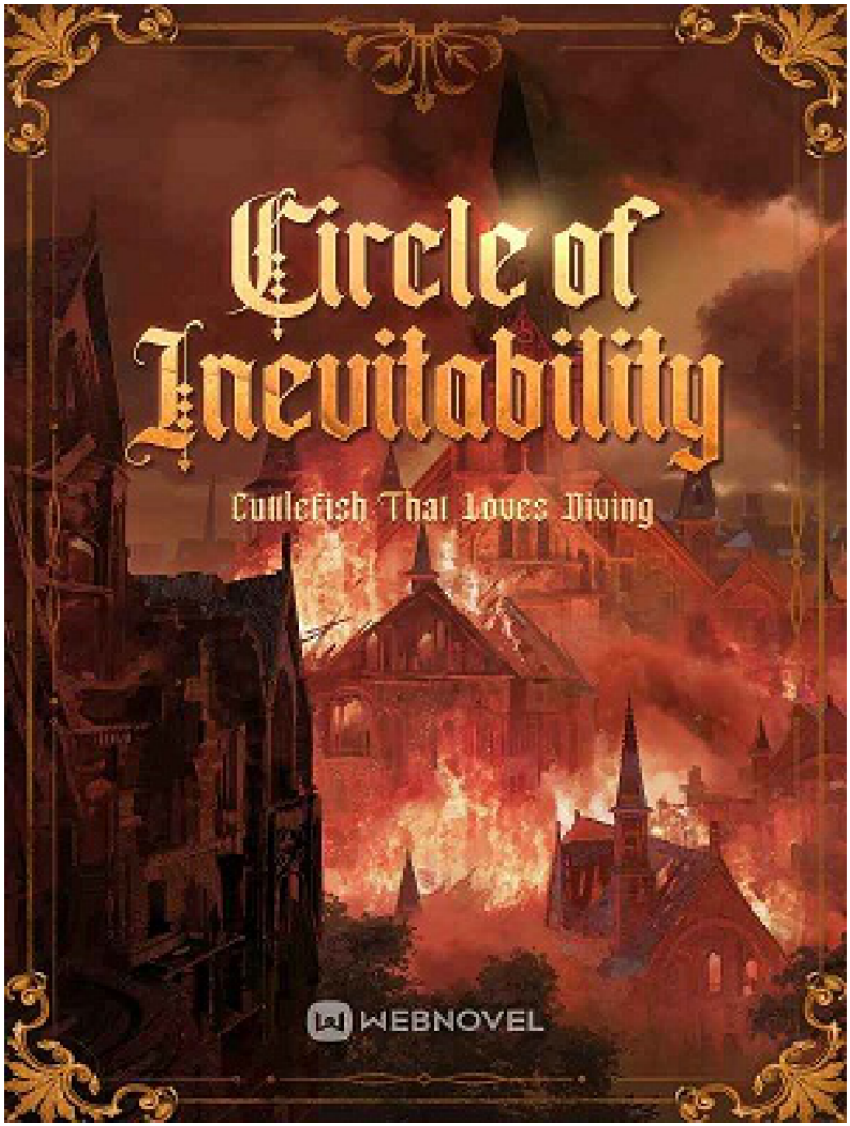
Circle of Inevitability
Cuttlefish That Loves Diving
WEBNOVEL

Information

Table of Contents URL: https://novelbin.me/novel-book/lord-of-mysteries-2-circle-of-inevitability#tab-chapters-title

A price is always exacted for what fate bestows—adapted from Zweig's Mary Queen of Scots.

"I'm a nobody, with no time to notice the brightness of the sun.

"My parents couldn't help me, and I wasn't highly educated. I had no choice but to make it on my own in the city.

"I'd applied to many jobs, but no one ever hired me. Maybe it's because I'm not good at expressing myself, and I'm not the best communicator. I guess I just haven't shown enough ability.

"Once, I'd eaten two loaves of bread over a three-day period. Hunger kept me up at night. At least I paid a month's rent in advance, so I didn't have to face the cold winter wind outside.

"Finally, I found a job at the hospital's morgue, keeping vigil over the dead.

Chapter 1 - 1: Foreigners

Chapter 1: Foreigners

A price is always exacted for what fate bestows—adapted from Zweig's Mary Queen of Scots.

"I'm a nobody, with no time to notice the brightness of the sun.

"My parents couldn't help me, and I wasn't highly educated. I had no choice but to make it on my own in the city.

"I'd applied to many jobs, but no one ever hired me. Maybe it's because I'm not good at expressing myself, and I'm not the best communicator. I guess I just haven't shown enough ability.

"Once, I'd eaten two loaves of bread over a three-day period. Hunger kept me up at night. At least I paid a month's rent in advance, so I didn't have to face the cold winter wind outside.

"Finally, I found a job at the hospital's morgue, keeping vigil over the dead.

"Nighttime in the hospital was colder than I could have ever imagined. The corridor's wall lights were out, leaving everything shrouded in darkness. I could barely see my feet, and the only light seeping out was from the rooms.

"Mon Dieu, it reeked of something fierce. The smell of death lingered in the air. And from time to time, we had to help move the bodies into the morgue.

"It wasn't the most glamorous of jobs, but it put bread on the table. Plus, the free time at night allowed me to study. Few people ventured to the morgue, but when they did, they were there delivering bodies or taking them away for cremation. I had to make do without books,

as I couldn't afford them, nor did I see any hope of saving up enough for them.

"But I had to thank my predecessor for leaving so suddenly, as it allowed me to get this job.

"I dreamed of working the day shift. Sleeping during the day and being awake at night made my body weak and my head throb."

"One day, a new corpse was brought in.

"From what I'd heard, it's the body of my predecessor who suddenly left.

"I was intrigued by the mysterious disappearance of my predecessor, and as soon as the others left the room, I pulled out the cabinet and quietly opened the body bag.

"He was an old man, with bluish-white skin and wrinkles covering his face. The poor lighting only served to make him look scarier.

"He didn't have much hair. Most of it was white. He had been stripped of his clothes, not even a piece of cloth was left on him.

"As a dead man without a family, the movers couldn't resist the opportunity to cash in on the guy.

"I saw a strange mark on his chest. It was bluish-black. I can't really explain it. The light was too dim at the time.

"I reached out and touched the mark, only to realize there was nothing special about it.

"Looking at my predecessor, I couldn't help but wonder if I'd end up like him when I grew old…

"I promised his body I'd be with him on his last journey, take him to the crematorium and then to the nearest free cemetery. I couldn't have the bureaucrats throwing him in the river or some forsaken land like trash.

"I knew I was gonna 'ave to sacrifice some shut-eye, but Dieu merci it

was Sunday the next day. I could catch up on my lost sleep then.

“After saying that, I zipped up the bag and shoved it back in the cabinet.

“The room went darker and the shadows lengthened…

“Since that day, every time I close my eyes, I’m swallowed by a thick fog.

“Something tells me I’m not alone. Something not quite human is coming my way. But nobody will listen. They think I’ve lost my mind in this job; they say I need a doctor…”

A male customer sitting at the bar looked at the narrator who had suddenly stopped and asked, “And?”

The narrator suddenly stopped his tale, causing a male customer at the bar to take notice. This mid-thirties chap sported a drab duffel coat and pale yellow strides. His hair was slicked back, and he had a rough dark bowler hat by his side.

He seemed run-of-the-mill, like the rest of the punters in the alehouse, with dark locks and piercing blue peepers. Not particularly handsome, but not repugnant either. Nothing about him screamed for attention.

The narrator was a strapping lad in his late teens, with long limbs and chiseled features that could make any lass go weak in the knees. His short, jet-black hair and bright, blue eyes only added to his appeal.

The lad looked wistfully at the empty wine glass in front of him and let out a deep sigh.

“And then?

“Then I quit my job and returned to the countryside so that I can tell you this bullshit,” the lad responded with a sly grin spreading across his face.

The male guest was taken aback.

“Were you just pulling our leg?”

“Haha!” Laughter erupted around the bar.

However, the laughter was short-lived as a middle-aged man looked sternly at the slightly embarrassed customer and remarked, “You ain’t from around here, are ya? Lumian spins a different yarn every day. Yesterday, he was a penniless bloke who got dumped by his fiancée, and today, he’s a watchman for the dead!”

“Aye, he talks about spending thirty years east of the Serenzo River and then thirty years to the right of it. He’s full of hot air, that one!” added another regular at the tavern.

All the men were farmers from the village of Cordu, wearing drab-colored tunics.

The black-haired lad, Lumian, leaned forward on the bar counter and rose to his feet. He flashed a cheeky grin and proclaimed, “As you all know, I ain’t the one making this up. My sister pens these tales. She’s a writer for some column known as Novel Weekly or other.”

With that, Lumian turned around, spread his arms wide, and beamed at the foreign customer.

“Looks like she’s crafted quite the tale. I’m sorry you misunderstood.”

The unremarkable man in the brown tweed shirt smiled and stood up.

“What an intriguing story. And how might I address you?”

“Isn’t it common courtesy to introduce oneself before inquiring of others?” Lumian replied, returning the man’s smile.

The foreigner nodded.

“My name is Ryan Koss.

“These are my companions, Valentine and Leah.”

The last sentence referred to the man and woman sitting beside him.

Valentine, a man in his late twenties with powdered blonde hair and piercing blue eyes, wore a white vest, a blue tweed jacket, and black trousers. It was evident that he had put considerable effort into his attire, as if he had been priming himself for a special rendezvous.

He had a rather chilly look on his face, not even sparing a glance for the farmers and herders around him.

Leah, on the other hand, was a striking young woman with long, light gray hair tied into an elaborate bun and a white veil perched atop her head.

Her eyes matched her hair and she regarded Lumian with an open smile, clearly amused by their exchange.

In the glow of the gas lamps inside the tavern, the woman named Leah showed off her sharp nose and stunningly curved lips. She was definitely a stunner in the countryside like Cordu.

She wore a snug white pleated cashmere dress with a small off-white coat and a pair of Marseillan boots. There were two tiny silver bells fastened to her veil and boots. They jingled as she walked into the tavern, drawing the attention of many—especially the men.

In their eyes, this was the kind of fashionable getup you'd only see in the big cities, like the provincial capital of Bigorre or even the capital city of Trier.

Lumian gave a nod of acknowledgement to the three foreigners.

"The name's Lumian Lee. You may address me as Lumian."

"Lee?" Leah blurted out.

"What's the matter? Y'all got a problem with my last name?" Lumian asked with a curious look on his face.

Ryan Koss took it upon himself to explain on Leah's behalf, "Your last name is downright frightening. I nearly lost control of my voice just now."

Observing the bewildered expressions of the farmers and herdsmen

around him, he continued, “Folks who have crossed paths with sailors and sea merchants are familiar with a saying that’s making the rounds in the Five Seas:

“I’d rather come face to face with pirate Admirals or even kings than run into a bloke named Frank Lee.

“That person’s last name is also Lee.”

“Is he really that scary?” Lumian inquired.

Ryan shook his head in response.

“I’m not exactly sure, but if such a legend exists, then it can’t be far from the truth.”

He switched topics and said to Lumian, “Merci for the story. It merits a drink. What do you desire?”

“A glass of La Fée Verte.” Lumian didn’t beat around the bush and settled back into his seat.

Ryan Koss furrowed his brow.

“‘La Fée Verte’… Absinthe?” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“I must remind you, absinthe is harmful to the human body. Such alcohol can lead to insanity and hallucinations.”

“I didn’t expect the trends of Trier to reach here,” Leah chimed in with a grin.

Lumian acknowledged her comment tersely.

“So the people of Trier also enjoy La Fée Verte…”

“For us, life is already tough enough. No need to fret over a little more harm. This drink can calm our minds.”

“Alright.” Ryan leaned back in his chair and turned to the bartender. “A glass of La Fée Verte and another glass of C?ur épicé.”

C?ur épicé was a renowned fruit-based spirit that had been distilled

to perfection.

The thin, middle-aged man who had exposed Lumian's lies piped up. "Give me a glass of La Fée Verte too. After all, I was the one who told the truth just now. I can even tell you the truth about this kid's situation!" He glared at Lumian, daring him to object. "Foreigner, I can tell you still have your doubts about the authenticity of that story."

"Pierre, you'd do anything for a free glass of alcohol," Lumian retorted, scowling.

Before Ryan could even respond, Lumian added, "Why can't I tell my story and get an extra glass of La Fée Verte?"

"Because no one knows if they should believe you," Pierre smirked. "Your sister's favorite story to tell kids is 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf.' People who lie all the time lose their credibility eventually."

Lumian shrugged and watched as the bartender slid a glass of light green alcohol in front of him. "?a va," he said, unbothered.

Ryan turned to Lumian.

"Is that all right?"

"Sure thing, as long as your wallet can handle it," Lumian replied breezily.

"In that case, another glass of La Fée Verte," Ryan said with a nod.

Pierre's face lit up with a smile.

"Generous foreigner, you should steer clear of this one," he said, gesturing to Lumian. "He's the most mischievous bloke in the whole village."

"Five years ago, his sister Aurore brought him back to the village," Pierre continued. "He's been here ever since. Can you imagine? He was just a wee lad of thirteen at the time. How could he have made the trek to the hospital to become a corpse watchman? The nearest hospital is in Dariège at the foot of the mountain. It would take an

entire afternoon to get there by foot."

"Brought back to the village?" Leah inquired, her voice tinged with suspicion.

She tilted her head, causing her bells to tinkle.

Pierre nodded in confirmation.

"Aurore moved here six years ago. A year later, she went on a journey and brought this lad back with her. Said she found him on the road, a starving, homeless child. She planned to adopt him."

"Then, he took on Aurore's last name, Lee. Even his name, Lumian, was given by Aurore."

"I don't even remember what my name was before Aurore gave me the name," Lumian, unfazed by the revelation, flashed a grin and took a sip of absinthe.

It was clear that his past did not bother him in the slightest.

Chapter 2 - 2: "Prank"

Chapter 2: “Prank”

Ryan apologized politely to Lumian. “Forgive me, I did not expect such a situation,” he said.

Lumian chuckled.

“Are you suggesting we need another glass of La Fée Verte?”

Without waiting for Ryan’s response, he changed the subject.

“What brings foreigners like you to Cordu? Are you here to buy wool or leather?”

Many of Cordu’s residents made their living as shepherds.

Ryan breathed a silent sigh of relief and seized the opportunity to explain their true purpose.

“We came to visit the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s padre, Guillaume Bénet, but he seems to be absent from both his home and the cathedral.”

Pierre, who had enjoyed Ryan’s free absinthe, kindly reminded him that there was only one church in Cordu.

The other locals around the bar counter were all drinking, but no one answered Ryan’s question. The name seemed to represent some kind of taboo or authority that couldn’t be openly discussed.

Lumian took a sip of drink and thought for a few seconds before offering his assistance.

“I can roughly guess where the padre is. Do you need me to take you there?”

Leah didn't stand on ceremony. "If it's not too much trouble," she said.

Ryan nodded in agreement.

"Once you've finished your drink."

"Alright." Lumian raised his glass and finished the light-green alcohol.

He put down his glass and got to his feet.

"Let's go."

"Merci beaucoup," Ryan expressed his gratitude and gestured for Valentine and Leah to stand up.

Lumian's face lit up with a smile. "It's no problem at all. You heard my story and I enjoyed a complimentary drink. That makes us friends, n'est-ce pas?"

"Oui." Ryan nodded.

Lumian's grin widened, stretching from ear to ear. He opened his arms wide, beckoning the other party in for a hug.

"Ah, it is good to meet you, my cabbages," he exclaimed with fervor.

Ryan, who was about to be enveloped in a bear hug, froze.

"Cabbages?"

His expression was a mixture of perplexity and embarrassment.

Valentine and Leah mirrored his expression.

"It is a term of endearment we use for our friends," Lumian explained with innocent sincerity. "Everyone in the Dariège region is aware of it. It has been a tradition for centuries, believe me, my cabbages."

Leah couldn't help but glance around, producing the tinkling sounds.

Pierre and the others nodded in agreement, assuring the newcomers

that Lumian's words were true. However, the grins on their faces hinted that they were pleased to see foreigners struggling to comprehend their affectionate greetings.

Lumian stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"Don't you fancy it?"

"Then I shall opt for a different option. It can also be used for friends.

"My dear bunnies, my darling chicks, my lovely ducks, or perhaps my adorable lambs? Which one tickles your fancy?"

But Ryan's expression was as stiff as a board, and Valentine's brow furrowed in confusion.

Leah let out a sigh, a mix of exasperation and amusement.

"Let's just stick with cabbage, shall we? At least it sounds normal."

Phew. Ryan let out a quiet sigh and gently grasped Valentine's elbow. He gave a slight nod and remarked, "They all seem like precious treasures in the family."

Without awaiting Lumian's response, he swiveled his body and addressed the bartender, "How much will it be?"

"Two verl d'or," replied the bartender, eyeing the glasses lined up on the counter.

Ryan settled the bill, and Leah shifted the conversation to a different subject.

"Lumian is an uncommon name."

"At least better than names like Pierre and Guillaume," Lumian countered with a grin. "If you were to call out Pierre in this place, a third of the people would turn their heads. Call out Guillaume, and another third will respond. As for this gentleman…"

He gestured to the skinny middle-aged man sipping his free drink.

“His full name is Pierre Guillaume.”

Leah flashed a smile, skirting the topic of cabbage.

As they departed from the tavern, Lumian turned around and surveyed the surroundings.

“What’s the matter?” Leah inquired with curiosity.

Lumian pondered for a moment and replied thoughtfully, “It’s not just the three of you foreigners who came to the tavern today. Another person arrived earlier, but I don’t know when they left.”

“What did they look like?” Ryan asked with a serious expression.

Lumian took a moment to reflect.

“A lady. Very sophisticated. You can tell she’s from the city with just one glance. I can’t describe her appearance. Why don’t I sketch her for you?”

“Do you know how to draw?” Leah queried, aware of Lumian’s idiosyncrasies.

Lumian chortled.

“I don’t.”

“In that case, let’s locate the padre first,” Ryan decided, drawing the conversation to a close.

Cordu was a place devoid of street lamps at night, yet the twinkling stars above provided a faint glimmer that allowed the four of them to navigate the road. The yellowish light emanating from the windows on either side only added to the ethereal ambiance.

As they approached the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral situated in the village square, the grandiose structure appeared somewhat blurry in the darkness, as if it was merging with the night.

“We’ve been here before. There’s no one here,” Valentine grumbled with a frown.

Lumian smiled and said, “No one at the front door doesn’t mean there’s no one elsewhere.”

He then proceeded to lead Ryan and the others around the front of the cathedral towards the cemetery, where they found a dark brown wooden door.

Lumian didn’t wait for Ryan to knock. Instead, he reached over and fiddled with the keyhole before opening the side door with a creak.

“That’s not very nice, is it?” Ryan frowned.

Leah nodded in agreement, her bells tinkling.

“We’re here to visit the padre, not to fight him.”

“Alright,” Lumian acquiesced.

He closed the wooden door and knocked lightly.

“Hey, is anyone there? I’ll come in if you don’t answer,” he muttered in a low voice that was barely audible in the night.

There was no response from inside the cathedral.

Without hesitation, Lumian pushed open the door and gestured inside.

“Go on in.”

Ryan hesitated. He looked at the darkness behind the door and glanced at his companions.

“Okay.” He took a step forward, slow but firm.

Leah and Valentine followed closely behind.

The four silvery bells adorning Leah’s boots and veil were eerily silent.

The environment was dim and eerie as the four of them made their way forward.

Out of nowhere, Ryan came to a halt and muttered in a low voice, “What’s that noise?”

“Yes, I heard it too,” Lumian agreed.

Without wasting any time, he forcefully pushed the door aside, and it opened with a loud clang, revealing what lay beyond.

The dimly lit space resembled a confessional. A beam of starlight shone through, revealing a naked man in his prime, lying atop a fair-skinned woman.

The scene stunned everyone, including the man and the woman.

Suddenly, the man sat up and bellowed at Ryan and his team, “Sacrebleu! You’ve ruined the holy church’s plans!”

Amidst the reverberating roar, Lumian, who had quietly approached behind the group, waved his hand and spoke quickly, “Ah, it seems we have discovered our padre. Au revoir, my cabbages!” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Before anyone could react, Lumian dashed towards the side door, leaving his words to drift away in the wind.

As the team stood in shock, Leah, Ryan, and Valentine couldn’t shake the words of the middle-aged man, Pierre Guillaume, from their minds: “…you should steer clear of this one. He’s the most mischievous bloke in the whole village.”

...

Lumian sauntered down the country road, hands tucked in his pockets while whistling a tune under the stars.

“As expected, the padre is having an affair with Madame Pualis.”

“Mon dieu, these foreigners exude an air of prestige. The padre would never dream of crossing them. He must pay an exorbitant sum to keep his sordid dalliances under wraps and preserve his standing within the cathedral.”

“Hmph, he only has himself to blame for lusting after Aurore. I have been biding my time for this chance…”

As Lumian muttered to himself, he returned to his abode on the outskirts of the hamlet.

The structure he called home was a peculiar semi-subterranean two-story affair. The ground floor doubled as both a kitchen and a lounge. A hefty oven and a grandiose stove dominated the room.

“Aurore! Aurore!” Lumian hollered as he trudged up the stairs.

No reply.

The upper storey was divided into three chambers and a lavatory, all the doors stood open.

Lumian peeped into each room but couldn’t find his sister.

He mulled it over for a moment, then marched to the end of the corridor and clambered up the ladder that led to the roof.

The roof was a fiery orange, painted by the twilight sky. In the center sat a figure, holding their knees and staring contemplatively at the sparkling stars.

This was an exquisite woman, exceptionally so. Her long and thick locks were a shade of gold, her eyes a pale blue, and her facial features were intricate and refined.

Her gaze was fixated on the cosmos, her countenance serene, akin to that of a statue.

Lumian remained silent. He shifted to her side and sat next to her.

He lifted his head, gazing at the dense forest in the distance, absorbing the susurrus of the wind blowing through the trees.

After a while, the woman raised her arms and stretched, paying no heed to her appearance.

“Aurore, I don’t understand why you come up here so often. What’s

so interesting about this view?" Lumian commented.

"Call me Grande Soeur!" Aurore scolded playfully, tapping Lumian's head with her finger.

Aurore sighed and thought to herself, "A philosopher once said that there are only two things worth revering in this world. One is the morality in one's heart, and the other is the cosmos above one's head."

Lumian noticed his sister's slightly melancholic expression and flashed a grin.

"I know the answer to this question. Emperor Roselle said so!"

"Pfft…" Aurore laughed.

She took a sniff and raised her beautiful golden eyebrows.

"You've been drinking again!"

"This is called socializing." Lumian took the opportunity to recount what had just happened. "I met three foreigners…"

Aurore could not help but laugh.

"I'm really afraid that the padre will have a heart attack."

Her expression then turned serious. "Lumian, don't provoke the padre anymore. It'll be troublesome if we get a new one."

"But I can't stand his face…" Lumian complained before Aurore stood up.

She looked down at her brother and smiled.

"Alright, it's bedtime, my inebriated brother," Aurore said with a smile as she threw out some silver dust.

Aurore flew down from the roof like a bird and entered the window on the second floor, leaving Lumian behind.

Lumian watched this quietly and shouted anxiously, "What about

me?”

“Climb down yourself!” Aurore replied mercilessly.

Lumian pursed his lips, his smile fading bit by bit.

He watched the silver specks of light disappear in the night sky, sighed softly, and muttered to himself, “I wonder when I’ll be able to possess such extraordinary powers…”

Chapter 3 - 3: Dream

Chapter 3: Dream

Lumian lingered atop the roof, reluctant to descend just yet.

His visage was a picture of stoicism, betraying no emotion. Gone was the mischievous young man who frequented the tavern, always ready with a grin and a jest. In his place was a composed and resolute figure, unrecognizable to those who knew him before.

Since discovering Aurore's magical powers by chance, Lumian had been obsessed with obtaining them. But Aurore always warned him against it, citing the immense danger and agony that came with wielding such abilities. She refused to divulge the secret even if she knew how to grant them to mere mortals.

Lumian couldn't force her to reveal the method, so he resorted to pleading and persuading her at every turn.

After a few seconds of contemplation, Lumian sprang to his feet and made his way down to the edge of the roof. He climbed back to the second floor using the wooden ladder.

He strolled to Aurore's room, only to find the brown wooden door ajar before peeking inside.

Aurore sat at her desk, scribbling away with a champagne fountain pen, dressed in a sky-blue gown.

What is she writing so late into the night? Is it related to witchcraft? Lumian placed his hand on the door and quipped, "Writing in your diary, are you?"

"Who writes in a diary, honestly?" Aurore replied without looking up from her writing.

Lumian wasn't satisfied with her answer.

"But didn't Emperor Roselle keep several volumes of diaries?"

Roselle, the last emperor of the Intis Republic where the siblings currently lived, had brought down the Sauron dynasty and assumed the mantle of Caesar, thereby declaring himself emperor.

The man had made countless strides in the fields of science and engineering, having been credited with inventing the steam engine. Not to mention, he had charted the sea route to the Southern Continent and sparked an age of colonization. He was the embodiment of his time, a symbol of a bygone era over a century ago.

However, in his twilight years, he was double-crossed and assassinated in the White Maple Palace of Trier.

In the aftermath of his death, his diary pages were disseminated throughout the world, yet they were written in a tongue that nobody could decipher, as if the words didn't exist in this world.

"That's why Roselle ain't no honest man," Aurore, her back turned to Lumian, scoffed.

"So, what're you scribbling there?" Lumian queried.

That was the crux of the matter.

Aurore responded with a shrug, her voice dripping with indifference, "A letter."

"To whom?" Lumian couldn't help but scowl.

Aurore paused, laying down her exquisite golden champagne fountain pen, intricately patterned, to review her words and phrases.

"A pen pal."

"A what now?" Lumian furrowed his brow, thoroughly perplexed.

What the hell was that?

Aurore chuckled, running her fingers through her lustrous golden hair as she began to enlighten her brother.

“That’s why I keep telling you to read more and study more. Quit wasting your days drinking and carousing!

“Look at you. What sets you apart from an illiterate?

“Pen pals are friends who become acquainted through newspapers, magazines, and other publications. They’ve never met and rely solely on letters to keep in touch.”

“What’s the point of having such a friend?” Lumian asked, rather concerned about this matter.

As he withdrew his hand from the door, he scratched his chin, deep in thought.

Aurore had never had a boyfriend before, so he couldn’t allow her to be fooled by someone she had never met before.

“Meaning?” Aurore thought about it seriously. “First off, emotional value. Oui, I know you don’t understand the concept. Humans need to connect with one another, but some things and emotions cannot be shared with the villagers, nor with you. I require a more private outlet to release my thoughts. These pen pals, whom I have not met in person, are perfect for that. Secondly, do not underestimate my pen pals. Some of them hold great power, and some possess extensive knowledge. For example, a pen pal gifted me this battery-operated lamp. Kerosene lamps and candles are too damaging to the eyes and not ideal for writing at night…”

Without waiting for Lumian to ask another question, Aurore waved her hand behind her.

“Get some rest, my inebriated brother! Bonne nuit!”

“Alright, bonne nuit.” Lumian replied, trying to hide his frustration.

Aurore instructed, “Don’t forget to close the door. It’s positively frigid in here with all the windows and the door open like this.”

Lumian slowly shut the door made of brown wood, then headed to his room where he removed his shoes before sitting on the bed.

In the dimness of the night, Lumian could make out the wooden table beside the window, the slanted chair, the small bookshelf against the wall, and the wardrobe on the other side.

He sat still, lost in thought.

He knew Aurore was a woman who kept her secrets to herself, and there were things she had not revealed to him. Lumian was not surprised, but he was worried that her secrets might put her in danger.

And when reality hit, his options were limited.

He was just an ordinary person, with a robust body and a sharp wit.

Thoughts came rushing in like waves crashing on the shore, and just as quickly they receded. Lumian took a deep breath and made his way to the washroom to freshen up.

Afterward, he removed his jacket-style brown coat and collapsed onto the cold bed.

The April air in the mountains was still nippy.

...

In the midst of his fugue state, Lumian perceived a murky mist, enveloping his surroundings and erasing everything in sight.

He trudged through the haze in a daze, yet regardless of which direction he took or how far he went, the fog always led him back to the same place—his bedroom. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The room was fashioned with a white four-piece bed, a wooden table and chair poised in front of the window, bookshelves, wardrobes, and the like.

...

Phew. Lumian's eyes flickered open with a start, the morning sun casting a light through the thin blue curtains.

He sat up, staring blankly at the room, feeling as if he was still trapped in a dream.

The same dream he had been having for days—the gray fog that refused to clear.

He raised a hand to his temples and muttered to himself in a deep voice, "It's getting more frequent. I have the same dream almost every day…"

Lumian's calm demeanor belied the fact that this dream hadn't brought about any negative effects, but it certainly had also failed to yield any positive outcomes.

"I pray that hidden in this is something propitious," Lumian murmured, as he rose from the bed.

Lumian opened the door to the corridor and was immediately met with a sound emanating from Aurore's room.

What a coincidence… Lumian smiled.

But then, a sudden thought hit him, causing him to take a step back and stand at the edge of the door.

When Aurore's bedroom door creaked open, Lumian quickly raised his right hand and began to massage his temples with a slightly pained expression on his face.

"What's wrong?" Aurore noticed his discomfort.

Success! Lumian cheered inwardly as he tried his best to calm himself down.

"I had that dream again," he replied in a deep voice.

Aurore's golden locks of hair cascaded down her shoulders as she furrowed her brows with concern.

“The previous method didn’t work…” she murmured to herself before suggesting,

“Perhaps… I should find you a hypnotist, a real Hypnotist, and see what caused it.”

“The kind with magical powers?” Lumian questioned deliberately.

Aurore nodded lightly in response.

“One of your pen pals?” Lumian couldn’t help but ask.

“Why do you care about this? Think about how to solve your own problem!” Aurore retorted without hesitation.

Isn’t that what’s on my mind? Lumian muttered inwardly.

He took the opportunity to say, “Aurore, if I become a Warlock and gain extraordinary powers, I should be able to unlock the secret of the dream and end it completely.”

“Don’t even think about it!” Aurore replied without hesitation.

Her expression softened as she continued, “Lumian, I won’t lie to you. This path we’re taking is dangerous, painful, and downright treacherous. If I had any other choice and if the world wasn’t spiraling out of control, I’d be content with being a regular old writer and living a peaceful life.”

Lumian didn’t hesitate to interject, “Then let me shoulder the burden of danger and pain. I’ll protect you, while you do what you love.”

Those words had been repeating in his head for quite some time.

Aurore went quiet for a couple of seconds before a grin spread across her face.

“Are you discriminating against women?”

Before Lumian could say a word, she added with a serious tone, “It’s too late to turn back now. Ain’t no going back to what we had before.

“Fine, I get it. I’m gonna go wash up. You study hard at home today and get ready for the college entrance exams in June!”

“You said it yourself, the world is getting more dangerous. What’s the point of taking exams?” Lumian muttered.

He believed that the key to success was strength, not some paper degree.

Aurore just smiled and said, “Knowledge is power, my uneducated brother.”

Lumian had no response, so he just watched Aurore walk into the washroom.

…

In the afternoon, in the bustling townsquare of Cordu,

Reimund Greg caught sight of Lumian Lee crouched under an elm tree. His thoughts were shrouded in mystery.

“Shouldn’t you be holed up at home with your nose buried in those books?” Reimund approached him, his voice dripping with envy.

Reimund was Lumian’s confidant, standing at a moderate 1.7 meters, with brown hair and brown eyes. He was an ordinary-looking fellow with a slightly flushed complexion.

Lumian looked up at him and offered a charming grin.

“Did Aurore not fill you in? Even the hangman deserves a respite! I’ve been cooped up for so long, I needed a break.”

All morning, he had been ruminating on the possibility of acquiring extraordinary powers without Aurore’s assistance.

This required him to seek out clues and take the initiative to investigate.

Eventually, he felt that the rumors of magical powers circulating throughout the village held some truth and leads, so he purposely

waited for Reimund here.

“If I were in your shoes, I wouldn’t rest for more than fifteen minutes,” Reimund drawled, leaning casually against the elm tree. “We don’t have a sister who’s well-read enough to teach us. I plan on learning how to herd sheep next year.”

Lumian paid no attention to Reimund’s remarks and spoke reflectively.

“Recall the tale of the Warlock for me.”

Reimund couldn’t quite understand Lumian’s intentions, furrowing his brow in confusion.

“The one about the Warlock?”

“In the past, there was a Warlock in our village, but he died later. On the day of his burial, an owl flew in from outside and perched atop his bed. It only departed after the coffin was carried out.

“Then, the coffin became unbearably heavy. It took nine bulls to pull it.”

Lumian pressed further, “How long ago was this?”

Reimund’s expression grew increasingly perplexed.

“How should I know? I heard it from my father.”

Chapter 4 - 4: Shepherd

Chapter 4: Shepherd

Lumian sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing with determination. “Then let’s go to your father.”

He had always been a man of action, and he knew that investigating the village legend couldn’t wait. If he dallied, his sister Aurore would surely catch wind of it, and she would never allow him to proceed.

In Aurore’s eyes, delving into the realm of extraordinary powers was tantamount to playing with fire.

How can I not know that there’s danger? Aurore wouldn’t lie to me about this. But even if the world is ablaze, I have to keep walking. I can’t let Aurore face this alone… As he got up, this thought flashed across Lumian’s mind.

Every time Aurore mentioned that the world was becoming more dangerous, the seriousness and worry on her face couldn’t be any more genuine!

Reimund Greg looked at Lumian with confusion etched on his face.

“Why are you looking for him?”

Lumian fixed him with a withering look. “Ask him how long ago the legend of the Warlock took place.”

Why is this guy struggling to comprehend such a simple matter? Perhaps I need to find some time to test his intelligence.

Reimund still looked baffled as he gazed at Lumian.

“Why do you need to know such details?”

Uh… Should I bother trying to explain it to this clueless fellow? Or should I simply come up with a plausible excuse? He weighed his options.

Lumian's mind raced as he considered his next move. He knew that he couldn't keep his investigations a secret from his friends, but he also knew that pursuing the truth about the legend was a risky move. However, he quickly came up with an idea.

He flashed a grin that he usually reserved for moments when he was about to deceive someone.

"…" Reimund took two steps back, sensing that something was amiss. "Spill it!"

Lumian adjusted his dark-colored shirt and linen jacket before smiling.

"I believe the legend of the Warlock is worthy of our attention."

"What's so important about it?" Reimund asked after some thought.

"There was indeed a Warlock in our very village of Cordu in the past," Lumian said with a serious expression. "Think about it, my friend. When I lie, I don't provide specific details like the time, place, and background that anyone could easily verify. However, this legend mentions a Warlock who lived in Cordu, and if it were a fabrication, it would be too easy for someone to expose it as such."

"But that was ages ago," Reimund countered.

"I'm also referring to the people who were around when the legend first started circulating," Lumian explained, his smile widening. "They could have easily confirmed whether or not a Warlock lived in Cordu at that time. And since the legend has been passed down through generations, it's highly likely that it's based on a real event."

Reimund remained unconvinced.

"But when you make up stories, you often use phrases like 'more than a hundred years ago,' 'centuries ago,' 'long, long ago,' to make it impossible for anyone to verify."

“That’s precisely why I need to confirm it with your father,” Lumian replied, a sly look in his eye that said: “You see where I’m going with this, don’t you?”

“That’s true…” Reimund nodded slowly, accepting Lumian’s explanation, but he couldn’t shake the feeling that something wasn’t quite right.

As they left the square and delved deeper into the village, Reimund had a sudden epiphany.

“Mon Dieu, why do you want to confirm if such a legend is true?”

“Warlock, mon ami, that’s what we’re searching for! If we can confirm the house where he lived and the place where he was buried, we might uncover his secret and gain magical powers that go beyond mere mortals,” Lumian replied, his truthful words dripping with deceit.

Reimund’s expression turned skeptical: “Don’t tell me lies.”

“Mon ami, most of those tales are created to scare little children. How can they be true?

“And on top of that, anyone who seeks the power of a Warlock will end up in the Inquisition!”

The Intis Republic lay on the Northern Continent, where the orthodox deities were the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery. These two churches divided the faith of almost all the people, and they didn’t allow the Church of Evernight Goddess, the Church of the Lord of Storms from the Loen Kingdom, the Church of Earth Mother from the Feynapotter Kingdom, the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom from Lenburg, and the Church of the God of Combat from the Feysac Empire to come in and preach.

The Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Inquisition was feared by all. Countless heretics had been locked up and subjected to unimaginable torture.

Lumian laughed.

“Why are you fretting now, my friend? You said it yourself, most of those legends are false. The chances of finding a Warlock’s remains are slim to none.

“Besides, even if we do stumble upon the remains of a Warlock, we don’t have to take on his forbidden power. We can give it to the Church and get a handsome reward. Oh right, a Warlock’s grave is sure to be overflowing with treasures.”

The Church that Lumian spoke of was the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun. The Church of the God of Steam and Machinery wasn’t found in Cordu, instead it was usually located in large cities and places with factories.

Seeing the temptation growing in Reimund’s eyes, Lumian couldn’t help but click his tongue in satisfaction.

“Do you really want to be a shepherd, my friend?”

The ‘shepherd’ here was not talking about the romanticized idea of a pastoral shepherd that city dwellers often had. No, this was a profession. Every morning, they would have to lead a flock of sheep out to graze and watch over them.

Cordu was located in Darième, Riston Province. Being a shepherd was a profession here, a tough and lonely profession.

They worked for sheep owners, herding dozens, even hundreds of sheep back and forth between the mountains and plains.

This was known as a herding. Every autumn, the mountains around Cordu would wither, and the shepherds would lead the sheep out of the mountain pass to the warmer plains far away, sometimes crossing borders into Feynapotter, Lenburg, and other countries. By the beginning of May, they would have brought the sheep back to various villages to shear them and wean the lambs. In June, they would trek up the mountains and into the tall ranges. They’d live in shacks and make cheese while grazing the sheep until the weather turned cold.

The shepherds spent their entire lives on the move, traveling from

place to place. They only had a small window to return to the village, which made starting a family nearly impossible. Most of them were single, and the few widows who had no choice but to herd sheep for a living were highly sought after by the shepherds. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Reimund fell silent.

After a long while, he hesitantly said, “I’ll listen to ya. It does sound like fun, and I could use somethin’ to pass the time.”

In the ordinary course of events, once the family decided which child would become a shepherd, they would dispatch him to a certain shepherd’s location to assist between the ages of fifteen to eighteen. There, he would learn the ropes of shepherding. Three years later, the youngster would officially become a shepherd and seek employment elsewhere.

Seventeen-year-old Reimund, however, had found several reasons to postpone this matter for over two years. If his circumstances did not alter, he would have to start learning how to herd next year.

“Come on,” Lumian said, patting Reimund’s shoulder. “Is your father in the fields or at home?”

“Recently, there hasn’t been much work. Lent is approaching swiftly. He’s either at home or at the tavern.” Reimund let out a voice of envy. “You don’t know anything about this? You’re definitely not a farmer. You have a fortunate sister!”

Lumian put his hands in his pockets and sauntered ahead, disregarding Reimund’s lamentations.

As they approached the rundown tavern in the village, a person emerged from the side street.

This individual was dressed in a lengthy dark brown coat with a hood. A rope was tied around his waist, and he wore a pair of brand-new, supple black leather shoes.

“Pierre? Pierre of the Berrys?” Reimund cried out in surprise.

Lumian halted in his tracks and turned to look.

“That’s me,” Pierre Berry replied with a wide grin and a wave of his hand.

He was a scrawny man with sunken eyes and greasy, curly hair. His stubble suggested it had been quite some time since he last shaved.

“Why are you back?” Reimund asked in confusion.

Pierre Berry was a shepherd and it was only the beginning of April. He should be tending to his sheep in the fields beyond the mountain pass. How in the world did he find himself in the village?

He had only just begun his journey, and even if he had gone to Lenburg or the north of Feynapotter, it would take him a month to return to the Dariège mountains.

With his warm, smiling blue eyes, Pierre exclaimed joyfully, “Isn’t it almost Lent? I haven’t celebrated it for years. I can’t miss it this year!”

“Don’t you worry. I have a companion to help me look after the sheep. That’s the beauty of being a shepherd. Without a supervisor, as long as I can find someone to help me, I can go wherever I please. I’m free as a bird.”

Lent was a widely celebrated festival throughout Intis. People welcomed the arrival of spring in different ways and prayed for a fruitful harvest for the year.

Although it had nothing to do with the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun or the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, it had already turned into folklore and didn’t involve the worship of pagan deities. Therefore, it had gained the tacit approval of the orthodox factions.

“You want to see who’ll be chosen as the Spring Elf this year, don’t you?” Lumian teased, flashing a grin.

In Cordu, the people selected a gorgeous girl to play the role of the Spring Elf for Lent. It was all part of the celebration.

Pierre laughed along.

“I hope it’s your sister Aurore, but she definitely won’t agree, and she’s not the right age either.”

“Alright,” he said, pointing towards the tavern just a stone’s throw away. “I’ll head to the cathedral to pray. Drinks on me later.”

Reimund absentmindedly replied, “No need. You don’t have much dough.”

“Haha, as the good Lord Himself has said, ‘Even if there’s only one copper coin, we have to share it with our poor brothers.'” He recited an adage that was well-known among the shepherds in the Dariège region.

Lumian beamed at Reimund, saying, “Pierre’s loaded. He’s definitely treating us to a drink!”

He pointed to Pierre Berry’s spanking new leather shoes.

Pierre Berry was thrilled.

“My new boss is not too shabby. He gave me a few sheep and some wool, cheese, and leather.”

The shepherds were compensated with food, a small sum of money, and communal animals, cheese, wool, and leather. The amount they received was dependent on the agreement they had signed with their employer.

For shepherds who had to travel long distances, having a good and suitable pair of leather shoes was the most pressing and practical desire.

As Lumian watched Pierre Berry strut towards the town square, his gaze gradually became solemn and filled with suspicion.

He silently muttered to himself, Going away for a week or two or maybe even a month just to attend Lent?

Lumian paused for a moment, his eyes scanning the area before he

turned and strode towards the local watering hole with Reimund.

The tavern was a nondescript establishment with no fancy moniker to speak of. The townsfolk affectionately referred to it as Ol' Tavern.

Upon entering, Lumian's eyes darted around the room in their habitual manner.

Suddenly, his gaze came to a halt.

There, before him, was the foreigner who had departed so hastily the night before.

She was alone, not in the company of Ryan, Leah, and Valentine.

Her dress was a long, flowing orange garment, and her locks were a rich brown, tousled in gentle curls. Her piercing, sky-blue eyes were fixed on the scarlet-hued drink that graced her delicate hand.

Beautiful and languid, she seemed out of place in the seedy, dimly lit tavern.

Chapter 5 - 5: Card

Chapter 5: Card

Kirsch. As expected of someone from a big city…?Lumian's gaze eventually landed on the glass in the lady's hand.

The distilled spirit made from sugar and fermented cherries had a color and texture that appealed to the ladies. Of course, they could replace the cherries with other fruits, but it would alter the taste only slightly.

Cordu's Ol' Tavern had a limited stock of high-grade wine, including Kirsch, which Madame Pualis fell in love with during her visit to the provincial capital, Bigorre.

Madame Pualis was the wife of Béost, the local administrator and territorial judge. Her noble ancestors had lost their title during Emperor Roselle's reign.

Lumian knew that she was also one of the mistresses of the padre, Guillaume Bénet, but not many people in the village knew about it.

Lumian shifted his gaze away from the lady and walked towards the bar counter.

A man in his forties wearing a linen shirt and trousers of the same color was sitting there. His brown hair was no longer lush, and his face was creased from years of hard labor. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

He was none other than Pierre Greg, Reimund's father.

Another Pierre.

At least a third of the people at the bar would answer to the call of

Pierre, Lumian had joked earlier in front of Leah, Ryan, and the others.

In the village, when people talked about Pierre or Guillaume, they had to specify which family they were referring to.

Many families had fathers and children with the same names, making it impossible to tell them apart without adding "*père*," "*a?né*," or "*junior*" to their names.

Reimund sauntered up to his father's side and asked, "Papa, why don't you go to the square and chat with the others?"

The men in the village always convened under the ancient elm tree or in someone's abode, where they'd spend the day playing dice, cards, chess, and swapping all sorts of rumors—the tavern cost money, after all.

Pierre Greg, with a glass of rich red wine in hand, turned to his second son and said, "We'll go later. There shouldn't be many people at the square now."

That's right. Where did all the men in the village go??Lumian was immediately perplexed.

He had noticed the absence of the village men at the square.

"*Monsieur*, I want to ask you something," Lumian said bluntly.

Pierre Greg immediately turned alert.

"A new prank?"

The story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" does indeed have a basis in reality…?Lumian turned his head, gesturing for Reimund to speak.

Reimund hesitated for a moment, gathering his thoughts.

"Papa, how long ago did the Warlock legend you told me happen? The one where it took nine bulls to pull the coffin."

Pierre Greg gulped down a mouthful of wine, his brow furrowed in

puzzlement.

“Why are you asking this?

“You know, your pépé told me this when I was just a wee lad.”

The Riston Province, where Cordu was located, and the neighboring provinces of Aulay and Suhit were located in the south of the Intis Republic. They were famous grape producers, and the wine here, especially the inferior ones, was very cheap. In some years, people could even drink wine like water.

Reimund was disappointed because it had been a long time since his grandfather had passed on.

Suddenly, Pierre Greg chimed in, “Your?*pépé*?claimed that he saw it with his own two eyes when he was but a young man. It spooked him so much that he became deathly afraid of owls. He was convinced that their evil talons could snatch his very soul away.”

Lumian and Reimund’s eyes sparked with excitement, almost in unison.

Merde, there were actual clues!

The legend of the Warlock—it was something that someone had actually experienced?

“Did?*Pépé*?mention anything about where the Warlock lived or where he was buried?” Reimund asked eagerly.

Pierre Greg shrugged. “Who cares?”

Not one to be deterred, Reimund persisted, determined to glean any shred of information. Before he could speak, Lumian intervened with a gentle touch on his shoulder as he spoke loudly, “The river awaits us.”

Reimund was just about to take his leave with Lumian when Pierre Greg suddenly remembered something.

“Hold up, Reimund. You’ll soon be a Greenwatcher, won’t you?

There's something you need to be aware of.

Greenwatchers had the crucial responsibility of patrolling the highland pastures around the village and nearby fields to prevent any illegal grazing during the prohibited period or livestock from ravaging the saplings.

Lumian didn't pay much heed to the conversation and made his way to the tavern's washroom.

As he exited the restroom, he took a detour to the female foreigner who was sipping on Kirsch. It was impossible to discern her age.

Although he had no intentions of striking up a conversation, he observed her with great detail. It might come in handy in the future, just like how he had used Ryan, Leah, and Valentine to infiltrate the padre's scandalous scene.

After a few subtle glances, Lumian was poised to head for the entrance of the tavern to wait for Reimund when the languid lady in the orange dress looked up.

Before Lumian could retract his gaze, his eyes met hers.

Lumian felt a little awkward as his thick skin couldn't protect him from the unexpected encounter.

Many thoughts immediately surfaced in his mind.

Maybe I should take a cue from the padre and administrators of the Church and praise her beauty? Or perhaps I should switch gears and hit on her? Alternatively, should I show my inexperience and hastily turn around to leave?

As Lumian made up his mind, the lady interrupted his thoughts and said with a smile, "Been having dreams, have you?"

Lumian was hit by a bolt of lightning. His thoughts went numb and his mind froze.

After a moment or two, he managed to force a smile and asked, "Dreaming isn't unusual, is it?"

The woman touched her cheek with one hand and sized Lumian up. She chuckled and said, “Lost in a misty dream, perhaps?”

*How could she know??*Lumian’s pupils dilated instantly, and his expression betrayed a hint of fear.

Despite having experienced many things, he was still young, and for a moment, he couldn’t control his emotions.

Stay calm, Lumian. Stay calm…?He repeated to himself, trying to relax the muscles on his face, before asking, “Did you hear the tale I told those three foreigners last night?”

…

The woman didn’t reply. Instead, she pulled out a stack of cards from her orange purse, which sat on the chair next to her.

She cast her gaze at Lumian once again and broke into a radiant smile.

“Draw a card. Perhaps it can aid you in unlocking the hidden secrets of that dream.”

*Wh—?*Lumian was taken aback, his guard instantly raised.

He was both enticed and wary.

He looked down at the card she presented him and furrowed his brows.

“Tarot?”

The card resembled the tarot cards created by Emperor Roselle for divination.

The woman looked down sheepishly and offered a self-deprecating smile.

“My apologies, I must have grabbed the wrong one.”

She swiftly returned the 22 tarot cards to her medium-sized handbag

and pulled out a different deck.

…

“This is also tarot, but it’s from the Minor Arcana. You don’t have the privilege to draw from the Major Arcana pack, and I don’t have the authority to let you…”

The Minor Arcana consisted of 56 cards divided into four suits, each representing chalices, wands, swords, and pentacles.

What is she talking about…?Lumian was bewildered by her words.

This woman was stunningly beautiful and sophisticated, yet there was an air of eccentricity about her that suggested she was not entirely sane.

“Draw one,” she urged, waving the Minor Arcana cards in her hand. “It’s complimentary, so there’s no cost to try. It may be the solution to your dream predicament.”

Lumian chuckled.

“My sister once said that free things often come at the most hefty price.”

“That may be true,” the lady said after some thought.

She laid down the Minor Arcana card with a delicate touch, careful not to upset the glass of Kirsch that sat beside it.

“But as long as you don’t pay, no matter what, how can I, a foreigner, expect to make you pay in Cordu?”

*That’s right… perhaps it’s worth a try. It wasn’t easy for me to get a hint about that dream. I gotta give it a shot, but what about the Warlock’s curse? Maybe I should get Aurore’s help??*Lumian’s mind raced with conflicting thoughts, and he couldn’t decide what to do.

The woman didn’t seem to mind his hesitation.

After what seemed like an eternity, Lumian finally made up his mind.

Slowly, he leaned forward and reached out his right hand. Carefully, he shuffled through the stack of Minor Arcana cards and extracted one from the middle.

“Seven of Wands.” The languid woman’s eyes drifted towards the card.

The image depicted a man in verdant attire, standing atop a mountain with a determined expression on his face. In his hand, he held a wand, poised for battle against the six wands representing his enemies that were attacking from the foot of the mountain.

“What does this mean?” Lumian asked.

The woman’s lips curled into a smile.

“I shall interpret it for you. It symbolizes crisis, challenge, confrontation, courage, et cetera.

“However, what really matters is that this card now belongs to you. When the time comes, you will discover its true meaning.”

“You’re giving it to me?” Lumian’s confusion grew with each passing moment.

Could this card truly be cursed?

The woman ignored his query and started to put away the remaining cards. She picked up her glass and finished the remaining Kirsch in a single gulp.

With graceful strides, she made her way towards the staircase on the side of Ol’ Tavern and ascended to the second floor.

It was obvious that she lived there.

Lumian felt the urge to follow her, but something held him back. His thoughts were in disarray.

Is this really an ordinary card?

She gave it to me. Does that mean she’ll never be able to use that deck

again?

Aurore might be able to shed some light on this…

At this moment, Reimund approached Lumian.

“What’s the matter, my friend?”

“Nothing much. That foreigner was quite the looker, isn’t she?” Lumian said patronizingly.

“I reckon your sister, Aurore, is far more beautiful.” Reimund then lowered his voice. “Lumian, my?*pépé*?has been gone for ages. What should we do next?”

Lumian, who was in a hurry to leave, pondered for a moment before answering,

“Firstly, we could track down an elder around your pépé’s age who’s still kicking. Alternatively, we could head to the cathedral and examine the registry. Uh, but that’s something to consider at a later time.”

Lumian remembered his recent altercation with the padre and decided it was better to avoid the cathedral, unless it was absolutely necessary.

As the only cathedral in Cordu, it held significant power, even acting as a government entity. It recorded all significant events, including deaths, and marriages.

Before Reimund could ask any further, Lumian interjected, “Let’s split up and see who fits the bill. We’ll inquire tomorrow.”

“Agreed.” Reimund immediately agreed.

…

In the semi-subterranean two-story building, Aurore listened intently to Lumian’s tale, her piercing gaze fixed on the “Wand” card in his hand.

“It’s an ordinary card, oui. I detect no malice or enchantments.”

“Aurore, uh,?*Grande Soeur*, what do you make of the foreigner’s intentions? How did she know of my dream?” Lumian asked.

Aurore shook her head.

“Now that she has shown us her hand, we can only wait and see.”

“I will keep a watchful eye on her for the next few days.

“Oh… And take this card. It may cause change. But have no fear, I will be watching.”

“Alright.” Lumian tried his best to relax.

...

In the dead of the night, Lumian deftly tucked the Wand card into the garments draping over the back of the chair, then slipped under the covers and shut his eyes.

Before long, a dense, ashen mist once again enveloped his vision.

Without warning, he jolted awake within his reverie.

He sensed his mind clearing, and a newfound lucidity taking hold.

Yet, the dreamworld swathed in that same murky haze lingered on.

Chapter 6 - 6: Ruins

Chapter 6: Ruins

Lumian's subconscious gaze darted around the room, taking in the familiar sights of the table, the chair, the bookshelf, the wardrobe, and the bed.

It was his bedroom, but it was cloaked in a thin, gray fog.

Is this some sort of lucid dream? I'm having a lucid dream? His pupils dilated as the realization dawned on him.

A lucid dream was a rare occurrence where one's mind could think and remember like in a state of wakefulness while still in a dream state. It was a skill that required specialized training to master.

Aurore had tried various methods to induce lucid dreams in order to unravel the secret of Lumian's gray fog dream and help him eliminate the latent danger it posed, but she had failed.

But now, Lumian found himself inexplicably conscious in his dream.

As the shock of the situation passed, he began to consider the possibility of why this had happened.

Could it be because of the tarot card that represents the Seven of Wands?

That woman said it would help me unlock the secret of the dream..

Therefore, its function is to allow me to enter a lucid dream state and explore the area enveloped by the gray fog?

Hmm… Compared to my previous impression, the gray fog seems to have faded a lot. A lot more…

With these thoughts racing through his mind, Lumian rose from his chair and strode to the side of the room. He placed his hands on the table against the wall and gazed out the window, where a completely unfamiliar landscape greeted his eyes.

This dream did not replicate the Cordu where he lived.

Under a thin, ghostly fog, a towering mountain peak caught Lumian's attention. It rose up twenty to thirty meters into the air, constructed from brownish-red stones and reddish-brown soil.

Buildings surrounded the mountain, now in ruins, either fallen or charred beyond recognition.

They resembled crypts, a disordered cemetery surrounding the mountain's base.

The ground was marred by holes and scattered with gravel. Not a blade of grass or a single weed could be found in this barren wasteland.

The fog in the sky thickened to an impenetrable white, with no indication of a sun. Lumian could only see as if in the dead of night, under the light of the stars.

After a moment of observation, he murmured to himself, "That's it? This is the dream that's been haunting me for years?" The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

But soon he refocused his thoughts on a more practical question:

Where is the dream secret hidden?

On the peak, or in one of these shattered buildings?

Lumian did not rush to leave his bedroom and explore the dream. Instead, he stayed put, scanning the area from his vantage point.

Suddenly, he caught sight of a figure darting through the ruins of the buildings surrounding the mountain peak.

Despite the fog's thinness and the two-story house's limited height,

Lumian couldn't shake the sense of its presence. He wondered if he was hallucinating.

Taking a deep breath, Lumian muttered to himself, "Stay calm. Be patient. Stay calm. Be patient."

From what I can see, this dream is shrouded in secrecy, and it doesn't feel entirely my own. Lumian knew that blindly exploring it could lead to danger.

Yes, I will search for that woman tomorrow and see what information I can find. Then, I will make a decision…

Lost in thought, Lumian withdrew his gaze and prepared to exit the dream to rest in peace.

However, he didn't know how to wake himself up while being awake.

After numerous attempts to awaken, he laid in bed and attempted to clutter his thoughts, trying to recreate the state he was in while sleeping.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Lumian abruptly sat up and noticed the faint glimmer of golden sunlight filtering into the room through the curtains.

I'm finally awake…

As expected, sleeping within the dream restores my disoriented state. Then, I can escape…

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief and whispered to himself.

In that moment, a knock reverberated through the door.

"Aurore?" Lumian's heart clenched, fearing the worst.

"It is me," Aurore's voice infiltrated the room.

Lumian sprung from the bed and rushed to the entrance. He grabbed the handle and pulled it open.

Lo and behold, it was Aurore standing outside. She donned a white silk nightgown, and her long tresses of golden hair cascaded elegantly down her back.

“How did it go?” She appeared certain that Lumian had just awoken.

Lumian held nothing back and recounted every detail that had occurred.

Aurore nodded pensively.

“The purpose of the card was to facilitate a lucid dream…”

She inquired, “What are you going to do next?”

Lumian grunted curtly.

“I shall grab a bite to eat before visiting the woman and attempting to gather more information to discern her true intentions.”

“Very well.” Aurore offered no objection.

She added, “I shall also pen a letter to someone inquiring about the dream you recounted and the symbols therein.”

At this juncture, she glimpsed Lumian’s suddenly apprehensive expression and smiled.

“Fret not, I shall make adjustments. I shall not jettison everything at once. After all, I am the one who instilled in you the principle of gradual progress.”

“Well, when you converse with that woman, do not be aggressive. Endeavor to be amicable. It is not that we are fearful of her, it is simply better to acquire another ally than an additional adversary.”

“Understood,” Lumian replied solemnly.

…

Cordu, Ol’ Tavern.

Lumian strode into the Cordu, Ol’ Tavern and approached the bar

counter. He leaned in and spoke to Maurice Bénet, the tavern owner who also doubled up as a bartender.

“Which chamber does the foreign madame occupy upstairs?”

Ol’ Tavern, the only inn in the village, boasted six rooms on the second floor for guests to rest their weary heads.

Maurice Bénet was not a burly man. Like most in the village, he had raven locks and blue eyes, but his nose was always red, a consequence of his heavy drinking.

He was related to the Church’s padre Guillaume Bénet, but the two were not close and were merely distant cousins.

“Why the inquiry?” Maurice Bénet inquired, his curiosity piqued. “What business would a big-city woman have with a country bumpkin like you?”

There was an obvious look of inquiry on his face. Maurice had a sixth sense for these things, especially when it came to men and women.

Lumian scoffed, “Aren’t you a country bumpkin and a hillbilly yourself?” He casually made up a reason, “The lady lost something last night. I found it this morning. Just trying to return her property.”

Maurice Bénet didn’t buy it for a second. “Is that so?”

Eight out of ten things that came out of Lumian’s mouth were lies.

“What else? Do you think she’ll fall for me?” Lumian said, undaunted.

“That’s true.” Maurice Bénet was convinced. “She’s in the room by the square, opposite the washrooms.”

After Lumian left, Maurice polished a glass, eyes tracking him. He whispered, just barely audible to Lumian, “Impossible? Not always. Sometimes people want to try something new…”

…

Lumian found the washroom on the second floor, the only spot of

light in the dim, narrow hallway. But his eyes were drawn to the door across from it. A piece of paper hung from the brass handle, stark white against the dark red wood.

Scrawled on it in Intis: “Currently resting. Do not disturb.”

Lumian read the note for a few seconds. Instead of rushing forward to knock on the door, he took two steps back and stood against the wall.

He planned to wait here until the lady came out.

Life on the streets had taught him hard lessons. When an opportunity appeared, you seized it with both hands, no hesitation, no second thoughts, no fear. Otherwise it slipped through your fingers, and you were right back where you started. So he would wait as long as it took, the minutes ticking by endlessly as he ignored the eyes he felt tracking him, the whispers in his mind.

He stood there without a hint of frustration, probably capable of passing off as a statue.

Finally, a soft creak.

The woman had changed into a pale green dress with white edges. Her brown hair was swept into a tight bun.

Those light-blue eyes flicked to Lumian before moving to the paper sign on the door handle, a smile dancing at the corner of her mouth.

“How long did you wait?” she asked, not at all surprised to see him there.

Lumian took a step forward and said, “That’s not important.”

He tried to keep his tone even, to appear less eager.

“What do you want to ask?” the woman said, cutting straight to the point.

Lumian glanced around the empty hallway. “Here?”

The lady replied with a smile, “If you don’t mind, I don’t mind

either.”

Lumian had already noticed that the other occupants of the tavern, including Ryan and Leah, were nowhere to be found. There was no one else on the second floor except for him and the woman in front of him.

Lumian asked, organizing his thoughts carefully.

“What’s the secret in that dream of mine?”

The lady laughed involuntarily.

“That’s for you to answer, not me.”

She paused for a moment before saying, “All I can say is, you’ll find extraordinary power there.”

Extraordinary power… His pulse roared in his ears.

“What’s the point, if it’s just a dream? Won’t change anything out here.”

The woman’s lips curled into a smile.

“Who’s to say what’s possible, in the realm of the extraordinary? Perhaps, it can?”

After everything, the power I crave is there for the taking? Lumian’s breath caught.

The grin slid away as the lady added seriously, “But danger lurks there too. Die in the dream, you die out here.”

Die in the dream, die for real? Lumian didn’t understand, but he chose to believe it.

That dream clung to Lumian like a shadow, as it had for years. But it was different, somehow. Special. And Aurore’s voice whispered in his memory: “Careful’s never a bad idea.” Lumian preferred to view the situation as challenging and the consequences as severe. He couldn’t afford to underestimate the danger or be careless.

After a few seconds, he asked, “If I stay out? What then?”

“Theoretically speaking, there won’t be any consequences. No one will force you,” the woman said thoughtfully. “But as time passes, I can’t be sure that the situation won’t change. And the probability of things going wrong is much higher than things going right.”

“How much higher?” Lumian pressed. “90% to 10%?”

“No, 99.99% to 0.01%.” The lady added seriously, “Of course, this is just my personal judgment. You can choose not to believe it.”

Lumian felt a wave of uncertainty wash over him, his mind racing with conflicting thoughts.

Recently, I’m becoming convinced that the dream is a hidden danger. Not caring is the worst choice…

But if I really want to explore it, there’s a very high chance that an accident will happen without any knowledge…

Should I wait for Aurore to gather more information from her pen pals before making an attempt?

But if I do, Aurore definitely won’t allow me to use the dream exploration to obtain extraordinary powers…

Wasn’t my investigation of the legend to seek extraordinary powers?

It’s too risky. It can lead to death…

Perhaps I should do a preliminary exploration at the edge of the dream ruins to gather information and not take the risk of entering?

Hmm, I can tell Aurore about the conversation, but I can’t reveal the possibility of obtaining extraordinary powers…

Once his thoughts had settled, Lumian gazed at the woman across from him and asked in a low, serious tone, “Who are you exactly? Why did you give me that tarot card and the opportunity to explore the dream?”

The woman smiled enigmatically.

“I will tell you once you have unraveled the mystery of the dream.”

Chapter 7 - 7: Naroka

Chapter 7: Naroka

Once Lumian had departed from the Ol' Tavern, he found himself standing on the uneven road, uncertain of where to go next.

The morning sun beat down upon him, albeit with a slight chill in the air.

As he deliberated his next move, Reimund Greg emerged from the side.

"I was just looking for you."

Lumian quickly regained his composure and queried, "What's the issue?"

Reimund appeared taken aback. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"Have you forgotten? Today, we're supposed to seek out the elderly, around the same age as my pépé, and inquire about the legend of the Warlock."

Lumian groaned, pressing his hand against his forehead in agony.

"Is that so? Why can't I recall? Or is this just your imagination?"

Reimund's expression shifted from one of concern to one of fear. Just as he was about to inquire further and confirm whether he had imagined the events of the previous day, Lumian's face lit up with a mischievous grin.

"You rascal, you're playing a joke on me again!" Reimund cursed, unable to contain his annoyance.

“You need to work on your cursing,” Lumian chided, shaking his head in disappointment. “Even Ava can curse better than you.”

Ava Lizier, the beautiful daughter of Cordu Village’s renowned shoemaker Guillaume Lizier, was now a goose herder.

Reimund’s expression shifted as he muttered, “Ava…”

He then looked at Lumian. “She’s our friend, right?”

Lumian nodded with a smile. “Indeed she is.”

The trio, along with Guillaume of the Berrys and Ava’s cousin Azéma Lizier, were inseparable teenagers who often spent their days together.

“Why don’t we bring Ava on board to help us uncover the truth behind the legend?” Reimund suggested. “As you know, her father always said, ‘Why must a dowry be paid when a woman gets married? How many good families have fallen like this?’ It pains her to hear it. She might be relieved if she could get some treasure or reward from the investigation.”

“I’ve also heard the heads of several families in the village say similar things, including our padre,” Lumian added with a sly grin. “They wish their brothers would stay at home forever. Even if they get married, they won’t venture out alone to establish a family. That would require them to split the assets and give them their deserving share.”

Lumian shot a furtive glance at Reimund and continued, “Therefore, many families prefer to let one of their children become a shepherd. This way, he won’t get married and will have a certain income. Most of the time, he can support himself.”

Reimund’s expression gradually darkened as he considered the implications of this issue.

He had never thought too deeply about it before.

This was precisely why he enjoyed spending time with Lumian. Although most people in the village believed that Lumian had a poor

character and enjoyed lying and playing tricks, he was actually more knowledgeable than anyone his age. Reimund, on the other hand, felt like he didn't know much and spent his days in a daze, simply following through with his family's arrangements.

It's good that you know…?Lumian thought to himself before skillfully steering the conversation back to their investigation.

"It's too late now. We must hurry up and ask around. We will get Ava tomorrow. Yes, we can also bring Guillaume-junior and Azéma on board later. Not only will this potentially lead to gains, but it will also be a fascinating activity that can train our abilities."

"Bring Guillaume-junior and Azéma too?" Reimund grumbled begrudgingly.

The more people involved, the less his share of the rewards would be.

Furthermore, if he included them, he would have fewer chances to win over Ava's affections.

Lumian regarded him with a touch of kindness and pity in his gaze.

Silly child, do you think Ava will fall for you? Her eyebrows are very high, and she only wants to marry into a good family. She clearly has a certain favorable impression of me, a 'villain', yet she can control herself…

In the Dariège region, having "high eyebrows" meant having high standards, and they wouldn't settle for just any average bloke.

"My sister always said there is strength in numbers," Lumian explained simply. "Who are the old croakers that we need to visit?"

"You didn't investigate?" Reimund asked in surprise.

How could I have the energy to investigate after the incident with the Wand card??Lumian smiled and quipped, "Of course I investigated. I am just testing your ability to gather information."

Reimund had no doubts.

“There are nine elders who are still alive in the village. They are about the same age as my pépé, or a little older…”

Six women and three men. Ladies do live longer…?Lumian listened quietly, deep in thought.

“There’s no need to visit the last two. They’re from another village and came here through marriage.

“Let’s start with Naroka. She’s the oldest and might have been an adult when the Warlock incident happened.”

Naroka’s real name wasn’t actually Naroka. It was a title of respect for her.

In Riston Province, married women from prominent families or those who were the actual heads of households were entitled to the title “Madame”. More than that, their names were marked with an “a” to proclaim their femininity, and prefixed with “Na” to signify their authority as Madames reigning over their domains.

Madame Pualis’s family had been in decline for a long time, and at home she dutifully deferred to her husband Béost, the provincial administrator. Therefore, she didn’t have a “Na” prefix or an “a” suffix. She could only be addressed as “Madame”.

Naroka had been widowed early on in life, and as a result, she took over the family’s accounts. Despite her two sons coming of age, getting married, and having children of their own, she kept her hand positioned squarely on the purse strings of the family fortunes.

This was a rare occurrence in Cordu, where men usually took charge of the family’s affairs. In families where the father was absent, the eldest child would naturally take back the authority to manage the entire family from their mother once they reached adulthood.

“Okay,” Reimund acquiesced without questioning Lumian’s decision.

As they walked by a few buildings, Lumian spotted four old women basking in the sun as they chatted casually in front of a two-story house.

They sat very close to each other, catching lice on each other's bodies, which was a form of entertainment in the countryside of the Intis Republic that served to bring people closer and express affection.

"Do we ask her now?" Reimund hesitated, concerned that their pursuit of the truth behind the legend might spread throughout the village.

"Let's wait a little longer," Lumian replied solemnly, knowing that many rumors in the village were generated and spread through such gatherings.

After a while, the other three old women left one by one because they still had work to do at home.

"Good morning, Naroka." Lumian immediately walked over.

Naroka's hair was grizzled, and her eyes were slightly turbid. She wore a dark dress made of rough cloth, and her hands were covered in a layer of chicken skin with obvious patches on her face.

"When will Aurore join us? Many people in the village miss her," Naroka asked with a smile.

…

The men, I suppose??Lumian entered a state where he spoke his truth while the other talked about another matter and asked curiously, "Naroka, have you really seen a real Warlock? The one whose coffin nine bulls couldn't move?"

Naroka's visage shifted ever so slightly.

"Who told you that?"

"His pépé came back one night to tell him." Lumian began to spout nonsense.

Naroka was stunned. "Can souls really return…"

"My papa told me that Pépé had mentioned it when he was alive,"

Reimund interjected, unable to watch Lumian deceive the elderly woman.

Naroka's expression fell. After a moment of contemplation, she spoke up.

"Before he passed, none of us knew he was a Warlock. He acted perfectly normal."

Just like how you don't know that Aurore is a Warlock…?Lumian thought to himself.

"Until he suddenly died and that owl flew over…" Naroka trailed off, lost in her memories.

The rest of her tale mirrored the legend.

...

Lumian pressed further.

"Where did that Warlock reside at that time?"

Naroka glanced at him.

"It's where you and Aurore are dwelling now.

"After that Warlock was laid to rest, the padre and a few others ransacked the place and burned it to the ground. For two or three decades, no one dared to approach that site. Eventually, the matter was forgotten. Later, Aurore came and purchased the land to rebuild the house."

Our place??Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

This answer was completely beyond his expectations!

In a flash, he realized that there were a multitude of problems he had previously overlooked.

With Aurore's knack for making money and her mysterious, unearthly abilities, why on earth would she settle down in the rural

countryside of Cordu?

Cities like the provincial capital, Bigorre, the bustling textile center of Suhit, or even the capital itself, Trier, would be far better options. Even if Aurore was seeking a place with fresh air and a pristine environment, these urban centers boasted plenty of areas that would suit her needs.

Aurore once told him, “The best way to hide is to hide in a big city…” Lumian’s mind raced as he struggled to calm himself.

Today, he learned that the land Aurore had chosen for their home, the land where their house stood, had once belonged to a powerful Warlock…

“Where is the Warlock buried?” Reimund interjected, unable to contain his curiosity.

With no hope of finding riches in Lumian’s home, he could only hope that the Warlock’s body held some sort of valuable secret.

Naroka said with amusement, “This was quite the affair. It undoubtedly sounded the alarm for the padre.

“In the old days, nine bulls were gathered to pull the coffin to the cemetery beside the cathedral. The padre performed a ritual to purify it. Eventually, the body was cremated and the remains were buried in a grave.”

Reimund couldn’t conceal his disappointment and muttered, “I see.”

“Why do you inquire?” Naroka scrutinized Reimund’s face before questioning.

Lumian cackled and spun a tale that sounded more like a fabrication. “We seek the Warlock’s treasure.”

“Kid, don’t waste your time daydreaming,” Naroka warned.

“Understood,” Lumian replied meekly.

Lumian and Reimund bade Naroka farewell and hit the road toward

the townsquare.

“There ain’t no hope, Lumian. None at all,” Reimund muttered, his spirits sinking as they circled a building.

“Indeed. All that could have been burned, has been burned. All that could have been taken, was taken decades ago,” Lumian replied, nodding in agreement.

Despite the bleakness of their situation, Lumian wasn’t disappointed thanks to the opportunity in his dream.

Reimund agreed.

“Aye, you’re right. Of all the tales, only that blasted owl still remains.”

Lumian’s eyes lit up as he turned his gaze to the forest beyond the village. “Owl…” he murmured.

Reimund recoiled in horror and added hastily, “But it must have died years ago.

He wasn’t one for consorting with the likes of owls and other evil creatures.

Down south in Intis, owls, nightingales, and ravens were thought to be sinister beings that served demons, stealing away human souls and bringing only misfortune.

Chapter 8 - 8: Owl

Chapter 8: Owl

The idea hit Lumian like a bolt of lightning, but he didn't particularly fancy going through with it.

Ignoring the fact that years had flown by since the Warlock's demise and that the lifespan of owls was measly compared to humans, the sheer number of birds in the mountain was enough to make Lumian reconsider.

There were too many of the damn things!

That owl doesn't have any distinct markings… No, in the legends, there was no mention of anything specific about the owl. Naroka didn't disclose everything… We didn't inquire deeply enough… He snapped out of his thoughts and flashed a reassuring smile at Reimund.

"An owl tied to a Warlock could live for a hundred years."

As Reimund trembled with fear, he reassured him in a calm voice, "Don't fret, mon ami. This is my last resort. I do not wish to encounter a monster."

"Perhaps we should consult another old sage. Naroka may have overlooked a vital clue."

The man's tone turned seductive as he continued, "If I were a Warlock, I would not keep all my treasures with me or in my home. I would stash some away in case the Inquisition attacked me. I would not have the luxury of time to collect my belongings. When I must flee, I would be left destitute."

The Inquisition of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun was notorious for hunting down Warlocks and Witches. Their "heroic

deeds" were celebrated throughout the countryside.

Reimund's face lit up with excitement as he exclaimed, "You are right!"

He said with a yearning expression, "It's a shame. Too many years have elapsed. The Church's discovered riches must have been spent ages ago."

"*Mon ami*, that's a dangerous thought," Lumian teased.

Undeterred, they continued their visits to Pierre-père, Naferia, and other elders of the Maury family.

Although their responses mirrored Naroka's, Lumian and Reimund, with their newfound experience, managed to extract more details.

For instance, the owl was of medium size and resembled its kind. It had a pointed beak, a feline face, brown feathers with scattered spots, brownish-yellow eyes, and black pupils…

However, it was larger than the average owl, and its eyes appeared to spin. It was not as rigid or dim-witted as its kind.

All these peculiarities made the owl seem even more sinister in their descriptions.

"Seems like we've hit a dead end," Lumian stated to Reimund as they traveled to the townsquare. "We must focus on other legends."

Reimund was not as discouraged as he had been earlier. "Agreed. But which one should we pursue?"

This fellow is so proactive and hardworking…?Lumian silently praised Reimund's enthusiasm and diligence and readied a reward for him.

He nodded and said, "Take your time and reflect on it. We shall discuss tomorrow. I shall impart combat techniques to you this afternoon."

"Marvelous!" Reimund exclaimed, overjoyed by the unforeseen instruction.

Aurore was a skilled fighter. After all, how else could she handle the savage and rough men in the village? Her younger brother was likely to be just as proficient.

After bidding farewell to Reimund Greg, Lumian veered onto the trail leading to his home.

As he walked, he spotted a group of men approaching him.

The leader was in his prime, not towering above 1.7 meters in height. He wore a white robe and had light black hair.

With a regal demeanor and decent facial features, the tip of his nose curled slightly in undisguised disgust and malice as he glared at Lumian with his blue eyes.

None other than the padre of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church in Cordu, Guillaume Bénet.

“I have been awaiting your arrival for quite some time,” Guillaume Bénet bellowed in a baritone voice. “Did you deliberately bring those foreigners to the cathedral?”

Lumian attempted to explain himself as he furtively took a step back. “I thought you were sleeping inside.”

He had noticed Pons Bénet—the padre’s younger sibling—standing beside Guillaume Bénet. Pons was in his early thirties, muscular, domineering, and a bully.

The other individuals with them were the padre’s henchmen.

Guillaume Bénet signaled Pons with a glance as Lumian retreated.

Pons Bénet’s grin turned sinister as he lunged forward, bellowing,

“Rascal, eet ees time zat you learn who ees ze father here!”

Before he could complete his sentence, Pons had already hastened his steps and pounced on Lumian. The other brutes followed suit.

In Cordu, a place where logic held no sway and apologies fell on deaf

ears, brute force was the only language that could command respect. Guillaume Bénet, the padre, knew this all too well, having resorted to violence countless times before. So, when he learned that the outsiders had been ushered into the cathedral by Lumian, the priest wasted no time in making his move. He was determined to get hold of the ruffian and pummel him into submission until he lay bedridden for a month. The padre was keen to show Lumian the error of his ways and wouldn't rest until someone paid the price for his insolence. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Of course, he had to avoid Aurore.

Regarding the law, he only needed to notify the administrator and the territory judge, Béost. The city sheriffs were unlikely to investigate such a minor issue in the countryside.

As an outsider, Béost would not offend a local-born padre unless there was significant conflict of interest.

Guillaume Bénet felt fortunate that the foreigners had not divulged his affair with Madame Pualis, the administrator's wife, to anyone. He was still unaware of this.

Despite their speed, Lumian was quicker. Just as Pons spoke, Lumian pivoted and dashed away.

He was familiar with the padre's character and methods.

Previously, a villager had accused Guillaume Bénet of having multiple mistresses and embezzling offerings from the Eternal Blazing Sun. He had also bullied others relentlessly in the village, hardly behaving like a man of the cloth. Subsequently, the villager had mysteriously died one afternoon.

Thud thud thud!

Lumian raced like the wind.

"Wait for your papa, eh??*Attends ton père*!" Pons shouted while chasing him. His pace was not sluggish either.

The thugs pursued closely behind him.

Instead of fleeing along the main road, Lumian darted into the nearest house.

The family was preparing lunch in the kitchen when they suddenly saw a stranger burst in.

With a swoosh, Lumian darted past them and leaped out of the kitchen window at the back.

By the time Pons and his cronies entered, the homeowner had regained his senses. He stood up to confront them and inquired, "What is going on? What are all of you doing?"

"Get out of ze way, old man!" Pons shoved the homeowner aside with force, but it slowed him down.

...

When they reached the window and jumped out, Lumian had already vanished into another trail.

After pursuing him for a while, they lost sight of Lumian entirely.

"*Sacrebleu, ces chiens fous*!" Pons spat on the roadside.

...

Outside the semi-subterranean two-story abode, Lumian gasped for breath before finally opening the door and entering the house as though nothing had happened.

"One, two, three, four; two, two, three, four…" A series of rhythmic shouts reverberated in his ears.

Lumian gazed at the empty space on the other side of the kitchen and observed Aurore's blond hair tied in a ponytail. She wore a flaxen shirt, tight white pants, and dark sheepskin boots, leaping around and drenched in sweat.

In Cordu, the kitchen occupied most of the space on the first floor, serving as the family's core. Cooking and dining occurred here, as did receiving guests.

She's exercising again…?Lumian was accustomed to Aurore's eccentricities and was unfazed by her exercise regimen.

Aurore often did strange things without giving any reason when probed.

At the very least, exercising is beneficial, and it's quite a feast for the eyes…?Lumian observed silently.

…

After a while, Aurore stopped and squatted to turn off the black tape recorder.

She took the white towel from Lumian and instructed him as she wiped the sweat from her forehead,

"Remember, we have combat practice this afternoon."

"I have to study and learn combat. Aren't you demanding too much of me?" Lumian grumbled nonchalantly.

Aurore glanced at him, smiling, and retorted, "You must remember that our objective is the comprehensive development of the five? educations[1]?of morality, intellect, physique, aesthetics, and labor!"

The more she spoke, the happier she became, as if recollecting something beautiful or amusing.

I have already failed moral education…?Lumian muttered under his breath.

He queried, "What kind of combat?"

One of the things he failed to comprehend was that Aurore, who seemed delicate and frail, was an expert in combat. She mastered numerous fighting techniques and could easily overpower him.

Aurore pondered seriously, leaned forward slightly, and gazed into Lumian's eyes.

She then laughed heartily and declared, "Self-defense!"

“Huh?” Lumian exclaimed in astonishment. “Isn’t that supposed to be for girls?”

Aurore stood tall and shook her head gravely, saying sincerely, “Boys must protect themselves when they are out. Who says boys don’t encounter perverts?”

The smile on her lips was no longer hidden.

Lumian was unsure if his sister was joking or serious, so he remained silent as he retrieved the white towel and headed towards the stairs.

Suddenly, he felt something tighten under his foot, as if he had tripped over an obstacle. He stumbled forward.

In midair, Lumian hastily contracted his abs, extended his arm, and leaned on the chair beside him. He somersaulted and barely landed on his feet.

Aurore retracted her leg and chuckled.

“One of the fundamental combat principles is to be vigilant at all times. One cannot be complacent.

“Remember that, my novice brother?”

Her right hand had already clutched Lumian’s back, but when she saw that he had regained control of his body, she let go.

“It’s because I trust you too much…” Lumian grumbled.

He contemplated the matter and realized that this trust was meaningless. He had lost count of how many times he had been at the mercy of Aurore.

Aurore coughed and restrained her expression.

“How did it go with that woman?”

Lumian provided a brief summary of their conversation before declaring, “I intend to wait for your friends to respond before delving into the dream.”

“Smart decision,” Aurore affirmed.

Lumian changed the subject.

“What’s for lunch?”

“We still have some leftover toast from this morning. I’ll roast four more lamb chops for you,” Aurore replied after contemplating for a moment.

“What about you?” Lumian inquired.

Aurore casually said, “I’ll just have truffle bamboo chicken shreds topped with some cheese and onion soup. I tried it last time and found it to be quite…”

Before she could finish speaking, she suddenly froze.

The next moment, she raised her hands to cover her ears. The muscles on her face gradually contorted, making her appear somewhat ferocious.

Lumian observed silently, his eyes filled with anxiety and apprehension.

After a while, Aurore exhaled deeply and returned to her usual self.

Her forehead was drenched in sweat once more.

“What happened?” Lumian asked.

Aurore smiled and responded, “The ringing in my ears is acting up again. You know that I have this old problem.”

Lumian didn’t probe further. Instead, he said, “Alright, then I’ll prepare lunch. Rest well.”

Every time this occurred, his yearning for extraordinary abilities grew stronger, as it became a pressing matter.

Chapter 9 - 9: Magazine

Chapter 9: Magazine

As the night settled in, Lumian finished dealing with his neighbors who had come to borrow the oven. He made his way up to the second floor, entering the room that served as Aurore's study.

In Cordu, many folks were destitute and couldn't afford their own ovens or large stoves. When they needed to toast bread or smoke meat, they had to borrow it from others and use it on the spot.

Aurore had always been lenient and accommodating when it came to this. Anyone could borrow her oven, but they had to pay the fuel costs or bring their own coal and wood.

Currently, she had donned her white silk nightdress and was curled up in a reclining chair, her focus solely on the book she held under the bright battery-powered lamp on the desk.

Lumian didn't wish to disturb her, so he nonchalantly pulled out a thinner book from the bookshelf and took a seat in the corner.

Hidden Veil… What kind of magazine is this??Lumian pondered, gazing at the cover that was adorned with cryptic symbols.

He swiftly flipped through the pages, and the more he read, the more he was taken aback.

This magazine delved into the very existence of the human soul. It discussed how all beings had a spirit, and through secret methods of communication between different spirits, one could obtain various kinds of aid.

Even if one wasn't devout, even if they only attended the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral to pray and partake in Mass occasionally, two

words couldn't help but flash through Lumian's mind:?*Sacrilege! Taboo!*

As a Warlock who would undoubtedly be burned at the stake by the Inquisition if her true identity was exposed, it was customary for Aurore to have such books at her residence. However, Lumian could tell that this magazine had received the government's permission for publication!

Can such a thing be openly published?

Didn't they say that publication censorship had always been very strict?

Or is this a fake permit…?Lumian looked up at Aurore and inquired, "Is this a prohibited magazine?"

Aurore took her eyes off her book and glanced at her brother. She responded in a nonchalant tone, "In the past, it was underground fiction. Later on, for some reason, it cleared the censors and was officially published. The Eternal Blazing Sun Church actually didn't care and tacitly agreed."

"Fiction?" Lumian was taken aback by his sister's choice of words.

"Of course, it's fiction. You're not taking it seriously, are you?" Aurore laughed. "If what's written is true, do you think it can still be published? If you follow the method written on it, other than making yourself mentally weak and neurotic, there won't be any additional gains. Yes… there will occasionally be something real, but without the corresponding ritual language, it'll be a waste of effort no matter how hard you try."

This was the professional evaluation of a Warlock.

"Alright…" Lumian couldn't hide his disappointment. "I just find it strange that this can be published."

Aurore took a deep breath, her puffed-up cheeks accentuating her pondering.

"I don't know why either. Perhaps it's because the world has been seeing an influx of supernatural events lately, and it's becoming

increasingly difficult to conceal them. The public is becoming more aware of their existence, and the government is slowly easing its grip on such topics. That's why books like these are being published. In Trier, Psychic, Lotus, and Arcane are the most popular magazines. I have them all on my bookshelf. If you want to come up with more realistic stories for the tavern, you should give them a read."

"Oui," Lumian responded eagerly, his interest piqued.

Simultaneously, he let out a wistful sigh deep in his heart.

Aurore's hoard of books was truly impressive and diverse!

Thanks to these tomes and Aurore's occasional elucidations, Lumian —a lad who had forsaken his schooling—had managed to acquire a reasonable comprehension of the world, continent, and nation he called home.

The world was divided into two great continents, one to the north and one to the south, separated by the treacherous Berserk Sea, where raging hurricanes battered any who dared to sail its waters. But the truly mysterious lands lay to the east and west, on the legendary Eastern and Western Continents. No one had ever set foot there, and some wondered if they even existed at all.

Lumian and Aurore lived in the Intis Republic, a land situated in the heart of the Northern Continent. It was a nation bordered by the Fog Sea to the west, the Feysac Empire to the north, and the Hornacis mountain range and the Loen Kingdom to the east. To the south lay the Feynapotter kingdom, Lenburg, and Masin.

The small countries nestled between the Feynapotter Kingdom and the Loen Kingdom, such as Segar, together with Lenburg and Masin, were collectively known as the countries of the south-central region. They shared a common faith in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

The Southern Continent had already fallen under the dominion of the various powers of the Northern Continent. Whether it was the Balam Empire, the Paz Kingdom, the Haagenti Kingdom, or any of the other nations, they had all but lost their autonomy. Yet still, a fierce resistance against colonization burned in the hearts of the conquered.

In addition to the Berserk Sea dividing the Northern and Southern Continents, there were other great seas: the Fog Sea to the west of the Intis Republic, the Sonia Sea to the east of the Loen Kingdom, the North Sea to the north of the Feysac Empire, and the Polar Sea to the south of the Southern Continent. They were collectively known as the Five Seas.

Of all the nations of the Northern Continent, the Loen Kingdom was the strongest, with the Intis Republic close behind. The Feysac Empire, defeated in the last war, had fallen to fourth place. The Feynapotter Kingdom had risen to third place. And among the countries of the south-central region, Lenburg reigned supreme.

Compared to the simple folk in Cordu who only knew of the Intis Republic, the Feynapotter kingdom, and Lenburg, Lumian was practically a cartographer.

It was no surprise really, considering the Cordu Village shepherds only traveled to their neighboring kingdoms of Feynapotter and Lenburg. They only had a limited understanding of these lands. The people in the northern villages of the Dariège region were just as provincial. Other than the surrounding settlements, they could only name Trier, Suhit, and a few other metropolitans.

Lumian was often baffled.?*How did Aurore come by such vast knowledge?*

All the textbooks he read were penned by Aurore, and all his practice exams were prepared by her. Aurore had an answer for every question in the books he read!

But what stunned him even more was her expertise in various forms of combat.

It was simply mind-boggling that a woman in her twenties could accumulate so much wisdom. Some people couldn't amass that much knowledge even after living 50 or 60 years.

Could it be that these are the building blocks of a true Warlock??Lumian looked up again and gazed at Aurore, lost in thought.

As Aurore patted her cheeks while reading, she hardly seemed like a scholar or a warlock.

Aurore caught Lumian's gaze and demanded, "What are you ogling at?"

Lumian quickly changed the subject, "Last time you mentioned that I possess the knowledge required to pass the college entrance examination?"

Aurore pondered for a moment before responding, "In theory, you could gain admission to any university, but since I never took that particular exam, I can't say for certain what questions will be asked. Roselle sure did a number on the populace. Sigh, I guess it's a good thing…"

Undoubtedly, Emperor Roselle's reign spawned the college entrance examination, and it has remained a fixture of academic life to this day.

Aurore's mind suddenly shifted gears. She shot Lumian a sly grin and inquired, "Why did you not make your usual stop at the tavern today to regale the patrons with your tales?"

"I'm not truly an alcoholic," Lumian replied while flipping through his magazine. "Reading at home is equally enjoyable."

And it helps to calm my nerves and ease my mind…?Lumian silently added.

Aurore nodded and glanced over at Lumian's spot in the corner of the room.

"Why are you sitting so far away, putting on an act of pitifulness, weakness, and helplessness?"

"Come closer. You need proper lighting to read at night, otherwise, your eyes will suffer."

Aurore sure has a way with words, Lumian mused. Although I understand the meaning behind "pitifulness," "weakness," and "helplessness," it's still an odd combination. Supposedly used to her

idiosyncrasies by now, Lumian retrieved a chair and moved closer to the desk where Aurore sat.

The two of them spent the evening reading in silence, occasionally chatting, as the sound of their breathing mingled with the rustling of pages and the soft breeze that wafted in from outside the window. Peaceful and soothing.

...

As he bid Aurore goodnight, Lumian slipped back into his quarters. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

He peeled off his coat and draped it across the back of the chair. He couldn't risk bringing the Wand card to bed with him; that would only raise suspicion, and his sister had sworn to keep a watchful eye on him at all times.

...

Just as he was about to approach the bed, Lumian froze, his heart skipping a beat.

His sharp eyes darted around the room, and he adjusted the chair that was usually positioned at a diagonal angle to face the window.

Then, he crawled into bed and extinguished the kerosene lamp resting on the cabinet next to him.

As he drifted off into the depths of slumber, Lumian was suddenly startled awake.

The bedroom was shrouded in a dense, gray fog.

Lumian, who was already mentally prepared, calmly took in his surroundings and made a realization.

The chair that he had meticulously arranged before retiring for the night was still positioned at an angle in his dream, just as it had been in reality in the past.

This suggested that the dream world he had entered was not an exact

reflection of reality. Perhaps it was a manifestation of his deepest subconscious desires. Although Lumian couldn't decipher its meaning, he knew that it was something to be remembered.

He walked over to the window, placed his hands on the sill, and gazed out.

The mountain made of brownish-red stones and reddish-brown soil, and the collapsed buildings that surrounded it, were still present.

The eerie silence of the place was deafening.

...

Time quickly passed. After much contemplation, Lumian made a firm decision.

He would embark on a preliminary exploration of the area tonight!

His past life on the streets had turned him into a man of action.

He didn't rush downstairs, however. Instead, he opened the cabinet and began to pile on clothes.

He didn't need them to keep warm, but he wanted to increase his "defense ability" in this way.

He grabbed a cotton shirt, cotton pants, and a leather jacket, stretching his body to feel the fit. Any more clothing would only hinder his agility, and that was crucial in a situation like this.

As he adjusted to his current state, Lumian had a sudden thought.

This is my dream. Can't I get whatever I want?

With that intention, he muttered to himself, "I want a breastplate and a revolver… I want a breastplate and a revolver…"

The room was still shrouded in a thin, gray fog.

*This won't do. This dream is special…?*His disappointment was palpable, but he quickly regained his composure and made his way to

the bedroom door. Stepping out into the corridor, he found himself in complete darkness. It was murky and dim.

Lumian pushed open the door to Aurore's bedroom and then her study. The layout was slightly different from reality, but he recognized it immediately. The biggest difference, of course, was that Aurore was nowhere to be found. The entire scene was frozen in shades of gray.

The first floor was no different.

Lumian scanned his surroundings, searching for a weapon to defend himself. He knew his home better than anyone else and quickly found two viable options.

The first was a two-meter-long fork made of steel. Aurore had said that it was effective and outstanding as long as the target didn't have a long-range weapon.

The second was a sharp, iron-black hand axe.

Ah, why not both…?Lumian couldn't help but think of Aurore's oft-repeated phrase, but he quickly dismissed the idea.

Today was all about reconnaissance. He needed to be sly, hidden in the shadows.

Lugging around a cumbersome weapon would only hinder his movements and give him away.

Taking a deep breath, Lumian stooped down to retrieve the axe.

He rose to his full height and set off towards the door, barely visible in the misty haze.

With a deft hand, he opened the door, not making a sound.

Chapter 10 - 10: Blood

Chapter 10: Blood

As Lumian stepped out the door, he felt as thought he was transported to another world.

Before him lay no longer the familiar Cordu, but a dark-red mountain peak and the collapsed buildings surrounding it. Together, they formed a strange ruin.

The fog in the sky was thick and pale, making it difficult for light to enter. The ground was shattered and there were many rocks. Lumian gripped his axe tightly and inched forward carefully, his heart pounding in his chest. Along the way, he couldn't find a place to hide.

There were no weeds or trees.

Lumian walked in fear, his every sense on high alert. All he could do was hunch his back and comfort himself. At the very least, if there was any danger in this area, it would be obvious at a glance. He could discover it in advance.

Finally, he arrived at the ruins, a half-collapsed building that had been wrecked by fire.

Lumian surveyed the area for a moment and tentatively confirmed that there were no other creatures lurking about. Satisfied with his assessment, he cautiously made his way inside the building, being mindful of the charred wood that could fall at any moment from midair.

As he searched the room, his eyes landed on a broken pot in the corner of the house. There was a hint of gold shining through the cracks.

Lumian approached the pot slowly and realized that it was a gold coin.

Can it be true? There's actually treasure in the ruins of my dream??He picked up the gold coin and wiped it against his body.

The patterns on the surface of the coin were revealed.

The coin featured a man's portrait carved on the front. His face was thin, and his hair was parted 30-70. There was a mustache on his lips, and his gaze was rather firm. On the back was a bunch of sweet iris flowers surrounding the number 20.

Lumian recognized the man depicted on the coin. It was none other than the first president of the Intis Republic, Levanx.

It's actually a Louis d'or…?Lumian was rather surprised.

Firstly, he couldn't believe that the currency in this strange dream ruin was actually the currency of the Intis Republic in reality. And secondly, he had casually picked up something as valuable as a Louis d'or.

He knew that in the present day, the legal currencies of the Intis Republic were verl d'or and coppet. One verl d'or was equivalent to 100 coppet.

Coppet existed in the form of copper coins and silver coins. The copper coins were divided into three categories: 1 coppet, 5 coppet, 10 coppet, while the silver coins had the denominations of 20 coppet and 50 coppet.

Verl d'or could be found in the form of silver coins, gold coins, or banknotes. In silver coins, there were denominations of 1, 5, and 10 verl d'or, while gold coins came in 5, 10, 20, 40, and 50 denominations.

The denominations of banknotes were even more varied, ranging from 5, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1,000 verl d'or.

In reality, the people of Intis still clung to the old currency units. For example, the most widely used 5 coppet copper coins were known as

‘lick.’

Similarly, gold coins worth 20 verl were commonly referred to as Louis d’or.

In the old currency era, Louis d’or had been known as Roselle. But after the Republic was established, the name was changed to Louis d’or in order to erase Emperor Roselle’s influence.

As Lumian understood it, even in the rural area of Cordu, a Louis d’or could sustain a poor family with fields for an entire month.

He knew that without Aurore’s high income, he might never have even seen what a Louis d’or looked like. In fact, in the entire village of Cordu, only the siblings and the family of the administrator had ever seen or owned a Louis d’or.

To any villager, this Louis d’or was an incredibly valuable gain.

Unfortunately, this is just a dream…?Lumian couldn’t help but feel a pang of disappointment.

This was something ordinary, making it unlikely he could “bring” it out of the dream.

But even so, he handled the Louis d’or with great care and respect. Having spent much of his life wandering, he knew the value of every coppet.

And he knew that one Louis d’or was equivalent to 2,000 coppet, which was equal to one gold pound in the Loen Kingdom, though slightly less. According to the papers he had read, 24 verl d’or could only be exchanged for one gold pound.

Lumian continued his search for any written information that could shed light on the ruins and their history. He wanted to see if this place corresponded to a certain location in reality, and whether a village in the Intis Republic had been “transported” into this dream world. The appearance of the Louis d’or had only fueled his curiosity.

As Lumian moved cautiously through the ruined building, his eyes fell upon a spot where a stove had once stood, now stained with a

dark red color.

“Blood?” His pupils dilated as he quickly made a guess.

Immediately after, he made a judgment.

Although it wasn’t fresh, it hadn’t yet turned black—it looked as though it had just dripped there two or three days prior, or perhaps even more recently!

As his heart began to race, Lumian suddenly felt the light around him dim, as if something had silently blocked the light filtering through the dense fog from above!

The memory of past attacks flooded Lumian’s mind like a turbulent wave, causing him to react instinctively.

Without a thought, he lunged forward and wrapped his body in midair, rolling on the ground to avoid any potential danger.

Thump!

A loud thump echoed through the air as something heavy fell behind him.

Lumian quickly rolled to the left side of the dilapidated stove, using a nearby rock to leverage himself around.

As he rose to his feet, axe at the ready, he saw an additional figure standing where he had just been moments before.

The dim light made it difficult to discern whether it was human or some kind of humanoid creature.

The figure hunched in front of Lumian was unlike anything he had ever seen before. It was a monster, with no clothes or shoes to speak of. Its skin had been peeled off, revealing the red muscles, blood vessels, and yellowed fascia beneath. Sticky liquid dripped from its body, yet it didn’t fall to the ground.

It was a monster!

Its eyes seemed to be embedded in its face, and its mouth hung open with all its might, revealing uneven teeth and a long drool of saliva.

Despite all the ghost stories Lumian had fabricated in the past, he never expected to encounter such an evil spirit in real life.

Whoosh!

The stench of blood filled Lumian's nostrils as the panting of the monster filled his ears.

Instinct took over Lumian as he dodged to the side, narrowly avoiding the blood-red monster's attack.

Lumian knew that he had Aurore's guidance and years of experience fighting on the streets to thank for his quick reflexes. Without them, he might not have been able to react in time.

Taking a deep breath to calm himself, Lumian charged after the monster that had pounced on him. With his sharp axe in hand, he swung with all his might and struck the monster in the back.

Bang!

Lumian's axe felled the monster mid-turn, sending a spray of pus and blood in every direction.

...

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian knelt down on one knee and raised his axe again, ready to strike another blow.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Again and again, Lumian swung his axe with precision and force, each strike slicing through the monster's flesh and leaving deep, wide cracks on the back of its head, neck, and back.

Finally, the monster lay still, defeated by Lumian's fierce barrage of blows.

"Huff! Puff! You don't act as terrifyingly as you look." Lumian heaved

a sigh of relief, his voice tinged with a hint of mockery.

He wiped his face with his left hand, then used it to wipe off the blood on his other hand.

“Is this monster’s bodily fluids poisonous? For the time being, there’s no pain of the fluids eating at me…” Lumian began to worry about another problem.

Just as Lumian mustered up his courage and was about to search the monster’s body, he was caught off guard by a sudden movement. The skinless, blood-colored monster propped itself up with both hands and bounced up again, as if it were still alive.

It isn’t dead yet?

Despite being slashed to such a state, it seemed that the monster was still alive.

Lumian was shocked and afraid.

…

Fear and trepidation took hold of Lumian.

If Lumian had been facing normal humans, beasts, or monsters, he would not have been so afraid, even if he couldn’t defeat them. But this monster in front of him seemed unkillable, rendering Lumian’s every move useless.

Taking advantage of the monster’s brief disorientation, Lumian made a quick decision. He propped himself up with his feet, exerted strength on his knees, and ran wildly.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

He ran with all his might, but he could feel the monster’s breath on the back of his neck, and the sound of its heavy breathing echoed in his ears.

The monster followed closely behind him.

Despite his fear, Lumian gritted his teeth and allowed his fear to push himself

to run even faster, surpassing his previous limits.

To his delight, he soon realized that the distance between him and the monster was no longer shortening.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Lumian finally reached his semi-subterranean two-story building as he pulled open the unlocked door and jumped inside.

With a loud clang, he slammed the door shut and quickly made his way to the stove, where he picked up a steel fork that was leaning against the wall.

Then he focused on the door.

But then, he heard the sound of the monster's running footsteps fading away. He waited, but the monster didn't try to slam through the door.

It knows that I'm lying in ambush here??Lumian couldn't believe that the monster had higher intelligence.

He slowly moved towards the window near the door and peeked out.

Suddenly, a face appeared on the glass—a bloody, skinless mess with uneven teeth.

Lumian froze for a moment, his heart almost stopping.

To Lumian's surprise, the monster didn't try to break the glass or attack him. Instead, it simply met his gaze.

Lumian snapped out of his daze and retreated, brandishing the long fork with both hands.

The monster left the window.

Lumian watched cautiously, observing its movements as it lingered in

the light fog for a while before finally retreating back to the ruins.

Lumian was at a loss.

He had been prepared to trap the monster and make a quick escape from the dream, but the creature had simply left without attacking.

After some thought, a possibility occurred to Lumian.?*Perhaps the monster is afraid to enter my house?*

Yes, there's no signs of damage to the house at all…

In the dream, this is an absolutely safe place?

With this realization, Lumian felt a sense of relief wash over him.

Lumian was hit with a wave of exhaustion the next second.

The short chase had taken more out of him than an entire afternoon of combat training.

Lumian made his way upstairs to his bedroom, clutching the pitchfork and axe tightly in his hands. As he lay down on the bed, Lumian attempted to fall asleep. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

…

Lumian opened his eyes, feeling disoriented and groggy.

Outside the curtains, it was still dark, and the room was shrouded in shadows.

For a moment, Lumian couldn't tell if he was still in the dream world or if he had somehow returned to reality. But then he noticed the lack of gray fog and the fact that he was wearing his pajamas, and he realized that he must have woken up.

"I woke up early because of the fright," Lumian muttered to himself, subconsciously patting the pocket of his pajamas. But when he didn't feel the weight of the Louis d'or, he felt a pang of disappointment.

It confirmed another fact—that money couldn't be brought out of the dream world!

Lumian took a deep breath and composed himself, his thoughts turning to a serious problem:

How was he supposed to deal with that unkillable monster?

While Lumian knew that he could bypass the area and enter stealthily, he also knew that this was not a long-term solution. The possibility of encountering similar monsters in the future was always there, and he couldn't afford to risk his life by being unprepared.

Chapter 11 - 11: Madame Pualis

Chapter 11: Madame Pualis

The azure sky was speckled with fluffy white clouds, gently blown by the spring breeze that carried with it the fragrance of the forest. White geese pecked at the lush grasses, grazing beside the meandering river. A lass, draped in a grayish-white frock, stood intently observing them with a long pole in her hand.

Her countenance was bathed in the golden sun rays, exposing her thin, downy hair. The girl's brown tresses, elegantly tied in a white cloth, revealed her youthful and lively features.

Glancing at Lumian sitting under a tree by the river, Ava Lizier scrunched her face slightly.

"Are we not here to discuss which legend is easier to investigate? Why have you turned into a stone statue reminiscent of the ones from the cathedral?"

Ava was the daughter of Guillaume Lizier, the shoemaker. Being one of the few youths in the village, she had an amiable relationship with Lumian and Reimund.

"I'm contemplating a problem," Lumian responded, still gazing at the white geese and the rippling waters.

"What problem?" inquired Reimund Greg, who was tending to Ava's flock of geese.

Lumian pondered before replying, "What if you come across a beast with a thick hide that your weapon cannot pierce, what would you do?"

"Obviously, I'd find a way to flee. The mountains are teeming with

wild beasts. We need not hunt it," Ava replied, feeling that there was nothing to worry about.

Lumian grunted in disagreement.

"What if that beast is exceptionally rare, and the lords in the city adore it, and are willing to pay a hundred Louis d'or for its carcass?"

"A hundred Louis d'or, two thousand verl d'or…" Reimund breathed heavily.

He had never seen a Louis d'or before, nor had he used one. His instinct was to convert it into verl d'or first.

With such a hefty sum of money, he could start a small business in Dariège. He wouldn't have to fret over shepherding anymore.

He quickly thought and suggested, "Borrow a shotgun?"

"The beast's skin cannot be penetrated," Lumian rejected flatly.

Even though she knew the prey was just a figment of imagination, with no value in the real world, she couldn't help herself.

"Is it a powerful creature? Fierce?"

Lumian paused to consider her question. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"It's about as fierce as me."

That was all the assurance he needed to continue his hunt.

Reimund, who had been holding his breath, let out a sigh of relief. "Good. Go back to the village and round up some people. We'll surround the beast and drain its strength. Once it's down, we'll tie it up."

He knew that Lumian could fight, but that was all.

"In that case, we can only expect to get ten Louis d'or, or even less," Lumian reminded.

Ava, with her stunning lake-blue eyes, had an idea. “I’ve seen them hunt before. Maybe we can dig a trap and make it fall. That way, we won’t have to worry about it getting back up.”

Lumian nodded his approval. “That’s a good idea.”

Realizing that Ava and Reimund had little to offer in terms of planning, Lumian took control of the conversation.

“Which legend do you think we should target next?” he asked.

Ava shook her head. “Neither of them fit the bill. They’re either centuries old or were only seen by one person, who is long dead.”

Reimund agreed. “That’s right.”

“If you don’t ask the right folks, how would you know there ain’t no clues?” Lumian clicked his tongue and chuckled. “You lot don’t have any grit. If you wanna give up at the first sign of trouble, you might as well be tending geese and sheep for the rest of your days.”

Ava and Reimund were fuming at Lumian’s words.

When it came to riling people up, Lumian was one of the best in all of Cordu.

Ava blurted out, “I don’t think any of them are suitable ’cause there are more suitable ones.”

“What is it?” Lumian’s eyes sparked with interest.

As soon as Ava spoke, she regretted it, but she’d been planning to bring up this issue. She just didn’t want to reveal it to Lumian and Reimund so easily.

After a few seconds of tense silence, she glared at Lumian.

“There’s a real witch in the village.”

“Who is it?” Lumian’s heart tightened.

Could it be Aurore?

If Ava found out that Aurore was a Warlock, he and Aurore would have to flee Cordu and go somewhere else to avoid the Inquisition's wrath.

Ava looked around nervously and lowered her voice. "Madame Pualis."

Madame Pualis, the administrator's wife and the padre's mistress?? Lumian found it hard to believe.

"Are you serious?"

If Pualis was indeed a witch, how could Lumian have missed it when he found out about the lady's affair with the padre?

"No way?" Reimund was exceptionally surprised.

Ava tiptoed and looked in the direction of the village entrance.

"I'm not certain, but Charlie, the administrator's valet, let it slip once.

"He told me that Madame Pualis is a soul messenger who can talk to the dead and help them return home. He also said that she can create secret medicines and charms."

Lumian listened intently but remained skeptical.

With magazines like Psychic, Lotus, and Hidden Veil flooding the market, it wasn't uncommon for the administrator's wife to be familiar with such terms and trick the servants and villagers.

"We should go to the cathedral and snitch," said Reimund, his eyes wide with excitement.

Lumian paused before responding, "If Charlie knows that Madame Pualis is a witch, then the administrator should know as well, right?"

...

"*Oui*," agreed Ava.

Lumian continued, "Madame Pualis is also the padre's mistress. If we

go to the cathedral and snitch on her, we will probably be sent straight to the administrator."

"What?"

"Madame Pualis is the padre's mistress?"

Ava and Reimund were shocked.

"I saw it with my own eyes." Lumian chuckled. "Pretend you don't know. Don't tell anyone. Otherwise, you might disappear one day."

Ava and Reimund agreed in unison, their expressions unusually solemn, their fear of the padre and the witch intertwined.

"If we can confirm that Madame Pualis is a witch, we'll go to Dariège and tell the bishop at Mass," Lumian assured them.

"*Oui*," Reimund nodded fervently.

They had to be sure before they snitched. Otherwise, they would be in trouble if Madame Pualis was innocent.

After discussing these matters, Lumian, who didn't want to waste any time, stood up and said to Ava and Reimund, "I'm off, back to my studies. Otherwise, Aurore would be chasing me with a wooden stick. You two take care of the geese."

...

"Okay." Reimund was thrilled at the prospect of being left alone with Ava.

Ava looked displeased.

.....

As Lumian approached Cordu, he began to hide his tracks, constantly paying attention to whether there was anyone nearby.

He had to be careful, especially now that the Padre and his crew were on his tail.

According to his observations, the padre, Guillaume Bénet, was not one to forgive easily.

He made his way towards Ol' Tavern, trying to stay as inconspicuous as possible.

Suddenly, he heard the sound of bells ringing in the distance.

Lumian turned to see Ryan, Leah, and Valentine approaching Naroka and the others.

The bells on Leah's veil and boots rang clearly and melodiously.

They've been wandering around the village for the past two days, chatting with people and asking questions. I don't know what they are up to…? Lumian was puzzled and a little wary.

As he thought about the deserted town square and the shepherd, Pierre Berry, who had returned to the village unexpectedly, Lumian knew that something was about to go down.

*Is something about to happen in the village??*He needed to speak to Aurore, his smart and knowledgeable sister, and get her opinion.

Lumian managed to sneak into Ol' Tavern and spotted the woman who had given him the tarot card sitting in her usual spot, eating.

Lumian leaned over and took a glance.

"*Omelette au lard*? Don't you find it a little too cloying?"

In Dariège, this dish was the go-to for ordinary folks to impress their fancy guests. Lumian, however, had his doubts about it being too greasy and heavy for city women.

The lady savored a slow bite of the golden omelet and shut her eyes to savor it.

"It's a real gem. It's got this local flavor that's just exquisite."

"You're having lunch so early?" Lumian asked, seated across from her.

The lady's light-blue eyes betrayed a hint of exhaustion as she smiled and replied, "It's breakfast."

What time is it…?Lumian didn't dare let slip his thoughts.

He scanned the nearly empty Ol' Tavern and hushed his voice.

"I saw a ruin in my dream and came across a monster."

"Oh." The lady didn't bat an eye. Her expression even held a hint of teasing mischief that Lumian couldn't quite decipher.

Lumian composed himself and recounted his tale.

"How do I vanquish this monster?"

The lady beamed and countered, "Is it dead or alive?"

"It's still kicking. I can't seem to kill it…" Lumian trailed off then answered on reflex.

He pondered in earnest for a beat before replying slowly, "I can feel it breathing. So, it's gotta be alive."

"If it's still breathing, then try harder. Lop off its head. Or pour oil and light it up. Bury it alive, even. Who knows? It might just kick the bucket," the lady suggested nonchalantly while relishing her meal. "When you've exhausted all options and still come up short, then come to me. But I'm not your nanny who'll coddle you through every little problem. If you want to learn, you've got to figure it out on your own."

She's quite the charmer…?Lumian wasn't crestfallen or dispirited. It seemed the lady was hinting that she'd lend a hand if things got truly dire. And a monster like this wasn't even worth mentioning.

But what's trivial can be a real headache…?Lumian felt a migraine coming on.

He resolved to heed the lady's advice. He'd start by trying to behead it, burn it, bury it alive, and anything else he could think of.

Chapter 12 - 12: Undercurrents

Chapter 12: Undercurrents

As Lumian left Ol' Tavern, he resumed his surreptitious ways, skulking down the path he always took home.

Sure enough, he spotted one of Pons Bénet's goons hiding behind a tree, spying on passersby.

The padre doesn't know when to quit…?Lumian muttered to himself.

But Lumian couldn't retaliate.

His personal abilities were limited, and he couldn't risk bringing attention from the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun in the Dariège region. The Inquisition would be all over him in a heartbeat, which could spell doom for Aurore.

Unless Lumian was pushed to the brink and had no other choice but to abandon the town, his only option was to expose the padre's unsavory activities and force him to retire to a cloister. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

But that was easier said than done. Lumian needed to be careful and cunning, just like when he let the foreigners discover the padre's affair with Madame Pualis.

Lumian didn't want to make a big fuss about it. He knew that Béost, the administrator and territorial judge, was a stickler for his reputation. If Lumian brought Madame Pualis's predicament to light, he wouldn't get any favors in return. No, it would be more likely that Béost would turn on him, filled with bile and vitriol.

That would leave Lumian with little choice but to flee Cordu, with both the padre and administrator hot on his heels.

He proceeded with caution, taking a detour through a narrow alley that weaved between several houses.

Along the way, Lumian relied on his wits and the surroundings to conceal himself. He ducked behind walls, slipped through doors, and took refuge behind trees whenever necessary. As he neared the end of the alley, he heard the sound of voices.

“Guillaume, why we waste our time chasing zat keed all day? Let’s go to Aurore’s house tonight and catch him. We ‘ave ze advantage of numbers, and Aurore’s fightin’ skills ain’t enough to stop us. We can even get reinforcements from ze city if needed.”

Guillaume… The padre is here too…?Lumian stopped, retreating into the corner to eavesdrop on their conversation to see what plans the padre had for him.

Guillaume Bénet’s voice was mesmerizing.

“Surely, you don’t think that’s the extent of Aurore’s capabilities? I wouldn’t be surprised if she had supernatural abilities beyond mine.”

“Ah…” Pons Bénet was obviously surprised. “A witch, you say? Guillaume, maybe it’s time for you to venture to Dariège and seek out ze Inquisition. If you can catch a true witch, ze Church will undoubtedly grant you a great reward. And wiz zat, you may finally attain ze extraordinary strength you’ve been yearnin’ for all zese years.”

“Imbecile,” Guillaume Bénet scolded his brother. “Don’t you know what’s happening in this village? The Inquisition has noses like hounds. They won’t overlook any anomalies. When the time comes, we’ll be in hot water.”

“Even if Aurore desires to deal with us, I have other solutions,” he said. “We mustn’t arouse the Inquisition’s attention.”

So, what is happening in the village now??Lumian took this seriously and was curious.

Combining his observations of abnormalities, he sensed that something terrible was brewing and developing in the village, like a

turbulent undercurrent under the calm sea.

To Lumian's dismay, Pons Bénet didn't elaborate on the topic. Instead, he focused on something else.

"Do you 'ave any way to deal wiz a Witch?"

"You don't need to know," the padre, Guillaume Bénet, responded in a hushed tone. "Next, we can put aside dealing with Lumian, but we still have to maintain appearances. We can't let anyone suspect my desire for revenge. That will provide the connections the foreigners need and have a negative impact. What you need to do now is to remind each relevant person and scare those yokels who might notice. Don't let them spill the beans in front of those foreigners."

"Guillaume, you mean zat zose foreigners are 'ere to investigate zat matter?" Pons Bénet appeared fearful and concerned.

*Look at you. All brawn, no brains. You're nothing like your brother, a natural-born leader…?*Lumian mocked Pons Bénet inwardly.

Despite his disdain for the padre, whom he saw as a crude and greedy stallion rather than a man of the cloth, Lumian couldn't deny that he had a certain rugged charm. His direct, domineering style and clear mind won over the masses in the countryside, making it easy for them to idolize and rely on him.

Guillaume Bénet sneered.

"No need to worry. So long as those foreigners don't find any real evidence, I'll still be the padre of Cordu.

"Pons, you need to understand that ruling through fear and intimidation won't lead to peace or prosperity. The Church doesn't want a ruined town that can't pay taxes. We need friends and followers to maintain control. By offering them protection, we can gain their support.

"The Church trusts us locals with our relatives, friends, and followers to handle matters here and doesn't bring in outsiders who could make a mess. As long as there's no solid evidence, the higher-ups will continue to believe in me.

“Alright, I’m off to the cathedral.”

That does sound logical and persuasive, but your wisdom and insight are limited to Dariège… Aurore told me that when the Church confronts villages that are overrun with evil gods, they obliterate them entirely and raze the land to the ground. They don’t just slay the adults, but even the kids…?Lumian found himself almost swayed by Guillaume Bénet’s words. Luckily, Aurore had warned him about the fearsome reputation of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun and the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery.

After the padre departed, Lumian took a different path and made it back home unscathed.

Aurore, clad in a pristine apron, bustled about the oven.

“What are you up to?” Lumian inquired with curiosity.

It was still two hours to lunchtime.

Aurore tucked a strand of her blonde locks behind her ear and beamed, “Trying out a new toast recipe. Rice bread.”

“You don’t have to go through all this trouble…” Lumian was moved to his core.

He believed Aurore was going out of her way to make something special just for him.

Aurore giggled and retorted, “What are you thinking? Can you be any more self-absorbed?”

“For me, baking is a form of amusement. It’s a great way to pass the time. You get it?”

“Then why don’t you like going out? There’s plenty of fun out there,” Lumian probed. He always felt Aurore was a homebody because she was too concerned about the risks her Warlock status posed.

Aurore swiveled her head and shot him a withering glare.

“You mean drinking and gambling?

“Remember, I’m my own person, not relying on or attaching to others.”

Lumian grasped the first half of her statement but was at a loss with the latter.

“Ah? Could you expound on that?”

Aurore gave him a deadly glare.

“Long story short, your sis is a major introvert most of the time!”

“What do you mean by most of the time?” Lumian queried, confused.

“Humans are walking contradictions,” Aurore mused, turning back to the oven. “Don’t you recall? Sometimes, I’m a chatterbox, eager to venture out and listen to the old ladies’ gossip. Other times, I’ll play with the kids and regale them with tales. Every so often, I’ll cut loose and ride Madame Pualis’ horse around the mountains, hollering at the top of my lungs.”

At the time, you shone like a dew-kissed rose, luring people in only to prick them… Lumian couldn’t help but grumble to himself.

Since Madame Pualis was mentioned, Lumian decided to change the subject.

…

“Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, I heard a rumor about Madame Pualis.”

“What is it?” Aurore did not hide her curiosity.

“She’s a Warlock who can talk to the dead…” Lumian related to his sister what Ava had divulged. He also brought up the anomaly he’d observed and Guillaume Bénet’s comments.

Aurore halted her work and listened to her brother’s account intently.

Her mien grew noticeably graver.

After Lumian had finished, Aurore offered him a smile and assuaged

his fears.

“Don’t fret too much. Those three foreigners must be here for something that the padre and his comrades did in secret. It might have to do with Madame Pualis.

“Don’t mess with Madame Pualis for now. I’ll keep an eye on them.

“Explore the village more, mingle with those foreigners, and try to suss out what’s going on. Heh heh, compared to that, the lady who gave you the Wand card is far more intriguing.

“If things do deteriorate, we must contemplate departing Cordu. We can start making arrangements now.”

“Okay.” Lumian nodded in agreement.

…

After a brief silence, he inquired curiously, “Aurore, if we must depart Cordu, where do you envision moving to?”

“Trier!” Aurore declared without hesitation.

Trier was the capital of the Intis Republic, the apex of culture and art across the continent.

“Why?” Despite considering Trier himself, Lumian posed the question casually.

Every Intisian coveted a chance to visit Trier.

In the eyes of the Triers, there were only two types of individuals in Intis: Triers and outsiders.

Aurore responded nonchalantly, “A prophet once said, ‘As long as Trier endures, mirth and glee will never?falter[1].'”

Chapter 13 - 13: Attempt

Chapter 13: Attempt

It was the dead of night, and all was quiet.

Lumian stirred in his dream once more. The first thing he glimpsed was a faint gray mist.

On impulse, he reached into his shirt pocket with his hand.

The frigid sensation of cold, hard metal immediately registered in his mind.

He retrieved the object he'd felt. A glint of gold illuminated his eyes.

It was a gold coin.

A Louis d'or. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

It's still here…?Lumian sat up and peered down at himself.

He still donned the cotton attire, pants, and leather jacket from his last expedition. The nearly two-meter-long steel pitchfork and sharp, iron-black axe rested within arm's reach.

This was precisely the same condition as when he'd exited the dream.

In other words, this dream is persistent. It doesn't reset with each entry…? Lumian fiddled with the Louis d'or and slipped it into his cotton shirt's inner pocket.

Though it couldn't be actualized, it was still a joy to have.

Lumian rose from bed and gazed out the window for a spell, ensuring the red mountain peak in the ruins hadn't changed.

He hoisted his axe and pitchfork, departed his chamber, and entered the dimly lit corridor.

Aurore's bedroom and study doors remained ajar.

Lumian studied them briefly, then suddenly conceived an idea.

In the dream, my room is practically identical to reality. It contains all the expected elements. Aurore's room appears the same at first glance.

However, can I locate her witchcraft notebook, secret potion formula, or learn how to become a Warlock in her quarters?

This notion was akin to a devil's whisper, causing Lumian's heart to race. He was tempted to try.

Compared to exploring the unknown, hazardous, enigmatic ruins, sifting through Aurore's room was the simpler, safer option.

No, no!?Lumian shook his head vigorously and cast the idea aside.

He'd rather take his chances than violate Aurore's privacy. He wouldn't venture into her bedroom without her approval.

This was due to his respect for Aurore.

If it weren't for Aurore, he would have perished as a child on the streets five years ago.

Lumian withdrew his pained gaze and made his way to the stairs.

If the occupant of the room wasn't Aurore, he would have already delved in to search for useful information.

Once downstairs, Lumian didn't hasten his departure. Instead, he inspected the provisions in the kitchen.

The olive oil, corn oil, and animal fat that Aurore had amassed were neatly arranged in buckets and cans, just like in reality.

Almost instinctively, Lumian lifted the bucket of corn oil and

positioned it near the stove.

His sole reason for selecting it was that animal fat and olive oil were pricier.

Then he adeptly kindled a blaze in the hearth with coal and wood, and fashioned a couple of torches to ignite.

He was preparing to incinerate that monster.

Naturally, it would be preferable if there were other options. That was a last resort.

After completing these tasks, he retrieved his axe, opened the door, and departed.

Lumian then observed something unusual.

The faint gray mist that suffused the dream felt more humid than before. The ground beneath his feet was also slightly muddy.

It rained? This place persists and develops naturally according to certain laws when I'm absent or dreaming??Lumian was somewhat taken aback, but he had an inkling that it was only fitting.

Recalling Aurore's bizarre tales, he suddenly had a notion.

This can't be the real world, can it?

My dream is connected to the genuine world. That tarot card enables me to traverse the barrier between dream and the ruins while conscious?

Lumian swiftly surveyed his surroundings and realized that an endless gray fog bordered both sides of the ruins, on the dream's periphery.

I'll check later. I won't venture into the ruins. I'll stroll out of the gray fog and see if it's a surreal and irrational dream after passing through the gray fog, or if there's tangible land, sky, village, and town…

If it were the former, it signified that this place was still a dream. If it wasn't, Lumian had to confirm which world this was.

He surmised that based on the usage of the Louis d'or, this place still appeared to be in the Intis Republic, but it might not be the present era. It could be a location that had vanished decades or centuries ago.

However, Lumian sensed that there was a high likelihood that he wouldn't be able to exit the encompassing gray fog.

He gathered his thoughts and proceeded toward the ruins.

He didn't forget that the purpose of entering the dream was to attempt to contend with that monster.

After traversing a hundred to two hundred meters in the muddy wilderness riddled with gravel and crevices, Lumian abruptly halted.

He thought of a problem.

He'd overlooked something in his preparations earlier!

Previously, his two-story abode lacked any flames. It was quite secure in this world cloaked in gray fog. But now, it had a blazing furnace that emitted light. Would it draw in a swarm of monsters and render the safe zone unsafe?

Lumian instinctively turned his head and peered in the direction he'd come from. He observed that a scarlet gleam had been etched on various glass windows at the base of the half-submerged two-story structure in the faint gray mist.

It was akin to a beacon in the dark world.

...

Considering that a considerable amount of time had elapsed, it was evidently too late to attempt to extinguish the fire. Lumian hastened his pace and entered the ruins, taking refuge in the building that had crumbled due to a conflagration.

He clipped the axe to the back of his belt and agilely scaled a wall, concealing himself in a shadowy nook separated by bricks and timber.

Lumian gazed at his home on the other side of the wilderness.

As time ticked by, he didn't witness any monsters lured by the fire.

Seems like the fire won't trigger any changes. At the very least, my house won't be besieged by monsters…?Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

This meant that even if he encountered any peril, as long as he could flee home promptly and slumber as soon as possible, he could successfully elude it.

He began to contemplate how to entice and eliminate the previous monster.

From their brief skirmish, he'd deduced that its strength, speed, reaction time, and agility were similar to his, but he could sense that it fought on instinct. It lacked sufficient experience, expertise, or corresponding intelligence. That's why he'd been able to counter and slay it when it ambushed him…

It'll also be bewildered and taken aback. It's not dissimilar to humans…

Other than combat techniques, I have two other advantages over it. Firstly, I possess superior intelligence. Secondly, I know how to wield weapons and utilize tools. This is the greatest advantage humans possess over such monsters…

As long as I'm cautious, defeating it again won't be arduous. The most crucial aspect is how to eradicate it completely…

…

Just as Lumian was about to deliberately stir up some commotion to see if he could lure over some monster, he spied a figure stealthily approaching the utterly ruined house on the side.

The figure was crimson and devoid of skin. Its muscles, blood vessels, and fascia were exposed. It was the monster from last time.

Unlike before, this monster was wielding a manure fork.

A manure fork!

It knows how to wield weapons too… Lumian's countenance stiffened as his expression turned grim.

Unwittingly, his confidence waned a bit.

As the monster drew closer and turned, Lumian perceived exaggerated wounds on its back, neck, and the nape of its neck. However, the fissures were no longer oozing pus, and it appeared to have mostly mended.

It's indeed the one I encountered previously…

Its self-healing ability is many times superior to that of ordinary humans…

Lumian gasped soundlessly.

He compelled himself to compose and expeditiously assessed the situation.

In the twinkling of an eye, Lumian arrived at a determination.

This was a prime opportunity, and he had to seize it when he encountered it. He couldn't let it slip by!

He silently retrieved a stone brick beside him and awaited the monster's arrival at the desired location.

In just a few strides, the monster entered Lumian's kill zone.

Lumian abruptly hurled the stone brick at the ground behind the monster.

Thud!

The stone brick clattered, causing the monster to swivel around and scrutinize the assailant.

Upon beholding this, Lumian seized the axe with both hands and pounced fiercely from the wall towards the monster.

Bang!

The axe descended heavily onto the monster's neck, cleaving it in two.

With twin thuds, Lumian and the monster plummeted to the ground simultaneously.

Lumian sprang up nimbly, seized his axe, and darted over, delivering weighty slashes to the monster's neck.

Once, twice, thrice. The monster didn't even get a chance to resist before its head was lopped off.

As the head rolled aside, the skinless body convulsed twice and ceased movement.

Lumian didn't halt there. He took a diagonal step, rotated his axe, and pulverized the vicious head with its thick back, reducing it to fragments.

Subsequently, he pivoted and hacked at the exposed muscles, blood vessels, and fascia, crushing the heart and other vital organs.

After accomplishing all of this, Lumian took two paces backward and surveyed his handiwork. He panted and chuckled softly.

"I thought you were truly invincible. Who'd have thought you possessed so little ability!"

Amidst the subdued laughter, the decapitated cadaver abruptly jolted upward.

Lumian's pupils contracted, and he instinctively wished to pivot and flee.

He forcefully quelled this impulse and strode forward once more, brandishing his axe.

After the corpse bounced twice, it reverted to immobility, as if it had writhed in vain.

Lumian scrutinized it a while longer and ultimately verified that the monster was wholly deceased.

How tenacious… Lumian sighed inwardly. Then, he leaned over and crouched down. He employed his axe to pry open the muscles and fascias and scrutinized the corpse.

The monster's bodily structure wasn't dissimilar to a human's, but its muscles were evidently more animated. Even though it was already dead, some of its incisions were still wriggling slightly.

There's no treasure, nor is there any supernatural power transferred into my body…?Lumian assessed his present state and felt somewhat disenchanted.

The adage that one grows stronger with each monster they slay indeed only existed in Aurore's tales.

He then relocated the monster's corpse and head into the ruined building and entombed them with bricks and timber.

Subsequently, he scoured the burnt-down house, hoping to discover something.

Chapter 14 - 14: Different Monster

Chapter 14: Different Monster

After a bout of searching, Lumian stumbled upon a considerable number of gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins. In total, there were 197 verl d'or and 25 coppet.

Among them, Louis d'or alone constituted five.

As for the paper bills, he only discovered some suspected remnants.

Aside from money, Lumian also discovered a small blue book.

The book had a grayish-blue cover and measured approximately 21 by 28.5 centimeters, a typical size found in Intis villages and towns. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

It was based on the calendar and blended with the religious teachings of the two major Churches. It had a rather positive effect on guiding farmers and herders to farm, produce, and graze to enrich their spiritual lives.

Naturally, even though it had been nearly two centuries since Emperor Roselle advocated compulsory education, there were still a large number of farmers, herdsmen, and workers who knew no more than a handful of words and were illiterate. They could only rely on the explanations of certain people around them to obtain the instructions they needed from the blue book, literally known as livre bleu.

Lumian flipped through a few pages nonchalantly and realized that the livre bleu was no different from his own. It was just that it appeared a little older overall.

There's the livre bleu and so much verl d'or; this family is undoubtedly well-to-do in the countryside. There aren't more than five such families in Cordu… Lumian discarded the livre bleu and placed the gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins into different pockets. Some were stashed deep in the cotton shirt's pocket, some were tucked into his pants pocket, and some were haphazardly stuffed into the pocket of his leather jacket.

Even though Lumian knew that this wealth couldn't be brought to reality, he couldn't resist collecting it for safekeeping.

These little trinkets of gold, silver, or copper were simply irresistible.

During his days as a vagrant, he cherished every coin he came across, even if it was just a coppet or a lick. He often fought with others for them and took risks to obtain them.

After scouting the area, Lumian hoisted his axe and crept towards the collapsed building closer to the reddish-brown mountain peak.

He proceeded deeper and deeper. Every time he traversed the empty space in the center of the ring, he was apprehensive that dozens of monsters would suddenly ambush him in an area without cover.

In the faint gray fog, Lumian crouched down and sneaked behind a half-collapsed stone wall. He squatted there and utilized it to conceal his form.

He cautiously poked his head out and surveyed the area ahead.

It was a narrow strip between two rows of destroyed buildings. There were no trees, no weeds, just gravel, crevices, and dirt.

Suddenly, a figure jumped into Lumian's line of sight.

It stood in the opposing building, staring at something.

This figure was garbed in a black robe with a hood. From the back, there was nothing peculiar. It appeared to be an ordinary human.

Lumian's heart constricted as he became even more watchful.

In such a dream ruin, the appearance of a regular person was far more terrifying than the appearance of a monster!

As if sensing that someone was observing him, the figure swiveled around slowly.

Lumian snuck a quick glance before retracting his head hastily. He leaned against the wall and didn't dare to budge.

With just one look, he had the impression that he had descended into hell or an abyss.

The figure was indeed a human, but 'he' had three faces and six eyes!

The face in front had cloudy eyes, sparse eyebrows, and numerous wrinkles. He was evidently an old man.

The left side was a chiseled face with sharp-looking blue eyes and a thick, black beard, making him appear like a burly man.

The skin on the right side was smooth and delicate, like a peeled egg. The blue eyes exuded obvious innocence and ignorance. It didn't seem a day over five years of age.

What kind of monster is this… Lumian attempted to regulate his breathing to prevent his heart from racing.

Such a monster had never surfaced, even in Aurore's horror tales. Only in the deepest and most absurd nightmares could it be encountered.

Although it was not good to judge a 'person' by their appearance, Lumian instinctively sensed that the three-faced monster was far more powerful than the skinless monster from earlier!

Furthermore, there was a high probability that it had exceptional abilities.

Eternal Blazing Sun. Great Father, please protect me from being discovered by it… Upon witnessing this scene, Lumian couldn't help but pray to the Eternal Blazing Sun.

If he weren't still clutching an axe in one hand and was in a perilous environment, he would have extended his arms, a gesture symbolizing the adoration of the sun.

At that moment, time appeared to stand still. Lumian believed he might be hallucinating.

It was as if someone's stare pierced through the wall and landed on his back.

His back stiffened instantly and felt somewhat warm.

In just a second or two, the illusion vanished, and heavy footsteps receded into the distance.

Lumian waited a while until the footsteps dissipated completely. Then, he gradually straightened his knees, turned around, and poked his head out to survey the area ahead.

The monster was farther away, having arrived behind the collapsed building whose two sides still stood. Half of its body was visible in the faint gray mist.

It still had his back to Lumian, as though it had transformed into a statue.

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

He didn't have the confidence to confront such a monster.

It's definitely impossible to venture deeper into the ruins from here… Should I circumvent it?

Won't there be comparable monsters elsewhere?

The closer I approach that mountain peak, the more potent the monsters that emerge?

Lumian retracted his body and deliberated for a while before deciding to conclude the night.

He intended to inquire with the woman who gave him the tarot card

after daybreak to see if there was a means of dealing with the three-faced monster. If there was no alternative, he would consider taking a detour.

He arched his back, detached from the wall, and headed in the direction he came from.

At that moment, he had a notion.

If I slumber in these ruins, will I be able to escape the dream?

Considering the possibility of numerous monsters in the vicinity, he suppressed the urge to experiment, for now.

On the way back, he hastily searched every destroyed building he passed, but he couldn't unearth any useful written information. There were only a few coins.

After retreating for a while, Lumian conceived a notion and decided to take a detour. He approached the burnt-out house that he encountered first from the side, where he had buried the skinless monster.

He wanted to see if the monster's demise would be detected by its kin and if it would result in any changes.

After locating the spot and concealing himself, Lumian poked his head out from the side and scrutinized the target area.

In the following moment, he caught sight of another "figure."

The figure was half-human and half-beast. Its legs were bent forward as it squatted there and inspected the skinless monster's cadaver.

It had already removed the stone bricks and wooden blocks that Lumian had stacked.

It wore a dark jacket and relatively snug muddy pants. Its black hair that hung to its neck was unkempt and greasy, and it carried a shotgun on its back.

A shotgun!

Lumian averted his gaze hastily and withdrew his head.

These monsters are truly absurd!

They actually know how to wield a shotgun…

At that moment, Lumian felt like he was a hunter, hunting in the mountains with his weapon and comrades, only to discover that the rabbit opposite him was clutching a water-cooled machine gun and targeting them. He considered it ridiculous and immersion-breaking, as well as disappointing.

As time elapsed, he waited patiently for the monster with the shotgun to depart.

Finally, he discerned a faint sound of movement, gradually receding.

Lumian stuck his head out cautiously once again and examined the monster that was half-human and half-beast.

“It” moved like a cat towards the back of the building.

Initially, Lumian’s heart eased, but then his eyes widened.

He realized that the path the monster took was precisely the same as the route he took when he ventured deep into the ruins!

It’s tracking me!

It has an extraordinary tracking ability!

Lumian made a subconscious evaluation.

He was exceedingly grateful that he had opted for a detour when he returned. Otherwise, he would have certainly collided with it and might have even been ambushed!

As soon as the monster vanished, Lumian sprang up and dashed towards his house.

The crimson fire that reflected in the glass window on the ground floor of the house was akin to sunlight that could dispel darkness.

Lumian sprinted all the way to his two-story building, yanked open the unlatched door, and rushed inside.

After locking the door, he gazed at the ruins through the window.

Far from the gray mist, at the edge of the ruins, there stood a faint figure, but it didn't approach.

Phew. Lumian exhaled and planned to extinguish the fire, ascend upstairs to slumber, and exit the dream.

He glanced at the still-burning fire and murmured to himself, It can still burn for a while… I can experiment and see if it continues to burn until it extinguishes after I depart the dream, or if it is frozen in time the moment I leave…

Lumian had previously verified through the rain that the wilderness where the ruins were located was undergoing natural development. It had nothing to do with whether he was dreaming or not, but whether the same situation was transpiring in his house or the so-called safe zone remained to be verified.

He acted on his notion. He added a few more coals to the fire and fiddled with them. Then, he carried the axe and steel fork to the second floor and entered the bedroom.

…

When Lumian arose, it was just after daybreak.

He inspected his shirt-like pajamas. As anticipated, he was disheartened to discover that the gold coins, silver coins, and copper coins did not accompany him into reality.

Lumian exited the bed and stretched his body. He sauntered to the desk and extended his hand to draw the curtains.

Amidst the sound, a mild and refreshing radiance trickled in.

As the window opened, fresh and organic air invaded Lumian's nostrils. He couldn't help but extend himself, feeling that waking up early was quite pleasant at times.

Of course, this was also owing to the “Patriotic Public Health Campaign” that Emperor Roselle had launched. It was also thanks to the subsequent rulers who had preserved it and only altered its name.

He surveyed his surroundings, sometimes gazing at the far-off forest, sometimes scrutinizing the orange-red clouds in the sky, and sometimes observing the weeds outside the house.

Suddenly, Lumian’s stare froze.

He spied a larger bird perched on an elm tree not far away.

It had a pointed beak, a feline face, brown feathers with scattered spots, brownish-yellow eyes combined with black pupils, giving it a sharp appearance.

It was an owl.

It appeared to be observing Lumian.

Chapter 15 - 15 Getting Information

15 Getting Information

That owl?

That owl from the Warlock legend?

His mind raced with possibilities, trying to comprehend the gravity of the situation. His blood seemed to freeze.

It was worse than facing the three-faced monster.

After all, this was no longer a dream. This was reality.

Even if his demise in a dream led to the same in reality, it was different psychologically.

What should I do?

Will Aurore be implicated?

…

As Lumian racked his brain for a countermeasure, the owl remained still, observing him with a piercing gaze.

After a few seconds, the owl spread its wings and flew towards the distant forest.

Its graceful glide carried it down, down, until it vanished into Cordu.

Only when the owl had completely vanished did Lumian’s mind snap back to the present.

He slumped into a chair and lifted a hand to his forehead.

He was drenched in sweat.

Is it truly the owl of the Warlock legend?

Has it truly lived for so many years?

In any case, it was unlike any other owl with dull eyes. It almost looked human…

If it's really that owl, why did it choose to fly just outside my window? Is it because I want to uncover the truth about the Warlock legend? But we've already given up…

It left after a few moments of observation…

I wonder if it will return and cause trouble for Aurore…

Despite wanting to observe the situation further since nothing had happened yet, Lumian knew he couldn't keep it from his sister any longer.

After leaving the room, he saw that Aurore was still asleep. He went downstairs to prepare breakfast, all of which were his sister's favorite dishes.

Sunny-side up, meringue cookies, ordinary toast with jam…

I have to make noodles later. This time, I'll add meat sauce… Lumian mentally noted that the noodle compartment was empty and decided to refill it some time in the next two days.

It was Aurore's favorite dish.

Aurore descended the staircase in a flowing nightgown, her golden locks tousled. The breakfast spread was readied.

"Morning," she mumbled, stifling a yawn.

Lumian grinned at her. "It's not getting early.

"Don't you always say a day's planning starts early in the morning?"

“That’s right. My plan is to sleep.” Aurore settled into her seat and tucked into her breakfast with a glass of milk.

Lumian sat across from Aurore At the table that could fit six. As he nibbled on a pancake, he casually said, “I’ve been in the village for the past few days trying to find out the truth about those legends.”

“Why?” Aurore asked.

Lumian was very frank.

“You didn’t want to help me get supernatural powers, so I decided to find my own way. Those legends might contain clues.”

“It’s almost impossible,” Aurore commented, her tone casual. “The legends have been twisted beyond recognition over the years. Or hallucinated by some loony. It’s meaningless. Yes, it’s also possible that someone specially made up a story as an excuse. Heh heh, and the contributions of rubberneckers like you.”

“What?” Lumian didn’t understand what Aurore meant by ‘rubbernecker.’

It wasn’t even Intisian.

“It means people who can’t help but get involved in drama they have no business in,” Aurore explained simply. “And judging by how you are suddenly raising this matter, I’m guessing you’ve caused some trouble and now have no choice but to come home to ask your sister for help.”

“It can be considered an accident, but it’s not to the extent of causing trouble,” Lumian said, undaunted.

Lumian organized his thoughts carefully.

“My first target was the Warlock legend.”

“What Warlock legend?” Aurore’s confusion was palpable.

Lumian couldn’t believe it. “You’ve never heard of it? A long time ago, a person in the village suddenly died. When he was buried, an

owl flew over and stopped by his bed. It only flew away when the corpse was lifted. After that, the corpse became very heavy. It took nine bulls to pull the coffin. Only then did the villagers know that the person was a Warlock when he was alive."

Aurore was listening intently.

"I really wasn't aware of such a legend before."

It doesn't make sense… Lumian was incredulous.

Aurore may have been a homebody, but she still made time to socialize with the other old ladies in town. She loved telling stories to the children and was always up-to-date on the latest Cordu gossip. It was hard to believe she hadn't heard about the Warlock legend that had been circulating for years.

But what was even more intriguing was the fact that her house was built on the very spot where the Warlock's home once stood.

Lumian had a hunch from the start that Aurore's decision to settle in Cordu was driven by the allure of the Warlock's treasure, the key to unlocking extraordinary power.

"And then?" Aurore asked calmly. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian answered truthfully, "We did some digging around, and we got confirmation from the village elders. This wasn't some tall tale. The Warlock really did exist, but that was decades ago. The Church burned the house down, and now the land belongs to you."

"Is that so?" Aurore was obviously a little surprised. "I knew it. There's always a catch. Why else would they sell me this land at a price lower than the norm? I thought it was because of my gift of gab, when it came to old ladies…"

She thought for a moment and asked, "So, the Church burned the Warlock's body?"

…

Lumian nodded. “Yes. His ashes are buried in the cemetery beside the cathedral.”

He continued, “We’ve given up on this matter because all the clues led to a dead end. But this morning, I saw an owl outside my window. It looked just like the one in the legend.”

Aurore’s expression became serious. “Are you certain?”

“I can’t say for sure, but it didn’t look like any ordinary owl,” Lumian responded objectively.

Aurore pondered for a moment before saying slowly, “Don’t leave the village for now. And after dark, don’t step outside until I’ve finished investigating the situation.”

She gave a sour smile. “I’ve warned you before about the dangers of seeking supernatural power. But look, trouble has already found you.

“Fortunately, it seems that the other party doesn’t have any malicious intentions. The problem should be resolved relatively easily.”

I’m glad you’re on guard… Lumian lowered his head and said straightforwardly, “Grande Soeur, I was wrong.”

He changed the subject.

“Did your pen pals write back?”

“How can it be that fast? It’s not like we’re sending e— Uh, post!” Aurore scoffed.

…

Lumian was puzzled. Isn’t post already referring to letters and packages sent through the post office?

He was not too concerned. After all, Aurore often used strange words.

…

At the entrance of Ol’ Tavern.

Lumian stood there and surveyed the area.

He knew that the woman who had given him the tarot card wouldn't be awake yet, so he was looking for the three foreigners: Ryan, Leah, and Valentine.

As expected, the trio was enjoying a lavish breakfast at a table inside the tavern.

Lumian observed them for a few seconds, taking in the spread of trout rolls, wine, and mayonnaise bread, before leaving without disturbing them.

Some time later, as Ryan and the others prepared to continue strolling around Cordu and "chatting" with the locals,

Lumian approached them with open arms and a bright smile.

"Good morning, my cabbages."

Valentine's face twitched, and between Ryan and Leah, one looked slightly embarrassed while the other looked amused.

Uh, they're dressed exactly the same… Did they not bring many changes of clothes despite being out? Lumian noticed that Leah was still clad in a snug pleated cashmere dress, a small white coat, and a pair of Marseillan boots, each adorned with a small silver bell. Her veil which doubled as a hat also had bells attached to it. Ryan was still sporting a drab duffel coat and pale yellow strides, topped with a rough dark bowler hat.

And Valentine still had powdered hair and makeup on his face.

"Good morning, Lumian. What brings you here?" Ryan asked calmly.

Lumian looked aggrieved as he responded, "Well, you guys are my friends, and I have nothing to do. I thought I'd come visit."

He then questioned them, "I noticed that you've been chatting with people in the village for the past few days. Is there anything you want to ask?

“You can come to me if you have any questions, my cabbages. I’m your friend.”

“We can’t trust your answer,” Valentine interjected.

Ryan shot him a look, signaling him to calm down.

Lumian smiled.

“So you can completely trust the others?”

Leah was at a loss for words, while Ryan thought for a moment before responding,

“Actually, we can’t completely trust anyone. We have to make a comprehensive judgment based on the answers we get from different people and the situation we observe.”

“That’s more like it.” Lumian spread his hands. “Well, then it wouldn’t hurt to hear my answer. At least it’s a reference.”

Ryan was silent for a moment before glancing around.

The early morning in Cordu was bustling with people heading to the farmlands, but there was hardly anyone near Ol’ Tavern.

“Here’s the deal,” he said finally. “We’re here to find someone.”

“The padre?” Lumian asked with a smile.

Ryan shook his head.

“No. We visited the padre to find this person.”

“Who is it?” Lumian asked with interest. “I know everyone in the village. I should be able to help.”

Ryan did not show any joy.

“Actually, we don’t know who this person is, how old they are, or what they look like.

“We received an unsigned letter some time ago, and we’re trying to

find the person who wrote it."

Lumian couldn't help but wonder if the letter was from an informer.

He feigned puzzlement.

"Did the person who wrote the letter not reach out to you after you arrived in the village?"

"No," Leah replied for Ryan.

"Perhaps they don't feel safe and don't trust you?" Lumian suggested eagerly. "Can't you glean any clues from the contents of the letter?"

Lumian was curious about the letter's contents.

If it was targeting the padre's crew, he'd be happy to help them. But if it involved Aurore, he'd urge his sister to move. After all, Aurore communicated with her pen pals frequently, and if any of them were caught, she could be implicated. The letter could be a crucial clue.

Chapter 16 - 16 Letter

16 Letter

Ryan shook his head.

“The letter was just two simple sentences. It seemed like a man in deep trouble was seeking our help.”

“Did he not mention what kind of trouble he was in?” Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

There was no way a letter from Aurore or her pen pals could be that short.

!!

“Nothing,” Ryan replied with a soft sigh.

Lumian couldn’t help but mock them in his heart. It’s just a letter asking for help, and you’re here? Aren’t you afraid this is just a prank? Even the people from the Inquisition aren’t as enthusiastic as you. Isn’t this too nice, too kind, and too missionful?

Normally, he would have voiced these thoughts aloud, but he needed to get information from them, so he held his tongue and forced himself to be patient.

Despite his reservations, Lumian knew that Ryan wouldn’t reveal the entire situation to him. They must have other considerations or reasons for coming to Cordu and searching for the person who wrote the vague letter.

“Uh…” Lumian stroked his chin and suggested tentatively, “Why don’t you show me the letter? Perhaps I can identify the writer from their handwriting.”

Valentine, with his powdered hair, gave Lumian a look that said: “Do you think we’re fools?”

Leah chuckled.

“Do you know how to appraise handwriting?”

“Barely,” Lumian admitted sincerely.

He then added inwardly, Being able to appraise Aurore’s and my own handwriting is also considered a form of appraisal.

“It’s useless,” Ryan interjected, shaking his head. “Every word in the letter came from a livre bleu, and the entire sentence was comprised of cut slips.”

Lumian couldn’t help but wonder why the writer was being so cautious. Why hide their identity in such a way when they were asking for help? Were they afraid of interception and retaliation, or was there something wrong with them that they didn’t want to be exposed? Lumian tried to analyze the writer’s mentality.

Lumian put on a look of realization and said, “So you’ve been chatting with people in the village to see if anyone else has experienced similar damage to their livre bleu?

“But the person who wrote the letter could have purchased a new livre bleu without anyone knowing, or even thrown it away after using it.”

“That’s just one of the leads we’re following,” Ryan explained calmly.

Lumian didn’t treat himself as an outsider at all and asked, “Are there any other leads?”

“Well, if someone is asking for help, then something must be happening, and there will always be some traces left behind,” Ryan responded after some thought.

“That makes sense,” Lumian said, looking troubled for Ryan and the others, as if he could empathize with their situation.

He promised solemnly, “My cabbages, I’ll keep an eye out for you. Hopefully, we’ll find some clues.”

“Thank you,” Ryan replied politely.

Leah had regained her composure and asked Lumian, “Since we’re friends, I have a question for you.”

“Go ahead.” Lumian smiled.

“Why did the villagers in the tavern laugh when you called us ‘cabbage’?” Leah was rather intrigued.

Although it was embarrassing, ‘cabbage’ was a common local slang term, and it shouldn’t have been a cause for laughter.

Lumian explained sincerely, “In slang, ‘cabbage’ means darling or beloved. It’s mainly used between intimate friends or between an elder and a junior. ‘My bunny’ and ‘my chicks’ are similar.”

He emphasized the word ‘intimate’ as he spoke.

Then, with an innocent expression, he added, “I just wanted us to be intimate friends.”

Lumian’s innocent expression suggested that he had no idea what ‘intimate’ meant.

More like you want to be our senior… Leah finally understood why the villagers were laughing.

While Lumian’s explanation may not have been entirely truthful, it was logically convincing.

Ryan nodded in agreement.

“Is there anything else?”

“Nope,” Lumian replied, not wanting to appear too eager and arouse suspicion about him and Aurore.

His sister couldn’t undergo an investigation!

After watching Leah and the others leave with the sound of the tinkling bells, Lumian sat at the entrance of Ol' Tavern and waited for the lady with the mysterious background to wake up.

After a while, Lumian's friend, Reimund Greg, approached him.

"Lumian, have you decided which legend to investigate next?" Reimund asked.

In the past two days, Reimund had been even more proactive than Lumian in this matter. After all, he didn't have any strange dreams or other ways of obtaining treasure.

"Not yet." The owl had already come knocking on his door. He couldn't risk investigating the legend without confirming the situation first.

"I'll think about it after the Lent festival," Lumian explained, trying to sound casual.

"Okay, that makes sense," Reimund agreed. "I don't have to be a Greenwatcher for the time being then. I'll head out after Lent. Even if there are grazers in the meantime, it won't cause much damage."

"Do you mean you don't have to leave the village for the next few days?" Lumian asked Reimund.

Reimund nodded in confirmation, and Lumian smiled.

"What a coincidence. I can't leave the village for the next few days either."

Reimund was confused. "Why not?" he asked.

Lumian lowered his voice and spoke with a serious expression.

"This morning, I met the owl from the Warlock legend. It said that if it weren't for the cathedral and the gaze of God in the village, it would have taken my soul and thrown it into the abyss…"

Reimund was shocked and frightened, and his entire body trembled.

“Is that for real? I told you not to provoke such an evil creature…”

Reimund suddenly saw a smile appear on Lumian’s face.

…

“…” Only then did Reimund remember his good friend’s nature.

“You’re pulling a prank on me, it’s a lie, isn’t it?” he asked, feeling both angry and anxious.

He was angry at himself for falling for Lumian’s deception yet again. He knew what kind of person Lumian was and had been fooled by him many times before.

“You believe such a ridiculous thing?” Lumian chuckled.

Quietly, Lumian added to himself that he had made up the story to prevent Reimund from going straight to the cathedral to repent when he couldn’t withstand the pressure. Updated from novelbIn.(c)om

Reimund relaxed and breathed a sigh of relief. “Phew…”

Lumian offered some advice to Reimund.

“Although I made up that story just now, it’s true that pursuing the truth of a legend can be dangerous. Try not to leave the village or the cathedral’s protection if you can.”

Silently, Lumian added to himself, And that’s the truth. Although most of the story was fabricated, half of it was true. I wouldn’t have reminded you and shared Aurore’s advice in a different way if I didn’t need your help with many things in the future. Whether someone lives or dies has nothing to do with me…

Reimund recalled the feeling of fear and nodded in understanding.

“Alright!”

…

He changed the subject and asked, “Who are you going to vote for to

be the Spring Elf?"

The Spring Elf was the symbol of spring and the start of many celebrations during Lent. In the Dariège area, the whole village usually voted for an unwed, beautiful girl to play the role.

"Ava," Lumian replied nonchalantly. "Hasn't she always wanted to be the Spring Elf?"

"I'll choose her too," Reimund said, secretly relieved.

Yesterday, Ava had hinted to him that she wanted him to vote for her, so he felt the need to help her canvas for votes.

…

Outside a house not far from Ol' Tavern.

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine weren't in a hurry to find someone to "chat."

Valentine raised his hand to cover his mouth and nose. "Is it really okay to say so much to that guy just now?" he asked.

The air around them was filled with the faint smell of poultry feces.

Leah fiddled with a silver bell above her head. "I don't know if there's a problem. All I can confirm is that my divination results tell me he's of help."

Ryan explained his intention. "If we can't turn the situation around, leaking some information and instilling fear in the relevant people could be effective. Next, we'll observe him more closely and see what he'll do or who he'll find."

…

After Reimund left, Lumian entered Ol' Tavern and saw the lady who had given him the tarot card in her usual spot.

She was wearing a white blouse and a pair of baggy light-colored pants, and beside her hand was a round straw hat adorned with a few

yellow flowers.

She really has a lot of clothes in her suitcase. She changes them every day, unlike Leah and the others who look so shabby, Lumian thought to himself as he moved closer and sat opposite her.

During this process, he casually glanced at her breakfast, which consisted of a plump mince pie with a thinned sauce, a few darioles, cubed seasonal fruit, and a light-colored transparent drink with some impurities.

This isn't something Ol' Tavern can provide… Lumian pointed at the drink on the table and asked the lady, as though they were close friends, "What is this? It doesn't look like wine."

"It's called 'Venus Sacred Oil,'" the lady replied casually. "It's made from sugar and cinnamon water soaked in vanilla and mixed with poppies. It was invented by a bar in Trier."

The word "Venus" came from Emperor Roselle. He mentioned in a story that she was a woman comparable to a Goddess of Beauty.

Lumian was intrigued. "Where did you get it? Did you concoct it yourself?" he asked, suspecting that the nearest city, Dariège, couldn't provide something similar.

The lady smiled.

"As a traveler, it's my professional instinct to obtain suitable things at the right time."

Lumian was honest. "I don't understand."

He then said, "I've finished the previous monster. This time, I've encountered two even more dangerous ones…

He went on to describe the monster with three faces and the one with a shotgun on its back.

"I feel that they all have powers that surpass ordinary humans. They're not something I can deal with. Is there any way to deal with them?"

The lady took a bite of the dariole and rolled her eyes. She smiled and said, “I’m not sure about the three-faced monster, but you are more than capable of dealing with the one with the shotgun, as long as you use what’s special about yourself.”

Lumian was both surprised and confused. “A special trait… What’s so special about me?”

I don’t even know myself!

The lady smiled at him and said, “That’s your dream. As the owner of the dream, you naturally enjoy special treatment. It’s just that you haven’t realized it yet.”

Chapter 17 - 17 Suspect

17 Suspect

Lumian was on edge, his mind racing with excitement and fear. “What is it exactly?”

The woman took a leisurely sip of Venus Sacred Oil before replying in a calm, unhurried tone.

“You have to ask yourself that.”

Having said that, she lowered her head slightly and focused on enjoying her breakfast, giving the impression that she had no intention of continuing the conversation.

Why do you keep parts of the matter untold and only answer at the next opportunity? Isn’t this a waste of everyone’s time? He couldn’t help but feel inferior to her ability to infuriate others.

Taking a deep breath, he forced a smile and bade farewell.

Lumian obediently spent the rest of the day at home.

This wasn’t out of fear of the owl to the point of not daring to step out during the day, nor was it because he had nothing to do, but to avoid arousing suspicion.

Lumian was determined to get to the bottom of the help-seeking letter that Leah and her companions had in their possession. He needed to find out what was written and who wrote it. The key to his investigation was to flip through every livre bleu in the village and find the one with words cut out. As a villager, Lumian was best suited for this task, but he was hesitant to proceed after talking to the three foreigners. It could attract someone’s attention and cause unnecessary trouble.

This was a matter of life and death, survival or doom, and Lumian knew that even with Aurore's protection, he couldn't guarantee that the other party wouldn't take any risky actions against him.

In the past two years, he had become better at figuring out the threshold required for pranks.

This was due to his rich experience.

He planned on "visiting" every family in a few days, using the excuse of pursuing the legends related to Lent.

After dinner, when it was dark, Aurore returned to her bedroom to finally write a manuscript that was long overdue.

Lumian entered the study planning to find some books related to dreams to read, hoping to gain some special inspiration for his dream.

As they only had one battery-powered table lamp at home, which was being used by Aurore, he had to light up the kerosene lamp that had a pungent smell and was not great for illumination purposes.

Carrying the kerosene lamp that emitted a dim yellow glow, Lumian quickly swiped his other hand across the backs of the books. Occasionally, he would choose a book and clamp it under his armpit.

After a while, he returned to the table with three selected books.

Just as he placed the books in his hand, Lumian saw the livre bleu at home.

It was quietly placed in a corner of the desk as usual, and the gray-blue cover seemed a little dusty.

Upon seeing this livre bleu, Lumian instantly thought of the book he had obtained in the dream ruins and the book that had been cut and meshed into a plea for help.

He reached out and picked up the livre bleu in front of him, planning to flip through the content to see which words were suitable for cutting and piecing into useful sentences.

After flipping through a few pages, Lumian's gaze froze.

There was an obvious hole in the notes attached to the current calendar page.

A word had been cut out!

"No way…" Lumian whispered, extremely shocked.

He quickly flipped through the livre bleu in his hand and found more than ten words cut out.

"No way…" Lumian whispered again, his reaction almost the same as before.

The livre bleu that Ryan, Leah, Valentine, and the others were searching for turned out to be the one at home!

Not only had they not expected it, but Lumian had never even fathomed this possibility!

It didn't even cross his mind!

Amidst the indescribably complicated emotions, Lumian frowned.

Could it be Aurore who requested help?

Why did she seek help from the officials? Why didn't she tell me?

Based on Leah and the others' behavior, their habitual choice to discuss matters with the padre as soon as they arrived, and other details, Lumian made a preliminary judgment that they were officials. They could be from the government, Dariège's Eternal Blazing Sun Church, or the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

Lumian hesitated, his expression constantly changing.

Finally, he made up his mind. He took the livre bleu and walked out of the study to Aurore's bedroom.

He planned on asking her directly and chose to believe in Aurore.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Lumian bent his finger and knocked on the

door.

“Come on in.” Aurore’s voice sounded.

Lumian turned the handle and pushed open the door to enter. Under the bright light of the table lamp, Aurore, who was wearing a two-piece cotton pajama set, had bound her golden hair with a headband and was engrossed in writing a story.

“Did you cut this?” Lumian asked, interrupting his sister before she could speak.

“Huh?” Aurore turned around in confusion, her eyes blank and distant, as if she was still deep in thought.

Lumian handed over the livre bleu, which had been flipped to the corresponding page, and stared into Aurore’s eyes.

“You didn’t cut this?”

Aurore gazed at it carefully for a few seconds before looking up in amusement.

“Would I be so bored and childish? I’m steady, mature, and broadminded, unlike you.”

Aurore’s reaction was natural, and she didn’t seem surprised or flustered that her secret had been exposed. Lumian didn’t hide his confusion and asked, “But who would have cut out words from the livre bleu?”

“Wasn’t it you?” Aurore sized up her brother. “After reading my novel, you planned on mimicking what you read and cut out words from books and newspapers to create a random letter to play a huge prank on the village. But before that, you wanted to see if you could fool me? Are you testing my deductive abilities?”

This really doesn’t seem like Aurore’s doing… Lumian’s gaze was fixed on Aurore’s face, not letting go of even the slightest change in her expression, but his sister’s performance was flawless.

“It wasn’t me.” Lumian frowned. “Who could have done it?”

Aurore smiled. “Go on and play your little game of deduction. I have a manuscript to finish. If I have time tomorrow, I’ll help you figure out the truth.”

Using extraordinary means? Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and stopped disturbing his sister’s creation.

He took the livre bleu and returned to his unlit room, sitting on the chair behind the desk.

…

“Who could it be?” Under the illumination of the crimson moon, Lumian muttered, trying to make deductions.

We are a family of two. Aurore is a Warlock with extraordinary abilities. She won’t let others ransack our home… Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

If it’s really not her, and in her words, ‘when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.’

So, in the case of having only two choices, I’m actually the one who did this?

For a moment, Lumian found it absurd and funny.

So I’m the ‘criminal’?

Why don’t I know that?

Lumian couldn’t help but turn his body and look at the full-body mirror attached to the wardrobe.

Under the crimson moonlight, his mirror reflection was wearing a linen shirt and brown pants. His handsome features didn’t have a smile on them, and his expression was abnormally heavy.

He was very sure that he had never cut out the content from the livre bleu.

To eliminate the possibility, he recalled his experiences in the past month.

...

Although many details were already a blur, he was still very certain about what he had done.

Bathing in the crimson moon's light that seeped in through the windows, Lumian muttered to himself, "Could it be that I did it when I was unconscious? While having that dream, I can sleepwalk in reality? No, that's impossible. Aurore said that she would watch me. If I really sleepwalked and cut the livre bleu, she would have pointed it out just now. Moreover, the letter must have been sent during the day. I'm very awake during those times."

Lumian eliminated himself and thought of other possibilities.

Someone else who came here, perhaps?

Although their family had few guests usually, it did not mean that they did not have any.

Firstly, poorer neighbors would come to borrow the stove or oven to smoke meat or make bread.

Secondly, Lumian's friends would come to his house from time to time to find some simple novels to read or listen to his stories.

Lastly, Nazélie, Madame Pualis, and a few other ladies visited Aurore from time to time to have a chat with her. Among them, Madame Pualis came the most. She even lent Aurore a pony so that Aurore could ride freely in the mountains. They were quite close.

After all, in a village like Cordu, only an author like Aurore was worthy of Madame Pualis' friendship.

Madame Pualis appeared very amiable on the surface, often basking in the sun with the other women and chatting with them, and even catching lice with them. She had a good reputation in the village.

Although Madame Pualis and Aurore could be considered friends,

Lumian did not like her at all. Madame Pualis would often introduce one of her relatives to Aurore and persuade her to get married and have children as soon as possible.

It would be fine if Madame Pualis' relatives were nice, but every time Lumian asked around in Dariège, he found that the other party either had bad character or was not very capable. They were about to fall into poverty, and none of them made the cut.

The first time might have been a coincidence, but with it happening every time, Lumian bore a hatred for Madame Pualis.

It's definitely impossible for those who come here to smoke meat or bake bread. There's always someone watching them. They won't be allowed to go up to the second floor… Reimund, Ava, and the others are also unlikely suspects. I'll accompany them the entire time. Madame Pualis, Nazélie, and the other ladies have a certain chance. Every time they come, Aurore will keep them in the study to read while she prepares some snacks…

If Madame Pualis is really a Witch, then it's understandable that she needs to hide her identity from the authorities. Also, she is very careful to use other people's livre bleu to avoid being traced back to her…

Did she discover something when she was having an affair with the padre? Did she have to protect herself in this way?

The more he thought about it, the more excited he became. He felt like he was about to lock onto a suspect.

He stood up, paced a few steps, and suddenly walked downstairs.

He didn't want to question Madame Pualis, nor did he plan to pry into her actions now. Instead, he planned to find Reimund or Guillaume-junior and use their livre bleu as a comparison to determine which words had been cut out and what sentence could be formed.

This way, Lumian could recreate the exact content of the request for help.

He rushed down the stairs, through the kitchen, and opened the front door.

The crimson darkness outside rushed in, instantly calming him down.

“Uh, Grande Soeur said that before we figure out the owl’s situation, I shouldn’t go out after dark…” Lumian muttered. He took two steps back and closed the door.

Anyway, there was no hurry to borrow the livre bleu. It would be more natural to do it tomorrow.

After doing a stretch, Lumian walked towards the staircase.

Ding ding ding ding ding.

The doorbell rang, the sound echoing through the house.

“Who is it?” Lumian turned around in confusion, calling out as he walked towards the door.

A slightly magnetic and gentle female voice sounded from outside.

“It’s me, Pualis de Roquefort.”

Chapter 18 - 18 “Straightforward”

18 “Straightforward”

Madame Pualis… Lumian was shocked to see Madame Pualis standing outside his door. He had the illusion that someone had come to his place to silence him, but knowing that his sister was upstairs and had superpowers, he calmed down significantly.

Exhaling slowly, Lumian walked over and opened the door.

There were two women standing outside the door. The one in front was wearing a pure black and exquisite corset dress. She had a shawl of the same color on her shoulders, fishnet gloves on her hands, and a lady’s round hat that was slightly slanted.

She was dressed in black, with only a diamond necklace inlaid with gold hanging on her chest.

!!

Her eyebrows were slightly thin, framing her bright, smiling brown eyes. Her long brown hair was tied into a high bun, and her facial features were not outstanding, but when combined, they had a clean and charming beauty. Coupled with her elegant temperament and graceful posture, it made the night at Lumian’s door that was dyed a little red seem much fresher because of her. There was also a faint fragrance coming from her.

Madame Pualis, the wife of the Cordu village administrator and the territory’s judge, Béost.

Lumian knew he had to add words like “the mistress of the padre”, “suspected witch”, “help-seeking suspect,” and “the fair naked body

in the cathedral" in his heart. However, these were not suitable to be said out loud. Otherwise, Madame Pualis would definitely change her expression on the spot.

If he succeeded in angering her, disaster might follow.

"Madame Pualis, what's the matter?" Lumian deliberately looked out at the sky, hinting that it was not appropriate for Madame Pualis to visit at this time.

Madame Pualis's red lips were a little moist as she spoke softly, "I'm here to discuss something with your sister Aurore."

From her appearance alone, she did not look like a woman in her thirties with two children. She was at most in her late twenties.

Lumian deliberated for a moment and made way.

"Aurore is upstairs, writing for her newspaper column," he informed the entering Madame Pualis.

Pualis nodded and said to the lady's maid beside her, "Cathy, wait for me downstairs."

"Yes, Madame." Dressed in a black-and-white lady's maid outfit, Cathy took a few steps towards the warm stove.

Lumian led Madame Pualis through the kitchen and towards the stairs.

Madame Pualis stopped at the corner.

"What's wrong?" Lumian turned around and pretended to be confused.

Madame Pualis asked with a smile, "Did you deliberately bring the three foreigners to the cathedral?"

She's finally here to question me… Lumian didn't panic but instead calmed down.

Lumian's previous experience of pranking and infuriating people had

taught him that at such times, he could not directly answer the other party's question, nor could he defend himself. The best choice was to blame the other party for making a certain error!

Of course, this still depended on the situation. Turning around and running was an alternative.

Lumian revealed a furious look as he gazed at Madame Pualis and said, "You guys were actually having an affair in God's cathedral!"

He then spread open his arms and seemingly gestured as though he was "embracing the sun."

"My God, my Father, forgive the sacrilege of this guilty man and woman."

Madame Pualis watched him quietly, the ends of her lips curling beautifully.

"I think God will forgive us. I read a book once that said, 'A lady who shares a bed with her true love is cleansed of all sins, for love legitimizes pleasure, as though from the purest of hearts.' I'm very happy with Guillaume Bénet. Therefore, the Eternal Blazing Sun wouldn't be angry about this. It's not a sin." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

What kind of books are you reading, Madame… Lumian couldn't help but inwardly criticize.

"But," Madame Pualis continued, "this is indeed disrespectful to St. Sith."

Every region of Intis had one or two guardian angels or saints, recognized by the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun or the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery's canon, or they had made special contributions in Intis's history. They were well known and respected by the two Churches.

In the Dariège region, the saint in charge of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church was St. Sith. Every Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral here could actually be called Saint Sith Cathedral. However, to differentiate them, only the largest and core cathedral was called that. Others had

other names in place.

Therefore, Madame Pualis and the padre having an affair in the cathedral was equivalent to St. Sith's butler secretly bringing someone home and doing the deed in his master's bedroom. It was a great disrespect to the patron saint.

"That's right," Lumian nodded solemnly. "Isn't the padre ashamed?"

Madame Pualis burst into laughter.

After laughing, she said to Lumian, "Back then, I also persuaded him. I said, 'Oh la la, how can we do such a thing in the cathedral of St. Sith?' Guess what the padre said? He said, 'Oh, then St. Sith might have to put up with it a little.'"

Lumian, who was inexperienced in such matters, was momentarily at a loss for words.

"He's blaspheming the saint!" He finally managed to force out this sentence.

Madame Pualis looked like she was reminiscing.

"That's how he is. He's bold and direct, like a bandit who breaks through the door to your soul while swearing curses. He's completely different from the gentlemen in Darième. Perhaps that's why I slept with him."

"That's just the normal behavior of some men in heat. Not to mention Saint Sith, even if a deity was there, he would make Him wait." Despite his lack of experience, Lumian had read enough novels written by Aurore to know a thing or two about human desire. "This belongs to having his mind controlled by his lower body. No, his head was already empty during that period, filled with another liquid."

Madame Pualis smiled.

"I know that's the reason, but he did appear very charming in that situation. Heh heh, you're indeed an inexperienced young man. Don't you know that the same words will make people feel differently in

different environments and moods?

“I remember the first time I had sex with the padre. He stood there, looked me in the eyes, and said to me, ‘Pualis, I want to go deeper in understanding your body and mind.’ If it were any other time, I would only find him a crude and vulgar pervert. I would have called for help to stop him, but at that time, my body went limp. The mood was just right.”

Madame Pualis smiled charmingly.

“It’s like, if I had my eye on any man, I’d say to him, ‘How does my place tonight sound?’

“If he really comes, I’ll bring him straight into the bedroom and tell him, ‘I want to make love with you. I love you.’

“Lumian, as a man, how would you answer at a time like this?”

Lumian usually told dirty jokes to the men in the village. Although he was a little uncomfortable, he managed to keep his composure. He tried his best to recall the stories his sister had written and the novels written by other contemporary authors. After some deliberation, he said, “Madame, you are my sunshine.”

“Very talented…” Madame Pualis complimented.

As she spoke, she leaned forward, her eyes becoming moist.

A warm breath immediately blasted Lumian’s ear, and a slightly magnetic and gentle female voice sounded softly.

“I want to make love with you…”

At that moment, Lumian’s heart couldn’t help but tremble. His body felt numb, as though he had received an electric shock from touching a broken electrical lamp.

He immediately took a step up the stairs and said to Madame Pualis, “Aurore should be waiting for you.”

…

“Indeed.” Madame Pualis straightened her back with a smile on her face.

It was as if nothing had happened.

This woman… Lumian suddenly felt a little afraid of this woman.

He turned around and reached the second floor in a few steps, with Madame Pualis following at a steady pace.

Aurore was already waiting outside the bedroom when she heard the doorbell.

“What took so long?” She looked at Lumian.

Lumian explained vaguely, “We talked about the cathedral.”

Aurore understood immediately. She gave her brother a look that said, “Pray for good luck from the Eternal Blazing Sun.”

She turned to Madame Pualis, who had just arrived on the second floor, and asked with a smile, “What’s the matter?”

“I wanted to talk about the preparations for Lent. I might need your help with a celebration,” Madame Pualis said with a smile.

“You caught me at a bad moment…” Aurore found an excuse to decline.

…

Madame Pualis pointed at the door and said, “How about you hear it first?”

“Alright.” Aurore remained polite.

Watching his sister and Madame Pualis enter the study and close the wooden door, Lumian nodded indiscernibly.

Acting normally without showing any trace of returning to the ‘crime scene’…

Suddenly, an idea struck him like a bolt of lightning.

There is a high chance that Madame Pualis is a female Warlock. Can I get supernatural powers from her?

It would be much more convenient and safer than facing that owl head-on while searching for the truth of the Warlock or exploring the dangerous dream ruins…

After all, I have to unlock the secret as soon as possible to eliminate any hidden dangers. It's less risky once I obtain superpowers.

But Lumian soon became vigilant and shook his head.

He then self-reflected, How can I think that way?

I don't even know if Madame Pualis is a friend or foe. How can I seek supernatural power through her?

Yes, her actions didn't paint her to be a good person just now. She even made me feel a sense of danger…

What's wrong with me recently? Am I too hasty and rash in pursuing superpowers? It's as if I'll die if I don't obtain them quickly…

It had been nearly two years since Lumian discovered that his sister was a Warlock. Though he had tried to obtain supernatural powers before, he had never worked as hard as he had in the past few days. No matter if the opportunity was good or bad, or if there was danger, as long as there seemed to be hope, he could not wait to come into contact with it. It was as if he was not picky with food after starving for ages.

Phew… Thank goodness I sensed the problem in time. Otherwise, I might end up taking a more deviated and dangerous path. Lumian let out a long sigh, relieved that he had regained his normal state of mind.

But he knew it was impossible to stop pursuing supernatural powers. He just needed choices. After all, the dangerous dream had already revealed itself, and the undercurrents in the village were getting more and more turbulent.

Chapter 19 - 19 Meditation

19 Meditation

Madame Pualis and Aurore didn't talk for long. Ten minutes later, they walked out of the study.

Lumian walked Madame Pualis out of the door with his sister.

He looked at his sister and asked, "What did she want you to do?"

Aurore pouted and replied, "She wanted me to be the lead singer at the Praise Celebration, but I refused."

Cordu Village's Lent festival had three segments—Spring Elf blessing tour, waterside ritual, Praise Celebration held in the cathedral. The last segment mainly consisted of playing musical instruments and choral singing.

In the Dariège region, the lead singer was often from the cathedral choir, but Cordu could only seek out singers who were good at singing as alternatives.

As for musical instruments, the villagers didn't worry about it. In villages with shepherds, music or musical instruments were indispensable in their daily lives.

Shepherds lived in the wild all year round, either in shacks or pits. Other than their companions and sheep, the most common thing they interacted with was the flute they carried with them.

Apart from grazing, playing cards, and chatting, playing the flute and using music to comfort oneself was something almost every shepherd would do.

It was precisely because of this that the phrase used to describe a

shepherd in a difficult and impoverished situation was “he doesn’t even have a flute.”

With so many shepherds around, it was inevitable that the other villagers of Cordu would be affected. When they gathered and chatted in the square, there would always be someone playing an instrument, causing the melodious melody to reverberate.

Lumian was pleased to see his sister being steadfast. “Okay,” he said with satisfaction.

Joining in the celebrations was enough. If one wanted to take center stage, it would be a waste of time and could attract unnecessary attention.

In order to protect his eyesight, Lumian read for a while, then decided to wash up and turn in early. He considered how to safely test what was special about him in the dream.

The lady’s suggestions had proven accurate several times in a row, making Lumian unconsciously believe her completely.

In the dead of night, Lumian entered the dream again and woke up there.

He checked his pockets and confirmed that the 217 verl d’or and 25 coppet were still there.

Letting out a sigh of relief, Lumian picked up his axe and steel fork and headed downstairs to the stove.

The fire had already been extinguished.

The clock continues spinning when I’m not dreaming… Lumian frowned slightly.

How could there be anything special about him in such a “real” dream?

“The clock continues spinning” was a common saying in the Dariège region, meaning that time waited for no man and never stood still.

In the bedroom he deemed safest, Lumian put down his tools and undressed.

He walked to the full-body mirror attached to the wardrobe and checked his body inch by inch to see if there was anything different from reality.

Nothing out of the ordinary.

Mentally special? Lumian wasn't in a hurry to put his clothes on. Instead, he walked back to the bed and sat down cross-legged, like his sister often did when meditating.

Aurore had previously taught him some superficial meditation techniques that did not involve mystical elements to foster lucid dreams. Now, Lumian wanted to try and see if he could sense anything special about his mind and body in the completely quiet scene.

The first step was to regulate his breathing.

Lumian deepened his breathing and slowed down the corresponding frequency.

As he took slow, long, and rhythmic breaths, Lumian slowly emptied his mind.

At the same time, he outlined a red sun in his mind and focused all his attention and thoughts on it to eliminate other messy thoughts.

Aurore had instructed him to choose objects that represented light during meditation, in case he was targeted by vile, evil things.

As a believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun, Lumian's first reaction was to visualize the sun.

Gradually, his mind calmed down, and in his perception, the entire world seemed to have only that red blazing sun left.

Suddenly, Lumian heard something.

It seemed to come from an infinite distance yet was ringing in his

ears. The sound was unclear but had inklings of rumbling thunder.

Amidst the indescribable buzzing, Lumian's heart began to race. It was as if someone had inserted a chisel into his head and stirred it a few times.

An intense pain erupted, and the blazing sun turned as red as blood and quickly dyed black.

The scene in his meditation shattered.

Lumian's eyes snapped open, and he gasped for air. He felt like he was about to die.

After almost twenty seconds, he finally recovered from the near-death experience.

He instinctively lowered his head and examined his body, noticing something strange on the left side of his chest.

A symbol that looked like thorns, black as night, seemed to grow from his heart and extend out of his body, connecting one after another like chains.

Above these thorns were patterns resembling eyes and worm-like distorted lines, all bluish-black.

At this moment, the tattoo-like symbols were slowly fading.

Lumian was first shocked, then had many thoughts.

He quickly got off the bed and went straight to the full-body mirror, aiming his back at it.

Then, he tried his best to turn his head left to check the situation on his back.

He could barely see the chain made of black thorns drilling into his body from his back.

In other words, this chain of thorns sealed his heart and corresponding body in the form of a ring.

Lumian analyzed what was ‘special’ about him that was unlike reality until the symbols completely faded and disappeared. The black and bluish-black symbols are different, and the bluish-black one looks familiar. Yes, it’s very similar to the old man I helped when I was wandering. It was also from that time that I began to have dreams with large amounts of fog.

Lumian found the symbols to be special but meaningless, which left him feeling disappointed.

The process of making them appear was extremely painful, pushing him to the brink of death.

In a state that nearly knocked him out, what was the difference between facing the monster with a shotgun and delivering food to it?

…

And if he waited until he had the strength to fight again, the ‘special’ trait would have almost disappeared.

It was cold in the dream, like early spring in the mountains. Lumian found it uncomfortable being naked, so he quickly put on his clothes.

Just doing such a simple thing made him extremely tired, and his head hurt again.

Obviously, he couldn’t recover from the impact the meditation had caused him in a short period of time.

Under such circumstances, Lumian decided to give up exploring for the night and not make any attempts. He would sleep well and focus on recuperating.

……

The sky was still dark when Lumian woke up.

Looking at the darkness in the house and the redness near the curtains, he carefully recalled what had happened in the dream.

I’ve meditated many times in reality, but I didn’t hear that strange

sound or feel any pain…

It's something special that only exists in that dream? Lumian sat up in puzzlement, planning to confirm.

He followed the procedure and tried meditating again.

…

The red sun quickly appeared in his mind, and the chaos in his mind gradually settled down.

This was a familiar meditation experience for Lumian. There were no strange sounds, no intense pain, and no near-death experience.

After a while, he ended his meditation, unbuttoned his shirt, and looked down at his heart.

There was no symbol there.

Indeed, that's the special trait of the dream. It can't affect reality… Lumian didn't know if he should be happy or disappointed.

He raised his head and looked at the curtain that blocked the windows. His thoughts scattered as he thought about whether the "special" trait in the dream could be exploited, and how.

At that moment, he saw a small shadow outside the window.

Lumian's pupils dilated, turning high-strung as his instinctive reaction was to call out to his sister. But then he remembered that he was at home and Aurore had said she would watch over him, so she should have sensed it.

Slowly and carefully, he approached the window, waiting for his sister to call an end to his actions. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

But Aurore did not appear.

Lumian came to the window, grabbed the curtain, and cautiously pulled open a crack.

Outside the window was the quiet and dark night. The crimson moon hung far away in the sky.

On an elm tree not far away, an owl, larger than most of its kind, with eyes that were neither dull nor stiff, stood quietly, facing Lumian's window. It looked at Lumian with an indescribable look of superciliousness.

That owl!

It's here again!

Lumian's heart was in his throat.

Just like the last time, the owl looked at Lumian for about ten seconds before spreading its wings and flying deep into the night.

"…" Lumian was speechless.

After a while, he drew the curtains and cursed, "Is there something wrong with your head?

"You would come and take a look every single time, not saying a word before leaving!

"Are you mute, or is there something wrong with your IQ? Have you not learned human language after so many years?"

In fact, Lumian had his own guesses about the owl's actions. He believed that his sister's existence made it afraid to do anything. After all, Aurore had said that as long as he didn't leave the building at night, she could guarantee his safety. If he had stuck his head out of the window on impulse just now, the owl probably wouldn't have flown away quietly.

After cursing for a while, Lumian decided to close the curtains and catch up on some sleep.

He casually glanced outside and suddenly froze.

More than ten meters away, at the edge of a small forest, a figure was slowly walking over.

She wore a dark-colored dress made of coarse cloth, and her hair was thin and pale-white.

“Naroka…” Lumian recognized the figure.

It was Naroka, who he had asked about the legend of the Warlock.

Naroka’s face blended into the darkness, and her eyes reflected a strange light under the faint crimson moonlight. Her movements were abnormally stiff, like a wandering ghost.

Chapter 20 - 20: Customs

Chapter 20: Customs

Lumian subconsciously held his breath and shrank back a little.

Naroka did not come in this direction. Slowly, she entered the small forest and disappeared into the deep night.

Lumian was slightly worried. She doesn't seem right… Did something happen?

Recently, there had been more and more abnormalities in the village.

He looked outside for a while, and the night had returned to silence. Only the swaying leaves proved the existence of the wind.

"What are you looking at?" Aurore's voice suddenly came from behind him.

Lumian turned around and was delighted to see his sister, who was wearing a two-piece pajama set.

"Did you also notice something wrong?"

"No," Aurore replied, her blond hair slightly messy and fluffy from just waking up.

Then she added angrily, "I don't see anything wrong. All I know is that there's a guy who's up in the middle of the night, loitering at the window."

"It'll be dawn in an hour tops. How can it be considered the middle of the night…" Lumian muttered out of habit. Then he asked, "Didn't you come over because of the owl? Didn't you see Naroka outside?"

"Naroka?" Aurore revealed a rare blank expression.

Lumian recounted everything from the moment he woke up and realized that there was a black shadow outside the window to the strangely-behaving Naroka walking into the forest.

As for the special trait he discovered while meditating in his dream, he planned to consult the mysterious woman first before considering how to tell Aurore or hide it for a while to prevent his sister from stopping him from obtaining superpowers.

Aurore furrowed her beautiful blond brows.

“Something might have already happened to Naroka…

“Go check on them at dawn.”

Lumian asked subconsciously, “What could have happened?”

“How would I know? I didn’t see her; there’s no way I can make an accurate judgment,” Aurore snapped back.

“You really didn’t see her?” Lumian thought that his sister had been monitoring him the entire time.

Aurore scoffed. “Do you think you can see whatever you want? If you see something you shouldn’t, you have to consider which graveyard to bury me in. I won’t look outside for no reason. I’ll just monitor your condition. I’ll only wake up if something’s wrong.”

Lumian was stunned for a moment and couldn’t help but blink. Grande Soeur is taking such a huge risk to watch over me…

Aurore added earnestly, “That’s why I’m telling you, don’t look at what you shouldn’t see and don’t listen to what you shouldn’t hear. Pursuing extraordinary power is a very dangerous thing.”

“Got it.” Lumian nodded solemnly.

At the same time, he thought to himself, It’s precisely because it’s dangerous that I can’t let you go at it alone.

…

After breakfast, Lumian followed his sister's instructions and headed straight to Naroka's house. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

As he approached, he saw many villagers standing outside the door, including his friends, Ava's father Guillaume Lizier, Reimund's father Pierre Greg, and the padre's younger brother Pons Bénet.

"What happened?" Lumian carefully circled around Pons Bénet and the few thugs surrounding him and went to Reimund's side.

Reimund replied sadly."Naroka passed away."

"Ah?" Lumian was prepared for something to happen to Naroka, but he didn't expect her to be dead.

Reimund rambled on. "Before dawn, the padre came to give her the last rites. She was still fine and energetic two days ago when we asked her about the legend of the Warlock. Why would she suddenly pass away…"

Before dawn? Lumian was alarmed.

He realized that it was precisely that moment when he saw Naroka. The exact timing of the padre's last rites didn't make much of a difference.

Lumian's mind raced with thoughts. So, what I saw was actually Naroka's ghost? This happened after the owl flew over. Can it really take away a human's soul? Yes, Naroka was one of the witnesses to the Warlock incident that happened back then… If I hadn't listened to Grande Soeur and went out after dark, I might have been the one the padre did last rites with. Heh, his version of it for me is probably spitting at me…

Reimund didn't chat with him. He stood outside the two-story house and quietly mourned Naroka.

After Lumian reined in his thoughts, he saw Leah, Ryan, and Valentine walking over.

"Did something happen here?" Leah asked before Lumian could even

greet her.

They saw many people gathered on the road.

Lumian sighed and said, “My cabbages, an honorable old lady has passed away.”

“Then why are all of you standing outside?” Leah asked without offering any condolences, not fully convinced by Lumian’s explanation.

She was still wearing the same clothes as before.

Lumian made an obvious sizing-up gesture, which made Leah panic.

“What’s wrong?” Ryan asked.

Lumian smiled. “You’re definitely not Dariège locals.”

“We’re from Bigorre,” Ryan answered frankly.

Bigorre was the provincial capital of the Intis Republic’s Riston Province, while Dariège was a city on the southern border of Riston Province. It covered a large area, including the village of Cordu.

Lumian nodded. “It’s no wonder you don’t know the customs of the Dariège region.”

He had initially thought that these three foreigners were officials from Dariège, but it turned out that they were from the provincial capital, Bigorre.

Lumian silently updated his judgment of Leah and company. Looks like their status is much higher than I expected…

Leah asked with interest, “What kind of customs? Can you tell us?”

Lumian planned on forging a good relationship with them, so he smiled and said, “You’re my cabbages. Why wouldn’t I tell you?

“As you know, everyone has their own corresponding horoscope. And in the Dariège region, we also believe that every family has their own

horoscope that determines the amount of providence they receive. The death and funeral of the family, especially the head of the house, will take away such good providence.

“In order not to affect the horoscope and retain the providence, we will place the deceased in the center of a family before burial, which is the kitchen. Then, we will trim off some of her hair and nails and keep them in the house forever without letting them be discovered by any guests.

“At such a time, if a person attending the funeral enters the house, it will affect the corresponding horoscope and take away a portion of their providence. Therefore, we attend the funeral by mourning outside. At most, we will look in from the door and wait at the cemetery beside the cathedral.”

“I see,” Ryan nodded in understanding. “It’s the same as how every cathedral in every region has holy bones stored. ‘The sage is forever where a part of their body is.'”

He turned to face Naroka’s house, removed his top hat, placed it against his chest, and began to mourn.

Leah and Valentine also expressed their condolences.

When they were done, Lumian said to them, “I’m going to the door to look at her. I’ll see you later, my cabbages.”

“Okay,” Ryan replied with a gentle nod.

Lumian lowered his voice and added, “I’ll help you find that livre bleu.”

Before Leah and the others could respond, he stepped to the side and smiled.

“Why do you wear the same clothes every day?”

“We can’t care too much about appearances when we are out in a foreign land for extended periods,” Ryan explained simply, while Leah subconsciously touched the silver bell hanging from her veil.

After bidding farewell to Valentine and the others, Lumian walked to Naroka's door.

He had to queue for a while before it was finally his turn.

Lumian stood by the door and looked at the kitchen ahead.

Naroka's corpse had not yet been placed into a coffin. It was lying quietly on a simple bed made of a few benches.

Her nails had been trimmed, and her thin white hair was much neater than before.

Her face was pale, and her wrinkles deepened the lines on her face. Lumian didn't dare to look at her for too long.

Compared to when I saw her before dawn, her face is even whiter, Lumian thought to himself as he made a slight bow before leaving the door.

On the way to the cemetery with Reimund, Lumian suddenly slapped his head.

"Sacrebleu, I forgot to inform Aurore."

"What are you waiting for?" Reimund asked, understanding the importance of keeping Aurore in the loop.

Aurore didn't enjoy being out most of the time. She really wasn't kept in the loop if not for her brother.

Lumian saw an opportunity and said, "Coincidentally, this place isn't far from your place. Lend me your livre bleu for two days. A few pages of mine had been gnawed away by rats, so I need to copy it."

"Okay," Reimund agreed.

In any case, there was still some time before the burial.

...

Lumian returned home and hid the livre bleu before informing

Aurore about Naroka's passing.

She couldn't help but sigh.

"As expected, something happened. I wonder if it was caused by that owl…"

"I suspect so too," Lumian agreed, echoing his sister.

Aurore tersely acknowledged and said, "You must not leave the house after dark. You have to find a way to warn the people who were seeking out the legend of the Warlock with you."

Lumian had already scared Reimund with Naroka's death, having just asked about the Warlock legend two days ago, and instructed him not to go out after dark for the time being. "Alright," he replied.

"Naroka is a good person. I'll change my clothes and attend her funeral," Aurore said, walking towards the stairs. "Do you want to come with me, or do you want to read some books and do a test set before going?"

Why am I still doing test sets at a time like this? Lumian couldn't quite understand his sister's train of thought.

Considering that he had to compare the livres bleu, he said to Aurore, "I'll do a paper before I go."

"Very good." Aurore was rather pleased.

After Aurore left, Lumian's expression darkened.

He went up to the second floor and entered the study. He took out the livre bleu that he had borrowed from Reimund and compared it to the one at home where part of the words had been cut out.

Time slowly passed as Lumian pieced together the corresponding words one by one and wrote them on a piece of paper.

He made adjustments according to the length of the two sentences, and soon the contents of a possible request for help appeared in front of him: "We need help as soon as possible. The people around us are

getting weirder.”

Chapter 21 - 21 Response

21 Response

Lumian fell silent, his eyes glued to the restored request for help.

Although what he pieced together wasn't necessarily the content of the letter; after all, the words could create other sentences like 'the people around us need help as soon as possible; we are getting weirder.' He couldn't help but feel a weight pressing down on his heart.

In the past, he might've dismissed it as a prank, but too many abnormal things were happening in Cordu—and those were only the ones he noticed.

I can't pretend that I didn't see anything, nor can I pretend that nothing happened…

!!

Grande Soeur said that a person with a normal heart and mind needs to know how to avoid danger. They shouldn't stand under a wall upon discovering that it's about to collapse…

He snapped out of his reverie and made up his mind.

He couldn't risk staying in Cordu a moment longer. He had to leave with his sister, and he had to do it now!

Regarding the abnormality, the officials would undoubtedly handle it. The villagers of Cordu were under their protection, and Lumian had neither the duty nor the capability to take on such a responsibility.

In addition, I have to speed up the exploration of the dream ruins and

strive to obtain superpowers in a short period of time to deal with any accidents that might happen when I leave this place… The urgency of the situation filled him with a sense of imperative that he couldn't ignore.

He needed to become much stronger if he wanted to protect his sister and ensure her safety. The last thing he wanted was for her to be implicated in any abnormalities that might erupt before they left Cordu.

Keeping his mission in mind, Lumian carefully returned his livre bleu to its original place. Then, he snatched up the piece of paper containing the words and sentences from before and strode purposefully down the stairs.

He made his way over to the stove and tossed the piece of paper into the hungry flames.

Once outside, Lumian wasted no time in making his way straight to Ol' Tavern.

But as he approached the door, he found it tightly shut, a clear indication that the owner and bartender, Maurice Bénet, had likely gone to attend Naroka's funeral.

Still, Lumian knew that as a part-time hotel, it was impossible to lock all the doors during the day without inconveniencing the guests.

So, he headed for a side trail and slipped in through the back door.

Climbing up the stairs, Lumian scanned the hallway but saw no one in sight.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Lumian's footsteps echoed as he ascended the stairs to the second floor of the inn. He paused outside the door of the enigmatic woman's room, examining the doorknob for any sign of a "Do Not Disturb" placard. Finding none, he inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly, steadying himself. With a bend of his finger, he rapped lightly on the door.

Knock! Knock! Knock…

He knocked three times in a row, but there was no movement inside.

Knock. Knock. Knock… No answer. Lumian tried again, rapping more firmly this time.

He pounded on the door, but the room remained silent.

She's not here? Lumian frowned. She went to attend Naroka's funeral?

Without wasting a moment, he bolted down the stairs and out of the inn, making a beeline for the cemetery beside the cathedral.

En route, he passed by Naroka's house, where the mourners who had said their farewells at the door had dispersed and headed to the cemetery to await the procession.

Lumian surveyed the area, his eyes scanning the landscape until he spotted a figure emerging from the house. It was none other than Pons Bénet, the younger brother of the padre.

"Wh…" Lumian's heart skipped a beat as he leaned against the nearby building, trying to remain inconspicuous.

Wasn't it strictly forbidden to enter the house of the deceased as it could potentially influence the family's fortunes?

Pons Bénet stopped in front of Naroka's house and whispered something to Arnault André, the old lady's youngest son.

After a brief exchange, Pons Bénet departed, leaving Arnault to lock up the house and make his way to the cemetery.

Naroka's death is indeed a little peculiar… Lumian frowned and muttered to himself silently.

He now felt that perhaps the owl wasn't to be blamed for Naroka's death. It was more probable that the padre's group has something to do with it.

The owl might be simply adhering to its duty of taking souls from the dead in Cordu. It just happened to stop on the way and observed

Lumian for a while.

Of course, Lumian had an even more terrifying guess: What if the padre's group and the owl are connected!?

Their peculiarities and clandestine activities could be attributed to the Warlock's remains.

Before exiting Cordu, I should find an opportunity to share my thoughts with Ryan, Leah, and company. I hope they'll uncover the truth and put an end to the issue expeditiously. Lumian averted his gaze and mumbled to himself as he headed towards the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral.

Despite appearing somber and solemn during the funeral, Lumian kept a watchful eye on each villager, hoping to detect any abnormality in their demeanor.

Alas, his efforts yielded no fruit.

Nonetheless, he had a sneaking suspicion that some of the villagers were wearing a facade…

Additionally, the enigmatic woman who had bestowed upon him the tarot card was nowhere to be found at the cemetery.

……

As the evening descended upon the semi-subterranean two-story abode, Aurore fixed her eyes on her brother, Lumian, and demanded, "Where's your script? Let me see it."

Lumian's expression turned serious as he replied, "I have something to tell you."

Aurore scanned his face.

"Did some wild animal in the village chew your script again?"

"No," Lumian whispered, his voice low. "I found out something from those foreigners."

Aurore's smile faded as she nodded, gesturing for him to continue.

Lumian revealed how Ryan and his gang were snooping around, investigating a letter, and the peculiarity of the livre bleu at home. He spoke of his suspicions regarding Madame Pualis and the letter's contents, which he had unearthed using Reimund's livre bleu.

Finally, he suggested, "We have to leave the village as soon as possible and head to Dariège. No, Bigorre. We'll stay there for a while."

Aurore didn't respond right away. She mulled over Lumian's suggestion for more than ten seconds.

"This is indeed the best choice for now.

"However, there's a problem. If we suddenly bolt from Cordu while the officials are investigating, won't it draw attention to us? Will they intercept us and make us the focus of their investigation?"

"It's fine if I'm not a Beyonder, but I'm an unofficial Beyonder. I'll be captured and cleansed by the Inquisition."

Lumian was out of his depth, an amateur in a sea of seasoned veterans. The problem at hand was a conundrum that he had never faced before, and for a moment, he was at a loss for words. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

...

He finally managed to stutter, "So what's the plan? We break out and hide in another city, another country?"

"Oh, Lumian, you are overestimating me," she said. "Those three foreigners are more powerful than you think. If there was only one, I might be able to take them on, but three? And what if there's an ambush outside the village? Maybe they're just waiting for us to make a run for it."

Lumian was speechless.

He had to admit, compared to his sister, he was still green behind the

ears. He just didn't have the same level of experience or the sharp attention to detail that she possessed.

"You're too impulsive," Aurore said, shaking her head. "But I suppose that's to be expected. After all, what young man doesn't have a bit of fire in his belly?"

She paused for a moment.

"Tomorrow morning, you're going to do me a favor. Head over to the administrator's office and help me send a telegram to Novel Weekly. Ask them when their next author salon will be held."

Aurore was a beloved columnist for Novel Weekly.

Only the administrator and the padre possessed a telegram machine, reserved for emergency communications. The villagers could use it, but at a cost in verl d'or.

Aurore saw Lumian's confusion and quickly explained her plan, "Novel Weekly has been begging me to promote my work in Trier, but I've always refused, including the most recent author salon. However, if I ask them to invite me now, they'll jump at the chance and even reimburse our train tickets. Our departure will seem ordinary, and even if we're being watched, we won't be suspects. I can temporarily trick them when the time comes. As long as we don't let the abnormality corrupt us, our chances of slipping out of Cordu are high."

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief. "Alright," he said.

...

In just a few seconds, Lumian posed an intriguing question to Aurore.

"Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, is Beyonder a term for people with superpowers?"

"Yes," Aurore replied, choosing not to elaborate any further.

However, Aurore then flashed a sly smile and said, "So, you're really going to abandon your friends and flee from Cordu."

“I must have missed the part where that’s my problem,” Lumian snorted in response.

Keeping his sister safe was his top priority at the moment.

Aurore clicked her tongue and laughed.

“Oh, Lumian, you’re such a delight. Say that again, would you?

“How many times have you said that before? And yet, every time, you either quietly offer your help or give them a pretend warning,” Aurore continued.

“Those were trivial matters,” Lumian defended himself.

However, the abnormality they faced now was a real threat to his sister’s safety.

“Okay, okay,” Aurore sighed, not wanting to argue with the kid. “Let’s get dinner ready. It’s your turn to cook today.”

Lumian grunted tersely and headed towards the stove.

……

The night was dark, the crimson moon obscured by thick clouds.

Lumian finished washing up and lay down on the bed.

A visible worry crept onto his face.

Aurore’s response wasn’t bad, but Lumian was worried that the anomalies in the village would erupt at any moment while they waited for Novel Weekly’s reply.

Lumian was desperate to increase his strength and obtaining superpowers in the dream ruins seemed like the easiest option.

However, he hadn’t been able to find that lady all day and didn’t have any corresponding suggestions. He was left with no choice but to try it out himself.

The situation was like a nocked arrow, ready to fire, and Lumian

couldn’t afford to hesitate.

Without hesitation, Lumian composed himself and slowly drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 22 - 22: Arrangements

Chapter 22: Arrangements

Lumian awoke to the world shrouded in a faint, gray fog.

With practiced ease, he bounded out of bed and rushed to the window. His gaze fell upon the mountain, a towering behemoth of brownish-red stones and reddish-brown soil that loomed in the wilderness beyond.

Despite its modest size, a mere twenty or thirty meters tall, the mountain seemed to stretch endlessly upwards, piercing the very heavens themselves. Lumian found himself using the words "mountain peak" to describe it, so profound was its impact on him.

Beneath its massive frame, the ruins of dilapidated structures encircled the desolate wilderness, stacked atop one another, layer upon layer.

Judging by the shotgun-wielding monster's build, I'd say it's highly skilled in both running and jumping. It also appears to possess a degree of intelligence, capable of wielding a weapon as complex as a shotgun…

It has incredibly strong tracking abilities, and I can't discount the possibility that it possesses some sort of superpowers, much like Aurore…

…

As Lumian focused his mind, details of the target began to surface.

His initial judgment was grim—if he attempted to face the monster with the shotgun, his chance of survival was a meager 10 percent. And if he tried to utilize his special trait, it would only hasten his

demise. His meditation was a double-edged sword; it pushed him to the brink of death, making him vulnerable to even the slightest strike from the enemy.

Sneak attacks and assassinations were not viable options either. The other party possessed an uncanny ability to track his movements, rendering any attempts at stealth futile. Plus, Lumian lacked the necessary equipment to mount a ranged assault. A revolver would have been a godsend.

For the past two days, Lumian had wracked his brains trying to come up with a plan. And finally, a solution presented itself: traps!

He had ventured deep into the mountains with the village hunters, where he mastered the art of setting traps. Since then, Lumian had become a pro at pulling off a few practical jokes.

Lumian's initial plan was to use oil as a weapon. His idea was to fill a large bucket with oil, tie a rope to it, and hide it somewhere high. When his target approached, he would yank the rope, causing the bucket to tip over, drenching the unsuspecting victim with oil. Then, he would light a torch and toss it at them.

However, after some deliberation, he gave up on the idea.

On the premise that the creature had strong tracking abilities, he knew he had to overestimate its sense of smell.

The smell of oil was quite obvious, and if he used other stronger smells to cover it up, he wasn't sure if the other party would react differently. The monster might even be able to distinguish even the slightest abnormality, like wild dogs.

In the end, Lumian chose to dig a deep pit and plant stakes at the bottom.

He knew that there was a certain problem with this plan. With the tracking abilities displayed by the monster, there was a high chance that it would discover the anomaly in advance and see through the trap.

Lumian's response was to find a way to exploit its blind spots and

lower its guard.

His weapons were inferior to the creature's, but he hoped his intelligence could give him the upper hand. As a human, he had one advantage: his brain.

At least from our last encounter, it possesses a certain degree of intelligence, albeit not quite that high… Lumian comforted himself.

But he refused to let this lull him into a false sense of security. He would plan assuming that the creature had the cognitive abilities of an average human being.

Someone like Pons Bénet.

No, that guy's IQ is lower than a pile of rocks. If it weren't for all his goons, I'd have him bowing down to me and calling me daddy. After a moment of contemplation, Lumian raised his expectations of the monster. Yes, treat it like an uneducated padre.

He gazed out the window again, his eyes fixated on the wilderness between his dwelling and the ruins.

This place was closer to the "safe zone," making it the ideal location for his hideout. However, there was no cover, leaving everything exposed in plain sight, making it unsuitable for an ambush.

"It's fine to dig a trap, but if I use myself as bait, the other party will be able to spot me from a distance and shoot me. It won't need to come over at all…" Lumian muttered, contemplating whether to take the risk of entering the ruins to set up a trap.

His plan took shape rapidly, with one thing left to confirm: it would take a lot of time to dig a deep pit and plant stakes below. Lumian couldn't expect the other party to wait until he was done.

After a moment's reflection, Lumian opened his arms and made an "embrace the Sun" gesture. He prayed more fervently than ever before.

"My God, my Father, please bless me and aid me in dealing with that monster.

“Praise the Sun!”

There was no 100% certainty for most things in the world. Lumian didn’t hesitate for a moment. He grabbed the pitchfork and axe from the bedroom and proceeded to the study.

Considering the target’s weapon, Lumian knew he had to switch up his protection gear.

He shed his cotton clothes and lashed hard-bound books to his chest and back with a rope.

This was makeshift paper armor!

He vaguely remembered his sister warning him about the potential for internal injuries, but he couldn’t afford to worry about that now.

He stretched to make sure the weight of the books wouldn’t impede his fighting abilities, then donned his leather jacket and headed down to the ground floor to gather materials for his trap.

Not long after, Lumian’s grip tightened on the shovel and bundle of ropes at his waist, one for climbing and the other for crafting rope nets to replace the tree branches.

He breathed deeply, steeling himself for what lay ahead, and gripped the iron axe in his right hand as he opened the door.

A faint gray fog crept through the wilderness as Lumian approached the mountain, the peak now dyed in blood.

Lumian made his way through the eerie silence, creeping towards the edge of the ruins.

With caution, he walked a distance to the side and tossed his shovel, pitchfork, ropes, and other gear into a dark corner of a collapsed building. With only his trusty axe in hand, he returned to the spot where he had entered the ruins.

Moving quietly and deliberately, Lumian crept deeper into the ruins without drawing attention to himself.

When he finally reached the spot where the three-faced monster had scared him off last time, he paused for nearly a minute before turning back.

Halfway there, he began to detour, circling back towards the collapsed house where he had stored his tools.

As he approached, Lumian scanned the terrain, searching for a suitable location to set up his trap.

There's a relatively wide and short crevice here. With a little modification, it'll make an excellent trap and save me precious time. As for the other one, well, that might take a while. But I'll just have to hope the monster won't find me too quickly…

Lumian retrieved his shovel and other gear, turned back to the chosen location, and set to work.

After modifying the crevice, Lumian wielded his axe and sliced off a jagged piece of wood, then inserted it into the trap's base. He crafted a net from rope, draping it over the trap before covering it with soil, ensuring that it blended seamlessly with its surroundings.

With everything in place, he began to mimic the monster tracking him. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

If this creature is as perceptive as I think it is, it will sense the trap and avoid it, perhaps leaping over it in a single bound. However, it would inevitably reach this spot…

I need to be here, so it spots me the moment it arrives… Lumian measured the distance with his feet and confirmed his line of sight before settling on a relatively intact wall.

He squatted there and confirmed his line of sight.

Then he began to dig a second trap.

This was a trap specifically designed for "normal humans."

Lumian knew that when someone had managed to track down their target and easily realized that the other party had laid a trap for

them, only to discover that the enemy was lying in wait nearby, they'd probably get cocky. Their thirst for success would overwhelm them, and they'd ignore the possibility of a second trap, eagerly lunging at their prey.

It was a classic flaw of people with pedestrian intelligence.

Lumian just prayed that the monster didn't possess the average IQ of a human. If it did, he had no choice but to bolt. Odds were he'd be ensnared and left to die in the wild, with a slim chance of making it back to his house and hiding in the "safe zone."

Cordu's abnormality had forced him to make a dangerous choice.

With every passing moment, Lumian grew increasingly wary. Even though he had set up the second trap, the monster with the shotgun had yet to make an appearance.

The same held true for the other monsters.

At last, Lumian began to relax. After stowing away his shovel and other supplies, he stood tall, spreading his arms wide.

"Praise the Sun!" he exclaimed with renewed vigor.

Lumian shrank back against the wall and fell to his knee, his eyes fixated on the first trap.

There was no clear line of sight to the path he took, obstructed by a collapsed building looming in his way.

He waited there, patiently, his heart thumping in his chest. Lumian could feel the adrenaline pumping through his veins, and the sensation was unprecedented.

As a vagrant, Lumian had encountered his fair share of "enemies" who were bigger and brawnier than him. But they weren't looking to off him; they just wanted his grub, dough, and a decent spot to catch some Z's. Even if someone happened to die in the scuffle, it was chalked up to an unfortunate accident.

But now, the adversary he was up against was a monstrous creature

that didn't abide by human laws or morals. And it was exponentially stronger than Lumian. Hell, it might even possess a few superpowers. If his scheme went sideways, the outcome was all but certain.

Thump, thump, thump… Lumian's heart was about to leap out of his chest.

Everyone wanted to live the good life, and Lumian was no exception.

Breathe in, breathe out… breathe in, breathe out…

Lumian tried to take deep breaths to steady his nerves, but it wasn't helping.

Lumian hoped the monster would appear sooner, though he dreaded its arrival.

On the one hand, it could bring a quick resolution to this situation, regardless of whether the outcome was positive or negative. At least then he wouldn't be as anxious as he was now, almost at the point of breaking down. On the other hand, fear gripped him tightly.

Realizing that he couldn't go on like this, he reminded himself, I can't burden Aurore with my fears. With that, he attempted to meditate, focusing all his energy on the task.

Although it proved more challenging than before, Lumian eventually managed to outline the crimson sun in his mind.

The mere sight of it eased his nerves somewhat, yet he still trembled with fear.

Suddenly, he heard a faint rustling sound.

It was as if a shepherd was approaching quietly through a nearby pasture, hidden from view.

Chapter 23 - 23: Combat Intelligence

Chapter 23: Combat Intelligence

Lumian's senses were on high alert.

He wasn't as scared as before now that things were finally happening. Despite his body still quivering, he felt more in control and less likely to collapse.

I should've died five years ago. It's all thanks to Aurore that I'm still alive. These past five years were a free lunch. What's there to be afraid of?? Lumian muttered to himself, gritting his teeth and mustering up courage.

In the blink of an eye, the already dim light illuminating the first trap's surface grew even fainter.

A shadowy figure emerged, blocking the light that pierced through the dense fog in the sky.

The figure loomed in the distance, a hulking beast with blood-red eyes and greasy black hair. Half-human and half-beast, it was armed with a shotgun on its back, ready for anything. Its front "knees" bent as it surveyed the ground before it.

A moment later, the beast, wearing a dark jacket and muddy pants, removed its shotgun and jumped, controlling the vertical extent of its jump to leap over the trap and land on the solid, cracked ground.

It turned its greasy black-haired head and saw a slight movement.

Then, the monster spotted Lumian, who had a panicked expression and was trying to hide behind a wall.

With a low growl, the beast jumped up high again and pounced on its target.

It landed a slight distance away from where Lumian had been, to prevent him from turning around and dealing a fatal blow before it could stabilize itself.

Lumian fumbled his way around the wall, disappearing from view.

As soon as the monster landed, the soil beneath its feet gave way, and it plummeted along with the dirt and rope net into a deep pit that had suddenly appeared.

Thud!

The sound of something heavy crashing to the ground echoed through the abandoned building, accompanied by a screech resembling that of a rat.

Lumian, who had concealed himself behind the wall, couldn't suppress the thrill surging through him upon witnessing the sight.

The first step had been accomplished!

With most of his fear evaporating, he seized the pitchfork by his side and dashed towards the trap.

The skinless monster's formidable tenacity had left an indelible impression on Lumian. Moreover, his quarry had a shotgun, so he refrained from exposing himself above the deep hole. Instead, he aimed the pitchfork from a distance and thrust it into the pit.

In a sudden turn of events, the pitchfork plunged and halted abruptly.

Immediately, an intense force reverberated through the pitchfork, yanking Lumian into the trap with brute force.

Caught off guard, Lumian tumbled forward.

He didn't bother inspecting the pit's bottom. Discarding the pitchfork, he spun around and lunged towards the still-standing wall.

Bang!

The impact hit Lumian like a freight train, knocking him off his feet.

Blood, with a distinct metallic taste, surged up in his throat.

With a thud, he hit the ground, tumbling a few times before he regained his footing.

In the same instant, he caught sight of the monstrous creature—part-human, part-beast—emerging from the deep pit.

It held a single-barreled shotgun in its hand, its body torn open, revealing a grotesque display of wounds. A sickening mixture of dark red and pale yellow liquid poured out, as its insides spilled out.

Despite being badly injured by Lumian's trap, the creature had not lost its ability to fight.

As it tumbled into the pit, it managed to contort its body just enough to avoid a fatal blow. The creature's legs and arms were also still functional, allowing it to break free from the trap.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian bolted for the ruins nearby.

It wasn't a spontaneous decision; he had a plan in mind.

He knew there was a chance the trap wouldn't completely incapacitate the monster, leaving it with enough strength to fight back.

In the event that the trap failed, Lumian's contingency plan was to use the environment to his advantage. He'd play a game of cat and mouse, buying time for the beast to succumb to its wounds. Its reaction time and strength would weaken considerably, and Lumian could strike when the opportunity presented itself.

Bang!

Another shot rang out, followed by the sound of soil splattering as leads appeared at the spot where Lumian had been standing.

He quickly took cover behind a half-collapsed wall and crawled on all fours to the other side of the ruins.

Suddenly, he heard the sound of wind blowing in the air.

The monster had jumped over.

Lumian swiftly pivoted and crawled back behind the half-collapsed wall through a gap.

He made the most of the special conditions of the collapsed buildings, hiding at times and circling around at others, dodging the monster's attacks without engaging in a direct fight.

Hide-and-seek was Lumian's forte, honed through past pranks where he used this innate ability to escape getting beaten up on the spot.

As the cat-and-mouse game continued, Lumian gradually found himself panting, while the monster's running speed, jumping height, strength, and reaction speed had clearly weakened. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Just a little longer, just a little longer. I still can't defeat it now…?Lumian retreated back to his previous location, leaning against the half-collapsed wall and trying to control his urge to immediately counterattack.

Bang!?Suddenly, he felt a massive blow to his back, sending him flying forward.

The half-collapsed wall and rocks behind him exploded into a million pieces, raining down around him as he crashed to the ground.

The monster hadn't chased after him, instead choosing to body-slam into the obstacles in its way.

The already shaky half-collapsed wall couldn't withstand the brunt of its full force and collapsed completely.

Crimson blood gushed out of the creature's wounds, pooling on the ground in a grotesque display.

Despite being caught off guard, Lumian's reflexes were quick. He rolled out of harm's way and sought cover behind a pile of rubble.

Bang!

The monster's shotgun blast missed him by a hair's breadth.

...

Having slammed into the wall, the monster struggled to regain its footing.

It fumbled with the cloth bag strapped to its waist, only to find it empty. With a snarl, it hurled the shotgun aside and lunged at Lumian.

Lumian had already darted to a new hiding spot for a continued game of cat-and-mouse.

Of course, he couldn't keep up this game forever. The monster might slip away if he waited too long, and the noise could attract others of its kind.

As he circled around the area, he noticed that the monster seemed to be slowing down.

Here's the chance!

With a quick decision, Lumian pretended to make an escape towards a collapsed building.

Once there, he stood firm, drew his axe from his back, and took a moment to catch his breath.

In a flash, the monster rounded the corner and stood in front of Lumian.

Without hesitation, Lumian raised his axe and charged forward.

He stepped towards the creature, turning his body sideways and lowering his shoulder. He planned to body-slam the monster, a move his sister had taught him, and then slash at its neck.

...

Bam!

Lumian took a step forward, leaning his body against the monster's chest, but the creature didn't budge. Lumian was surprised by its unyielding stance. He tried to push harder, but the monster remained like a thick wall.

What…?Lumian's heart tightened, and he bounced back. He was about to pounce to the ground and try to escape the monster's attack range.

In a flash, the monster lunged forward and clutched Lumian's neck in a death grip.

It didn't look like it was having trouble moving at all!

Lumian gasped in shock as he was hoisted into the air, his neck throbbing with pain.?*Sacrebleu, I've been tricked!*?he exclaimed, his mind reeling.

A creaking sound filled the air, and the world spun around him, making his head swim.

His axe had missed its target and was now knocked off to the side.

Lumian finally realized that he had been outsmarted by the monster.

Despite being in dire straits, the creature had enough strength to fight. It had cunningly faked weakness, luring him into attacking instead of staying hidden. Lumian had underestimated its combat intelligence, and now he found himself in a desperate situation.

The monster was clearly at the end of its rope, as evidenced by its inability to snap Lumian's neck. But this was just a temporary respite. The creature still had enough energy left to finish the job.

As his neck threatened to snap and his breathing grew more ragged, Lumian felt his mind begin to go blank.

Blank.

As Lumian teetered on the brink of death, the lady's words suddenly resurfaced in his mind.

She wanted him to use what's special about him in the dream.

Special trait…?His thoughts were nearly blank, and so he quickly seized the opportunity to meditate.

The red sun instantly appeared in his mind. Unlike his previous attempt at meditation to calm his emotions, where the sun disappeared as soon as it was formed, this time he focused on keeping it in existence. Suddenly, a voice from above, infinitely high, pierced his skull.

The pain was excruciating, and Lumian felt as though his heart might burst from his chest. He forgot about the monster's vice grip on his neck and the fact that he was struggling to breathe.

Suddenly, he fell to the ground with a sickening thud.

The strange sound that had accompanied his meditation disappeared, but the pain remained, almost unbearable. He was unable to take stock of his surroundings or even assess the damage done to his body.

After an unknown amount of time, the near-death sensation subsided.

Lumian didn't bother checking his neck; instead, he placed his hands on the ground and lifted his head.

The beast was squatting nearby, half-human and half-beast, with its head drooping and its arms outstretched in front of it.

Lumian noticed its wounds still seeping with blood mixed with a yellow liquid, and the creature's body quivered uncontrollably.

What's wrong with it? Was it scared silly by the "specialness" I displayed??He picked up his fallen axe and took a step towards the monster.

Without hesitation, he held the axe with both hands and swung it at the back of the beast's neck.

The axe sank deeply into the creature's muscles and came to a halt at its bones.

Lumian used all his strength to remove the axe, then continued his assault, slashing at the monster's neck once, twice, thrice. Finally, the beast's head detached from its body with a sickening splash, rolling to the side.

The body held on for a moment longer, barely clinging to life.

No resistance, just trembles.

And then, with a sudden jerk, Lumian's body contorted, his hands releasing their tight grip, letting the bloodied axe slide down with a sickening squelch.

Huff. Puff. Huff.?He could finally catch his breath.

Chapter 24 - 24 Gains

24 Gains

Lumian didn't have the luxury of resting for too long. He had to keep moving, for fear that other monsters might come. After taking a moment to catch his breath, he endured the pain in his neck and back and slowly approached the monster's corpse.

He held the axe tightly in his right hand, ready to strike again if the creature wasn't fully dead.

After cautiously searching the body with his left hand, he found three copper coins called "lick" and an empty cloth bag.

"That's it?" Lumian muttered to himself, disappointed that he hadn't found anything related to superpowers.

!!

If it wasn't for that, would he have risked his life fighting this monster?

If Lumian wasn't special in the dream, he would have been nothing more than the monster's meal.

He propped himself up and looked towards the shotgun monster's head that had rolled to the side, praying that what he was searching for was there.

In that moment, a deep crimson glow materialized over the monster's body.

They resembled fireflies, gradually converging towards a single spot in an unyielding fashion.

Lumian gawked in disbelief, as a sense of elation began to well up

inside of him.

This phenomenon had to be connected to superpowers!

Without much delay, a sticky, dark red substance materialized on the monster's chest, and no additional light specks came into view.

Lumian cautiously crouched down and made a grab for the blob.

It was incredibly slippery, slipping through his grasp twice before he finally managed to hold it in his palm.

It's remarkably lightweight, yet possesses a certain texture and elasticity. The surface feels as smooth as glass…

"What the hell is this?" Lumian muttered to himself, realizing once more that he was completely illiterate when it came to matters of the mystical.

In the midst of hushed whispers, Lumian caught a whiff of something strange and dark-red that reeked of blood. His impatience grew, and an indescribable malice took over his body.

For a moment, he wanted nothing more than to raise his axe and hack at the monster's corpse until his violent emotions were spent.

But Aurore's warning about the dangers of pursuing superpowers echoed in his mind, and he quickly reined in his impulses. He had taken precautions to monitor himself and remain vigilant at all times, and he wouldn't let his guard down now.

It affects my mind? Lumian tossed the dark red blob into the cloth bag he had found on the monster.

The moment he lost contact with it, he felt a wave of calm wash over him, dissipating the remaining excitement of the deathmatch.

His body still trembled slightly, but he was back in control.

"As expected!" Lumian whispered happily as he returned to his senses.

He tied the cloth bag tightly and secured it to his belt buckle.

After a moment's consideration, Lumian withdrew the cloth bag and stowed it safely in the inner pocket of his leather jacket.

It provided him a sense of assurance and minimized the chances of losing it!

As the buttons on his clothes were undone, the book that had been plastered to Lumian's back lost its support and hit the ground.

It was riddled with potholes and in tatters, a far cry from its former state.

Lumian recognized it as the "Mock Examination Papers for Higher Education Admission" exercise book that his sister Aurore had prepared for him. This was the same book that had saved his life by blocking a shotgun attack.

Of course, this single book didn't deserve all the credit.

Lumian picked up the exercise book and sauntered back to the monster's lifeless body, a wry smile on his face.

"See, knowledge is indeed power!" he said, intending to throw it at the monster's face. But then he hesitated, recalling the countless hours Aurore had spent writing it. He couldn't bring himself to toss it away.

Instead, he tucked the exercise book into his belt, dragged the monster's corpse to the trap, and flung it inside. Lumian kicked the monster's head for good measure.

With the battlefield cleared, Lumian gathered his tools, including the empty shotgun, his pitchfork, and shovel, and retreated into the wilderness.

He looked over his shoulder as he walked, ever-vigilant.

Eventually, he made it back to his house, climbed the stairs, and entered his bedroom.

It was only then that he truly relaxed. The agony that had been gnawing at his body, the obvious discomfort, and the overwhelming exhaustion all erupted at once.

He slumped down on the bed, taking a moment to recover. But he didn't want to sleep just yet. He needed to assess the damage. Lumian stripped off his clothes and walked over to the wardrobe, checking himself out in the full-body mirror.

His neck was swollen, and the five bloody finger marks on it had turned an ominous shade of bluish-black. His back was bruised, and there were countless scrapes and cuts all over his body.

Even some of my injuries are internal, just like Aurore had warned me. I wonder if I'll recover by the next time I come in? He couldn't help but reflect on the battle. It was a failure, but not a total failure.

In the first half of the battle, he gave himself a pat on the back. Not only did he make full use of the monster's low IQ to lead it into the second trap, but he also followed his original plan to a tee. It was a game of cat and mouse, and he played it to perfection. He dragged the monster out until it was on the brink of surrendering to its injuries. However, his lack of experience was his downfall. Instead of throwing in heavy rocks, he chose to stab the monster with a pitchfork at the bottom of the pit.

In the second half of the battle, he was overconfident and underestimated the monster's intelligence. His insufficient combat experience made him fall into the monster's trap, which almost got him killed.

That performance would have been a disaster. Thankfully, his earlier successes had pushed the monster to its limit, and it didn't kill him quickly enough. This gave him a chance to complete his meditation and summon his "special trait".

Before this battle, Lumian had not expected the "special trait" to have such a powerful effect. It caused the monster to descend into uncontrollable fear, one so unbreakable despite suffering attacks.

He had worried that the near-death state brought about by

summoning the “special trait” would make him vulnerable to attack.

But it turned out to be special and very strong… As Lumian sighed, he had a revelation.

The monsters in the ruins avoided his house and made it a “safe zone” because there was something even more terrifying inside. It could be the owner of the mysterious voice he heard when he summoned the “special trait”!

Lumian gasped at the thought.

His subconscious urged him to search every corner of the house for the terrifying thing, but he quickly dismissed the idea.

Provoking the being that even the shotgun-wielding monster was helpless against was not an option.

For now, all was calm and peaceful, and it was best to keep it that way. He had to maintain the current state of the “safe house” and not uncover the shroud.

Each passing day was a day, and as for the dangers that may lie ahead, he would face them when the time came.

Not until then, not until I become a Beyonder and gain significant power. Lumian cast his gaze at the cloth bag in his left hand.

Even as Lumian examined his injuries in the mirror, shirtless, he refused to let go of the source of superpowers. He had worked too hard to obtain it.

...

How should I use this thing? he asked himself, opening the cloth bag and staring at the dark red blob within.

The blob lay still at the bottom of the bag, its form unstable yet clearly not alive.

Lumian, who knew nothing of mysticism, wondered if he should eat it, perform a ritual to merge with it, or offer it to some secret entity.

He only knew of the latter two options from reading Hidden Veil. In the past, he would have only thought of one thing: “Eat!”

Lumian didn’t rush to make a decision. He intended to seek counsel from the enigmatic lady at Ol’ Tavern first.

He was convinced that the woman would provide him with clues on how to harness the power of the dark red sphere and gain superhuman abilities.

Lumian sensed that the other party had a reason for doing so, despite not knowing what it was.

If things didn’t pan out, he could still count on his sister for help.

After dressing leisurely, Lumian stowed the lump of crimson in his coat pocket, along with all the cash he’d acquired.

Finally, he collapsed onto the bed, too drained to move. Despite the agony in his neck, back, and body, overwhelming fatigue seized him, and he drifted off to sleep in a flash.

……

...

As Lumian opened his eyes, he was blinded by the sunlight that had already penetrated the curtains, illuminating the entire room.

Slowly sitting up, he felt sore all over, as if he had been pummeled in a dream.

I was indeed beaten up badly… The injuries in the dream really get reflected into reality, but there’s an obvious level of weakening… Trying to move around, he felt his muscles aching a little but was ultimately relieved that he wasn’t too affected.

However, when he reached into his pockets—

“Nothing… Nothing at all!” Lumian failed to exit with the crimson blob.

His expression became solemn, his brows knitted tightly. Lumian didn't know what to do.

The crimson blob, an item that promised superpowers, hadn't followed him into reality. This was different from what the mysterious woman at Ol' Tavern had said. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian gathered himself, quickly changed his clothes, and left his room.

As he walked down the hall, he noticed that the door to the washroom was wide open. Aurore was facing the mirror, brushing her teeth with a serious look on her face.

"Morning," Lumian greeted.

"It's not early anymore. You got up late…" Aurore muttered incoherently.

Splat! Her blond hair, tied back into a ponytail, flicked about as she spit out the liquid in her mouth.

She turned to look at Lumian.

"What did you do wrong last night?"

"That owl is outside. How would I dare go out?" Lumian responded calmly.

"That's true." Aurore dropped the topic and said, "Remember to take five verl d'or to the administrator to send a telegram later."

Lumian nodded.

This was the key to their escape from Cordu, and it was something he would never forget.

After breakfast, Lumian headed straight to the village square where the administrator's office was located in a two-story building.

Upon reaching the office, Lumian discovered that Administrator

Béost had yet to arrive, but the rest of the staff had already commenced their day's work.

Lumian paid the required fee and promptly sent a telegram. After concluding his business, Lumian turned on his heel and began walking towards the Ol' Tavern.

It was highly unlikely that the enigmatic woman was already up and about, but Lumian was more than happy to bide his time.

His pursuit of superpowers had been a prolonged one, so a few more ticks on the clock didn't faze him.

Chapter 25 - 25: Sequences and Potions

Chapter 25: Sequences and Potions

Lumian sauntered into Ol' Tavern, his sharp eyes scanning the dimly lit room. To his surprise, the mysterious woman was already seated in her usual corner, enjoying a lavish breakfast spread.

She had changed her attire yet again, donning a long brown, pleated dress and a dark velvet hat that screamed high society.

"So early?" Lumian approached her table, calming his racing heart.

The woman looked up, meeting his gaze.

"Is there a possibility that I didn't sleep all night?"

"Perhaps." Lumian knew this routine all too well—his sister, Aurore, often pulled all-nighters when deadlines were looming. But what was the reason for the enigmatic woman raising this up?

As he glanced at her table, he found a delectable spread, with a cream soufflé sprinkled with nuts, a muffin that looked scrumptious, a croissant, a cup of black coffee, and a cat tongue biscuit.

What an appetite!?Lumian thought, impressed.?*But how can Cordu provide such luxurious cuisine? Only Aurore or the chefs in the administrator's family could whip up something like this.*

"It's all dessert," Lumian said, taking a seat opposite her.

The woman nodded, her expression serious for once.

"Intis's desserts are indeed not bad, and there's quite a lot of variety. Even if I have some for breakfast every day, it'll take me a month

without repetition to finish them all," she said, biting into the cat tongue biscuit and closing her eyes in bliss. "That's one of the purposes of traveling."

Lumian seized the moment to probe the woman's background. "You're not from Intis?" he asked.

The woman smiled enigmatically.

"I'm from Loen, but given the current situation, this isn't important."

What else did Loen have to offer besides steam machinery, factories, and a large army? Lumian, being an Intisian, couldn't help but recall the mocking words that everyone used to taunt the Loen Kingdom—reclining chairs, mint sauce, fried fish and potatoes, and pure snakefruit beer.

But he quickly brushed off the thought and turned his attention to the task at hand.

"I got rid of the monster with the shotgun."

The woman took a sip of coffee and nodded approvingly.

"Not bad."

Lumian sensed a strange emotion emanating from her eyes.

He couldn't shake off the strange feeling that he had sensed in their previous interactions. There was something about her that he couldn't quite put his finger on—a mix of facetiousness and hidden emotions that intrigued him.

Undeterred, he pressed on with the matter at hand.

"I obtained an abnormal dark-red object from that monster. Holding it makes me irritable and filled with hostility. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"I think it involves supernatural powers, but it didn't follow me to reality," he explained.

The woman smiled enigmatically.

“After going in and out so many times, don’t you realize that other than your own physical condition, you can’t bring anything else over?”

Lumian was taken aback. “Didn’t you say that supernatural things are excluded…” he trailed off, realizing that he was out of his depth.

Lumian couldn’t shake off the physical discomfort that lingered from his dream, along with the vivid memories that refused to fade away.

After careful consideration, he posed a question.

“You mean that after obtaining supernatural powers through the crimson blob and turning oneself into a Beyonder, the corresponding state that is different from that of a normal person can be brought to reality?”

“Not a lost cause,” she replied nonchalantly, savoring the cream soufflé.

“But won’t the corresponding strength weaken because of this?” Lumian pressed, his brow furrowing. “The injuries I suffered in the dream are much lighter in reality.”

“The conditions brought about by Beyonder characteristics won’t change,” the woman explained, meeting Lumian’s gaze. “This is why I said that extraordinary items are excluded.”

Beyonder characteristics…?Lumian mulled over the term, trying to piece together what his sister had told him about Beyonders.

Obtaining such characteristics would allow one to become a Beyonder, he surmised.

And based on the woman’s explanation, he had a hunch about the unique nature of his dream.

That ruin, it’s real. Or maybe it was once real, but now it’s sunk deep into some big shot’s dream and been left to fester. And my dream, it’s like a secret passageway. A passageway that’s only accessible through the

symbols on my chest, and leads straight to that ruin.

Based on my theory, my home in the dream is like a mark left behind by our interaction. It's a reflection of the place where I feel safest, deep in my subconscious. That's why it looks nothing like the wilderness or the ruins that surround it. It's like we're in two different worlds, me and the monsters.

But those monsters, they can't come in. They're stuck in the real ruins while my "home" is a mix of dream and reality. Only those with the special symbols can pass through the corresponding barrier.

The symbols only work for me, and they record the state of my body before I'm brought back to reality. When I wake up, the things that don't involve the supernatural will fade away, but the implications will remain. Even death will work the same way.

So there shouldn't be anything scary waiting for me at home in the dream. But the origin of those symbols and the source of that terrifying voice, they symbolize something dark and horrific…

Lumian sat in silence, watching the lady across from him leisurely devour her breakfast. She didn't seem to mind.

Lumian finally asked, regaining his composure, "May I ask how I should use that dark-red blob? Is it the Beyonder characteristic you mentioned?"

At the critical moment, he could not help but address her respectfully.

The lady set down her coffee and looked at him.

"I can give you a potion formula. Just follow it."

The generous gift made Lumian uneasy.

"Why are you helping me?"

The lady laughed.

"Would you believe me if I said it was arranged by fate?"

No…?Lumian subconsciously replied inwardly.

The abnormality in the village, the pressure of the impending storm, and the desire for superpowers all swirled around Lumian, threatening to overwhelm him. He pushed his unease down and spoke in a low voice, “I do.”

Opportunities like this didn’t come around often, and Lumian knew he had to act decisively. He couldn’t afford to hesitate or have second thoughts.

The lady’s smile grew wider, the unclear emotions he had detected in her eyes earlier intensifying.

…

She pulled out a stack of post-it notes and a silver fountain pen from her black lady’s purse and began writing.

Finally, she stopped and tore off the top note and handed it to him.

Lumian snatched it from her hand and read it quickly.

“Hunter potion formula:

“Main ingredient: One Hunter Beyonder characteristic;

“Supplementary ingredients: 80 milliliters of red wine, one Red Chestnut Flower (can be a specimen or substituted with 10 drops of the corresponding essential oil), 5 grams of poplar tree leaf powder, 10 grams of basil;

“Usage: Drink it directly.

Satisfied with his memorization, Lumian carefully folded the note and slipped it into his brown jacket.

Done with that, he asked, unable to contain his curiosity, “What does ‘Hunter’ mean?”

Hunter in the supernatural sense?

“The corresponding Sequence,” the lady replied, taking a casual sip of her coffee. “You do not know much about mysticism, so let me explain. There are 22 common pathways in the world. To access them, you must obtain ingredients with the corresponding Beyonder characteristics and concoct potions. Each pathway has 10 Sequences, numbered from 9 to 0. The lower the number, the higher the level, and the stronger the ability.”

…

“The Beyonder characteristic you obtained belongs to the Red Priest pathway. It can only be used to concoct the corresponding Sequence 9 Hunter potion.”

Lumian listened attentively and blurted out, “Then what Sequence does my sister Aurore belong to?”

“She’s a Sequence 7 Warlock of the Mystery Pryer pathway,” the lady replied coolly.

She did not mention how she knew.

Aurore is already at Sequence 7? That’s true. She has already obtained supernatural powers for several years… I’ll only be at Sequence 9 after consuming the potion. I’m still quite a distance from her… I only hope that I won’t be a burden when we escape Cordu in the future… ?Lumian couldn’t help but ask, “Can I drink higher Sequence Beyonder potions directly? Or should I drink Sequence 9 today and Sequence 8 tomorrow?”

“Theoretically, yes.” The lady added after Lumian revealed a look of joy, “However, most who attempt it end up dead or as a monster. Fewer than one in ten million people succeed.”

“Turn into monsters?” Lumian was alarmed.

The lady chuckled and said, “Didn’t your sister warn you about the dangers of the path to transcendence? After drinking the potion, if you can’t control the power, you’ll either die from a physical breakdown or transform into a monster. Why do you think the one you encountered was in human form?”

No wonder…?Lumian finally understood what danger his sister was talking about.

But he was willing to face it.

“Is there no way to reduce this danger?” he asked.

The lady considered him for a moment before answering, “There is. You need a firm will, good physical condition, and some luck. As for the rest, you don’t need to know. You’re still on the first potion.”

“Good physical condition…” Lumian, who had planned on returning to catch up on sleep and drink the potion later, frowned.

He was still seriously injured in the dream.

The lady opposite him nodded slightly and said, “Take your time. Wait until nightfall and your body has mostly recovered before diving back into your dreams.”

“Uh…” Lumian’s mind raced with questions. “So as long as my body in reality is almost healed, the injuries in my dream will completely recover?”

One had to know that his body in reality was only a little sore. It was completely different from the injuries in the dream!

“Yes.” The lady confirmed Lumian’s guess.

She continued, “There’s much to learn about the potion and the paths of the divine. I’ll tell you once you become a Hunter.”

The paths of the divine…?Lumian asked in puzzlement, “Why not tell me now?”

The lady laughed.

“If you die or become a monster, it would be a waste of my time to say so much now.”

“…” Lumian was speechless.

Lumian stood up and excused himself, but before he left, he asked one more thing.

“Do you know about the anomaly in the village?”

Chapter 26 - 26: Whistleblowing

Chapter 26: Whistleblowing

The lady nibbled on a croissant before answering Lumian's question.

"I do."

She really knows…?Lumian's heart leapt with hope. He deliberated over his words before asking, using honorifics to show his respect, "May I offer to pay a certain price to commission your help in solving Cordu's problem?"

From his point of view, this mysterious lady woman was much stronger than Leah and her companions. If she agreed to help, the problem with Cordu would be solved, and he and his sister wouldn't have to risk their lives to escape. But he was worried that he couldn't afford the price.

Lumian wasn't optimistic that the woman would agree to help. But he felt it was necessary to try. Even if he was rejected, he wouldn't be too embarrassed. He was not a stickler for such things.

The woman turned to him and spoke calmly, "I can indeed solve the problem here, but the corresponding price is that everything will be destroyed, including you.

"If you want a better outcome, you can only rely on yourselves."

Lumian's eyes widened in disbelief.?*Could the problem with Cordu be that serious?*?He searched the woman's face for any sign of jest, but found none. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

He wasn't surprised or disappointed that she refused to help. What shocked him was the severity of the problem. It could even lead to the destruction of the entire village!

He was puzzled and alarmed by the situation.?*Since she can resolve it, why is it that the entire village will die, while us ordinary people and Beyonders who aren't strong enough capable of producing a better outcome?*

If he didn't hear back from Novel Weekly by the day after tomorrow, he would urge his sister to leave Cordu immediately. He couldn't delay any longer even if it meant taking a huge risk! He had to act fast!

"What's the problem?" Lumian pressed, his dignity never a priority.

The lady smiled.

"Me telling you and you finding out through your investigations will give rise to completely different results."

Lumian gritted his teeth instinctively. He didn't stand her behavior of always holding back something.

For some reason, he sensed that peculiar feeling in the woman's eyes, something he couldn't quite put his finger on.

"Okay." Lumian paused for a moment, weighing his words carefully. "Do you have any information about Madame Pualis? Is she a Warlock—uh, a Beyonder?"

The woman lifted her coffee cup to her lips and took a small sip before answering, "Yes, she is."

Indeed…?Lumian asked further, "What pathway, which Sequence?"

The lady's expression turned serious in an instant.

"It's not a normal pathway."

"What do you mean it's not a normal pathway?" he pressed.

The lady smiled.

"You'll find out later."

I want to know now…?Lumian struggled to keep his expression in check.

Already standing and about to leave, Lumian suddenly remembered something crucial.

“Madame, how am I supposed to bring those supplementary ingredients into the dream?”

In the dream ruins, he could only find basic ingredients like red wine and basil in the dream ruins, but for the Red Chestnut Flower and poplar leaf, he would have to collect them in reality.

The task wasn’t impossible, and Lumian had already thought of a way to “borrow” them, but he knew it would all be for naught if he couldn’t transfer them to his dream.

The lady smiled and said, “I’ll offer you a little assistance again, free of charge.

“Find those materials in reality, put them on the table in your bedroom before you sleep. I’ll help you send them into your dream.”

She can send those things into my dream??Lumian was first shocked before feeling a wave of relief wash over him. At least his problem was solved.

He never thought he’d encounter someone else with the ability to “enter” the special dream world like he could.

Lumian couldn’t shake the feeling that his ability to enter dream ruins had something to do with the cryptic symbols etched onto his chest. As he gazed at the woman before him, he couldn’t help but wonder if she was connected to those same markings or that bizarre and terrifying voice that had been echoing in his mind.

Lumian had just left the Ol’ Tavern and had plans to collect the Red Chestnut Flower and poplar leaves.

But as he turned the corner, he saw Ryan, Leah, and Valentine exiting the back door of the tavern. They were still dressed in the same clothes and outfits.

Lumian's heart skipped a beat as he greeted them with a smile.

"Good morning, my cabbages."

Leah turned her head and laughed amidst the tinkling sounds.

"You're early, too."

Lumian tried to act sneaky and looked around before speaking in a hushed tone.

"I noticed something unusual yesterday."

Ryan's expression turned serious as he exchanged glances with Valentine and Leah.

"What is it?"

Lumian's voice quivered slightly as he spoke.

"I suspect that Naroka's death is abnormal. You attended her funeral yesterday."

Ryan gave Lumian an encouraging look to continue, and Lumian took a deep breath before proceeding with his suspicions.

"I told you about the funeral customs in the Dariège area, didn't I? After everyone went to the cemetery, Pons Bénet entered Naroka's house without any objection from the owner.

"Isn't this destroying the influence of their family's horoscope and taking away the corresponding good luck?

"There must be something wrong!"

"Pons Bénet, the brother of the padre?" Ryan thought for a few seconds and asked.

Lumian nodded heavily.

As Lumian thought about the padre's strange group and his impending departure from Cordu, he realized he had nothing to fear from speaking his mind. With a deep breath, he declared, "The padre

is not a good man!"

"Why do you say that?" Leah asked with a grin, clearly unsurprised by Lumian's criticism of the padre.

...

Not one for formalities, Lumian launched into a detailed account of a villager who had snitched in Darième and subsequently vanished. His focus was on the accusations against the padre, and he held nothing back.

Finally, he said, "I really question how he's a clergyman of the Church.

"One time, I said something that was deemed too real, and I had to hide temporarily in the cathedral.

"I was about to doze off behind the altar when the padre walked in with Madame Pualis. And let me tell you, they were doing the dirty deed right under the deity's gaze.

"In the conversation that followed the deed, the padre even lamented to Madame Pualis, saying, 'Why can't a man marry his sister?'

"Madame Pualis was appalled by his words and begged the padre to repent.

"However, the padre said, 'Many wealthy families lose their fortunes when their daughters marry and their sons start families. But if a son could marry his sister, these problems would disappear. Unfortunately, the law and morals don't allow it'..."

The frigid Valentine's face contorted with anger at the news.

"Is he a servant of God or a servant of the Demon?"

Ryan nodded as if in thought.

"No wonder Pons Bénet hasn't been able to start a family despite being married after all these years..."

...

Leah surveyed Lumian as she chuckled.

“You knew about Madame Pualis and the padre’s affair. You wanted to use us that day.”

Lumian’s smile was uneasy, but his tone was resolute.

“As a believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, I cannot tolerate such a person in the cathedral.”

The cold Valentine’s expression softened, and he nodded approvingly.

“If only Cordu had more people like you.”

*A few more like me??*Lumian shuddered at the thought of Cordu overrun with more people like him.

He continued, “That time, I overheard the padre warning Madame Pualis that he was planning something and might be targeted by the Inquisition. He told her to be careful and keep quiet.”

Ryan’s expression turned solemn.

“Did he say anything more about it?”

“No.” Lumian didn’t fabricate the matter.

He couldn’t risk saying more than that. If he did, trouble could erupt tonight. He wasn’t even a Beyonder yet.

After bidding farewell to the trio of foreigners, Lumian spent hours gathering Red Chestnut Flowers and poplar leaves.

As the sun neared its apex, Lumian arrived at the village square and made his way to the two-story building where official business was conducted.

Most of the villagers had already gathered, eagerly awaiting the selection of the Spring Elf, an important part of the upcoming Lenten celebration tomorrow.

Squeezing through the crowd, Lumian spotted Reimund, Ava, and the others.

“Is Ava on the list?” he asked.

Ava remained silent, her agitation palpable. Reimund shook his head. “We don’t know.”

“She must be on it,” interjected Guillaume Berry, a frequent companion of Lumian and the others. “Among the unmarried women in the village, other than your sister, she’s the most beautiful. Your sister doesn’t meet the age requirements.”

He was the Guillaume-junior that Lumian and the others were talking about. He hung out with them frequently. Guillaume had curly brown hair and prominent freckles on his face. His blue eyes seemed to narrow because they weren’t large enough.

Ava’s cousin, Azéma, also stood nearby, looking much like Ava but smaller and less striking.

She remained silent, but Lumian sensed her desire to be chosen as the Spring Elf as well.

In the Dariège area, being chosen as the “Spring Elf” was a coveted honor that not only recognized a person’s beauty and character but also came with hidden benefits.

Upon hearing Guillaume-junior’s words, Lumian grinned.

“If Ava’s not on the list, I’ll shout, ‘I vote Ava!’ when the administrator finishes reading it.”

Ava blushed. “You don’t have to do that.”

It was a normal process for villagers to shout out additional candidates after the administrator finished reading the list of nominees for the Spring Elf. However, not many had the nerve to do so. Lumian, however, was not one to shy away from such things.

He had no misgivings about this.

Ava will be the one being embarrassed, not me.

Shortly after, Administrator Béost appeared at a second-story window, looking far more put-together than the padre. His neatly combed brown hair, light blue eyes with black lines, straight nose bridge, thin lips, and well-groomed mustache conveyed his status, accentuated by his double-breasted flannel coat.

He gazed down at the assembled villagers for a moment before speaking.

“Ladies and gentlemen, it’s time. Those who are late will no longer have the right to vote.

“Next, I’ll read the list of candidates for the Spring Elf.”

“Ava Lizier…”

As Béost read out the list, Ava breathed a sigh of relief.

Unsurprisingly, she received over 80% of the votes.

After the voting, Lumian made an excuse about needing to go home and left without celebrating with his companions.

Upon arriving home, he immediately asked his sister, “Did we receive a reply?”

If they had, the telegrapher would have delivered it and collected a fee.

“Not yet,” Aurore replied, shaking her head.

She then said, “The undercurrents have been turbulent lately. You can’t let your guard down during combat practice. Speaking of which, we’ll spar in the afternoon.”

Lumian winced, feeling sore all over.

But then an idea struck him. He put on a pained expression and said, “I don’t know if it’s because I’ve been training too hard, but my whole body hurts today. Aurore, uh, sister, can you give me a

massage? You're the most skilled at it."

Aurore nodded. "Sure, I can do that."

.....

Under the skilled hands of his sister, Lumian's body finally began to recover that night.

Before drifting off to sleep, Lumian placed three Red Chestnut Flowers and some powdered poplar leaves in a bottle on the table in front of the window.

He gazed at the bottle for a long moment, his heart beating with anticipation and nervousness, before finally crawling under the covers.

Chapter 27 - 27 Five Changes

27 Five Changes

As Lumian awoke in the gray fog, his first instinct was not to check his physical condition. Instead, he sat up abruptly and looked at the table by the window.

There, bathed in the soft light that filtered through the thick fog, were the three Red Chestnut Flowers and the glass bottle of poplar leaf powder.

She really sent the supplementary ingredients in… Relief flooded Lumian. He got out of bed and stretched, delighted to discover that the pain in his neck and back had vanished, along with the general discomfort he had been feeling.

Just as I hoped, I'm fine in the dream when I'm better in reality even though the injuries on both sides aren't equal at all… He quickly walked over to the wardrobe with the full-length mirror, took off his shirt, and examined himself.

The five bloody finger marks, the bruises, and the blood clots were all gone.

This made Lumian wonder if killing the Beyonder monster had been nothing more than a dream.

Thankfully, the crimson object in the cloth bag, the slightly larger sum of money, and the shotgun next to his bed confirmed the reality of his experience.

Lumian's heart eased. With the cloth bag containing the crimson item and a large amount of money, he left the bedroom and went straight to the first floor. Grabbing a bottle of red wine and a beer mug, he headed back up with some basil.

He made sure to bring along a measuring cylinder and miniature scale that his sister Aurore had purchased for him.

Looking at the desk filled with all the necessary items, Lumian felt both excited and nervous.

With everything in place, all that remained was to concoct the potion!

Potions were not beverages. They were more dangerous than alcohol, capable of killing or transforming the drinker into a monster with the slightest mistake.

Lumian took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, his hands steady as he used the measuring cylinder to pour 80 milliliters of red wine into the beer mug.

Next, he added 10 grams of basil, 5 grams of poplar leaf powder, and a single Red Chestnut Flower.

The process proceeded without incident. The red liquid in the mug had a few more dregs and a floating flower, but otherwise looked unremarkable.

With the cloth bag of crimson substance at his side, Lumian watched intently as the object slid into the beer mug.

Without a sound, the dark-red blob seemed to dissolve rapidly, drawing in the surrounding liquid in the process.

Bubbles erupted, and the entire mug turned a deep shade of red. The Red Chestnut Flower had dissolved completely.

This is the Hunter potion? Lumian gulped and picked up his beer mug.

The supernatural power he had sought for so long was finally within his grasp.

Without hesitation, he took a deep breath and steeled himself for what was to come. Raising the mug to his lips, he drank the potion in one swift gulp.

The pungent odor of blood filled his nostrils, and he started hearing things. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

As he set the mug down, a searing pain ripped through his body,

so intense that Lumian wondered if he had swallowed a ball of fire. The flames seemed to burn through his esophagus, stomach, heart, lungs, intestines, and blood vessels all at once.

At the same time, a strong scent of blood wafted up from his throat.

Lumian fought to remain conscious, remembering the lady's warning that fainting would mean defeat. He knew the stakes were high, and the outcome was obvious if he failed.

His head swam as he lowered it, gazing at the bright red veins protruding from the back of his hand.

The pain and burning came in waves, but they quickly began to recede. But just as he thought it was over, a mysterious voice echoed in his mind, as if coming from both infinitely far away and right beside him.

The sound was like steel thorns piercing his brain, stirring it forcefully.

Suddenly, the near-death experience he had faced before returned, and the pain and burning flared up once more.

Lumian gritted his teeth and clenched his fists, feeling as though something was trying to claw its way out of his flesh.

The gray fog around him seemed to thicken.

The terrifying sound that had filled his ears slowly faded away, and the writhing of his flesh and blood vanished like an illusion.

The excruciating pain, the burning sensation, and the metallic scent of blood dissipated, leaving Lumian gasping for cold air as he regained control of his body.

He bent over, hands on his knees, panting heavily as he realized the

true dangers of pursuing supernatural powers, as his sister had warned him.

A mere Sequence 9 potion had nearly claimed his life!

Of course, it had first seemed manageable—dangerous, but manageable. But the mysterious voice that had been brought on by the symbol on his chest had almost caused him to collapse at the critical moment.

Each breath he took seemed to restore some of his strength, and before long, he felt fully recovered.

Bang! Lumian clenched his fist and swung it hard, striking out at the air with a force that caused a sonic boom.

He had never imagined possessing such power before, and the realization filled him with excitement. In his small bedroom, he practiced a combat technique his sister had taught him, each punch producing a crisp sound.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Despite the commotion, Lumian moved with precision and control, not touching anything as he completed the set.

To his surprise, he felt neither tired nor fatigued, but rather energetic and alive.

He assessed his condition:

On par with Aurore…

In terms of strength, speed, reaction, or body control, they've all been greatly enhanced. It's a little inhuman…

I possess the strength of a bear and the agility of a cat. It's slightly equivalent to the combination of the two…

Without the potion, I might never be able to reach this level of power in my life…

But before he could finish his inspection, Lumian caught the scent of blood, his heart tightening with fear. Instinctively, he sniffed the air and realized that he could determine the source of the blood—it came from his body!

Lumian looked down and saw that the back of his hand was covered in blood-red spots.

He came to the full-body mirror again and realized that his face was similarly stained.

He wiped some of the blood away, but found no sign of any wounds.

After a moment's thought, Lumian came to a realization.

Did the potion cause the capillaries Aurore talked about to burst? And then they quickly healed after I absorbed the potion?

…

The only explanation for his current condition was supernatural influence.

Realizing he was not injured, Lumian pushed the matter aside and focused on his sense of smell, which seemed to have undergone a significant change.

As he concentrated, the scents around him were "decomposed" and drilled into his nose in various forms.

The smell of blood, the residual smell of alcohol, the fragrance of flowers, the smell of dust… Lumian began identifying the scents around him one by one, even the slightest ones not escaping his heightened senses.

Simultaneously, he "saw" invisible footprints and the distribution of dust in the bedroom, "heard" the beating of his own heart and the breeze outside the house…

The second change is that my sensory abilities have increased exponentially, surpassing the standards of ordinary humans. No wonder the monster he had encountered was so skilled at tracking…

Lumian was delighted.

More importantly, this improvement did not interfere with his daily life and only appeared when he focused. It only took the form of a weaker version.

Through experimentation and self-examination, Lumian discovered two other changes brought on by the Hunter potion.

The third change allows me to accurately locate certain points in his environment, such as weak spots in a wall, enabling me to set traps more efficiently and kill my enemies—be they humans, beasts, or monsters—more effectively.

The fourth change is that I have more knowledge about wild plants and animal organs, allowing me to survive better in the wilderness and quickly find hemostatic medicine when injured. I can even make poison to smear on weapons if needed…

As he confirmed these newfound abilities, Lumian couldn't help but feel a sense of absurdity.

…

I actually managed to kill that shotgun monster?

The current me is much stronger than the previous me, and it was not much weaker than the current me..

Lumian contemplated for a while and concluded two crucial points.

Ability is important, but brains are equally important!

Exploiting a good environment can effectively increase my strength!

After some thought, Lumian added inwardly, Also, I can't be careless and lose my patience at any time…

He walked to the window and gazed at the dream ruins again.

An indescribable sense of oppression, fear, and danger surged into his heart. This was something he had never felt before.

Uh, the fifth change is some kind of intuition strengthening… Lumian nodded gently.

He went to the washroom and washed his body with clean water. He changed into a fresh set of clothes and then lay back on the bed, with the money close.

He wanted to get back to reality as soon as possible, eager to know if the Hunter abilities would stay with him or if they would be weakened.

……

In the dead of night, Cordu was eerily silent. The clouds shrouded the crimson moon and stars, leaving the darkness to reign supreme.

Lumian surveyed the night scenery and felt an overwhelming sense of happiness.

He was now a Beyonder in the real world, and his powers hadn't weakened at all compared to the dream realm.

As an intuition struck him, Lumian unbuttoned his shirt and gazed down at his chest.

The black symbol resembling a thorn chain was slowly fading away.

It also appears in reality… Lumian muttered, feeling a twinge of unease.

He noticed that the bluish-black symbol that had loomed over the thorny chain existed only in his dreams.

Suddenly, Lumian's heart skipped a beat as he gazed up at the nearby elm tree. The legendary owl of the Warlock was perched on a branch, observing him quietly.

Chapter 28 - 28 Laws

28 Laws

The brownish-yellow eyes of the owl glowed in the dark, fixating on Lumian as it perched on the branch.

Lumian was no longer as intimidated as he was during their previous encounters. He yelled, “Whatcha looking at? Say something if you dare!”

Lumian didn’t have to provoke the owl, but he hoped it would reveal the owl’s true motive. He couldn’t bear the thought of the creature lurking around and staring at him in the dead of night.

To his surprise, the owl remained silent and didn’t make a sound.

After a few tense seconds, the owl spread its wings and flew off into the darkness.

“Crazy!” Lumian let out a frustrated curse, but he didn’t dare let his guard down.

Lumian remained focused on scrutinizing the dark shadows outside, trying to detect any signs of danger.

He recalled that the last time the owl had appeared, he had seen Naroka’s figure and learned of her death the following day.

I wonder if something similar will happen this time… But after careful observation, he didn’t notice anything abnormal and breathed a sigh of relief. He drew the curtains and lay back on the bed.

In the deep darkness, Lumian opened his eyes, contemplating his next move.

I wonder what this owl is trying to do… It’s acting so strange and

mysterious. It shouldn't be up to anything good…

Whatever. With the situation in the village, I have to leave with Aurore as soon as possible. I don't believe that it can follow us to Trier!

If I don't receive a reply tomorrow, we'll leave Cordu the morning after tomorrow…

If there's a reply, we can leave Cordu openly from the village entrance. If not, we'll have to improvise. It's Lent tomorrow, and everyone will still be celebrating the day after tomorrow, so we won't attract too much attention. Aurore can borrow Madame Pualis' pony and spend some time in the nearby alpine pastures. We don't need to go down the mountain, so it shouldn't attract the investigators' attention. When the time comes, we can use a dangerous trail to leave the mountain…

The path is treacherous, with several broken parts in the middle. Even the shepherds don't think it's passable. However, with my newfound abilities and Aurore's witchcraft, allowing her to fly a distance, she'll have it easier than me…

There's a good chance we can hoodwink the investigators…

Becoming a Hunter had allowed him to do what was previously impossible. It gave Lumian a newfound sense of confidence, allowing him to quickly formulate a plan.

His heart became more certain, and he slept soundly.

……

The next morning, Lumian rose early and got to work in the kitchen.

His thoughts turned to how he had become a Beyonder and how he was about to leave the abnormal village of Cordu with his sister. Lumian's mood brightened, and he even found himself eager to hum a tune.

When Aurore came downstairs, there were already two bowls of minced meat noodles on the table.

“How did you know I was about to get up?” she asked, pleased.

“I started cooking noodles when I heard movement in the washroom.” Lumian grinned, inwardly noting, You are always in a groggy state after waking up. How don’t you realize this?

Aurore nodded. As she sat at the dining table, she casually asked, “That owl flew over again in the middle of the night?”

“That’s right.” Lumian knew that his sister had discovered him looking out the window, so the owl’s appearance had been a fortunate distraction. Otherwise, he wasn’t sure how to explain himself.

He couldn’t risk telling Aurore about his newfound Beyonder abilities just yet, as he would be given a dressing down by her.

However, Lumian planned to divulge the truth to his sister sooner than later. He wanted to avoid Aurore from having considerations that might hinder their escape.

He planned to tell his sister about this the day after tomorrow when they escaped from Cordu to prevent her from diverting her attention to take care of him.

By then, she wouldn’t have the time to give him a dressing down.

Aurore furrowed her brow in confusion. “What a strange owl…”

She was still trying to decipher the bird’s true intentions—all it did was come over to take a look.

Lumian slurped up the last of his noodles, then turned to his sister.
Updated from novelbIn.(c)om

“If there’s a reply, we’ll leave Cordu this evening and take the usual path down the mountain.

“If not, borrow a pony from Madame Pualis tomorrow morning and we’ll head to the nearest alpine ranch. I know of a trail that leads down the mountain, and the investigators won’t be aware of it.”

Aurore fiddled with her hair, deep in thought.

After a while, she grinned and said, “Sure, the probability of this plan succeeding is quite high.”

She clicked her tongue and added, “My stupid brother has grown up.”

Lumian couldn’t help but feel smug, basking in his sister’s praise.

……

After breakfast, Lumian made an excuse to go see if Ava was finished with her Spring Elf blessings tour. He left the subterranean building and headed straight to Ol’ Tavern.

As a newly-minted Beyonder, Lumian was eager to gain more knowledge, and the lady had promised to share some with him.

Not far from the tavern, Lumian spotted an old acquaintance walking towards him.

It was Pons Bénet, the younger brother of the local padre.

He’s alone… Lumian couldn’t help but smile at the thought of how he had been chased by Pons and his thugs in the past.

Having just obtained supernatural powers, he was already eager to test out his new supernatural powers.

“Hey, my illegitimate son,” Lumian greeted him. “How dare you go out alone without daddy’s permission?”

Lumian hoped to provoke Pons and goad him into a fight instead of letting him run.

Pons Bénet looked in the direction of the voice and saw him.

The villain’s expression changed slightly. He turned to run away.

Thud. Thud. Thud… Lumian watched in disbelief as Pons sprinted away, disappearing at the intersection not far away.

He sure ran fast… Quite an alert one…

Lumian sighed silently.

He knew, without a shadow of a doubt, that he could take down Pons Bénet in a one-on-one scrap, even before he ascended to Beyonder status. But it seemed likely that Pons Bénet had the same notion. The two of them had never properly thrown down, but they both had confidence in their own abilities. So, it caught him off guard when Pons Bénet bolted the second he caught sight of him today, like he'd come face to face with a bloodthirsty beast.

...

It's impossible for him to know that I secretly became a Beyonder last night… Is he so dense that he's developed animal instincts and can sniff out danger? Lumian slandered Pons Bénet in his heart.

He refrained from pursuing Pons Bénet because he regretted the moment he "greeted" him.

The village was riddled with aberrations, and the situation was perilous. Lumian knew better than to stir the pot before he left.

If he had pummeled Pons Bénet, the padre and his goons might spring into action prematurely, thus jeopardizing his and Aurore's escape. It would be too late for regrets when that happened.

Furthermore, the padre's group was an enigma, and there could be something off about Pons Bénet. Lumian suspected that if he engaged in fisticuffs with him, his Beyonder identity would be exposed, and that would spell trouble in the future.

Being a Beyonder has made me too haughty and overconfident. I need to rein myself in, Lumian mused, reflecting on his behavior, as he entered Ol' Tavern.

He had intended to head straight to the second floor, but his eyes landed on the lady seated in the corner.

Today, the lady was garbed in a pearl-gray dress and a light-colored lady's bonnet. Lumian noticed that there wasn't any food in front of her.

“Have you had breakfast?” he asked, taking a seat opposite her.

The lady replied nonchalantly, “Not yet. I’m meeting someone here, and I’m still waiting for her.”

Her? Not me…? Lumian scanned the area but saw no one else except the tavern owner.

…

He looked at the lady again and sincerely said, “I’ve become a Hunter.”

It’s time for you to keep your promise and give me more common knowledge.

The lady wasn’t surprised at all. She remarked with a smile, “It seems you’re in pretty good shape.”

She spoke in a voice that sounded almost otherworldly, “What you need to master now are two laws and one method.”

Why does it feel like I’m studying physics… Lumian didn’t dare speak his thoughts aloud.

The lady continued to speak, “For most Beyonders, this knowledge is incredibly valuable. They’d trade everything they have just to acquire it. But for you, fate has brought you here, and so I’ll give it to you for free.”

Free things often come at the most hefty price. How will I pay the price? Lumian felt a weight settle on his shoulders.

Ever since he became a Hunter, his intuition and observation skills had improved significantly. He could sense a strange, indescribable emotion in the lady’s eyes, much stronger than before, but he still couldn’t put a finger on what it was.

The lady straightened up.

“All supernatural powers come from the Oldest One, the Creator. As a believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, you should know that His eyes

became the Sun."

"Yes." Lumian had heard the padre's sermons about it before.

"That's a symbolic description," the lady clarified. "In essence, the Oldest One created this world and many deities. Eventually, He disintegrated Himself and split into Beyonder characteristics of different pathways."

"So that's why they're called the paths of the divine?" Lumian connected the dots.

The lady nodded slightly.

"Yes, every pathway's Sequence 0 is equivalent to a true god. For instance, the Bard pathway's Sequence 0 is known as the Sun, which is also the Eternal Blazing Sun you believe in."

Lumian was surprised and a little apprehensive. So every Beyonder can become a god in the end?

If he were a devout believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, he would have accused the lady of blasphemy. But he wasn't that kind of person. He was just a casual believer who didn't give it much thought.

He even asked, "What's the Hunter pathway's Sequence 0? And what about the Mystery Pryer pathway?"

"Didn't I already tell you? It's the Red Priest, and the position is currently vacant," the lady replied with a chuckle. "As for the Mystery Pryer pathway, the Sequence 0 is known as The Hermit, and it's currently occupied by an evil god called the Hidden Sage. He likes to impart knowledge to Beyonders of the same pathway, earning Him the nickname 'Knowledge Pursuer.' Your sister's troubles stem from Him."

"Is that so…" Lumian felt a twinge of dislike towards the Hidden Sage.

The woman redirected the conversation.

“Since Beyonder characteristics come from the Oldest One, they won’t disappear or increase. They only transform from one form to another, moving from one object to another. This is known as the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility or the Law of Conservation.”

Chapter 29 - 29 Method

29 Method

Lumian put his physics knowledge to work and pondered for a moment.

“Why not just call it the law of conservation?”

“That’s another law, but don’t worry about the details for now.” The woman nodded in agreement. “Essentially, it’s the same as the law of indestructibility, but with additional prerequisites and specific elaborations.”

Is that so… Lumian considered for a moment before speaking.

“So, according to the law of indestructibility, if I want to obtain Beyonder characteristics, I can target other Beyonders, in addition to hunting the corresponding monsters?”

Since Beyonder characteristics were indestructible, a Beyonder’s death would result in the appearance of the corresponding Beyonder characteristics.

The woman’s face showed a certain amount of emotion.

“You’re very perceptive.”

“Therefore, this law isn’t suitable for most Beyonders to know. It would result in Beyonders killing each other, and they won’t be able to trust each other.”

Lumian didn’t mind this. “Even without this law, humans still kill each other. In the real world, there’s plenty of suspicion, bullying, and murder.”

The woman replied with interest, “But at least there’s still a certain

warmth and light of the human spirit."

Lumian pondered for a while before speaking.

"Looking at it from another perspective, this law should become a consensus among Beyonders. That way, the weak can be prepared in advance and not become easy prey for those who know."

The lady nodded slightly.

"That does make some sense. Actually, if battles between Beyonders happen frequently enough, people involved would likely be able to figure it out."

She then introduced, "The second law is called the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence."

"Convergence…" Lumian struggled to understand.

He couldn't quite derive it from their earlier conversation.

The woman's expression turned serious.

"As the creator of this world, even if the Oldest One splits into Beyonder characteristics of different pathways, it doesn't mean that He has completely withdrawn from the stage. His mind is scattered among the different Beyonder characteristics and will never be obliterated unless this world completely perishes.

"These minds are similar to a brand, but they have the instinct to reassemble and revive the Oldest One.

"In other words, after you become a Beyonder, you're more likely to encounter other Beyonders than before. You're more likely to encounter Beyonders of the same pathway or neighboring pathways than Beyonders of other pathways. This is the convergence of fate. The higher the Sequence, the more obvious this situation becomes."

Lumian had many questions, but he decided to start with the most important one.

"So, combined with the Law of Beyonder Characteristics

Indestructibility, can I conclude that convergence leads to massacres?”

The lady once again revealed an approving expression.

“You’re very perceptive on such matters.”

“It’s not a problem when your Sequence is low, but at the demigod stage, especially after becoming an Angel, you must find a way to weaken or avoid the effects of convergence.”

“Demigod, Angel?” Lumian was surprised and intrigued upon hearing these terms, even though he knew that every Sequence could eventually become a true god.

The lady casually explained, “Demigod is a term for Beyonders from Sequence 4 to Sequence 1, meaning half-god, half-human.

“Among them, Sequence 4 and Sequence 3 are known as Saints, while Sequence 2 and Sequence 1 are called Angels. There are other names beyond that, but it’s best if you not know them for now.”

Saints… Angels… Lumian thought of the saints and angels from different regions.

They were real?

The remains of a Saint are the corpses of Saints. There are Beyonder characteristics left behind?

Lumian asked, feeling a little afraid, “So every Beyonder characteristic has the mental imprint of the Oldest One, and the higher the Sequence, the more is left behind?

“Wouldn’t the person who consumes the potion be affected in other ways?”

The lady confirmed with a smile, “Yes, why do you think this path is filled with danger and madness?

“Losing control is one of the main reasons why consuming a potion can be so dangerous.

“To be specific, it’s losing control of supernatural powers and one’s own mind and transforming into a terrifying monster.”

“Is there another reason?” Lumian pressed.

The lady tersely grunted.

“Firstly, the intensity of the mental imprint mainly depends on the level of the owners of the corresponding Beyonder characteristics. Their obsession and madness before death also contribute to it. Secondly, consuming the potion in the wrong order or method can cause a huge conflict in the body. Thirdly, some existences can use the consumption of potions to exert influence. For example, every time the Mystery Pryer pathway consumes a potion, they passively receive knowledge instillation from the Hidden Sage.”

Similar to the voice I heard after drinking the Hunter potion? Lumian deliberated for a moment before recounting his encounter truthfully.

“Which entity’s influence is that?”

The next second, he saw the expression of the lady opposite him become a little odd.

She said solemnly, “Some existences can corrupt and take control of you just by knowing of their existence.

“Unfortunately, the owner of that voice is one such existence. It’s not suitable for you to know Their honorific name at the moment.”

Lumian’s mind raced with thoughts. That horrifying? A Sequence 0 true god? But most people in Intis and I know about the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery. There’s nothing wrong with them… Could there be a difference between a true god and an evil god? But she mentioned the Hidden Sage, who is also a Sequence 0. Is it possible she doesn’t know who it is and is using vague terms to mask her ignorance?

He gave up on the topic, considering his own strength, and asked about another intriguing term.

“What is a neighboring pathway?”

The woman's expression returned to normal as she explained, "Under normal circumstances, if you choose a pathway and consume the corresponding potion, you can only go down that path one step at a time. Otherwise, you will definitely lose control, or at the very least, half-lose control. However, there are always exceptions. Every pathway has one or more neighboring pathways. You can jump over at a specific Sequence, such as Sequence 4, which divides between humans and demigods."

"Hunter's neighboring pathway is Assassin."

Assassin… Sounds cooler than Hunter… Lumian asked with concern, "Which pathways neighbor Mystery Pryer?

"Will one no longer be affected by the Hidden Sage after jumping to a neighboring pathway?"

"The Savant pathway. The current Sequence 0 is the God of Steam and Machinery," the woman replied calmly. "After jumping over, one will still be affected by the Hidden Sage, but the degree will decrease significantly. However, the corresponding Beyonder characteristics still exist unless one finds a way to expel them."

…

"How?" Lumian asked, surprised.

"The easiest way is to have children. In mysticism, there's a high chance of transferring the corresponding Beyonder characteristics to a child through heredity," the woman explained. "Alternatively, you can use the special abilities of certain pathways, but there's a certain risk, and you have to pay a considerable price."

Lumian nodded before raising another question.

"Can I switch only at a particular Sequence?"

The chances of reaching Sequence 4 and becoming a demigod were slim.

The lady glanced at him.

“In theory, it’s possible to switch at a lower Sequence, but the risk of losing control is much higher. Unless there’s no other way, it’s best not to attempt it.”

The woman paused before saying, “I’ve finished explaining the two laws. Now, I’ll explain the method.

“This is one of the most important pieces of knowledge in the mystical world.”

Most important? Lumian instinctively straightened his back, feeling abnormally focused.

The lady continued to speak, “It’s called the ‘acting method.’

…

“It’s a way to help you digest the potion. By digesting the potion, the risk of losing control will be greatly reduced when consuming the next Sequence potion.”

It’s no wonder I can’t drink the Sequence 9 potion today and drink the Sequence 8 potion tomorrow… I have to use the “acting method” to digest the previous potion… Lumian came to a realization.

He did not interrupt her and listened attentively to her explanation.

“Remember, it’s digestion, not control.

“What’s the acting method? It involves acting according to the name of a Sequence like an actor. By reconciling the differences between one’s body and the remnant mental imprints of the Beyonder characteristics, one can obtain the corresponding recognition. This allows them to bypass the barrier that originally existed and fuse the Beyonder characteristics with themselves.”

“So, I have to act like a Hunter and hunt in the mountains every day?” Lumian asked attentively.” Lumian appeared as attentive as a student.

The lady shook her head.

“That’s just the most superficial form of acting. We not only have to understand the surface meaning of a Sequence’s name, but we also have to investigate its deeper meaning. For example, the city is also a jungle. Everyone is both prey and hunter.”

I’m familiar with this… Lumian was already familiar with this concept, which he had learned during his days as a vagrant.

“How can you be sure that you have digested the potion and can advance to the next Sequence?” Lumian asked curiously.

The lady smiled.

“You will sense it when the potion is truly digested.”

Alright… Lumian didn’t continue the topic and asked in puzzlement, “Who named the different Sequences?”

Why could he digest the potion just by acting them out?

The lady’s expression turned serious.

“The earliest Sequence divisions came from the remnants of the Oldest One’s splintering. It was a stone slab filled with mystical knowledge.

“As it involves the secret of becoming a deity, it’s called the Blasphemy Slate.

“In ancient times, during the end of the Second Epoch and the entire Third Epoch, a powerful deity close to the Oldest One appeared. He was called the Ancient Sun God. After He perished, a second Blasphemy Slate was born from His remains. All the current Sequence names and potion formulas came from it.” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

That’s not the Second and Third Epoch history I learned… Lumian muttered inwardly.

The lady continued to speak, “When Emperor Roselle was alive, he used the second Blasphemy Slate as a reference to create a Cards of Blasphemy set based on tarot cards. There are a total of 22 cards, and

each card represents a pathway of the divine.”

Lumian was astonished. “Emperor Roselle is also a Beyonder?”

As an ordinary Intisian, it was difficult for him not to feel a certain amount of admiration for Emperor Roselle.

The woman laughed. “Otherwise?”

Lumian asked, “Was he powerful?”

“Almost a deity,” the lady said concisely.

That amazing? Lumian was stunned but felt that it was only right.

He thought for a moment and said, “Then, wouldn’t the diary left behind by Emperor Roselle be very valuable?”

The lady nodded.

“Yes, but there are very, very few people who can decipher those strange writings.”

Lumian fell into deep thought. Aurore seems to have some of Emperor Roselle’s diary transcripts in her collection. She seems to be able to decipher them… Could it be that a portion of her strength comes from there?

Chapter 30 - 30 Lent Begins

30 Lent Begins

The woman turned her head to look out of Ol' Tavern's window.

"It's about time. I'll end this with giving you some pointers. Based on the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, we know that humans and Beyonder characteristics combine to become Beyonders. Similarly, creatures and Beyonder characteristics combine to become Beyonder creatures. But what about items that combine with Beyonder characteristics?" she asked, not giving Lumian a chance to answer.

"They are called mystical items. As items don't have will, spirit, and self-control, coupled with the combined effects of other factors, after they fuse with Beyonder characteristics, they will not only display corresponding special abilities but also bring about very strong negative effects. The various Churches tend to seal them and use suitable methods to activate them when needed. This is why mystical items are also called Sealed Artifacts.

"The mystical items that have been sealed by the various Churches have their own serial numbers and are divided into four grades: 3, 2, 1, and 0. The smaller the prefix number, the higher the danger. Among them, there are a limited number of Level 1 and 0 Sealed Artifacts that are extremely dangerous. The serial numbers are common to the various Churches and won't be repeated."

Lumian muttered, "Level 0 Sealed Artifacts…"

Lumian had a deep impression that Sequence 0 was equivalent to a true god. This led him to make a certain connection and ask, "Are these Sealed Artifacts formed by fallen deities or exterminated evil gods?"

He had noticed that there were 22 pathways with Sequence 0s, but the number of deities clearly didn't add up.

However, Lumian also recognized that his lack of understanding of evil gods and secret existences might have caused this confusion.

"Not all of them," the lady replied after thinking for a moment. "Most of them are at the level of Angels. Only a small number have the ability to kill gods."

Lumian nodded. "I understand. I won't underestimate the items in other people's hands."

The woman added, "You can't underestimate the negative effects of Sealed Artifacts either. In the future, you will definitely come across Sealed Artifacts.

"Oh, and there's another category of items in the field of mysticism called extraordinary items. They are made by Beyonders of corresponding Sequences using their abilities, spirituality, or with the help of the spirit world or deities. They don't contain Beyonder characteristics, but they have a certain level of supernatural effects. However, their strength will gradually dissipate over time. Charms, lotions, and other items can only be used once.

"In comparison, Beyonder weapons are more stable and can be used for years.

"As a Hunter, you lack the ability to deal with Spirit Body ghost-type creatures before Sequence 7. If you have the chance in the future, consider obtaining the corresponding Sealed Artifacts or Beyonder items."

Lumian listened carefully and asked, "The spirit world?"

He had seen this term in Hidden Veil, but it did not provide sufficient explanation.

The woman quickly explained, "From a mystical point of view, this world is divided into three levels: the real world, the spirit world, and the astral world. The rest are formed by attaching to one of these three, like the Underworld.

“I don’t need to explain much about the real world; you already know it very well. The spirit world is a place where spirits reside, and many concepts of reality no longer exist there. You will gradually understand it in the future. As for the astral world, it originally referred to the world of gods, but now, the entire cosmos needs to be included in that definition.”

Lumian was just asking casually, but after obtaining a preliminary answer, he immediately returned to the previous topic.

“Can a Hunter create Beyonder items?” he asked, thinking that Warlocks could probably do it.

The lady shook her head before saying, “Hunters can’t rely on their own Sequence, but because their spirituality has been enhanced, they can learn ritualistic magic and pray to a deity or a hidden existence. They can use their responses to create charms, weapons, and other Beyonder items.

“However, I have to remind you that most hidden existences are very dangerous. It’s best not to attempt praying to them. Otherwise, death would be the best outcome. And the seven orthodox gods basically won’t respond to you unless you join the corresponding Church and become an official Beyonder.” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“In other words, it’s impossible for a Hunter to create a Beyonder item?” Lumian asked, feeling somewhat disappointed.

The lady smiled and said, “Not really. On the one hand, you can use the blood and saliva of certain Beyonder creatures to create poisonous weapons. In a sense, this can be considered a Beyonder item. On the other hand, after you unlock the secret of the dream, I’ll tell you the honorific name of a great existence. You can pray to Him.”

Lumian was shocked and suspicious. This was the first time she had used the word “great” as an adjective. He had never heard her use it to describe the Eternal Blazing Sun or the Hidden Sage. Who could this great existence be? Was it safe to pray to Him?

The more he learned about mysticism, the more he realized how little

he knew.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her answer and asked, “What are the corresponding Sequences 8 and 7 for Hunters?”

The woman replied indifferently, “Sequence 8 of the Hunter pathway is called Provoker, and Sequence 7 is Pyromaniac.

“Alright, that’s all for today,” she said as she stood up and walked towards the entrance to the second floor.

After a few steps, she stopped and said over her shoulder, “I forgot to remind you. Remember, you’re just acting.”

Just acting… Lumian mulled over her words and thoughtfully asked, “What if you take the role seriously?”

“You will become less and less like yourself until one day…” The woman smiled and closed her mouth before turning around, walking to the stairs, and disappearing.

She didn’t finish her sentence again… Lumian muttered silently.

He sensed that forgetting he was only acting would have serious consequences.

Lumian sat quietly in a corner of Ol’ Tavern, reviewing the general knowledge the woman had just taught him to prevent forgetting anything.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized the importance of the two laws and one method.

They are like the main framework of mysticism. Everything else is derived from them.

I wonder if Aurore knows…

After leaving Cordu, I’ll discuss this problem with her…

Uh, I wonder if that lady will allow me to inform Aurore of all these directly…

……

As Lumian left Ol' Tavern, he looked back and muttered to himself, Why haven't those three foreigners taken action yet? It's already Lent today…

He continued to ponder as he made his way to the village square.

After he finished asking if there was any reply, he saw Ava, Reimund, and the others approaching.

Ava was wearing a long white dress with a round headdress made of branches and flowers on her head, and a huge necklace hung around her neck. Brown branches and green leaves adorned her back, arms, waist, and legs, making her look like a fairy in the forest.

She was the main character of Lent, the Spring Elf.

Reimund and the other lads surrounded Ava, each carrying a basket woven from tree branches filled with grass, soil, rocks, leaves, and other items.

"Lumian, the blessing tour is about to begin!" Ava exclaimed when her aqua-blue eyes saw him.

Her face was filled with joy.

Reimund and the others also looked happy.

"Come on, let's go get the contributions!"

Since Novel Weekly had not yet replied, Lumian had nothing to do for the time being, so he decided to join the procession.

The young lads began singing loudly as they surrounded Ava and walked out of the square.

After about ten meters, they stopped in front of the first building.

…

Lumian walked to the door and banged on it.

“The Spring Elf is here!”

The door creaked open, and Nazélie appeared in front of them.

She was the other female head of the family in the village, in her forties with the prefix ‘Na.’ Her black hair was tied up, and her blue eyes were smiling.

As the door opened, Ava took two steps forward, spread her arms, and began singing.

“I’m the elf of spring,

With a sweet face and a joyful ring,

Bringing happiness to everything,

In this season so charming.

Come and sing, come and dance,

Let’s celebrate this time of chance,

…

For this is the only way,

To bless the land and make it stay.”

After the song, Ava took a clump of soil from Reimund’s basket and handed it to Nazélie.

“Thank you, ‘Spring Elf’,” Nazélie said, receiving it with a smile and handing a piece of cloth to Ava.

“Bumper harvest! Bumper harvest!” Lumian and the other lads replied in unison.

This was a blessing ritual. The Spring Elf used singing and the giving of soil, grass, rocks, and other natural things to the villagers to bless them with a bumper harvest this year. The villagers needed to give something back as a contribution, or the blessing would become a curse.

After Reimund received the cloth, Ava sang another song enthusiastically.

Only then did they bid farewell to Nazélie and head to the next house.

A portion of the dedications received during the blessing tour would be thrown into the river in the waterside ritual, and the rest would be placed in the final ritual. After Lent was over, the girl who was the embodiment of the Spring Elf had the right to choose some to take away.

This was a considerable gain.

If Cordu really experienced a bumper harvest this year, Ava, as the embodiment of the “Spring Elf”, would be widely believed to have received the love of the elves and blessings of spring. Whoever married her would have bumper harvests all the time.

In that case, she had a chance of marrying someone from a good family.

The blessing procession sang all the way to Lumien’s house, where Aurore opened the door. She had changed into a light-colored pleated dress with a straight collar and had bunned her blond hair.

Ava walked over and sang the same song again.

“I’m the elf of spring…”

Aurore listened with a smile and handed Ava a small pottery jar.

“Thank you, Spring Elf.”

Lumian glanced at the jar of animal lard and felt that his sister was too generous.

They had no farmland except for a small vegetable field at the back of their house and did not need to worry about the harvest at all.

Chapter 31 - 31 Celebration

31 Celebration

Despite feeling the usual pinch, Lumian didn't stop his sister as Ava, Reimund, and the others turned around and walked towards the nearby buildings. He deliberately fell behind and whispered to Aurore, "Call me if you hear back from Novel Weekly."

"Don't worry, I'll keep you updated," Aurore replied, giving Lumian a reassuring look.

The festive and joyous blessing tour continued with songs as they knocked on the villagers' doors in Cordu.

Finally, they arrived at the administrator's residence, which was modified from a castle from the Sauron royal era. It was located on a hill at the edge of Cordu, dark in color with two towering towers.

The outer walls surrounding the building had long been torn down. Lumian and company passed through the garden specially created by the Béost couple and arrived at the entrance.

The door was four to five meters tall, a brownish-green color like trees, and looked very heavy.

However, it was divided into upper and lower parts and only needed to open the two-meter-tall part below unless welcoming esteemed guests.

The Spring Elf was the embodiment of spring and the messenger of the harvest, so she deserved the most honorable treatment. At this moment, the heavy door was completely opened, and Madame Pualis stood there in a light green corset.

Her lady's maid, Cathy, stood to the side with a basket woven from

tree branches, half a step behind.

Ava walked over and sang a song of blessings.

Madame Pualis listened quietly with a smile on her face, which made her look noble and reserved. The young men who followed the Spring Elf didn't dare to look at her, but Lumian, who had "listened" to the other party and the padre doing the deed, scoffed inwardly when he saw this.

As the song ended, Ava exchanged the seeds of a tree for a basket of eggs.

The blessing tour was over, and Lumian, Reimund, and the other lads escorted Ava, the Spring Elf, to the mountain river not far from the village for the second segment of Lent: the waterside ritual.

Arriving at the place where geese were usually herded, Ava approached the clear river and did a simple dance, repeating the song from before. Meanwhile, Lumian and the other lads stood still, seven to eight meters away from the Spring Elf.

After the dance, Ava took out a chopped turnip from a basket beside her feet, given by a particular villager, and threw it into the river.

As she threw, she sang, "A bumper harvest! A bumper harvest!"

When Ava was done, Lumian stepped on the ground and ran over in a few steps. He bent down and took out the cut turnips from the basket and threw them into the river.

"A bumper harvest! A bumper harvest!" he shouted.

The remaining lads were a tad slower than Lumian, but they rushed towards Ava, afraid of falling behind. They took out turnips and radishes from the basket and threw them at different parts of the river while shouting "bumper harvest."

Reimund failed to take the initiative and couldn't beat the others, so he was the last to complete the ritual.

The next second, he saw the malicious smiles of Lumian, Guillaume-

junior, and the others.

They lifted Reimund up, shouting “bumper harvest,” and threw him into the water with a splash. Reimund was drenched from head to toe.

The people on the shore even picked up soil and branches and threw them at him.

This was part of the waterside ritual: the person who completed the last prayer would be thrown into the river and not allowed to go ashore. They could only swim a little further down and quietly return home to hide until it was dark.

Reimund wiped the water droplets off his face and struggled for a few seconds before heading downstream.

Only then did the team escort Ava to the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral at the edge of Cordu’s square.

It was almost noon. Most of the villagers, including Lumian’s sister Aurore, had gathered at the cathedral, which was not as grand as those in the city. The tallest one was only 11 to 12 meters, with a dome in an arc that looked like an onion from the outside. Looking up from the inside, a dazzling sun mural greeted their eyes. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

The entire cathedral was golden in color and looked very bright, which was also the common style of all the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedrals.

The altar was located in the east, and all kinds of Sun Flowers surrounded a huge Sacred Emblem.

On the surface of the Sacred Emblem, the golden ball and the lines representing light formed a symbol filled with mysticism: the symbol of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

High up on the wall behind the altar, there were two pure glass windows inlaid with gold foil. Every day, when the sun rose, the light would shine from here onto the Sacred Emblem.

On the west side of the cathedral, there were two similar glass windows to take in the glow of the setting sun.

As this was not a formal ritual of the Church but a traditional celebration of the people, Padre Guillaume Bénet did not appear. Instead, Administrator Béost hosted the celebration with Ava, who was still dressed as a “Spring Elf,” standing next to him. Musical instruments such as flutes and lyres sounded, and the villagers sang songs that praised spring and prayed for a bumper harvest.

They hadn’t rehearsed, so the singing wasn’t uniform, and some people even sang and danced, making the scene lively.

Lumian’s mouth opened and closed, but he didn’t make a sound—he was simply going through the motions. On the other hand, Aurore, who was beside him, was engrossed in her singing, taking the opportunity to have fun and raise her voice.

As he was only going through the motions, Lumian had time to look around.

He didn’t notice any abnormalities in the villagers’ behavior. He subconsciously looked up at the golden sun mural on the dome.

Then he saw it—the thing he couldn’t quite put his finger on.

The villagers weren’t praising the sun.

For a village that worshiped the Eternal Blazing Sun, this was strange. Words like “Praise the Sun” and “My God, my Father” were staples of daily life, but Lumian realized he hadn’t heard them in a while!

As a quasi-believer and having skipped activities in the cathedral since crossing the padre, Lumian hadn’t thought much of it before. But something about the solemn and golden atmosphere of the cathedral made him realize that this was not normal.

And then he remembered the letter of help that he had reconstructed, the urgent plea for assistance from someone in the village: “We need help as soon as possible. The people around us are getting weirder.”

The people around us are getting weirder… At that moment, Lumian gained a deeper understanding and agreement with this sentence.

Lumian's heart raced as he looked around, searching for Leah and the other foreigners.

But they were nowhere to be found at this Lenten celebration.

Seriously, they don't appear when they're needed… Lumian muttered inwardly.

Lumian forced himself to join in the chorus, pretending not to notice anything out of the ordinary.

Finally, the singing died down, and the celebration ended. Lumian whispered to Aurore, his voice urgent, "Go home first. I have something to tell you later."

He knew he couldn't leave yet; as an escort for the Spring Elf, he had to participate in the final part of the ritual.

He couldn't force his way out of the cathedral, risking an anomalous eruption.

Aurore nodded thoughtfully. "Okay."

She didn't ask further and left the cathedral with Madame Pualis and the other villagers, leaving Lumian behind.

The cathedral was empty, save for Lumian and a handful of lads who had participated in the blessing tour.

Ava, the embodiment of the Spring Elf, stood in the center of the room, surrounded by the contributions, symbolic items that hadn't been thrown into the river—herbs, axes, shovels, whips, and goose sticks.

…

Lumian and his companions had to wait for someone to come in from outside and announce the departure of the Spring Elf before they could take off her crown, necklace, branches, and leaves. During this

process, they needed to leave a gap for the Spring Elf to leave Ava's body.

In just 20 to 30 seconds, footsteps echoed from the cathedral's entrance.

Lumian instinctively looked up. Two figures entered the cathedral.

The thin Shepherd Pierre Berry had rushed back to attend Lent. His eyes were sunken, and he wore a dark brown long coat with a hood. He had tied a rope around his waist and was sporting new black leather shoes.

But what caught Lumian's attention was that his greasy black hair was now clean and smooth. Even his messy beard had been tidied, and it was now neater and shorter than before. As usual, there was a faint smile in his blue eyes.

The other man was Padre Guillaume Bénet, adorned in a white robe with gold threads, befitting of his role as a clergyman. He had sparse black hair and a slightly hooked nose, but he exuded a dignified aura. Despite standing at less than 1.7 meters tall, he still seemed to tower over Shepherd Pierre Berry.

The padre… Why did he come? Lumian was surprised and puzzled.

As a clergyman of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, he had no business being here, at a folk celebration that didn't include a segment to praise the sun.

Lumian's mind jolted as he recognized that the padre and his group were previously up to something sinister, especially considering his past conflict with them. He quickly retreated to the side of the stained glass, moving slowly and silently to avoid drawing attention to himself.

The group hadn't yet surrounded Ava, the Spring Elf, so they were standing in different places, making Lumian's actions inconspicuous.

Ava was surprised to see the padre, but she quickly remembered his importance in the village. It made sense for him to announce the end of the Lent celebration. She smiled once again.

...

Padre Guillaume Bénet and Shepherd Pierre Berry approached Ava, and the former spoke in a deep voice.

“Send the Spring Elf off.”

Other than Lumian, people rushed forward to surround Ava.

“Send the Spring Elf off!” Shepherd Pierre Belly shouted as he bent his back with a smile.

Not good! Lumian’s heart raced as he stepped forward, his body reacting before his mind could catch up.

But it was too late. Shepherd Pierre Berry picked up an axe from the pile of symbolic items, and with a tight grip and a powerful swing, the axe came cleaving down.

Blood spurted from Ava’s neck, forming a thick red mist.

Thud.

Lumian watched in horror as Ava’s head fell to the ground and rolled a few times in the blood, finally stopping, head facing up.

She still had a look of joy in her eyes.

Having just taken two steps in her direction, Lumian’s heart sank. He immediately turned around and turned to flee towards the stained glass.

Chapter 32 - 32 Anomaly

32 Anomaly

The cloth, jars, and eggs that were splattered with blood, along with the sickening stench, failed to elicit a reaction from Padre Guillaume Bénet. He turned his body and locked his gaze on a particular spot in the cathedral, where Lumian's figure was reflected in his blue eyes.

The color of the padre's eyes shifted, turning so ethereal that they appeared transparent.

Lumian was surrounded by complicated silver symbols that coiled around him like small rivers. He ran through an illusory river that was formed from these symbols, with blurry tributaries ahead of him.

Guillaume Bénet reached out his right hand and grabbed a mercury-colored symbol that encircled Lumian.

Lumian stomped his right foot, preparing to hurl himself through the stained glass and out of the cathedral.

But he slipped and couldn't muster enough strength, and his body was sent flying.

With a loud bang, whoosh, and cracking sound, Lumian shattered the stained glass depicting Saint Sith, but he failed to break through it and instead crashed back into the cathedral.

His body was covered in cuts, and blood flowed freely.

Shepherd Pierre Berry, who had earlier decapitated Ava with an axe, locked onto Lumian.

His gentle smile belied the ferocity in his blue eyes, as if a seal inside him had been undone, revealing his true nature.

Pierre Berry charged at Lumian with the axe, his body seeming to grow taller and stronger with every step.

Lumian leaned against the broken stained-glass window, his back facing the ruthless shepherd.

Lumian struggled to free himself from the pain of being stabbed as he fell heavily to the ground. As he propped himself up with his hands to roll out of the cathedral, an abnormal sense of danger washed over him.

Someone's behind me, he realized. Ignoring the pain and blood, he continued pressing down on the broken glass window frame and pretended to roll out, using it as a cover to quickly retract his body and fall back instead of moving forward.

Bang!

Suddenly, an axe smashed into the window frame, sending it flying out of the cathedral with a loud bang.

Lumian rolled backward, narrowly avoiding Pierre Berry's violent attack as he lunged past his feet.

But he didn't feel relieved. Pierre Berry had blocked his only escape route, forcing him back into the cathedral.

Despite having read countless novels, Lumian knew he couldn't rely on simply rolling to avoid getting hit. As he brushed past Pierre Berry, he quickly propped himself up with his elbow, exerted strength from his waist, and bounced up.

He surveyed the scene and realized that, besides Guillaume-junior and a few others, all the lads had lost their minds and turned deranged.

They ignored Ava's headless corpse and the blood that stained the ground, shouting excitedly, "Send the Spring Elf off! Send the Spring Elf off!"

Guillaume-junior and a few others stood in shock, staring at Ava's wide, smiling eyes without moving.

Fear, panic, and disbelief etched their faces, as if trapped in an unbreakable nightmare.

Pierre Berry loomed over Lumian, appearing taller than the cathedral dome.

His axe missed, but he quickly retracted it and swung at Lumian again. Lumian deftly dodged the attack and ran off despite not even finding his footing.

Thud thud thud!

Lumian fully utilized a Hunter's speed and agility as he ran in an arc.

Target: the padre!

He knew he had to deal with the leader, no matter how the others attacked him. He put on a fierce stance, determined to either let them allow him to flee or die trying with him.

Only in this way could a miracle be created in a very unfavorable situation.

Shepherd Pierre Berry didn't pursue Lumian. He stood in front of the broken window frame, holding his blood-stained axe and extending his left hand towards Lumian's direction.

The cathedral plunged into darkness, and Lumian's surroundings grew even more ominous.

Seemingly coming to life, the abyss swayed gently, like a curtain behind which pale-white, pitch-black, and strange arms were poised to strike.

Padre Guillaume Bénet's eyes were nearly transparent, with Lumian's figure submerged in an illusory river formed by shimmering mercury symbols. In front of him, he saw something similar but more surreal, as if representing the future or a tributary.

After experimenting, Guillaume Bénet's right hand finally grasped the key pattern formed by multiple symbols.

With a single move, he could rewrite Lumian's future and render all his efforts futile.

But suddenly, the padre's eyes froze, and he let out a scream. His eyes shut tightly as blood and turbid tears streamed down his face.

Amidst his scream, his body expanded like a balloon being filled with gas, and his white robe with golden threads cracked under the strain.

His skin turned nearly transparent, revealing the bizarre mark that had been hidden beneath his clothes.

The black marks that resembled a seal connected to an indescribable world. The terrifying aura they emitted filled the cathedral, leaving the lads who were still sending off the Spring Elf in a state of extreme terror. They either ran around the offerings, knelt on the ground, or prostrated themselves on the floor, afraid to look up.

Guillaume-junior and a few others fainted from fear, leaving pools of urine and a foul stench.

Shepherd Pierre Berry was about to use his mystic arts to grab Lumian when he threw away his axe and knelt on one knee, bowing his head and ceasing all movement.

Lumian was the only one who remained unaffected in the entire cathedral.

Although he felt an abnormal pain in his head, it was nothing compared to the mysterious voice that had nearly killed him.

He also felt a burning sensation in his chest, suspecting that the black thorny chain symbol had appeared, along with the bluish-black symbol resembling an eye and worms.

However, he had no time to check his physical condition or understand why he suddenly had the upper hand. He continued to run towards Padre Guillaume Bénet, determined not to let any opportunity slip by!

As he got closer, Lumian could clearly see the unique black marks resembling seals made up of strange symbols and words.

His gaze quickly swept around and he noticed something familiar: black symbols resembling thorns that drilled out of the left chest of Padre Guillaume Bennet and circled behind him.

It was identical to Lumian's chest, but much lighter.

He has one too?

Lumian's heart trembled.

Is this the root cause of the abnormality in the village?

Why do I have it? When did I get it?

…

...

Thoughts quickly surfaced in Lumian's mind, but he didn't let them distract him from his movements.

He ran towards Guillaume Bénet, stretched out his right arm, and wrapped it around the enemy's head.

Without pausing, he forcefully circled behind the padre, and with a snap, Guillaume Bénet's head turned and faced his spine.

Phew… Lumian breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that the biggest problem had been resolved. He had to hurry home and escape with his sister, leaving the rest to the three foreigners to deal with.

But just as Lumian turned to leave, Guillaume Bénet, who was supposed to be dead, opened his eyes.

They were bloodshot, and a sharp buzz split Lumian's head in half, the intense pain preventing him from screaming.

Everything shattered before his eyes, and he was engulfed in darkness as he lost consciousness.

……

Painful!

How painful!

Lumian suddenly sat up, opened his eyes, and rubbed his head.

…

He saw the familiar surroundings of his bedroom: the wooden table, the reclining chair, and the wardrobe and small bookshelves on both sides. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

I was saved by Grande Soeur? How long was I out? How is the situation in the cathedral? Lumian didn't have the time to think through it. Without wasting any time, Lumian got off the bed, held his head, and rushed out.

He found Aurore in the kitchen on the first floor, wearing a light blue dress and preparing dinner.

Lumian shouted, "Aurore! Grande Soeur, we need to run! The padre and many people in the village have gone crazy. They killed Ava at the end of the celebration!"

He wasn't sure if his sister knew about the incident, so he got straight to the point. After all, there were many ways to be saved, and it did not mean that she had to be at the scene.

Aurore turned around, looking confused, and asked, "Celebration? The Lent celebration?"

"Yes." Lumian nodded vigorously.

Aurore smiled.

"That was one hell of a story. Two sentences and you've got me feeling all kinds of scared. But listen, you gotta be more careful with your tales. Lent's still a few days away."

"…" Lumian was stunned.

Chapter 33 - 33 Confirmation

33 Confirmation

Lumian gazed into Aurore's eyes for a moment before slowly asking, "How many days until Lent?"

He suspected his sister was trying to prank him, but he had never known her to be flippant about important matters. This was a crucial moment that would impact the whole village, and possibly even their survival.

Aurore sized him up and quipped,"Did you not take an afternoon nap? Are you still not fully awake? It's March 29, 1358. We still have a few days before Lent."

March 29… Lumian ruminated the date for a moment and wondered if he was dreaming.

He had vividly experienced Lent—a period of merriment that ended in a bloodbath. He had witnessed Shepherd Pierre Berry hack off Ava's head with an axe and blood spurt everywhere…

Was he dreaming now, or had his past experience been a dream? Regardless of which one it was, they both seemed too real. Lumian couldn't detect any signs of deceit on his sister's face.

Sure, Aurore could be an excellent actress, but Lumian believed she was not that kind of person.

They had spent five years together, and he knew every detail of her personality. There was no way she could have fooled him!

Lumian was perplexed as he considered the possibilities of his sister Aurore lying to him about the date.

Either she was being controlled by the padre or some secret entity or everything had been resolved and she was just messing with him.

If neither of these options was true, then it was likely that Aurore was telling the truth.

Time had rewound to March 29th, a few days before Lent.

With Lumian's understanding of the world, this was clearly impossible and shouldn't have happened. However, his sister's attitude left him at a loss.

I have to think of a way to confirm it… Lumian tried to recall everything that had happened during that time period and realized he could easily remember most of the details—Aurore was wearing a light-blue dress on that day on the 29th March corresponding to the "successful" celebration of Lent. He also remembered meeting Leah, Ryan, and Valentine that night before taking them to the cathedral to catch the padre in the act.

"What's wrong?" Aurore stretched out her right hand and waved it in front of her stunned brother.

Lumian quickly gathered his thoughts and said, "Aurore, I just remembered something. I need to go out for a while. I'll be back soon!"

Lumian realized that the only way to confirm if time had really returned to March 29th was to find Ava.

If she was still alive, he would have to come to terms with this unbelievable change.

He didn't wait for Aurore's response and hurried to the door, bypassing her.

"Call me Grande Soeur! Don't be late for dinner!" Aurore shouted after him.

As he ran towards Ava Lizier's house, Lumian feared that if he were even a second slower, he would be caught in an indescribable nightmare and completely devoured.

Along the way, many villagers noticed him, but they were afraid it was a prank directed by him and didn't stop to ask for a reason.

Finally, Lumian reached his destination.

Guillaume Lizier, Ava's father, was a famous shoemaker in the village of Cordu and the surrounding mountains. Although they weren't particularly rich, they weren't too bad either. They lived in a subterranean grayish-blue two-story building with an empty space at the back where grass and firewood were piled up, and a goose house was repaired.

It was almost dinner time when Lumian arrived, and several figures were busy in the kitchen of the Liziers' household.

Lumian walked through the open door and immediately saw Ava.

This brown-haired girl with aqua-blue eyes was wearing a gray-white dress and preparing dinner for her mother. Her hands and feet were nimble, and her eyes were lively. Lumian could tell just by looking at her that she was alive.

She's really not dead… Lumian thought to himself as he looked at Ava's neck, trying to find signs of stitches.

In one of Aurore's horror novels, there was a scene where a corpse was stitched up to act as a living person.

But Ava's neck was long and smooth, without a single scar.

Guillaume Lizier, the shoemaker, noticed Lumian standing in the doorway and asked, "Lumian, what's the matter?"

He stood up from his kitchen chair and faced Lumian, his brown hair disheveled, and a slightly greasy brownish-white apron hanging in front of him.

Ava, who had been busy in the kitchen, turned around in surprise and looked at Lumian.

She saw Lumian standing there in a daze.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

Lumian was momentarily stunned but quickly regained his composure and planned to make up a random reason to explain his visit.

However, Guillaume Lizier inspired him with a question.

He deliberated for a moment and asked, “Monsieur, did Pierre of Berry order a pair of leather shoes from you?”

He remembered that he and Reimund were supposed to meet Shepherd Pierre Berry the next morning and were surprised when he had abandoned his flock to rush back to participate in the Lenten celebration despite the dangers of the long and difficult journey.

By that time, Pierre Berry had already put on a new pair of soft leather shoes.

Unless he went to a shoe shop in Dariège that sold finished products, it would take time to make a pair of leather shoes. This meant that Pierre Berry had been back in the village for at least two or three days!

Guillaume Lizier was surprised by Lumian’s question and said, “Pierre Berry came back a few days ago, but not many people in the village know about it. He also told me not to tell anyone else.”

As expected… Lumian made up a reason and said, “I saw someone who looked very much like him and thought I was hallucinating.

“Because the man was wearing new leather shoes, I came to confirm it with you.”

“It’s him.” Guillaume Lizier gave an affirmative answer. “He was still herding three or four sheep that he claimed his employer had given him.”

Don’t they only let the sheep return to the village in early May to shear and milk them? How are they to be grazed if a few sheep are brought back now? Grazing in the highland pastures is still prohibited… The more Lumian thought about it, the more he felt that

Shepherd Pierre Berry's behavior was extremely abnormal.

And his performance at the end of the celebration proved Lumian's judgment.

However, he had no idea what he, the padre, and the others wanted to do, or what they had already done.

Lumian smiled at Guillaume Lizier and Ava and said, "I'm relieved that it's really him. I thought I was having problems with my brain and eyes because I drink too much."

He then waved at the Liziers and said, "Goodbye."

As Lumian left the Liziers' house, the smile on his face disappeared quickly.

He was now very confident that today was really March 29th.

Did I go back in time, or did I have a precognitive dream? Dreams can't be that real. They're so real that every detail is there… Lumian thought hard as he walked.

Either way, it was something he had only read about in Aurore's novels and never imagined would happen in reality.

…

On his way home, Lumian circled the square and came to the side of the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral.

The stained-glass window, which should have been completely shattered, was perfectly embedded in the wall, and the Saint Sith missionary illustration on the surface shone brightly under the sunset.

Lumian watched this scene with mixed feelings. Many thoughts threatened to emit smoke from all the friction against each other in his mind.

On his way back to the square, Lumian saw a familiar figure walk out of the cathedral's main entrance.

It was the padre, Guillaume Bénet, who had a slightly hooked nose and a dignified aura, and he was wearing a white robe with golden threads.

Lumian's heart tightened, and he arched his body slightly, preparing himself for an attack or to flee.

Guillaume Bénet glanced at him and nodded expressionlessly.

"Come again tomorrow for prayers."

Uh… That's right. He hasn't been caught red-handed by me during the early evening of March 29th. He hasn't fallen out with me, nor is there any worry that his secret plot is about to be exposed… With this in mind, Lumian instinctively reacted.

He stood up straight and spread his arms.

"Praise the Sun!"

…

"Praise the Sun!" Guillaume Bénet replied with the same pose.

After leaving the village square, Lumian habitually recalled what had just happened.

Suddenly, he discovered a point that he had neglected previously because he was shocked by "time reversal."

He still had his superpowers!

He was still a Hunter!

He had not needed to catch his breath from running all the way to the Liziers, and he had immediately put on the best posture when facing the padre. This meant that his physique and corresponding condition far exceeded the time before he consumed the potion.

From this, Lumian made a judgment that the previous experience was not a precognitive dream, and he was already a Sequence 9 Beyonder!

I'll try entering that special dream at night to see if I can still enter and if there are any changes… Lumian quickly came up with the next step of his plan.

After returning home, Lumian pretended as if nothing had happened and had dinner with his sister, Aurore.

As he often acted this way because he didn't want her to help clean up the mess every time he got into trouble, Aurore didn't ask any further despite sensing that something was off.

After washing the cutlery and cleaning the kitchen, Lumian informed his sister and went straight to Ol' Tavern.

He wanted to confirm if the foreigners who didn't hail from Cordu would appear.

After entering Ol' Tavern, Lumian sat at the bar counter and greeted the boss and bartender, Maurice Bénet, and the thin middle-aged man, Pierre Guillaume.

"A glass of Whiskey Sour," he said with great familiarity.

Whiskey Sour referred to low-quality alcohol brewed from apples. It was only more expensive than some beer in taverns. People often hawked it on the streets of the city.

Maurice Bénet nagged, "Stingy brat, don't you like the pain of absinthe?"

Lumian said the familiar words, "Is it on the house?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

This made his mind feel a little adrift.

Maurice Bénet immediately stopped talking and poured a glass of Whiskey Sour for Lumian.

Lumian sipped his drink as he waited.

Not long after, he heard tinkling sounds.

He turned around to see Ryan wearing a rough dark bowler hat, a drab duffel coat, and pale yellow strides.

Leah attracted the attention of almost all the men in Ol' Tavern with her white pleated cashmere dress, off-white coat, Marseillan boots, and small silver bells tied to her boots and veil.

Similarly, Valentine wore a white vest, a blue tweed jacket, and black trousers, with his blond hair covered in a little powder.

The three of them walked to the bar counter under everyone's gazes and sat down beside Lumian.

Lumian didn't look up as he thought to himself, A glass of Dariège red wine, a glass of rye beer, and a glass of C?ur épicé…

Ryan took off his top hat and put it aside. Then, he said to Maurice Bénet, "A glass of Dariège red wine, a glass of rye beer, and a glass of C?ur épicé."

Lumian let out a long sigh, and Ryan asked, "What's wrong?"

Lumian took a sip of his Whiskey Sour and said in a deep voice, "I'm a nobody, with no time to notice the brightness of the sun…"

Chapter 34 - 34 Sayings

34 Sayings

Lumian intended to observe, so he went through the entire process of getting to know Leah and her companions until they arrived outside the cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

He confirmed that these three foreigners really didn't know him and weren't on guard against his corresponding prank.

Has time really rewound… Lumian was momentarily in a daze.

Valentine said his 'lines' as he looked at the magnificent building in front of him that had blended into the night. "We've been here before. There's no one here."

!!

Lumian composed himself and stopped following the procedure.

He said directly, "That's because the padre doesn't want to bother with you."

He planned on leaving the impression on these three foreigners, who were suspected to be official Beyonders, that he liked to joke but meant no harm.

Leah thought of several possibilities and asked, "You're saying that the padre is in the cathedral but isn't responding to the knocks due to certain matters?"

Lumian smiled.

"It's not suitable to have others see you having an affair in the cathedral."

After saying this, he instinctively muttered in his heart, Unfortunately, I can't hear the classic line 'You've ruined the holy church's plans!' this time.

Of course, after learning more about Madame Pualis, he felt that what the padre said was not entirely unreasonable.

Perhaps padres could be like the main characters in Aurore's spy novels, who were willing to endure temporary humiliation and betray their bodies to infiltrate the evil forces represented by Madame Pualis to complete an important mission.

Valentine's cold attitude changed as he asked anxiously, "Having an affair in the cathedral?"

Lumian spread his hands. "What's the problem? The padre does this every day. Relax. Isn't there a saying that goes, 'throughout the ages, it has remained unchanged: men will always pursue women?'"

Valentine snapped, "But this is a cathedral!"

Lumian thought for a moment and asked curiously, "So, as long as the clergyman doesn't have the affair in the cathedral, it's acceptable?"

"This is blasphemy against God!" Valentine was on the verge of exploding.

Ryan placated him with a pat on the shoulder, and the most composed foreigner in the group asked, "Do you know who the padre is having an affair with tonight?"

Lumian shook his head.

"There are too many possibilities. His mistresses include Madame Pualis, Madonna Bénet, Philippa Guillaume, and Sybil Berry…"

"Madonna Bénet? She has the same last name as the padre?" Leah interjected.

Lumian nodded. "She and the padre are cousins twice removed."

"…" Valentine was stunned for a moment. He gritted his teeth and asked, "Is Guillaume Bénet a servant of God or a servant of the Demon?"

Do you only know this line? Why don't I see you blowing up his head… Lumian deliberately defended the padre, "It's actually nothing. In Dariège, we have a saying: 'Distant cousins, feel free to sleep together.'"

Leah laughed, tinkling the silver bell on her head. "Why do you have so many sayings?"

Lumian spread his hands again. "That's just how it is in the countryside."

Ryan interjected thoughtfully, "How do you know that we're not from Dariège?

"You wouldn't have said, 'in Dariège, there's a saying.'"

You told me this yourself… Lumian had been quick to shoot off his tongue and actually treated what had "happened previously" as information that he already knew.

He had no choice but to make up a reason.

"You don't look like Dariège locals."

He pointed to the road leading to the village and said, "I've already helped you find the padre. I have to go home now."

Leah smiled faintly and said, "I thought you'd follow us."

"I don't dare offend the padre," Lumian casually mentioned. "The villager who snitched on him previously has been missing for a long time."

Without waiting for Ryan and the others to respond, he waved his hand and ran to the other side of the square, saying, "Remember to keep my secret, my cabbages!"

……

Lumian walked along a starlit country road, the crimson moon obscured by clouds.

He pondered recent events, his hands in pocket.

As he neared his home, he looked up at the roof of the semi-subterranean two-story building.

As expected, Aurore sat there, hugging her knees and gazing at the cosmos.

In the darkness, she seemed lonely and distant.

It has really repeated… Is there a possibility that what happened previously is real and I'm dreaming now? Lumian had just come up with a new guess when he suddenly realized the difference between the two March 29ths.

He realized that the woman who had given him the Wand card and taught him mysticism knowledge was absent from Ol' Tavern, preventing him from determining if he was dreaming or not.

I'll do a confirmation tomorrow… Lumian composed himself, walked to his house, and pushed the door open.

Just like last time, Lumian climbed to the roof using the ladder on the second floor and sat beside Aurore.

"What's so interesting about this view?" Lumian said deliberately.

Aurore turned her head and sighed. Just as she was about to speak, Lumian added, "I mean, what does the cosmos mean to you?"

Aurore sized him up.

"You're being rather direct today?"

She then looked at the cosmos and said faintly, "As you know, I'm not from Cordu or Dariège. I don't know if you've ever heard the saying that home is where you can't return to…"

Lumian didn't joke as he looked into the cosmos.

Aurore proceeded to fly into her bedroom and write a letter to her pen pal. Lumian didn't reveal his newfound Beyonder status. He returned to the second floor, chatted with her sister about her pen pal, then closed Aurore's door and returned to his bedroom.

Upon seeing the white four-piece bed, Lumian's heart skipped a beat. He lifted the pillow and found the Minor Arcana tarot card representing the Seven of Wands!

…

Looking at the man in verdant attire with a determined expression on his face, his hand holding a wand, poised for battle his enemies, Lumian remembered the woman's interpretation of the card: "Crisis, challenge, confrontation, courage…"

The more Lumian thought about it, the more he felt that these four words truly revealed his current situation.

Before drawing the card, there was a high chance that he would enter a crisis and face challenges!

What I need to do next is to muster my courage and confront the problem? Wait, hasn't time already turned back? I haven't even met that lady or drawn the card. Why is it here? Lumian was alarmed. He wasn't too confident about his previous guesses.

All kinds of thoughts and deductions quickly emerged in his mind, like bubbles bubbling in boiling water.

This made Lumian's head hurt; he felt like he was about to go crazy.

In the end, Lumian decided to treat the woman and the item she gave him as an "exception" for the time being.

With that lady's mysteriousness and uniqueness, it was considered normal for her to be unaffected by time reversal!

If I can find her tomorrow and she still knows me, it means that there's nothing wrong with my deduction… Lumian exhaled, feeling mentally exhausted.

He went to the washroom to wash up and went to bed early.

……

...

Lumian woke up in the familiar, faint gray fog and sat up, seeing the wooden table and chair in front of the window.

He had once again entered the special dream.

Upon discovering that the Wand card still existed, Lumian knew he could enter.

Lumian subconsciously touched the inner pocket of his clothes, and his expression froze.

The gold coins were gone!

All the gold coins were gone!

Lumian hurriedly jumped off the bed and searched his entire body and the spot where he had been lying, but couldn't find them.

He didn't even have 1 coppet worth of copper coins.

Time has reversed here, too? Lumian suddenly had such a guess.

He looked around and didn't see the shotgun, axe, or pitchfork that should have been there.

He calmed himself and walked down to the first floor, where he found the pitchfork and hand axe in their original locations, identical to his first exploration of the dream ruins.

Similarly, the bucket of corn oil had not been placed beside the stove.

As for the shotgun, Lumian searched everywhere but didn't find it.

Lumian believed more and more that time had turned back in the dream.

I'll check the ruins and see if the two monsters are still there…

Lumian muttered to himself silently. He picked up his axe and opened the door.

Not long after, he passed through the wilderness filled with crevices and weeds and arrived at the edge of the ruins. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Unlike the first time he explored this place, as a Hunter, he noticed many traces left behind by living creatures, including two that often appeared in the area when he put his mind to it. He followed one set of footprints to the half-collapsed house.

If I had such superpowers in the past, how could I have nearly been ambushed during my first exploration? Lumian carried his axe and entered the building.

He went straight to his “destination” and arrived in front of the shattered pottery jar.

A sliver of gold seeped out from inside.

Lumian bent over and picked up the Louis d’or.

It was the same lustrous color as the first time Lumian picked it up.

Indeed, time has reversed. With very few exceptions, everything has returned to the original state… Lumian sighed.

Suddenly, he took two quick steps forward, twisted his waist, and half-turned to the right.

As he exerted his strength, the axe in his hand cleaved out.

The skinless blood-colored monster lost sight of its target just as it pounced from the roof. What greeted it was an axe.

Pfft!

Its head flew out, and its headless body fell heavily to the ground amidst the blood and pus.

Chapter 35 - 35 Differences

35 Differences

It's about as strong as the 'last time'… Lumian muttered to himself as he looked at the corpse of the skinless monster.

Before the time reversal, he had been evenly matched with the monster, relying on his intelligence to defeat it. Now, as a Beyonder, he only needed one swing of his axe to finish it off.

Of course, he had the advantage of already experiencing the same sequence of events and knowing the monster's attack strategy. This allowed him to anticipate its moves.

The contrast between before and after made Lumian feel that he had undergone a significant improvement after becoming a Beyonder.

After pondering for a moment, he moved the monster's corpse and head to a corner but did not hide it under rocks, wood, and mud, leaving it exposed along with the blood on the ground.

Lumian then quickly searched the half-collapsed building and found the remaining 197 verl d'or and 25 coppet, categorizing them into different pockets.

He flipped through the livre bleu again but found nothing out of the ordinary.

Once he had completed his search, he snuck deeper into the ruins. However, after only 20 to 30 meters, he changed course and returned to his starting point. Following the path the skinless monster had taken while alive, he nimbly climbed onto the half-collapsed roof.

After making the necessary preparations, he hid himself. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Minute by minute, Lumian waited patiently like an experienced hunter.

After an unknown period of time, a figure emerged from the ruins.

It was the same monster that had previously given Lumian a Hunter Beyonder characteristic, with its half-human, half-beast appearance, bent knees, greasy black hair, and shotgun on its back.

The shotgun monster approached cautiously, as if on a daily patrol.

Suddenly it sniffed the air and detected the blood in the distance.

It quickly changed direction and headed towards the half-collapsed, burnt building.

Following the trail of blood, the monster found the skinless monster's corpse and head.

It squatted down to examine it carefully.

On the half-collapsed roof, Lumian shook his head and muttered to himself, You can't even smell me from such a distance? Even with the smell of blood, you shouldn't have missed me!

As he muttered, he raised his axe and struck hard at the crevice in the stone beside him that he had prepared earlier.

Crash!

The half-collapsed roof shook, and heavy rocks crashed down.

The shotgun monster reacted quickly, twisting its waist, kicking its feet, and lunging towards an uncollapsed area.

Lumian smiled and swooped down from the intact roof like an eagle grabbing its prey in midair.

In the midst of the howling wind, Lumian and the shotgun monster clashed in the air. Lumian raised his axe with one hand while the monster desperately tried to turn around and block.

Lumian clenched his left hand into a fist and punched down. As the monster extended its arm to block, Lumian opened his palm and reduced his strength, grabbing the monster's arm.

As Lumian pulled back with his left hand, he suddenly cleaved down with his axe in his right hand.

The blade struck the monster, and they both fell to the ground in a pool of blood.

Lumian, who had a buffer pad, was not affected by the impact. He raised his hand and cleaved the monster's head from its body with his axe once again.

Despite its unwillingness, the head rolled twice and separated from the body.

Standing up, Lumian looked at the monster and sneered, "You've weakened!

"All you have is a terrifying shell, nothing more than a stuffed scarecrow inside!"

As a Hunter, he was confident in dealing with the shotgun monster again, but he hadn't expected it to be so easy.

Looking at the corpse on the ground, Lumian patiently waited for the Beyonder characteristic to appear.

However, after waiting for a long time, he saw no sign of the dark-red light.

"Nothing?" Lumian muttered to himself in puzzlement.

He wasn't surprised, though.

Last time, he had obtained the shotgun monster's Beyonder characteristic and turned it into a potion that he had already consumed.

Since the time reversal didn't turn me back into an ordinary person, and the Beyonder characteristic in my body hasn't disappeared, it

means that there's one less Hunter Beyonder characteristic here. The shotgun monster is only back in its living state, but it essentially lacks what's important. The question now is, why am I still the same before the time reversal? He couldn't come up with an answer, so he decided to loot the copper coins from the shotgun monster and leave the ruins.

……

The next morning, Lumian didn't feign a headache in front of his sister like he had on March 30th. Instead, he got up early and prepared breakfast, including toast, fried poached eggs, sliced bacon, and more.

Aurore was surprised to see Lumian's diligence. "Oh, you're so diligent? I thought you wouldn't be able to get up this morning after drinking so much yesterday."

Lumian casually replied, "Just a glass of Apple Whiskey Sour and a glass of absinthe. How is that too much?"

Aurore shook her head and smiled. "What's there to be proud of? Other than wine, other alcoholic beverages are unhealthy and affect our brains. No wonder you're becoming more and more stupid, my drunkard brother."

Lumian, who couldn't argue with his sister, muttered to himself, "Why is wine an exception?"

"Because I like it," Aurore replied, challenging Lumian to retort.

Lumian had no response.

After breakfast, he stayed home and kneaded dough instead of going out.

Aurore clicked her tongue in wonder.

"Did you cause any trouble? You're so obedient…

"Tell me, I won't beat you up. At most, I'll give you an additional combat class."

“Nothing.” Lumian deflected the question and said, “I find things in the village getting weirder and weirder. Some people are acting more and more abnormally. Aurore, do you feel that way?”

Lumian had observed that his sister didn’t have any memories related to the time reversal, but the abnormality in the village had to have started before March 29th. As a Mystery Pryer, Aurore might have sensed it but didn’t pay enough attention to it.

Aurore’s expression turned serious.

“Even you can sense that something is amiss?

…

“Tell me, who were the ones who made you feel this way?”

As expected, Aurore knew that there was something wrong with some people, but she didn’t expect the problem to be so serious… Lumian washed his hands and thought before responding, “Madame Pualis, the padre, Pons Bénet, and the shepherd, Pierre Berry, who returned to the village early.”

“There is indeed something wrong with Madame Pualis. I knew something was off about her when she came to Cordu with the administrator, but she was very restrained. Apart from constantly having extramarital relationships, there was nothing evil about her. I saw something on her…”

Aurore stopped herself, not wanting to drag Lumian into the supernatural world.

Constantly having extramarital affairs? Before Lumian found out that Madame Pualis was having an affair with the padre, he found Madame Pualis a decent lady. He was surprised to learn that Madame Pualis had affairs with men other than the padre.

Of course, this was in line with Lumian’s stereotypical view of Madame Pualis.

“As for the padre, he has the same strong desire for superpowers as you, but he has never received the blessings of the Eternal Blazing

Sun Church," Aurore continued. "A guy like Pons Bénet, whose brain is nothing but muscle, can't do anything strange. As for the shepherd, Pierre Berry, rushing back a few sheep seems a little off, but I can't tell what's wrong, and I don't dare to look deeper…"

As one would expect from a Sequence 7 of the Mystery Pryer pathway… Before the time reversal, I hadn't conversed much with Grande Soeur about such topics. In fact, I overlooked the crucial hint that there could be an issue with Pierre Berry's sheep… Yes, I didn't suspect Pierre Berry much back then. I just thought it was a bit odd for him to hurry back early to take part in Lent… Just as Lumian was about to speak, there was a tinkling sound at the door.

The doorbell rang.

Lumian walked over to the door and asked, "Who is it?"

"A telegram for Aurore!" the person outside replied loudly.

…

"A telegram?" Aurore was confused. "Who would send me a telegram? There's nothing urgent recently…"

Lumian was also puzzled.

They hadn't received any telegrams before the time reversal on March 30th.

Wait, Lumian thought. I went to the village square early on March 30th to wait for Reimund. Perhaps Grande Soeur received a telegram but didn't tell me. Lumian quickly opened the door.

Outside stood Bertrand, the administrator's subordinate in charge of telegrams. He handed a piece of paper to Lumian and said, "1 verl d'or."

The brown-haired, brown-eyed Bertrand was not from Cordu and had come here with the administrator from Darième. He looked warm on the outside but was actually quite greedy.

Lumian tossed a silver coin worth one verl d'or to Bertrand and

looked at the telegram.

The contents were simple. Lumian quickly browsed through it.

“The author salon mentioned before is in June. If you’re willing, Miss Aurore, you can set off for Trier now. Leave enough time for a tour. We guarantee that this will be a very beautiful journey.”

It was signed by the editorial department of Novel Weekly.

Wh… Lumian’s eyes widened.

Was this a reply from Novel Weekly?

“When did I say I wanted to attend the author’s salon?” Aurore leaned over and read the telegram. “What’s wrong with the editorial department of Novel Weekly? It’s annoying having to meet so many people at once!”

Bertrand was well away from the door by now. Lumian was stunned and suddenly had a bold guess. The telegram in his hand was indeed a reply from Novel Weekly, but it was a reply to the telegram he would send in a few days!

To be more precise, the telegram he had sent before going back in time had received a reply after the time reversal, and in his current experience, that telegram had yet to be sent out!

Chapter 36 - 36 Meeting Again

36 Meeting Again

Lumian reached a conclusion that if his guess was true, Cordu and the surrounding area were the only places affected by the time reversal. Other places were not affected.

Lumian's thoughts raced, wondering if leaving this place would allow him to return to his normal life. He turned to Aurore and pretended to be guilty.

"Well, uh, this telegram is my doing."

"You?" Aurore was both angry and amused but, more importantly, at a loss.

!!

She wondered if her brother had pranked her.

This was akin to being pecked in the eye by an eagle despite being an experienced hunter!

Lumian explained 'sincerely,' "Here's the thing. Haven't I always wanted to go to Trier to take a look? So, two days ago, I secretly sent a telegram to Novel Weekly at the telegraph office. I wrote it in your style to ask when the nearest author salon is. As expected, they warmly sent an invitation."

Aurore showed a look of enlightenment, as though the mystery was finally solved. "So that's how it is…"

The next second, she picked up a wooden stick beside her and gritted her teeth.

"So the child has grown up!"

Lumian quickly added, “Aurore, no, Grande Soeur, listen to my excuses. No, listen to my explanation.”

He didn’t panic and even deliberately joked.

“Fine, go ahead,” Aurore said as she held onto the wooden stick. “I’ve always made sure that others accept any punishment with my best conduct. How can I convict someone without listening to the suspect’s statement? Even if you are to die, I’ll make sure you die knowing why!”

Lumian quickly said, “In Intis, Trier has the most and best universities. I’m going to take the college entrance examination soon, and I want to visit them to decide which three to apply for.”

Aurore nodded slightly, indicating for Lumian to continue.

Lumian praised his sister sincerely.

“I believe that as long as I make this legitimate request, you will definitely take me to Trier. However, you will have to spend your money. If Novel Weekly sends an invitation, not only will the steam locomotive ticket and hotel accommodation fees be reimbursed, but also various entertainment expenses in Trier.

“I know you don’t need the money, but all the writing you’ve done was painstaking work, word after word. I won’t let a way of saving money go to waste.”

Aurore’s expression eased.

“At least you care about me. But have you considered that I don’t want to attend an author salon? I hate interacting with so many strangers.”

Lumian smiled.

“Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, have you thought that Novel Weekly invited you so warmly not to let you attend the salon, but to build a good relationship with you? You’re a famous best-selling author. The salon isn’t important; what’s important is you. You can find a reason to reject the salon if you’re willing to accept the invitation to visit

Trier. The people at Novel Weekly will be glad that you accepted the first part of the invitation."

Aurore sized up Lumian.

"You're getting better at reading people."

She exhaled and said, "Alright, I'll handle some matters and pack our luggage. We'll leave for Trier in two days. Send a telegram to Novel Weekly before we leave and ask them to pick us up at the Trier train station."

"Alright!" Lumian couldn't hide his joy.

Although he suspected that it was impossible for him and Aurore to simply walk out of Cordu and find the corresponding source of the time reversal, he had to try. He couldn't trap himself in one place.

Having such thoughts, he had tried to convince Aurore.

Lumian didn't plan on telling Aurore about the time reversal because she had lost her corresponding memories. Lumian knew that it was unlikely that she would believe such a delusional speculation unless Lumian kept making prophecies that were eventually verified. However, he still pretended that he wasn't aware of the time reversal. He didn't plan on making prophecies for the time being to see if he could discover any clues.

Using reading as an excuse, Lumian returned to the second floor and entered the study.

He sat down and casually flipped open a book to confirm if he had it the right way up.

Then he sank into his own thoughts, hoping to make further sense of the current situation through the various details he discovered last night and today.

As his gaze shifted across the empty space, Lumian saw the livre bleu on the table.

His heart skipped a beat, and he retracted his thoughts. He stretched

out his palm and took the livre bleu, flipping through it quickly.

The pages that were missing some words and had corresponding holes appeared before his eyes.

That letter… Lumian muttered silently.

He combined the “late” reply from Novel Weekly with the letter of help that Leah, Ryan, and the others had received, and he had a new guess.

Perhaps that letter was really written by me. I’m the murderer!

Time reversal might have happened more than once. According to the definition in Aurore’s novel, this should be called a time loop.

In a previous cycle, I discovered a certain abnormality through certain exploratory actions and decided to seek help from the outside world by sending an anonymous letter without implicating Aurore. By the time officials realized the seriousness of the problem and sent Ryan and the others to deal with it, Cordu had already begun a new cycle. Like Aurore now, I lost all my corresponding memories and returned to my ‘initial’ state…

Now, that begs the question. Why are words still missing from this livre bleu?

Logically speaking, it should have returned to its “initial” state, just like the food I ate in the previous cycle.

There are two possibilities.

Firstly, if I discover an abnormality and ask for help before time starts to loop, then the relevant memories shouldn’t be reset. Could there be another reason that caused me to lose a portion of my memories? This is getting more and more complicated…

Secondly, I had found a way to keep something from being affected by the loop during that particular cycle. What could it be? If there is, why don’t I just find a piece of paper and write down what I found?

Lumian felt like he had cleared away a layer of fog and reconstructed

the general situation, only to fall into even more confusion.

He believed that he had already experienced many time loops. However, in the previous cycles, his memories and physical condition would reset once he started from the beginning, so he did not notice it at all.

The reason why he could retain his memories and the Hunter Beyonder characteristic this time was that he had met the lady and obtained the Wand card. He had entered the dream ruins and activated the special trait in him. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Since the special trait brought about by the two symbols allowed Lumian to “bring” his Beyonder state in the dream to reality, it was completely possible for them to “save” his complete physical condition to the starting point of the cycle.

Therefore, even after the shotgun monster’s condition reset, it still failed to retrieve the Hunter Beyonder characteristic… Lumian leaned back in his chair and looked at the ceiling as he slowly exhaled.

He then laughed self-deprecatingly.

I’ve just become a Beyonder, but I have to face such abnormal things. I don’t even get the time to develop…

Uh, I can’t confirm that the request for help was created by me. It might have been Aurore, and Madame Pualis is also a suspect. As Beyonders, they might have sensed something amiss during a certain cycle and tried to save themselves. With their mysticism knowledge, it’s easier for them to find a way to preserve some traces than I can. Nonetheless, a time loop is indeed the best guess for the current situation.

As he pondered, Lumian realized a way to confirm the source of the letter.

...

The solution was simple. He would enter the dream ruins and flip through the same livre bleu at home.

If the livre bleu also had missing words, it meant that Lumian had created the letter of help himself. The home in the special dream was formed by his subconscious projection onto the mixed ruins. Everything he subconsciously knew would appear there.

If not, then it was most likely done by Aurore or Madame Pualis. Lumian's subconscious wouldn't know about this and wouldn't be responsible for it.

Lumian wasn't in a hurry to 'catch up on his sleep.' Seeing that it was about time, he sneaked out of the house and headed straight for Ol' Tavern.

In the corner of Ol' Tavern, he spotted a familiar figure.

It was the lady who had given him the Wand card and potion formula.

She was wearing a long orange pleated dress with a flounce collar and a light-colored frilly hat.

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief, feeling like a drowning person who had finally caught a lifebuoy.

He quickly walked over and noticed that there were not breakfast items on the table in front of the lady, but three stacks of tarot cards.

"Do you need me to draw a card?" Lumian probed.

"You've already drawn it." The woman shuffled the three stacks of tarot cards without looking up.

...

Lumian felt tears welling up in his eyes.

As expected, she was not affected by the time loop!

Without beating around the bush, Lumian sat down and asked directly, "I, as well as the entire Cordu Village, have fallen into a time loop?"

The lady looked up and replied with a smile, “Yes, you’re one of the Circle Inhabitants.”

Lumian repeated the term ‘Circle Inhabitants’ to himself and asked in confusion, “What does that refer to? People caught in a time loop?”

The lady smiled and said, “There are two explanations. The first refers to people that obtained a special power equivalent to Sequence 4 after praying to a certain existence. The second refers to your current situation.”

“You can obtain strength by praying to a hidden existence?” Lumian was very surprised by the first explanation of Circle Inhabitants.

Wasn’t it the case that all 22 Beyonder pathways relied on consuming potions to advance?

The lady nodded slightly and said, “In theory, the Eternal Blazing Sun can also bestow the gift of Beyonder powers without the need for a potion. However, it is a burden to Him. It can only be used as a temporary measure. The more people who need a blessing, the greater the burden. It might even affect His state.

“There are also disadvantages to those who are bestowed. They will slowly become closer to the Eternal Blazing Sun, be it in body, mind, or spirit.

“Moreover, as it is a gift from a superior being, They can take it back at any time unless you possess the unique power of certain pathways and secretly complete a certain level of stealing while still having the gift.”

Chapter 37 - 37 “Dangerous Forest”

37 “Dangerous Forest”

Lumian paused for a moment and then said, “So the body, mind, and spirit will approach the bestower because the power of the gift carries a corresponding brand?”

He made this inference from the Beyonder characteristics left behind by the Oldest One and the previous owners.

Although the bestowment was pure strength and didn’t contain any characteristics, it was also likely to have been tainted with all the previous owner’s quirks.

The lady held the tarot cards and nodded in agreement.

“Your logical ability is impressive. You should thank Aurore for giving you enough basic education.”

Lumian muttered inwardly, No need for your reminder…

The lady continued, “Even if the bestower doesn’t wish to affect the bestowed, it’s difficult to prevent the other party from approaching Them physically, mentally, and spiritually. This is because if the power bestowed doesn’t contain the bestower’s will, it will be challenging for the bestowed to control it, and it will quickly dissipate.

“Therefore, the blessings of the orthodox gods in this aspect are basically temporary and limited to a certain extent.”

And the evil gods don’t care what happens to the bestowed? Lumian nodded thoughtfully and asked curiously, “Beyonders, what I mean

is, can people with Beyonder characteristics still accept gifts? Will the two conflict and cause them to lose control?"

The lady smiled and shook her head, "There may be some conflict, but not much.

"Think about it. The power of the gift will transform your body to match that of the bestower, but your body has already adapted to your Beyonder characteristics. So, there will be a conflict until you find a new balance. However, this conflict won't affect your mind or spirit, so you won't lose control unless you're on the brink of collapse. The only problem is that you might have to get used to seeing a third eye and a fourth hand growing on your body. Of course, the prerequisite is that the power bestowed on you will last for a long time. The corresponding level has to be very high as well. Otherwise, the little changes in your body can be ignored."

Lumian acknowledged the information in a terse manner.

"What if the gift is from the same or a neighboring pathway?" he asked.

The lady nodded.

"It won't cause any conflict."

She then chuckled.

"But that doesn't mean there won't be physical changes."

What does this mean? Lumian was confused and was about to ask for clarification when the lady interrupted him with a chuckle.

"I thought you'd be more interested in the time loop after learning about Circle Inhabitants. It's surprising that you're paying attention to this knowledge that may not be useful to you in the future. That's not like you!"

Lumian revealed a self-deprecating smile.

"I wanted to ask if you could help us break the time loop," he said. "But then I remembered what you said before. You claimed that the

price for resolving the corresponding problem would be the complete destruction of Cordu. Everyone would die. If I wanted to achieve a better outcome, I could only rely on myself. I didn't understand it at the time, but now I can guess the reason. If you want to break the cycle and you're not a Circle Inhabitant, the only way is to destroy everything?"

The lady nodded in agreement.

"That's correct."

Lumian was confused and asked, "Then why didn't you make it clear before?"

It's not like it's something that would lead to destruction!

Or was this lady used to speaking in a half-concealed manner?

The lady immediately laughed.

"Would you have believed me if I had told you that the whole village was caught up in a time loop?"

Lumian thought about it for a moment and replied, "Probably not…"

It was difficult to believe such an absurd story without experiencing it firsthand.

The lady smiled and said, "That's why I didn't make it clear. I didn't want to spend a lot of time explaining it to you."

"…" Lumian fell silent for a moment before seizing the opportunity to ask, "Do you know what the key is to breaking this cycle? In what direction should I focus my efforts?"

The lady shook her head.

"Divination on certain matters is very dangerous here."

"Huh?" Lumian was confused.

The woman could only add, "If I knew the key, I would tell you," the

lady said. “The sooner I solve this, the sooner I can end this journey.” She sighed. “When can I have a work-free vacation…”

Work? Lumian couldn’t obtain any inspiration from the mysterious lady, so he probed, “If the padre isn’t killed, will time stop repeating itself?”

“No,” the lady replied accurately. “There are many trigger points in the loop, including time reaching the twelfth night. You can figure out the rest yourself.”

Twelfth night… There’s still quite a bit of time to investigate… Lumian thought for a moment and said, “Because I triggered the specialness in my body, I can maintain my memories and Beyonder characteristics every time I loop, right?”

Seeing the lady nod, he further asked, “So, as long as I’m alive and continue to investigate, I’ll be able to find the key to end everything sooner or later?”

This was an application of the “exhaustive method” that Aurore had mentioned.

“In theory, that’s right.” The woman’s emotive eyes, which puzzled Lumian couldn’t put his finger on, surfaced again. “But you should have realized that only Cordu and the surrounding area are in a time loop. Time is passing normally in the outside world, and the date is completely different from Cordu’s.

“The three investigators will send telegrams to describe their situation and the village, and the officials will sense the abnormality here once they mention the date.

“Even if the investigators fail to send a telegram before the cycle restarts or they don’t mention the date, as time passes, the officials will discover the problem. What do you think they will do to resolve the time loop in Cordu?”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before replying, “They’ll destroy it directly, just like your alternative choice.”

The lady nodded with mixed emotions. “That can effectively prevent

the abnormality from spreading and affecting others," she said. "If you have the chance to go to the Sonia Sea in the future, you can ask about Bansy Harbor. It was destroyed by the Church of Storms due to some kind of corruption. No one escaped."

Lumian felt a renewed determination to find the key point of the loop on his own.

He mocked himself, saying, "Looks like I don't have much time left."

He knew he only had three or four more cycles, and he couldn't have it loop to the twelfth night every time.

The lady stood up and calmly said, "At least you still have a chance. Some people don't even have that."

……

After leaving Ol' Tavern, Lumian stood on the road and looked at the few pedestrians and houses around him. Everything in Cordu Village seemed normal on the surface. The villagers had the same emotions as people everywhere: joy and anger, desire and longing.

However, beneath the peaceful and noisy facade, this village hid an unimaginable horror. Everyone here had fallen into a loop and lived the same few days over and over again.

Aside from a few people like Padre Guillaume Bénet, Shepherd Pierre Berry, Pons Bénet, and Ava Lizier, Lumian was temporarily unable to determine who was innocent.

...

He wasn't even 100% sure that Reimund Greg, who was usually rather dim and unscheming, was fine.

The padre's superpower may have influenced the lads' strange behavior at the end of Lent, instead of them having issues beforehand.

For a moment, Lumian felt that Cordu was like a primitive forest, rife with unseen dangers. He couldn't tell who was the prey and who was

the hunter.

Caution and patience were most important to survive in such an environment. Ability, courage, wisdom, and experience had to take a backseat.

This was somewhat similar to his vagrant days, yet clearly different.

As these thoughts surfaced, he felt the Hunter potion showing signs of digestion.

This is the first step of the ‘acting method’?

That’s pretty fast. I thought it would take a month or two to start.

He became excited at the possibility of digesting the Hunter potion.

Can I digest the Hunter potion in one or two cycles?

With the help of dream ruin’s hunting, he might quickly become a Sequence 8 Provoker and increase his chances of solving the time loop problem.

…

Lumian pondered as he walked forward. Soon, he arrived at the village square.

His current plan was to “chat” with the padre to test him for abnormalities and obtain any clues.

As he looked around, he saw a figure walking towards the cathedral.

The figure was wearing a dark brown long coat with a hood, a rope tied around his waist, and a pair of brand new soft leather shoes. It was Shepherd Pierre Berry.

It’s him… Lumian quickly approached Pierre and deliberately asked, “Pierre, why are you back?”

Pierre’s black curly hair was greasy, and he hadn’t shaved for a long time.

He happily replied, “Isn’t Lent almost here? I haven’t celebrated it in years. I can’t miss it this year no matter what…”

His blue eyes were filled with a gentle smile, and he seemed completely different from the shepherd who had traumatized Lumian before.

Uh, the answer will be somewhat different from the previous cycle in a different place with a different questioner. Although the essence doesn’t change, certain words will be different… Lumian listened carefully and looked at Pierre’s new shoes before asking, “Did you make it rich?”

“Not really. I can only say that my current boss is not too shabby. He gave me quite a bit of things. Drinks are on me tonight.” Pierre’s joy was evident.

“Alright.” Lumian agreed and pointed at the cathedral. “Are you going to pray?”

Pierre sighed and said, “Yes, it’s been too long since I prayed to God in a cathedral.”

Though the sentence didn’t seem significant, the more Lumian listened, the more he sensed that something was off.

Shepherds weren’t entirely isolated from human settlements. Numerous villages were scattered around the plains and pastures. High mountain meadows might be desolate, but shepherds would occasionally descend the mountain to resupply. How could he not find a cathedral?

Indeed, if Pierre Berry had ventured to Feynapotter or Lenburg, locating the Cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun would be a fruitless endeavor. However, Lumian couldn’t shake the feeling that there was something amiss in every word Pierre Berry uttered.

Instead, Pierre Berry inquired, “Are you headed to the cathedral as well?”

“No,” Lumian replied, shaking his head. “I thought there’d be people chatting in the square, but it was empty.”

He then waved his hand. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“I’m going home.”

“See you tonight,” Pierre Berry responded, waving back.

After watching the shepherd head towards the cathedral, Lumian made his way back to the village.

He decided against having a chat with the padre. His next destination: the home of Shepherd Pierre Berry!

Chapter 38 - 38 Sheep

38 Sheep

Over a dozen members of the Berry family were crammed into a ramshackle two-story house. Lumian seemed unfazed by the open door and carefully maneuvered around it to the vacant area enclosed by wooden fences at the back.

Piles of hay and firewood were scattered near the eaves of the clearing, and three filthy, white sheep, muddied with dirt, were lingering there.

Lumian remembered Aurore mentioning that the sheep Pierre had hurried back with seemed peculiar, but she couldn't quite pinpoint what was unusual about them. That's why Lumian had taken advantage of the shepherd's absence during prayer at the cathedral to inspect the sheep.

Although he had never herded sheep himself, he had lived near the highland pastures in Cordu, so he had at least encountered 70 to 80 sheep. He was by no means unfamiliar with them.

After observing closely for some time, Lumian couldn't discern any differences between the three sheep before him and others of their kind. All he could do was mutter under his breath, "Can't see any issues with my naked eye—do I need some superpower?"

Sadly, Hunters didn't possess such abilities.

Lumian had already utilized his enhanced vision, sense of smell, and understanding of various clues, but he still couldn't identify any problems.

The only oddity he noticed was that the sheep's droppings were piled in one corner rather than scattered everywhere.

Of course, there was a high probability that the Berry family regularly cleaned the area to use the feces more efficiently.

After several more seconds of observation, Lumian murmured softly, “Looks like just looking and sniffing isn’t enough… Do I need to get hands-on?”

Without any hesitation, he placed his hand on the fence and flipped over it, as if he was right at home.

The three sheep turned their heads simultaneously to look at Lumian, who greeted them with a grin.

“Come on, time for a checkup.”

He wasn’t concerned that their owner would discover his actions since he had done similar things more than once. Every family in the village knew that this guy enjoyed playing pranks in various ways. Using sheep as props was just part of his antics.

In Lumian’s own words: When your reputation is already tarnished, there are some perks to being infamous.

With the title of “Prankster King,” anything he did in Cordu Village wouldn’t arouse too much suspicion. Even if those who were clearly abnormal caught him red-handed, they wouldn’t be able to confirm that something was amiss with him.

Of course, under such circumstances, Padre Guillaume and Shepherd Pierre might try to silence him as a precautionary measure. As such, he needed to exercise caution when necessary.

“Baa! Baa! Baa!”

As if sensing Lumian’s ill intentions, the three sheep hid behind the haystack, their cries barely audible.

But how could they escape a Hunter?

Lumian grabbed a sheep and patted its side while forcefully examining its teeth.

“No issues here either…” he whispered.

Seeing the sheep look at him, he added with a wicked grin, “You’re in excellent health. You’d probably make a delicious mutton stew with peas.”

He deliberately said this to test the intelligence of the three sheep.

When there were no problems with the target’s body, he could only start from this angle.

The sheep’s eyes glazed over momentarily.

Lumian chuckled.

“Pretty smart, huh? Do you understand what I’m saying?”

The sheep’s eyes returned to normal as it turned its head and began eating hay.

“Ignoring me?” Lumian stroked his chin. “I’ll buy you from Pierre Berry later and have you for dinner tonight!”

The sheep remained unresponsive.

It bit off a piece of hay and yanked it out.

The haystack suddenly collapsed, and Lumian’s sharp Hunter’s eyes caught a glimpse of something.

His expression darkened as he walked over and squatted down for a closer inspection.

It was a bundle of black hair containing a few severed fingernails.

“Why would this be outside the house?” Lumian muttered in surprise.

As a native of Cordu, he was well aware of the burial customs of the Dariège region. When someone died at home, their hair and nails had to be cut and hidden somewhere inside the house to maintain their horoscope and good fortune.

How could such an item appear in an outdoor haystack?

Lumian picked up the bundle of hair and nails, weighing it as he examined it.

It looks quite fresh, as if it had been cut only recently… He quickly made a judgment.

However, no one had died in Cordu Village lately!

Lumian could only suspect that this was some form of witchcraft similar to the funeral customs. He planned to consult his sister about it later.

To avoid arousing suspicion, he stuffed the nails and black hair back into the haystack and restored the messy scene.

Having completed that task, he walked towards the wooden fence.

As Lumian took a few steps forward, he turned to look back at the three sheep. With a hopeful attitude, he muttered to himself, “Pierre Berry seems off. He’s back in the village before May. Did he commit a crime outside? As a good citizen of Intis and a devout believer of God, should I visit Dariège and inquire around?”

The three sheep just stared at him, unresponsive and unchanged.

Lumian sighed inwardly, feeling disappointed. These sheep aren’t particularly intelligent, he thought.

He then raised his hands—thumbs pointing up, index fingers pointing down—making a gesture of disdain.

What’s wrong with mocking the sheep when I’m in a bad mood?

Suddenly, the sheep that Lumian had examined took a few steps forward, looking hopeful.

It raised its hoof and started drawing on the mud.

Lumian was momentarily stunned, but soon approached the sheep to see what it was drawing.

The sheep seemed to be drawing letters on the ground. Lumian found

them familiar but didn't recognize them.

He frowned and speculated, This language should have the same origin as the Intis language… But I only know Intis and some ancient Feysac languages…

…

At that moment, Lumian realized the significance of Aurore's words: "knowledge equals power."

The sheep finished drawing and took a step back, looking at Lumian with sincerity in its eyes. The other two sheep also had a similar emotional change and bleated softly.

Lumian looked at the word on the ground and fell into deep thought, wondering what it meant and how he should respond.

In just a second or two, he had an idea and nodded solemnly at the three sheep.

He stretched out his right foot and wiped away the word on the soil.

He may not understand, but he could pretend to understand it!

He would trick the sheep for now and ask his sister for guidance later. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Without waiting for the sheep to 'respond,' he nodded slowly with a heavy and thoughtful expression as he walked towards the fence, as if saying, "Be patient, I'll figure something out."

After leaving the sheep pen, Lumian didn't waste any time and went straight home. He found Aurore reading on a recliner in the study.

"Grande Soeur," he called out anxiously, "there's something."

Aurore immediately raised her guard. "Calling me Grande Soeur… What kind of trouble did you get into this time?"

…

Lumian took a deep breath and organized his thoughts.

“Remember when you said there was something off about Shepherd Pierre Berry’s three sheep?

“Well, I went to the back of his house to take a look while he was praying in the cathedral. And guess what I found?”

Aurore’s expression turned serious.

“If you’re going to do something like that, you need to tell me in advance. It’s dangerous now, and no one will protect you.”

Lumian felt touched by his sister’s concern but complained, If I told you in advance, you probably wouldn’t have let me go…

“I’ll keep it in mind for next time,” he promised sincerely.

He had said similar words dozens of times.

Aurore understood the urgency of the situation and nodded, indicating that Lumian could tell her what he had discovered.

Lumian quickly recounted his experience in the sheep pen. The more Aurore listened, the more serious she became.

“Write down that word,” she said, getting up from the recliner and finding a pen and paper to hand to Lumian.

Lumian had memorized the word, so he quickly wrote it down on the paper.

Aurore took a quick glance and said solemnly, “This is a big problem.”

I know… Lumian responded inwardly.

Moreover, he believed the problem was even bigger than his sister had imagined.

“What’s the problem?” he asked.

Aurore pointed at the word and said, “This is Highlander, the official

language of the Feynapotter Kingdom. Like Intis, it comes from ancient Feysac.

“It means…”

Aurore paused for a moment, then spoke in a deep voice, “Help!”

“Help?” Lumian blurted out in surprise. “The sheep are asking us for help?”

Aurore tersely acknowledged, “I suspect they’re not really sheep. They were probably humans!”

“Humans?” Lumian asked in shock.

This was beyond the scope of what he knew.

Before, Lumian had only thought that the three sheep were intelligent and had human-like emotions. They also seemed to have mastered some human language, but he had never thought of them as actual humans.

To him, turning into a sheep only happened in imaginative stories!

Just as he said that, Lumian was no longer shocked.

He realized that a time loop had already happened. What was so strange about people turning into sheep?

In the world of mysticism, there were plenty of bizarre and absurd things.

Aurore solemnly nodded at her brother’s confusion and said, “I’m not sure if there’s a secret art that can turn a person into a sheep, but all the details now point to that possibility.”

“Indeed,” Lumian echoed.

The more he thought about it, the more he felt that the three sheep were probably humans.

Did this mean that the shepherd, Pierre Berry, was actually grazing

humans?

Lumian then asked, “Why were those nails and hair hidden outside the house?”

Aurore pursed her lips and said, “This is one of the funerary customs of the Dariège region. However, it’s not used under normal circumstances. Many people have forgotten about it.

“As a Warlock, I’ve studied this aspect to see if I could obtain some useful knowledge.”

She then explained, “When a family member commits suicide or is murdered by a relative, or if they had a bad character while alive and exerted a negative influence on the entire family, the hair and nails that are cut after death have to be hidden outside the house to prevent the family’s horoscope from being affected and bringing them bad luck.”

Suicide or murder by a relative? Lumian suddenly thought of something.

During the last cycle, Pons Bénet entered Naroka’s house without adhering to the funeral customs.

Could he have gone to take away Naroka’s hair and nails?

Chapter 39 - 39 Sick

39 Sick

If Pons Bénet had really entered Naroka's house to take away her hair and nails, there's a high chance that Naroka had been murdered by a relative. After all, Naroka had a good reputation and was the pillar of the entire family. Furthermore, she was relatively healthy, both physically and mentally, so it was unlikely that she had committed suicide. Lumian quickly came up with a series of speculations.

But if Naroka had really been murdered by a relative, what was the reason?

Seeing that her brother was deep in thought and hadn't spoken for a long time, Aurore thought that he was frightened by the idea of "humans turning into sheep" and "someone from the Berry family dying from murder". So she comforted him gently.

"Although the matter is serious, it doesn't affect us yet.

!!

"I need to reflect on such matters. It's easy for you to panic when you encounter something similar if you're always prohibited from coming into contact with real mysticism. Hmm, the frequency of supernatural events has been increasing in recent years, and I can't be by your side at all times. You'll grow up and have your own life…"

Lumian inwardly retorted that he had never heard of someone having to leave the family when they grew up.

He could feel that Aurore's attitude toward him coming into contact with mysticism had loosened up due to the matter of humans turning into sheep.

If I work harder, I can directly tell her that I've become a Beyonder… Lumian thought, but before he could speak, Aurore had already made her decision.

"Go pack your bags now. We'll leave Cordu immediately using Novel Weekly's invitation. We're really lucky. They sent us a telegram at the critical moment so that we can leave openly without being suspected. When we're on our journey, I'll teach you some true mysticism, but don't even think about becoming a Beyonder. It's too dangerous."

Lumian silently muttered to himself, We're not lucky. I sent the telegram because I discovered the problem. We only received a reply in this cycle. But he was pleased that his sister was still the same decisive person.

Although he didn't think they could successfully leave Cordu Village or escape the loop, he had to try.

"Uh, aren't we going to save those three sheep—three people?" Lumian asked.

Aurore shook her head.

"This could trigger a conflict between us and Pierre Berry, and I'm not sure how strong he is or how many helpers he has. It's too dangerous to save others without knowing anything.

"It's better to let the officials do it. This is their duty. When we reach Dariège and buy steam locomotive tickets, we'll send an anonymous letter to the officials and let them handle it."

"But what if they don't believe us?" Lumian deliberately pressed.

Aurore smiled.

"In terms of mysticism, you are indeed illiterate. In the letter, we'll describe the matter of turning people into sheep clearly. They will naturally find professionals to perform divination. Even if they don't obtain any detailed revelations, they will discover that there's something abnormal about Cordu."

“Got it,” Lumian said, and he went upstairs to pack his bags.

Not long after, the siblings each came down with a brown suitcase.

Aurore looked out the door and said, “Let’s go to Madame Pualis and borrow her carriage to reach Dariège as quickly as possible.”

An ordinary person had to walk an entire afternoon from Cordu Village to Dariège. As a Hunter, Lumian didn’t need to, but in Aurore’s eyes, he wasn’t a Beyonder yet.

After hesitating whether he should take the opportunity to confess to his sister, he realized that it was impossible for him to escape from Cordu. He might as well take the opportunity to search Madame Pualis’s house for clues. Lumian tersely acknowledged, “Will do,” and reached out to take his sister’s suitcase. With two pieces of luggage in hand, he headed for the door.

Aurore nodded in satisfaction and relief, but then she said in puzzlement, “Your strength has increased. You’re carrying it so easily.”

She subconsciously wanted to raise her right hand and rub the sides of her eyes, but Lumian had already left. She could only give up and quickly follow.

On the way to the administrator’s residence, many villagers saw Aurore leaving with her luggage and asked about the situation curiously.

Aurore, who had a valid reason, was very calm about this.

On the other hand, Lumian came up with seven or eight stories to deal with the different villagers: something about Aurore getting the Intis Legion of Honor medal and going to Trier to be honored, something about him being specially recruited by Trier Normal College and being able to be matriculated, or something about Aurore going bankrupt from investing in stocks with her creditors about to come knocking on her door, leaving her with no choice but to flee to other places. The ignorant villagers were stunned when they heard this, but thanks to Lumian’s reputation, they chose not to

believe him after coming back to their senses.

Not long after, the siblings arrived in front of the black building that had been transformed from an ancient castle.

Looking up at the two tall towers, Lumian smiled and said, “I wonder what’s inside. Aurore, have you ever been inside?”

“Why would I wander around someone else’s house?” Aurore rolled her eyes at her brother.

Lumian muttered softly, “I thought Madame Pualis would invite you to tour the castle. Don’t people like them like to show their guests their big houses and precious collections?”

“What’s there to see…” Aurore’s voice became softer and softer as she thought about how this would be of great help to her description of a castle in her works. “Sigh, let’s talk about it in the future. I wonder if we can still return to Cordu.”

She then led Lumian through the colorful garden towards the castle door.

After taking a few steps, Aurore slowed down and looked around. She remarked in puzzlement, “The flowers in this garden bloomed very early…”

Cordu Village was in the mountains, and there was a highlander pasture nearby. Normally, the first wave of spring flowers would only appear in mid-to-late April.

“Perhaps Madame Pualis’s gardener has a special method,” Lumian said. He recalled that Madame Pualis was a Beyonder of an abnormal pathway and suspected that this was related to some supernatural phenomenon, but he couldn’t say it out loud.

Aurore was just making an offhand remark, so she didn’t think too deeply about it. They arrived at the castle and received a warm welcome from Madame Pualis.

The lady was wearing a blue corset dress today, and there was still a diamond necklace inlaid with gold hanging over her chest. Her long

brown hair was half tied up, the rest cascading down, making her look even younger than usual.

She sat on an armchair in the small living room and quietly listened to Aurore's request. She smiled and said,

"You don't have to be so polite. We're friends."

Heh… Lumian mocked in his heart.

Who would introduce crappy marriage partners to a friend?

But he quickly saw Madame Pualis looking at him with a smile in her bright brown eyes.

He suddenly recalled their previous conversation and felt uncomfortable.

"Alright," Aurore said helplessly.

Every time she borrowed a carriage, she would offer to pay for it, but Madame Pualis would always refuse. So she would usually bring some gifts for the lady on the way back, which were neither expensive nor cheap, and also give the carriage driver a tip.

While waiting for the carriage driver to prepare, Madame Pualis invited the siblings to taste some desserts made by her own chef.

Lumian tasted a muffin and looked around.

"Where's Mr. Lund?"

Louis Lund was Administrator Béost's butler. He had followed him from Dariège to Cordu Village.

Lumian had evidence that he had an affair with a woman in the village and had sold some of the castle's items secretly. This was how he got the news that Madame Pualis was the mistress of the padre.

Chancing upon the padre and Madame Pualis having an affair in the cathedral? That was a lie for the foreigners!

At this moment, Lumian was looking for Louis Lund to curse him, saying, “You son of a b*tch, why didn’t you tell me that Madame Pualis is a Warlock?”

…

Madame Pualis sighed.

“Louis is sick. He’s resting in his room.”

Sick? For some reason, Lumian felt that there might be a problem.

While his sister was chatting with Madame Pualis, he excused himself to go to the washroom, walked out of the living room, and went straight to the stairs.

This castle was huge, and the couple didn’t bring many servants with them. It looked empty everywhere, and one could even hear echoes when walking in certain places. This gave Lumian better conditions to infiltrate.

Relying on his powerful senses, he easily dodged a valet and a maid. With light footsteps, he arrived at the second floor and found Louis Lund’s room.

He was in no hurry to knock. He turned his head and pressed his ear to the wood.

“Ah!”

“Ah!”

… Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Sounds of a man screaming in pain came from the room.

…

Is he really sick? It sounds quite serious… Lumian thought for a moment and walked to the side. He opened the door of the other servants—Administrator Béost and Madame Pualis lived on the third floor.

After darting into the room, he gently closed the wooden door, took a few steps to the other side, and pushed open the glass window.

Lumian looked down and saw that no one was around. He immediately propped himself up with both hands and nimbly flipped over, “hanging” on the outer wall of the castle.

Then, he leaped lightly like a wild cat and silently landed on Butler Louis Lund’s windowsill.

Lumian stood at the edge of the glass window, turned his body, and secretly looked into the room.

He saw Louis Lund lying naked on the bed, his belly bulging, giving the impression that he might burst at any moment.

Seeing that the butler’s black hair was drenched in sweat and his face was grimacing with pain, Lumian couldn’t help but frown when he heard his tragic cries from time to time.

What kind of illness is this?

It looks scary. A stomach can actually grow so big…

At this moment, a woman in her forties stood beside Louis Lund’s bed.

She had brown hair and brown eyes. She was pretty and didn’t have many wrinkles. She wore a grayish-white dress and was shouting excitedly at Louis Lund.

“Soon, soon.”

What’s happening soon? Just as this thought flashed through Lumian’s mind, he heard a scream and saw something holding up Louis Lund’s stomach.

In the blink of an eye, that spot had burst open. Louis Lund’s stomach had burst!

A small, bloody hand reached out.

“It’s born! It’s born!” The woman shouted happily.

She then leaned down and took out a wrinkled, dirty, and bloody baby from Louis Lund’s stomach.

Lumian was stunned.

“…”

Chapter 40 - 40 On the Carriage

40 On the Carriage

Compared to the “time loop” and “humans becoming sheep,” the scene in front of him was no less shocking. It made Lumian feel as though his eyes, mind, and spirit had been severely tainted.

If he had known beforehand that he would witness such a thing, he would definitely have abandoned his actions.

What the f*ck is going on?

Louis Lund is clearly still a man!

!!

Whose child is he carrying? The administrator’s? Or Madame Pualis?

Is this the world of mysticism?

Aurore didn’t let me come into contact with this for my own good…

For a moment, Lumian’s thoughts were disordered, and his mind was in a state of chaos. He wished he could dig out his eyes and forcefully forget what he had seen.

“Waa! Waa! Waa!”

The baby that Louis Lund had given birth to cried out, making the filthy “delivery room” instantly have a holy aura.

This was the beauty of a new life. Lumian, who was hiding outside the window, directly experienced the joy of human origins.

Of course, besides that, the strange, absurd, dirty, and disharmonious feeling became even more obvious.

Lumian finally came back to his senses and subconsciously looked into the room again.

The baby had already been placed on a white silk cloth beside Louis Lund by the woman in the grayish-white dress. The baby was a boy, and there was more blood than milky-white fat, but other than that, there was nothing abnormal. He looked like an ordinary newborn.

Lumian observed for another two seconds and realized that the baby boy's ten fingers were bent. His nails were very long, like the claws of a bird.

Just now, he had used these hands to rip open Louis Lund's stomach!

Louis Lund, on the other hand, lay in a semi-conscious state.

The wound on Louis Lund's stomach had yet to be stitched up, and blood kept seeping out. One could vaguely see the intestines pressed to the side and a strange, bird's nest-like thing covered in a flesh-colored membrane.

As the woman wrapped the baby in silk, she picked up a sewing needle and catgut, and began chanting as she sewed the groaning Louis Lund's wound, "This was quite easy for you. The last time I gave birth to quadruplets, that was considered painful…"

Lumian's facial muscles twitched slightly. He felt that after his eyes, brain, mind, and spirit were affected, his ears were also tainted.

He retracted his gaze. He had to get out of there, fast.

He leaped back to the window he had come from and flipped into the room.

After closing the window, he rushed out the door and headed straight for the stairs.

After dodging a male servant, Lumian tiptoed and quickly returned to the hall.

"Where did you go?"

Suddenly, a slightly magnetic and gentle voice sounded in his ears.

Even with Lumian's Hunter senses, he didn't sense that someone was standing beside the staircase entrance.

He turned around to see Madame Pualis in a blue corset, her hair half-tied, and her bright brown eyes reflecting his figure.

The madam no longer had a smile on her face. Her eyes reflected Lumian's figure with a piercing intensity.

Lumian's mind tensed up. He was terrified, but prepared to fight if necessary.

Aurore appeared from a side room and asked, "Where did you go? The carriage has been waiting at the entrance."

Having been in a similar situation, the experienced Lumian said half-truthfully, "Didn't Madame Pualis say that Mr. Lund is sick? I had drinks with Mr. Lund and wanted to visit him, but this castle is too big. I couldn't find his room."

Aurore nodded and said, "You could have asked Madame Pualis directly. You don't have to hide it from us. It's not a bad thing."

"My bad. I'm sorry." Lumian looked at Madame Pualis sincerely.

After seeing the scene upstairs, Lumian was more afraid of this lady than disgusted.

He was relieved when she finally smiled, no longer as serious as before.

"Let me thank you on behalf of Lund for your kindness, but he isn't in the best of health. He isn't willing to appear in front of others in that unseemly manner."

It's indeed unseemly… Lumian silently echoed her thoughts.

"Shall we board the carriage? Thank you so much," Aurore said to Madame Pualis.

Lumian watched Madame Pualis closely, afraid she would find a way to make them stay longer.

If she did, it could mean that she sensed something had happened with Louis Lund!

Although Lumian felt that their combined forces could fight against Madame Pualis after he rendezvoused with his sister, this was her castle after all, surrounded by her servants. It was the worst hunting environment for a Hunter.

Madame Pualis nodded and smiled at Aurore.

“I look forward to the gifts you bring back from Trier. I always yearn for what’s trending there.”

“I hope I can give you a surprise,” Aurore replied, though she wasn’t sure she’d ever be able to return to Cordu Village. She just needed to keep up appearances.

Madame Pualis walked the siblings to the door with her lady’s maid, Cathy, and watched them get into the four-seater carriage.

The burly, brown-bearded carriage driver wore dark red clothes, yellow pants, and a waxed hat. He looked almost like a professional coachman in the city, except that he didn’t wear a tie.

This was a mandatory request from Administrator Béost.

Aurore apologized to the driver. “Sorry to trouble you,” she said politely before closing the door.

The driver’s name was Sewell, and he had the most common blue eyes in the Intis Republic.

He was delighted by Aurore’s politeness and looked forward to the tip he’d receive when they arrived in Darième.

“Madame, Monsieur, sit tight.”

He raised his whip, and the horses started to speed up.

As the carriage passed through Cordu Village, it suddenly stopped.

...

Lumian's heart skipped a beat, knowing that their journey wouldn't be smooth and easy.

"What's wrong?" he asked the driver, Sewell.

Sewell explained, "Madame promised to send Naroka to Junak Village yesterday. I'm worried I won't be able to return in time after going to Dariège, so I thought of picking her up on the way. Don't worry, it won't cause any delays."

Junak Village was closer to Dariège than Cordu Village. Going there first really didn't affect the estimated time of arrival for Aurore and Lumian.

Aurore had no right to object since this wasn't her carriage, so she didn't.

Lumian was more concerned about Naroka's safety. In the previous cycle, she had died under suspicious circumstances, possibly at the hands of a relative. It was related to the padre's group.

Sewell went into Naroka's house before helping her out.

Naroka was different from usual. She was dressed in a long black dress with exquisite patterns and a dark bonnet. Her sparse, pale hair was carefully combed.

"Hey, my little cabbages, where are you going?" Naroka asked happily as she got into the carriage.

Her pockmarked and wrinkled face was filled with unconcealable joy, and her previously slightly turbid eyes were much more energetic. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Aurore told her the truth. "I'm going to Trier to attend an author salon, and also bring Lumian to check out the universities there."

...

Aurore asked Naroka, “Did you receive some invitation?”

While it was normal for Naroka to wear black clothes as a widow, she only wore this dress during festivals, banquets, and the anniversary of her late husband’s death.

Naroka looked expectant.

“Yeah, to meet some people.”

Lumian quietly observed Naroka, trying to see if he could detect anything from her.

The carriage started moving again, leaving Cordu Village behind.

Aurore chatted with Naroka intermittently, keeping an eye on the outside of the carriage.

Aurore worried that their sudden departure might arouse suspicion.

As they continued on, Lumian sensed a change in Naroka’s demeanor.

She looked much paler than before, and her eyes lacked their usual liveliness. She only spoke when spoken to.

This was very similar to the Naroka Lumian had seen in the middle of the night during the previous cycle.

Lumian discreetly tugged on Aurore’s hand to get her attention.

Aurore turned to him, silently asking what was wrong.

Lumian discreetly pointed at Naroka and drew a cross on her palm, a symbol Aurore often used to indicate an error in her scripts. He used it to refer to Naroka’s concerning state.

Aurore was momentarily stunned but quickly understood what Lumian meant.

She turned her attention to Naroka, sensing that something was wrong.

Aurore raised her hand to massage her temples, causing her light-

blue eyes to darken and become deeper.

With just a glance, Aurore's golden brows furrowed, and she leaned back slightly as if she had been hit by something.

She closed her eyes and rubbed her temples, as if she was feeling tired and in pain.

When she opened her eyes again, Aurore turned to Lumian and said, "When we reach Darième, you must stay close to me. No matter what happens, don't leave my side."

Her tone was serious, and Lumian understood immediately. He knew that if something happened, he had to follow his sister closely. She would take care of it.

He nodded solemnly and decided to tell Aurore about his recent Beyonder powers later.

Aurore turned her attention back to Naroka and asked, "Are you really going to Junak, or somewhere else?"

She was worried that an unexpected stop might make things more complicated. It was better to anticipate any developments and not fight in an environment the other party was expecting.

Naroka's gaze was vacant as she replied in a deep voice, "No, I'm not going to Junak. I want to go to Paramita."

As she spoke, Lumian noticed the outside of the carriage window darkening abnormally.

Chapter 41 - 41 Undead

41 Undead

What's Paramita? Lumian was alarmed as he quickly turned to look out the window.

But what he saw outside was not what he expected. Instead of mountains, pastures, and trees, he was greeted by a desolate wilderness. The pale-white clouds in the sky blocked out all the sunlight, casting everything in shadow.

In the wilderness, strange figures roamed about. Most of them wore white linen clothes, with pale-blue faces, empty eyes, and agape mouths, looking anything but normal.

Lumian watched in horror as some of the figures ran crazily towards the edge of the wilderness, while others stumbled towards them from the other side. It was as if they would never stop, doomed to wander aimlessly forever.

At the edge of the wilderness, near a cliff, he could make out dark monsters with long horns and humanoid bodies, grabbing the white-clad figures and throwing them over the edge.

Suddenly, a blood-curdling scream pierced the air, right into Lumian's and Aurore's ears.

The sound of hooves echoed through the wilderness as a tall figure in full black armor rode a white horse. The horse was so thin that it looked like it had only skin and bones left. The rider moved slowly at times and galloped back and forth at others, as if shepherding sheep.

Lumian's eyesight was sharp, and he could see the rider clearly from afar.

Inside the helmet that shone with a metallic luster, two deep red rays of light flickered like flames. A hideous wound on the rider's neck extended all the way to their navel, almost splitting them in half and dragging out their pale-white intestines.

Without any need for further evidence, Lumian knew who it was: a Death Knight!

It was a creature that often appeared in Intisian folklore.

Suddenly, the carriage they were in came to a stop.

Naroka silently opened the door and stepped out.

Her pale face, empty eyes, and numb expression were starting to resemble the figures in white linen clothes that Lumian had seen earlier.

Aurore turned to him and said in a deep voice, "This place is filled with undead. You must stay by my side at all times."

As she spoke, she took out a gold brooch and fastened it to her clothing.

Aurore took out a handful of grayish-black powder from her pocket with her other hand.

Lumian leaned forward to look at the carriage driver and realized that Sewell had become like Naroka—pale-faced and empty-eyed, slowly walking deeper into the wilderness as if he had been dead for a long time.

He said quickly to Aurore, "Grande Soeur, I'm already a Beyonder. You deal with these undead. I'll drive the carriage and get us out of here as soon as possible!"

He knew he couldn't fight the undead, so he could only be a temporary carriage driver.

But if the Death Knight showed up, he would do his best to block it.

Aurore was taken aback by Lumian's sudden transformation, but

quickly regained her composure. She reminded him, “Check the horses’ condition!”

Lumian looked ahead and saw that the horses were motionless, with their flesh and blood seemingly extracted, leaving only withered fur and skin wrapped around their bones.

“The horses are dead,” he reported back to Aurore.

Suddenly, the undead caught a whiff of the living and rushed towards the carriage, trying to enter.

“XXX.” Aurore uttered a word in a language Lumian didn’t understand.

As soon as Aurore spoke the word, the golden brooch in front of her lit up with a violent but not stimulating golden light.

The grayish-black powder in her left hand burned, emitting a flow of light that resembled water, spreading in all directions. The undead screamed as soon as they came into contact with the light, and cyan smoke rose from their bodies.

They wanted to retreat, but more undead surged forward, squeezing around the carriage, evaporating and disappearing.

Lumian watched enviously and solemnly, wishing he could do something to help. He yearned to advance in Sequence and gain more abilities.

But the powder in Aurore’s hand was about to run out, and the undead were still coming, ignoring the ones that had already been destroyed. Lumian knew they couldn’t stay there forever.

“We can’t stay here. Let’s make a run for it!”

No matter how many materials his sister had prepared, she couldn’t deal with so many undead!

The Death Knight and the creatures that looked like demons were still out there.

Their best chance was to use what resources they had left to escape from the wilderness known as Paramita.

Aurore nodded and said simply, “Follow me.”

The moment she finished speaking, the grayish-black powder in her palm vanished into thin air, and the desolate surroundings were engulfed by the undead.

Aurore wasted no time and retrieved another handful of materials, igniting them with the golden brooch before her. The materials combusted, creating a dazzling golden light

that decimated the approaching undead. Their agonizing shrieks echoed through the wilderness before they disintegrated into nothingness.

Aurore leaped off the carriage with Lumian hot on her heels, sprinting towards the nearest edge of the wilderness.

Suddenly, a hand jutted out from the golden blaze, snatching Lumian’s arm.

Lumian’s instincts kicked in, alerting him of the imminent threat. He pivoted his forearm and delivered a swift blow to the hand.

Pa!

It felt like he had punched a block of solid ice. A shiver ran through his body, rendering him immobile for a moment.

Lumian’s teeth clattered as he caught sight of the hand’s owner.

It was another undead clad in white linen, but it donned a mask made of white paper over its face. The figure disintegrated slowly under the golden light.

The peculiar undead lunged towards Lumian, but before it could make contact, a beam of pure, holy light descended upon it.

The masked undead halted in its tracks, burning fiercely before dissolving into black vapor.

“Keep moving!” Aurore shouted, withdrawing her hand from the golden brooch and darting forward.

Lumian shook off the cold and picked up his pace to follow his sister.

The duo relied on the grayish-black powder and Warlock spells to traverse the wilderness. The golden light eradicated countless undead garbed in white linen.

Unfortunately, Aurore couldn’t simply rely on one material to stuff every bag. As a Warlock, she had to anticipate various scenarios.

Before long, the bag containing the Sun Flower powder was empty, and they were still hundreds of meters away from the wilderness’s edge. The undead horde seemed never-ending.

What frightened them even more was the Death Knight’s approach. The horse-mounted knight had sensed the turmoil and was galloping towards them.

…

Aurore’s expression changed several times in the golden light. She slowed down, gritted her teeth, and spoke urgently to Lumian.

“When I shout ‘three,’ run towards the edge of the wilderness and don’t look back!”

Lumian opened his mouth to protest, but Aurore cut him off.

“Don’t worry, I’ll follow you. If you stay, you’ll only interfere with my use of a powerful spell and slow us down when we try to escape.”

As she spoke, Aurore removed the golden brooch from her chest and handed it to Lumian, giving him instructions.

“Focus your spirituality and extend it to this brooch. Repeat this word when you’re running: ‘XXX’!”

Lumian didn’t understand the word, but he committed the pronunciation to memory.

As soon as he took hold of the golden brooch, he felt a warm light envelop his body, banishing his dark thoughts and slowing down his racing mind. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Instinctively donning the brooch, Lumian concentrated his thoughts according to his sister's directions, extending his spiritual energy.

Seeing that the grayish-black powder in her hand was running low, Aurore retrieved another material and shouted out, "One, two, three!"

In order to avoid slowing down his sister, Lumian sprinted wildly towards the edge of the wilderness, shouting the word Aurore had given him with all his might.

...

"XXX!"

The golden brooch emitted a golden, radiant glow, illuminating Lumian as though a miniature sun was hanging on his chest. The undead in his path instinctively avoided him.

Thud thud thud!

As he ran, Lumian couldn't shake his worry for his sister. He cast a glance back at Aurore, who remained in her spot surrounded by a cloud of black gas.

The undead were drawn to the gas, abandoning Lumian to swarm towards her.

Lumian wasn't a fool. When he saw this scene, he understood that his sister was lying when she said that she would follow him.

"Aurore!"

He shouted, halted abruptly and spun around, running back towards his sister.

Aurore looked back and saw that he had stopped. She hurriedly shouted, "Are you stupid? Run!"

Lumian didn't say anything and ran towards Aurore. The undead parted before him, clearing a path under the golden light of the brooch.

Seeing this, Aurore lowered her head and cursed softly, "What an idiot…"

She then took out another iron-black substance and sprinkled it on Lumian, causing him to be pushed to the edge of the wilderness by an invisible force.

He struggled to break free, but he was in midair with no point of leverage.

"My stupid brother, live well…" Aurore whispered with a melancholic smile before the black aura consumed her completely.

She was directly exposed to countless figures and the Death Knight.

"Aurore!"

Lumian's eyes bulged with terror, his skin and eyes turning red with blood vessels.

However, he was still pushed to the edge of the wilderness.

But suddenly, all the undead stopped in their tracks.

Something was happening in the distance.

Aurore sensed the shift and looked up in shock. She saw an open carriage passing by, pulled not by horses, but by two demonic creatures with goat horns. The carriage was a deep red color, resembling a conch or a cradle, and a woman resembling Madame Pualis wearing a flower crown and green dress sat inside.

But unlike Madame Pualis, she was very dignified.

The Death Knight abandoned his target and turned his horse towards the carriage.

All the undead followed suit, clustering around the carriage as it

headed towards the hazy mountain range beyond the wilderness.

Chapter 42 - 42 Madame Night

42 Madame Night

Lumian was stunned by the carriage pulled by the ‘demon’ and the undead’s reactions. He forgot to struggle and got pushed by the invisible palm for over ten seconds before coming to a stop.

Although the carriage was getting farther away, he could still see the woman’s face clearly with his eagle-like vision.

Her long brown hair was tied up high, and her brown eyes were beautiful and bright. She had light eyebrows and wore a fresh green dress and a laurel crown made of flowers. She had an elegant and dignified aura.

Madame Pualis! Lumian’s first thought was that the woman on the carriage was Madame Pualis—the administrator’s wife and the padre’s mistress.

However, on closer inspection, he noticed an obvious difference between the two. Not only was there a vast disparity in their aura, but there was also a distinct difference in their looks.

The lady in the car had softer and more mature facial features.

If Lumian had to make a comparison, he would describe the lady in the car as Madame Pualis’s older sister by seven or eight years.

At the moment, the lady sat in an open carriage pulled by the ‘demon.’ Surrounded by countless undead and the Death Knight, she traveled towards the distant forest as if she was on some kind of magical patrol.

Aurore retracted her gaze and ran towards Lumian. As she ran, she shouted, “Take this opportunity to escape from here!”

Lumian snapped out of his daze and waited for his sister to catch up before taking large strides and fleeing to the edge of the nearest wilderness.

Before long, they felt as though they had passed through an illusory curtain or a thick layer of water.

The scene before them changed.

The wilderness dissipated like bubbles. The clear river, new grass on both sides, and green trees all entered their view at once.

To Lumian and Aurore, this scene was so familiar that they didn't need to identify it to make a judgment.

They were still near Cordu Village!

This was where Ava Lizier used to tend to her geese!

"We're back…" Lumian wasn't surprised or disappointed. Instead, he looked around, having confirmed his suspicion.

Aurore panted and said, "Whether Madame Pualis made a mistake on purpose or not, we can't go back to the village now."

"Let's head to Dariège!" Lumian suggested immediately.

"Then let's go to the nearest pasture. There's a dangerous path down the hill. With our abilities, we'll be fine," Lumian added.

"Okay." Aurore turned around and started running.

Having borrowed the pony from Madame Pualis from time to time, she was familiar with the highland pastures around Cordu.

Lumian followed his sister closely, both glad and terrified at what had just happened.

He didn't expect Madame Pualis to be so powerful that she could have so many undead, the 'demon,' and the Death Knight chase after her.

Of course, it might not be Madame Pualis.

As she ran, Aurore slowed down. Her breathing became heavier, and her gasping became more and more pronounced.

“What’s wrong?” Lumian still had plenty of energy.

This was one of the benefits of being a Hunter.

Aurore stopped and panted heavily.

“I’m exhausted. The spellcasting took up a lot of my energy.”

Lumian said without hesitation, “Then I’ll carry you. I’m not tired yet.”

They were in a dire situation, and time was of the essence. Aurore nodded, went behind the squatting Lumian, and leaned on him.

Lumian first took off the brooch in front of him and returned it to his sister. Then, he straightened his body and ran again.

“Is this a mystical item?” Lumian still had the energy to ask.

Aurore was taken aback for a moment before she chuckled.

“Looks like you know quite a bit. This is indeed a mystical item. I call it the Integrity Brooch. It can create Holy sunlight or help me ignite materials to help me use a mystic technique to deal with ghost-type creatures. However, wearing it for too long will cause people to become fanatical. And as long as you wear it, you will lose some thoughts. As you know, immoral methods in battle might be more useful, but you get limited by it.”

Aurore paused and asked in a deep voice, “Where did you get the Beyonder characteristic?”

As Lumian ran, he replied intermittently, “Didn’t that Wand card allow me to stay awake in the dream?”

“What Wand card?” Aurore was confused.

Oh, this is something from the previous cycle… Lumian reorganized his words.

“I was at Ol’ Tavern and met a mysterious lady. She gave me a Wand card. With that card, I stayed lucid in my dream and entered a strange space. There, I encountered some monsters and obtained a Hunter Beyonder characteristic.”

“Hunter…” Aurore was familiar with this Sequence commonly seen in Intis.

As she muttered to herself, she suddenly chuckled, seeming to have thought of something.

What are you laughing at… Lumian was baffled.

Aurore asked again, “Then who gave you the formula? That mysterious lady?”

“Yeah.” Lumian nodded as he ran.

Aurore sighed and said, “My stupid brother has his own secrets now… I can’t confirm if what you said is true or not. I’ll just take it at face value.”

Lumian couldn’t bear to see his sister disappointed, so he quickly changed the topic.

“Was that Madame Pualis on the carriage?”

“They look alike, but they’re not the same,” Aurore said, contradicting herself.

After a few seconds of deliberation, she said, “Since you’re already a Beyonder, I’ll tell you directly. My companions, uh, my pen pals, once mentioned something.

“They said that in the past few years, there have been many strange phenomena similar to what happened just now in the southern parts of Loen, the southern parts of Intis, and the Feynapotter Kingdom. Women ride carriages pulled by demons, patrol the wilderness and have hordes of undead following them. Some Beyonders who have

grasped the corresponding mystic arts will let their spirits leave their bodies and follow the carriage for a period of time to experience something wonderful and obtain mystic knowledge.

“One of my companions obtained one of the Beyonders’ notebooks. It mentioned that the lady’s name is Madame Night. The owner of the notebook obtained a secret medicine production method from his experience following a carriage, which can create an invisibility potion from a baby’s corpse.

“According to the investigation, the women in different places exhibit similar phenomena, but things happen at night.”

…

Lumian said in surprise, “But it’s daytime now.”

Could the anomaly in Cordu Village have brought about a change?

“That’s why I’m not sure,” Aurore said after thinking for a moment. “Perhaps sending Naroka to Paramita made a difference. Perhaps that wilderness is Paramita, where Madame Nights patrol in the day and appear in the human world at night. Yes, combined with the fact that the lady resembles Pualis, I’m inclined to the previous guess.”

Lumian didn’t know much about mysticism, but he instinctively felt that his sister’s suspicion was right.

He ran in silence for a distance before finally asking, “Why did you sacrifice yourself to save me? I wish you were more selfish.”

“I’m very selfish,” Aurore said with a smile. “I considered abandoning you and escaping on my own. Then, I would avenge you when I became stronger. However, after careful consideration, I realized that even if I gave you the Integrity Brooch and taught you how to use it, you wouldn’t be able to help me attract most of the undead to give me a chance to escape. Only a Warlock like me could do it.

“It was a choice between us dying together or at least you being able to live. I don’t have to tell you the choice I made, right?”

Making such a choice isn’t as easy as how you make it sound. Lumian

could accept it rationally, but not emotionally.

He said gloomily, “We might as well die together.”

“You can’t die! Who’ll bring me back if you’re gone? Anything’s possible in the world of mysticism,” lectured Aurore to her brother. “That’s why I said all those sappy lines. So you’ll remember to work hard and bring me back.”

That’s true… Lumian gradually agreed with his sister’s choice. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

…

After running for a while, they saw the nearest highland pasture. Lumian, who had been carrying Aurore, clearly felt tired, but he didn’t stop to rest. He mustered his remaining strength and rushed to the hill covered in green grass.

There were many livestock pens and shacks here. The former was surrounded by rocks and tree branches. The ground was compacted soil and flattened feces. There was a long and narrow exit at one end that could only allow one sheep to pass through. The latter was similar to a primitive tent: stones were first used to build a circle of low walls, leaving a door and a smoke vent. Then, a row of grates were built against the low walls. The bottom half of the grates was buried in the soil, and the upper end supported a wooden structure. On the wooden structure was a roof made of grass and mud.

This was where the shepherds lived. The environment was very harsh.

Lumian no longer carried Aurore and led her all the way to the other side of the hill.

The dangerous path was hidden below.

Looking at the path that required her to jump seven to eight meters off a cliff, Aurore said to Lumian, “Although you can climb this now, don’t waste time. I’ll fly you down.”

“Alright.” Lumian wanted to see what kind of changes would happen

if he left Cordu.

Aurore grabbed Lumian's arm with one hand and sprinkled silver dust with the other.

The two of them floated up at the same time and slowly flew down the cliff.

In midair, Lumian suddenly felt a pain in his head, as if someone had hit him heavily.

Aurore had a similar reaction.

Lumian's vision quickly turned black as he felt everything shatter.

……

Lumian jolted awake and saw the familiar sights of the table, chair, bookshelf, and wardrobe.

Back to square one… He got off the bed thoughtfully and went downstairs. As expected, he found Aurore in a light-blue dress, preparing dinner.

"Aurore, what's the date today?" Lumian asked.

Aurore glared at him. "Call me Grande Soeur! Are you still not fully awake? It's the 29th today."

Chapter 43 - 43 Frank

43 Frank

As expected, the loop has repeated… Lumian wasn't surprised to hear Aurore's answer.

This was the third cycle he could recall. Combined with his own experience and the mysterious lady's pointers, he had a preliminary conclusion:

The time limit for the loop is until the twelfth night.

The spatial range of the loop is Cordu Village and its surroundings.

Characters in the loop are restricted from killing the padre.

These are the three key points of the loop…

At this thought, Lumian looked at Aurore and asked thoughtfully, "Grande Soeur, if you wrote a novel about a time loop, where would you put the key to undoing it?"

Aurore looked Lumian up and down in confusion. "You suddenly asked such a question and even called me Grande Soeur obediently… Did you come up with a new story to deceive others?"

"I guess so," Lumian replied sincerely.

Aurore frowned and thought for a while before saying, "From a novelist's perspective, or rather, from the perspective of normal logic, the most critical part of the cycle is definitely the final scene. This is because it is both the end of this cycle and the beginning of the next cycle. It is the button that connects the end and the beginning. Without it, there is no way to turn the flow of time in a straight line into a closed circle.

“Think about it. The loop reverses, so there will always be a first time. Something must have happened at the last moment to cause time to restart.”

Twelfth night? Lumian agreed with his sister’s guess about the twelfth night. He nodded and asked, “Then why can’t the most critical part be the first day of the loop? Shouldn’t we ask why the loop starts at this moment?”

Aurore chuckled and said, “Making a short story to deceive a few people temporarily is your forte, but when it involves this kind of content that requires strict logic and rich knowledge, you aren’t capable of it.

“The reason why the first day of the loop is the first day is perhaps due to the power or energy that causes the loop. Proceeding past the last day will end up overlapping this day. This is like why a loop probably doesn’t cover the entire world, but some localized area. It’s not that it doesn’t want to, but it’s incapable of doing so.”

Lumian had actually considered this possibility. He just hoped that his knowledgeable sister would come up with a different answer.

Aurore thought for a moment and added, “If the loop is not a completely closed circle, where there is still interaction between those inside and outside the loop—for example, information inside can be transmitted, and people outside can enter but not leave—the first day of the loop might start from the day the outsiders happen to enter, so that when the loop is repeated, they don’t have a ‘position.’ Of course, it can also compel the outsiders to do something they will do subsequently on the originally eventless first day. There are too many ways to make up similar stories.”

Lumian’s eyes lit up when he heard that. He wanted to praise his sister loudly.

He suspected that the entry of Leah, Ryan, and Valentine caused the cycle to start on the afternoon of March 29th.

If that was the case, the twelfth night might have already turned into the tenth or ninth night. Of course, it might also have originally been

the thirteenth night that turned into the twelfth night due to the ‘intrusion’ of the outsiders.

These were all possibilities that Lumian needed to verify himself.

He completely agreed with his sister’s deduction. He believed that something must have happened on the twelfth night to cause the loop to happen. Only by figuring out what happened at that time could he find the key to undoing the loop.

Therefore, Lumian decided not to trigger any abnormalities in this cycle. He also found an excuse not to join the procession and stay until the twelfth night.

But he couldn’t do nothing. Time wouldn’t allow it.

Unless Lumian broke out of the cycle after experiencing the twelfth night, he would have to make the best use of time for the next cycle.

A complete cycle lasted twelve days. After that, the probability of the outside world discovering any abnormalities in Cordu would increase exponentially. Lumian had, at best, one complete cycle or less to resolve the problem.

If he wanted to stop the abnormality in one cycle, he needed to have enough information and a sufficient understanding of the entire village.

Lumian couldn’t help but mock himself. Not only do I have to avoid triggering the abnormality, but I also have to investigate the problem.

What was the difference between this and a clown walking on a tightrope at the edge of a cliff?

Wanting both wasn’t something good.

Aurore saw that he didn’t speak for a few seconds and seemed to be making up a story. She waved her hand and said, “I almost forgot to make dinner!”

“Wait a minute,” Lumian said with a solemn expression.

Aurore immediately clicked her tongue. “I smell mischief.”

Lumian said bluntly, “Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, actually, we’ve already fallen into a loop.”

“Heh, you’ve just learned the trick and you’re already using it on me?” Aurore was both angry and amused.

I guess people need to be trustworthy at times… Lumian sighed silently.

“Can you at least listen to the story I made up first? Why don’t you score me while we’re at it?”

Aurore looked outside at the bright sky.

“That works too.”

Lumian began from the time he met Leah and the other outsiders. He spoke as if he had a general outline, claiming that he had maintained his consciousness in the dream and entered a unique ruin. Through hunting monsters, he obtained a Beyonder characteristic and became a Hunter.

He didn’t hide the matter about the thorned ring pattern that sealed his chest because it might involve the key to the time loop. He had seen the same symbol on the padre, and killing the padre had caused time to restart.

At first, Aurore was still smiling, thinking that her brother had come up with a creative story. But as she listened, her expression turned serious. There was a lot of knowledge that Lumian shouldn’t have known.

When Lumian said that he had become a Beyonder, Aurore raised her right hand and massaged her temples.

Her light-blue eyes instantly became deep, but there was no figure reflected in them.

She looked at Lumian for a while and nodded slightly.

“Your Ether Body has undergone a huge change. Your life force and physical state are much stronger than ordinary people. Your Astral Projection has changed to a certain extent, but not much… As expected of a Hunter who’s better at hand-to-hand combat than spellcasting… I can’t see the symbol and the related changes, and I don’t dare to look deeper…”

Aurore pouted and asked in confusion, “Don’t tell me you deliberately made up such a ridiculous story to make me accept your becoming a Beyonder?”

This was a typical Lumian modus operandi.

Lumian didn’t explain and directly talked about the mysticism knowledge that the lady had imparted to him.

Of course, he only briefly mentioned the name and did not elaborate.

This was not because he was very moral and principled about not telling his sister before obtaining the lady’s permission. Instead, the other party was clearly very powerful. If he leaked precious knowledge and angered her, the time loop might be resolved, but they would die.

“Indestructible law… law of convergence… acting method…” Aurore was dumbfounded.

Aurore was stunned that her illiterate brother in the field of mysticism had grasped such incomparably precious knowledge.

It had been more than five years since she became a Beyonder. At first, she had relied on Emperor Roselle’s diary to join that organization. Her pathway was a symbol of knowledge in the field of mysticism. From time to time, she would be pursued by knowledge, allowing her to master the acting method, the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, and the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation, the three cornerstones of the Beyonder world. Therefore, she thought of herself as a Beyonder with insufficient experience but sufficient knowledge, miles ahead of most of her peers.

Now, her brother, who had never come into contact with mysticism, could actually mention such terms. Furthermore, he knew about a law of convergence of Beyonder characteristics that she didn't know about!

...

This eliminated the possibility that Lumian had peeked at her witchcraft notebook.

As a Beyonder of the Mystery Pryer pathway, Aurore suppressed her desire to know the specifics of the law of convergence as she looked at her brother. She asked in puzzlement, surprise, and worry, "What did you pay for that lady to teach you this knowledge?"

The potion formula was even free of charge! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

She sized up Lumian again, from top to bottom, then from bottom to top, trying to find out what was missing from him.

"Nothing," Lumian laughed self-deprecatingly. "That's why it's terrifying. I don't even know what price I'll have to pay in the future. Yes, I suspect that it has something to do with the symbol on my chest and the dream ruin. That lady probably wants me to unravel the corresponding secret."

Aurore tersely acknowledged, "Continue."

She waited for the rest of the "story" with a serious attitude.

Lumian talked about the owl, the anomaly during Lent, and the siblings' experiences during the second cycle. He also talked about how the cycle would restart the moment they attempted to leave Cordu.

Aurore listened carefully and muttered to herself in disbelief, "Either I've been hypnotized by you and told you everything, or time has really entered a loop…"

She began to believe Lumian because she had named her "Integrity Brooch" herself, and there was no record anywhere. Unless she told

her brother herself, it was impossible for Lumian to know, and she had no impression of it.

Lumian struck while the iron was hot.

…

“I can also prophesy that the three foreigners will appear at the Ol’ Tavern at night. I can also prophesy that the padre is having an affair with Madame Pualis tonight. I can also prophesy that the shepherd, Pierre Berry, has returned to the village. There’s something wrong with the three sheep he brought with him…”

The more Aurore listened, the more serious she became. After a while, she said, “The three foreigners entered the village in the afternoon while we were practicing combat. After that, we rested and didn’t go out at all. Yes, in the combat class in the afternoon, you were still an ordinary person…”

She accepted Lumian’s time loop theory.

If it were anyone else, Lumian would have laughed and said, “You believed it! Ha! You believed such a ridiculous story.” But in front of Aurore, he was very restrained.

He then suggested, “I’ll go around the village now and see if I can gather more information.”

Aurore nodded.

“I’ll also use my ‘eyes’ to look around, but there are huge restrictions and it’s very dangerous. I’m not sure I’ll gain anything.”

Lumian waved his hand, indicating that he understood, and walked out the door.

As Lumian took a few steps, he looked back at Aurore’s figure standing in the kitchen. He immediately thought of the scene of Aurore pushing him to safety among the countless undead and felt an inexplicable pain of separation.

He subconsciously asked, “Grande Soeur, why did you adopt me in

the first place?”

Aurore grumpily replied, “I didn’t want to either!

“I was just kind enough to give you some food, but you kept following me. I couldn’t shake you off, and you even obediently helped me do all kinds of things. My heart softened for a moment, and… who knew that you would grow into this!

“Do you know how hard it was for a young girl to raise a child like you?”

Lumian wanted to thank and praise her, but the words were stuck in his mouth, as if they wanted to rush to his eyes and nose.

He turned his head and walked back into the village.

Chapter 44 - 44: Eavesdropping

Chapter 44: Eavesdropping

Lumian had to investigate, but he couldn't activate any abnormalities, causing the cycle to restart ahead of time. He had to consider starting from the peripheral problems and edge in one step at a time.

His initial idea was to find the padre's mistresses this afternoon and use eavesdropping and other methods to see if they knew anything. If he didn't gain anything or lacked the opportunity for the time being, he would go to the cathedral to see if he could meet the padre and chat with him about daily life in the village.

Lumian's first target was Sybil Berry, the mistress of the padre Guillaume Bennet and the sister of the shepherd, Pierre Berry. She had a close relationship with the two abnormal figures, so perhaps she knew something.

Lumian's friend Guillaume-junior, Guillaume Berry, was a distant cousin of Pierre Berry. Even his hair color was different, and they didn't live together.

Sybil Berry was twenty-four years old and married to Jean Maury, a middle-aged man in his late forties.

He had been single for more than 30 years. The reason why he could marry Sybil Berry was because he did not have any requirements for dowry.

Lumian suspected that the reason why she married him using only a small amount of assets was that she had already become the padre's mistress at that time and needed a husband to be her illegitimate son's father. The padre had secretly promised something.

Although Intis was open-minded, and illegitimate children were common, many husbands or wives were still willing to take their spouses' illegitimate children under their wing despite being angry when they found out. After all, this was equivalent to having an additional free manservant or maid in the future. Furthermore, they didn't have the right to inherit any of the assets, but clergymen of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church weren't allowed to get married and have children. They often found fathers for their illegitimate children.

Lumian arrived at Jean Maury's house, a grayish-white short house at the edge of Cordu with only one floor. Behind the kitchen was the bedroom, and the other side was connected to the basement, serving as a living room and dining room.

There was no washroom; they only built a shed at the back of the house.

Lumian entered without knocking, quietly coming to the side of the house and squatting under the bedroom window.

At that moment, someone was sitting inside. Lumian could hear their breathing and determined their corresponding height.

Not long after, light footsteps came from the kitchen to the bedroom. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

There was no need to calculate. As a Hunter, Lumian naturally had the approximate weight of the owner of the footsteps in his mind.

It was likely a woman, probably Sybil Berry.

Lumian's impression of Sybil Berry was a woman with soft and smooth black hair who didn't like to tie it up like other women. She left it flowing down or tied it into a ponytail, giving off the feeling that she was still a young unmarried girl.

Her facial features were not outstanding, but they were soft and round, very fleshy.

At this moment, Jean Maury, who had been sitting silently in the bedroom, spoke gloomily.

“The padre came this afternoon?”

His voice was just like him, rather stuffy. He was the kind of person who usually chatted under the elm tree in the village square, replying one in every four or five sentences. In addition, he was often too lazy to comb his black hair. His brown eyes were lifeless, and his beard was not shaved clean. He looked gloomy.

“He was here.” Sybil Berry’s voice was still a little girlish.

She was born like this.

Jean Maury fell silent for a moment before asking, “Did you do it?”

“We did,” Sybil answered frankly.

Jean Maury fell silent again. When Sybil walked to the kitchen, he said, “I don’t have much to say about the padre, but you watch out for other men, especially Pato Russel.”

Pato Russel was Madonna Bénet’s husband. His wife was also the padre’s mistress.

Lumian, who was outside the window, was secretly speechless.

This relationship was really messed up!

He gained a higher opinion of the padre. He had come to Sybil Berry in the afternoon, and he was having a date with Madame Pualis at night. He could be said to be a model worker in the field of cheating.

If he could allocate more energy in this area to the Church’s matters and combine it with his scheming and machinations, he could have long advanced in clergical rank and become a Beyonder.

The clergical rank was the rank of a clergyman of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun. Starting from the first rank, it was ostiary, reader, chanter, acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon—also known as a priest or padre—bishop, archbishop, and cardinal. The pope was not in the ranks of the clergy.

Among them, the sixth-rank and above made them senior clergymen.

In Aurore's words, it was possible that they possessed superpowers. As for the lowest three ranks, they mainly handled cathedral chores and ritual support. In the past few centuries, they were only glorified titles and were not treated as true clergymen. The fourth-rank acolytes were usually students who had just graduated from the seminary. The fifth-rank sub-deacon could represent a true priest to preside over a cathedral in a rural area.

The situation in Cordu was the same. A fifth-rank sub-deacon was the padre, a fourth-rank acolyte was the deputy padre, and they were staffed with a few servants.

Guillaume Bénet only needed to advance one more rank to become a true priest.

"I understand," Sybil Berry simply responded to her husband's exhortations.

Jean Maury changed the topic.

"Is your brother Pierre back from herding?"

"Yes, there's an important ritual that requires his help," Sybil casually explained.

A ritual??Lumian's eyelids twitched when he heard that.

Jean Maury asked, "The Lent Festival?"

"No, it's a ritual of God," Sybil impatiently replied. "Don't ask too much. You'll know when the time comes."

Jean Maury tersely acknowledged and said, "Praise the Sun!"

Sybil didn't respond and left the bedroom to walk into the kitchen.

Lumian instantly made a judgment.

Sybil had a certain understanding of the secret dealings between the padre and Shepherd Pierre Berry, but her husband, Jean Maury, was completely unaware!

The ritual she was talking about wasn't the "sacrificial ceremony" at the feast. It was likely related to twelfth night!

Having gained something, Lumian left Maury's house and rushed to the two-story building where Pato Russel and Madonna Bénet lived.

Unlike Sybil, Madonna Bénet was married off with her share of the inheritance. Pato Russel also received his share from his original home, so they could build a decent house and entrust more than 20 sheep to the shepherds for grazing.

Lumian didn't know when Madonna became the padre's mistress. He only knew that in the past year, before he hooked up with Madame Pualis, the padre often visited Madonna. Perhaps the taboo from his identity sparked some kind of flame.

At this moment, Pato Russel, who had a gentleman's beard, was pacing in the kitchen. He asked Madonna, who was busy commanding the lady's maid, "When will you invite the padre over as a guest again?"

He had a fervent expression, hoping to cling to the person with real power in Cordu.

Madonna glanced at Pato's father's illegitimate daughter, who was also the servant cooking, and said in a subtle tone, "I don't know. It depends on his mood."

And his physical condition, I suppose??

Lumian, who was eavesdropping outside, silently muttered.

"Don't you often go to the cathedral to pray recently? You can ask him while you're at it," Pato Russel refused to give up.

...

*Often go to the cathedral??*Lumian frowned.

The padre's group is planning something in secret in the cathedral?

He really doesn't give a damn about the Eternal Blazing Sun and Saint

Sith…

After listening for a while, Lumian walked from Russel's house to the cathedral at the edge of the village square, hoping to have a face-to-face chat with the padre.

However, when he arrived at the cathedral, Guillaume Bénet was no longer there. Only the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, stood in front of the altar.

This foreigner from Dariège had graduated from Bigorre Theological Seminary. Last year, he was sent to Cordu on the bishop's orders to be Guillaume Bénet's deputy. He was usually ostracized and was only in charge of the registration of funerals, marriages, and newborns.

During the last cycle, Lumian had arrived at the cathedral and happened to encounter the padre leaving. The latter had asked him to pray the next day, not giving Michel a chance to listen to the prayers and confessions of the believers.

Michel was taller than Lumian. (Lumian felt that he had grown two to three centimeters taller after consuming the Hunter potion. He was almost 1.8 meters tall.) He was a young lad with curly brown hair.

Looking at Michel Garrigue, who was wearing a white robe with golden threads, Lumian spread his arms.

"Praise the Sun!"

After bowing, he stared at Michel, wanting to see how this deputy padre would react to the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun's etiquette.

…

If there was a certain amount of hesitation, Lumian would be able to determine that he had been implicated by the padre's group.

But Michel Garrigue immediately returned with the same posture.

"Praise the Sun!"

He did not hesitate at all. His brown eyes were filled with joy and anticipation.

From Madonna Bénet's words, the padre's group often discussed matters here. As a deputy padre, Michel should have noticed something, right? Lumian didn't ask directly. He looked around and asked, "The padre isn't here?"

"He's been gone for a while," Michel replied. "Three foreigners came here about 15 minutes ago, to no avail."

The deputy padre's eyes were passionate, as if he was asking if Lumian would make a confession while here.

Considering that the padre might have taken a detour and hid back in the cathedral, waiting for Madame Pualis to bring dinner over and was eavesdropping on his conversation with Michel, Lumian deliberately sighed.

"Then forget it. I'll pray again tomorrow."

Michel's eyes lost their luster.

Lumian turned around and left the cathedral. He planned on sneaking to Michel's residence when the night deepened to see if he could get any useful information.

Seeing that the sun was about to set, he returned home and asked Aurore, "Did you find anything?"

Aurore nodded slightly.

"In addition to the abnormalities you mentioned, I also discovered that there's something wrong with the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue."

"Huh?" Lumian didn't hide his surprise.

Chapter 45 - Make-up Lesson

Chapter 45: Make-up Lesson

Translator: CKtalon

Lumian had just confirmed that Michel Garrigue should not have been implicated by Guillaume Bénet and the others. He planned to visit the deputy padre late at night, but when he returned home, he heard his sister say that there was something amiss about him.

Aurore glanced at Lumian and smiled.

“My clueless brother was standing right in front of him when I realized that something was off about him. Seems like you didn’t notice…”

She appeared quite delighted, to the point that she had to raise her right hand to cover her mouth. After all, her younger brother, who was clearly ignorant of mysticism, had suddenly become a Beyonder. He had grasped a wealth of advanced knowledge and discovered that Cordu was stuck in a time loop. Not only had she been useless as a sister, but she also found herself outmatched in mysticism knowledge. This made her a tad unhappy.

Now, she had finally regained her dignity as an elder sister.

Lumian looked at his sister’s smile and nodded.

“I didn’t see anything unusual in his behavior.”

Aurore tersely acknowledged, “His Astral Projection; how can I put

it? Simply put, it's brighter than a normal person's, and he's not a Beyonder. He hasn't been training his body systematically for a long time."

"Maybe he was born with a good physique?" Lumian guessed before asking in puzzlement, "What's an Astral Projection?"

Aurore asked in surprise, "You don't know?"

"No." Lumian shook his head.

Aurore grinned again and said with a hint of disbelief, "That woman taught you divine paths, the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, and the acting method, but she didn't tell you basic concepts like Astral Projection?"

"She was in a hurry, so she only focused on the main points." Lumian defended the mysterious woman.

Aurore smiled even more happily.

"Perhaps this basic mysticism knowledge is useless to unofficial Hunters. You just need to track, set traps, and fight."

She struggled to describe her brother's current state. To say he was ignorant of mysticism wasn't entirely accurate since he knew a great deal. The things he had learned were all formidable. To say that his knowledge surpassed most Beyonders wasn't right either; he didn't even know what an Astral Projection was.

Aurore sighed and said seriously, "I can only complete your mysticism education. Remember, in mysticism, the external parts of the human body are divided into four levels. The innermost layer, which is also the core, is the Soul Body. It's almost equivalent to the concept of a spirit. It's the spirituality of everything—what gets strengthened. You could say it's the essence of building a soul.

"To a Mystery Pryer, the potion mainly upgrades the Soul Body.

"The Astral Projection is located outside the Soul Body. It's the latter's manifestation in the real and spirit worlds. Moreover, it's closely related to your will and current emotions.

“So, do you understand? When I said the deputy padre’s Astral Projection was brighter than a normal person’s, I meant that his Soul Body or spirit had an issue. This is reflected in his Astral Projection. It has nothing to do with his natural physique. Of course, it could be because his spirituality is naturally strong.

“Through the Astral Projection, we can still grasp the target’s true emotions. For example, red signifies passion and excitement. Orange represents warmth and satisfaction. Yellow indicates happiness and extroversion. Green conveys calmness and peace. Blue suggests coldness and introspection. White denotes brightness—an eagerness to improve. Dark colors symbolize worry, sorrow, and silence. Purple implies that spirituality is taking control, coldness, and estrangement…

“It’s very difficult to fake these colors, but they’re relatively generic. It’s impossible for us to distinguish subtle emotions and delicate feelings.”

Lumian listened attentively, as if he wanted to take out a fountain pen and jot everything down.

“Just listen.” Aurore felt a little worn out from talking. She sat down at the dining table. “I’ll give you my first witchcraft notebook later. It’s filled with such basic knowledge.”

“Alright, alright.” Lumian sat down and nodded obediently. “What’s outside the Astral Projection?”

Aurore picked up her carved glass cup and took a sip.

“Beyond that is the Body of Heart and Mind. From this point on, spirit and flesh merge.

“The Body of Heart and Mind involves the mind. It relates to one’s reasoning, thinking, insight, and ability to understand things. Some potions mainly improve this, but there are also many spells targeting it.

“The outermost layer is the Ether Body. It’s a manifestation of life force and physical state, so I can tell at a glance that your body has

improved greatly. Yes, through the thickness, brightness, and color of different parts of the Ether Body, I can also determine the target's health. As a Sequence 7 Mystery Pryer, I can even determine the target's lifespan from the specific situation of the Ether Body.

"As for how to differentiate them, read the notebook later."

Lumian was enlightened.

"The Hunter potion mainly targets the Ether Body?"

"You're wrong. It targets the body and life force, and 'Ether Body' is the straightforward manifestation of both."

Lumian nodded as he revised, gaining a preliminary understanding of such mysticism knowledge.

He recalled his sister's words and asked curiously, "Aurore, how did you observe the deputy padre? Why didn't I sense you nearby?"

Aurore smiled.

"Actually, I've been staying at home all this while, using the Mystery Pryer pathway's special trait."

"What's special?" Lumian asked with the mentality that it didn't matter if his sister didn't answer.

Aurore pointed at her eyes.

... The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

"The most unique ability of a Mystery Pryer is called the Eyes of Mystery Prying.

"Although I need to reach a higher Sequence before I can activate the complete Eyes of Mystery Prying, allowing it to not only be of use to me, but it can also be placed on the surface of other objects to help me monitor matters remotely, this doesn't mean that Mystery Pryer's eyes aren't special before this."

"From Sequence 9 onwards, a Mystery Pryer has seen more than most

Sequence Beyonders of the same pathway. The simplest example is that a Hunter can only see an Ether Body before they undergo a qualitative change in their godhood. Furthermore, it's in a less detailed manner. And now, I can examine the various details of the Astral Projection. In addition, I can also see things around me that aren't normally visible."

Aurore glanced at the kitchen.

This made Lumian inexplicably shocked.

There was clearly nothing in that direction, but he felt that there might be something invisible that he could not see!

Aurore continued, "Of course, this might not be a good thing. It's very easy for something to happen when you see something you shouldn't see. Therefore, I've been restraining myself. I don't look at things I shouldn't see, but as my Sequence increases, it's not up to you not to look."

Lumian thought for a moment and asked in confusion, "Didn't you say that only higher Sequences can project out the Eyes of Mystery Prying? Why can you observe the people in the cathedral from home?"

Aurore raised her right hand and pointed with her index finger.

...

"I've always told you that knowledge equals power, but you didn't believe me!

"Under normal circumstances, it's true that I can't observe things hundreds of meters away from home, but humans can use tools, and I have two 'assistants'."

As she spoke, she took out two items from a hidden pocket in her blue dress.

One was a brass telescope that could shrink and lengthen, and the other was a miniature version of a dark ink bottle—this was more like a child's toy.

“Look, the telescope can help me see people a few hundred meters away clearly. Once the visual range is closed, I can observe the target’s Astral Projection, Ether Body, and Body of Heart and Mind state,” Aurore introduced with a smile. “This is suitable for open spaces without obstacles.”

Lumian was a little dumbfounded.

That works too?

They were clearly discussing mysticism. Why did his sister take out a telescope?

“What about this?” He pointed at the pocket ink bottle.

Aurore didn’t answer. She massaged her temples and opened the bottle cap.

Lumian suddenly felt a little cold. A cool breeze seemed to blow in through the window.

“It’s a unique spirit world creature,” Aurore introduced.

“It? Where is it?” Lumian looked around.

Aurore was rather surprised.

“You still don’t know how to activate Spirit Vision? But didn’t you say you saw a lot of undead in the wilderness?”

Lumian had read about the term Spirit Vision in Psychic and knew what it meant. However, he was completely at a loss as to how to activate Spirit Vision.

He looked at his sister and slowly shook his head.

“I don’t know.” Then, he guessed, “Maybe ordinary people can see ghosts and undead directly when entering the so-called Paramita.”

Aurore thought seriously and asked, “So, you don’t know Hermes, ancient Hermes, Elvish, Dragonese, or Jotun?”

“What are those?” Lumian fully displayed what it meant to be illiterate in the field of mysticism.

Aurore couldn’t help but facepalm.

“What exactly did that lady teach you?”

“Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, law of convergence, acting method, paths of the divine, Sequence 0, Sealed Artifacts…” Lumian answered honestly.

“…” Aurore felt like he was flaunting. “I think you want a beating!”

She sighed for a few seconds before regaining her composure.

“Then I’ll combine it with my contracted creature to teach you how to activate Spirit Vision, how to carry out ritualistic magic, and how to use language with supernatural powers.

“This is only a rough explanation. If you really want to completely master it, especially those few languages, it will take at least a year or two. Of course, this is also a problem with your Sequence pathway. Hunters probably don’t have their learning abilities improved, nor do they have any enhancements in mysticism. Back then, I relied on diligence and indoctrination to master all of them in less than half a year.”

Her right hand gently stroked the void in front of her, as if she was stroking a transparent kitten.

“It’s very simple for Beyonders to activate their Spirit Vision, but it’s not completely dark yet. Let’s talk about something else first.

“I call it White Paper. It’s a very weak spirit world creature. As long as you have an accurate description, you can hold a ritual and summon it in your name. Other than the fact that spirit world creatures are difficult to see, it only has one use. That is to carry a certain supernatural ability of the contractor, but it can’t be too complicated or too powerful.”

Chapter 46 - 46: Ritualistic Magic

Chapter 46: Ritualistic Magic

Lumian gazed at the invisible spirit world creature and contemplated for a moment.

“How complicated can it get? How strong can it be?”

“Heh, I thought you’d ask how to summon or perform ritualistic magic, but you just want to know how to use it!” Aurore teased. “That might be a characteristic of the Hunter pathway. You don’t need to fully understand the principles, only consider how to apply them.”

Not waiting for Lumian’s response, she pondered and said, “I’ve tried. Not too complicated means it can only perform one action. Not too powerful means it can’t surpass a Mystery Pryer Sequence 7 Warlock’s spell.”

It’s nice discussing this with Aurore. She has a habit of analyzing things both qualitatively and quantitatively, unlike someone who prefers vague descriptions… Lumian felt emotional hearing that.

As he mulled it over, he stood up and helped his sister bring the food to the dining table. As they ate, he asked, “But I remember your spells often require materials. You can’t carry White Paper, right?”

“Yes, that’s inconvenient.” Aurore grabbed a piece of fried trout and stuffed it into her mouth. After chewing and swallowing, she said, “Moreover, a Warlock’s spells can’t be completed in one move. Even the simplest has three steps. First is concentrating spirituality, the second is outlining the symbol of the corresponding spell in the mind. This can also be replaced by reciting the incantation aloud. The third

is using materials to cast the spell. The materials serve either as a medium or part of the spell."

This does sound a little complicated. It isn't something the single-celled White Paper can do… Lumian knew he couldn't do it anytime soon. He'd need extensive training before he could cast spells proficiently.

Aurore glanced at him.

"Don't even think about it. It's impossible for you to be like me. First, you're limited by your Sequence, and your spirituality is insufficient. Second, using materials to help cast spells is a unique ability only Warlocks have. Yes, perhaps certain Sequences of certain pathways can do it. I don't know enough to make a definite judgment.

"However, once a Hunter reaches Sequence 7 and becomes a Pyromaniac, they can use many fire-related spells. Furthermore, they don't need materials, nor do they need to outline symbols or recite incantations in their minds. In terms of actual combat, it's faster, more convenient, and might even be stronger. As for Warlocks, their main advantage lies in their versatility. The more knowledge they acquire, the more comprehensive and powerful they become."

Lumian said with anticipation, "I don't know when I can become a Pyromaniac…"

He planned to explore the dream ruins again tonight. Firstly, he wanted to use hunting to help digest the potion, and secondly, he wanted to find clues about the main ingredient of Sequence 8 Provoker.

As for the corresponding monsters of the Pyromaniac, he didn't dare think about them yet. He believed it would be like serving himself on a platter. After all, those creatures could definitely launch long-range attacks, rendering his "special" abilities useless.

He then asked, "Can White Paper withstand the Pyromaniac's one-movement spells?"

"Theoretically, yes, but I'm not sure if Pyromaniac's spells exceed a

certain level." Aurore's reference standard was Warlock.

Upon hearing this, Lumian became excited.

"If I could, wouldn't I be able to simulate the?Funnels[1]?you mentioned?"

"Huh?" Aurore was puzzled.

Lumian explained his idea in detail, "I can summon a group of White Papers and form a contract with them. Then, I can have each White Paper carry a fireball. They'll float in the air and attack the target together. Isn't that similar to the description of the Funnels?"

"Unfortunately, you can't have a group of White Papers at the same time," Aurore laughed. "After you form a contract with a White Paper, the next time you use the initial summoning description, the same White Paper will appear."

"Can I summon one first and hold off on the contract? Then, I'll summon another until I have a satisfactory number before forming a contract?" Lumian hadn't received a traditional education, but instead, a custom one that included Aurore's ideas. Combined with the "refinement" of years of pranks, he always had creative ideas.

"…" Aurore admitted she wasn't that cunning. She considered and said, "I've never tried it before, so I don't know if it'll work. You can try it yourself when you're at Sequence 7. However, I think having a White Paper beside you while summoning others might cause a conflict. It's unlikely to succeed. The only hope is to directly summon multiple White Papers, but there's a high chance that only Sequences skilled at summoning can do it."

Lumian decided to give it a try when the time came. After all, he had nothing to lose.

Aurore scooped up some mashed potatoes.

"Now, let's talk about how to summon creatures from the spirit world. This is an application of ritualistic magic.

"Ritualistic magic is magic cast by selecting the date and time,

preparing the corresponding materials, and strictly following the format and process. It's often used in prayers and summonings."

Lumian nodded. "It's to achieve a certain supernatural effect through a ritual?"

He thought of the various rituals of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, as well as the process of the Lent celebration.

"Yes," Aurore was very satisfied with her brother's comprehension ability. "To put it simply, ritualistic magic needs a target to pray to. It can be the seven orthodox gods, other hidden beings, or even evil gods or devils. It can even be you. When you pray to the orthodox gods, you need to check or choose the date and time they rule over. For example, Tuesday symbolizes the Eternal Blazing Sun, and there is a corresponding Sun hour every day. During these times, the probability of success will be greatly increased if you perform the ritualistic magic that targets the Eternal Blazing Sun.

"However, this isn't very useful. Those who aren't official Beyonders have a very low chance of successfully praying to the corresponding orthodox god. Even if you receive a response, don't be happy. This might mean that you have been noticed by that entity.

"Of course, we also have ways to bypass restrictions. For example, obtaining an item closely related to the target deity.

"There's no need to pick a date or time to pray to a hidden being or an evil god or devil, but I don't need to tell you how dangerous it is, right? 99% of people who do this don't end up well.

"Therefore, for wild Beyonders, the most commonly used ritualistic magic is to pray to themselves to mobilize their spirituality to complete some relatively complicated tasks.

"Create charms and Beyonder weapons?" Lumian recalled a point of knowledge that the lady had mentioned.

Aurore nodded.

"That's right. Some mystical medicines also require ritualistic magic.

“You also missed something. Summoning a creature from the spirit world.”

She ate some more food before saying, “The second step of ritualistic magic is to prepare the corresponding ingredients. If you wish to pray to an existence, prepare herbs, essential oils, powders, extracts, and so on from their domain to please them. Let’s use the Eternal Blazing Sun as an example. If you pray to Him, you can use Sun essential oil, rosemary powder, Buddha’s hand, and all kinds of sunflowers. As for praying to yourself, it won’t be too troublesome. Although it’s best to use the ingredients in your domain, someone like you can even put a cup of absinthe. It’s fine even if you don’t do so.

“The third step is to set up an altar. This can be determined by the environment. There’s no need for a special holy solemnity. It’s mainly because there can’t be any miscellaneous items.

“The most important thing about the altar is the candles…”

Aurore picked up her knife and fork as she spoke.

She stretched out the two items and said, “Pretend that they are candles. If you pray to a deity, make them with the corresponding symbolic materials.

“As an example, the Eternal Blazing Sun has the Inextinguishable Light and the Embodiment of Order in His name.” Out of caution, Aurore paused for a few seconds before continuing, “God of Deeds and Guardian of Businesses.”

“There should be the honorific name ‘Father of All Life,’ right?” Lumian asked, familiar with the preaching.

Aurore shook her head. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

“That’s just a title used by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church when proselytizing. It’s beyond Him in mysticism. If it was really part of His name, it would mean something big had happened.”

She didn’t give any more details, unsure herself.

She brought the conversation back on track.

“Anyway, if you want to exorcize the undead, you have to pray to the symbol of Inextinguishable Light. So, you need to make candles out of different sunflowers. For contracts, use the honorific title of the God of Deeds to make candles with Buddha’s hand and other materials. Check my witchcraft notebook for more options.”

“In ritualistic magic, we can only place two candles at the spot corresponding to the deity. This is because in mysticism, 0 represents the unknown or Chaos. It symbolizes the state of the world before it was born. If we don’t place the candles, it means that there won’t be any effect. 1 represents a beginning, the first Creator; it also accurately pinpoints a particular existence. 2 represents the world and various divinities that were produced from the Creator’s body. Therefore, ritualistic magic can only have two candles to represent the deity. As for which candles to use, it depends on the desired effect.

“Three represent all things, so the third candle is for us. The two candles in the upper position represent the deity, and the candle in front is for myself, for a total of three candles. If you have an item related to a deity or a hidden existence, you can replace the two candles with that item for a dualistic ritual. If you pray to yourself, leave only the candle that represents yourself.”

Lumian listened attentively, realizing that as a wild Hunter, he could only pray to himself in ritualistic magic before knowing the honorific name of the great existence. Where would he find items closely related to a deity?

“Let me show you the next few steps using summoning creatures from the spirit world,” Aurore said, standing up as she saw her brother finish his dinner.

…

They quickly cleared the dining table.

Chapter 47 - 47 Truly “Illiterate”

47 Truly “Illiterate”

Aurore looked at the slightly stained white tablecloth and smiled at Lumian.

“If you’re the target of ritualistic magic, it doesn’t matter if the altar is dirty. But if you want to pray to a deity or a hidden existence, I suggest you change to a cleaner piece of cloth or remove the cloth and wipe the table.”

“Anything works if I’m just praying to yourself, right?” Lumian teased.

Aurore chuckled.

“That refers to the environment, materials, and equipment, but the ritual process and incantations must strictly follow the rules of mysticism.”

She pulled out an orange candle from her pocket.

“This is a candle mixed with citrus and lavender. It has nothing to do with their domain; I just like it.”

Aurore waved the candle above the altar.

“Remember, the candle representing the deity is placed in these two places. It can be empty now.”

Then she placed the candle close to her.

“Remember, this is the location of ‘me’.”

Next, Aurore brought a cup of water, a plate of coarse salt, and a small steel bowl from the kitchen.

“We need to create a clean and undisturbed ritual environment. Clean in the sense of spirituality. We have to construct it ourselves. Enter Cogitation and focus your mind. You can guide the spiritual power out through supplementary items and build a wall of spirituality around the altar.

“Mystery Pryers and Seers find this simple. Hunters need the help of other items before reaching Sequence 7. For example, incense to calm your emotions and make you ethereal, or a crystal ball to help you focus on your spirituality.

“The meditation I taught you before is incomplete. It’s only the first step. It can only gather your thoughts and calm you down. I’ll teach you the rest later.”

Lumian was surprised. Why can I activate the dream’s specialness and make the two symbols appear if the meditation method is incomplete?

Aurore pulled out a silver dagger.

“Watch carefully how I build the wall of spirituality.”

Lumian was stunned and blurted out, “Why do you have so many things on you?”

First, there were various casting materials, a retractable telescope, a miniature ink bottle that stored the spirit world creature, White Paper, and candles for rituals. Now, she had taken out a dagger.

Aurore sighed in exasperation.

“Do you think I want to? It’s just inconvenient for Warlocks.

“It takes me a long time to alter each of my clothes. Sometimes, I even feel like Doraemon. I can take out whatever I want.”

“What —Amon?” Lumian asked, not understanding the reference.

Aurore hesitated for a moment before replying with a mixed expression, “You don’t need to know.”

Lumian suddenly felt a pang of sadness for his sister.

Aurore composed herself and reached for the orange candle representing her.

“In ritualistic magic, candles can’t simply be lit. Of course, there are times when ordinary methods can work, but that’s not always the case,” Aurore explained. “The correct way is to extend your spirituality, rub it against the wick, and light it.”

As she spoke, she lit the candle with a spark of spirituality, and it burned with an orange flame.

The dining table transformed into an altar, and the surrounding area was bathed in a deep, otherworldly light.

Aurore’s light-blue eyes had darkened, and an invisible wind swirled around her as she plunged the silver dagger into the coarse salt and began chanting a mysterious incantation.

“XXX, XXX!

“…”

Lumian was bewildered as he watched his sister complete the incantation and draw out the silver dagger. She stabbed it into the cup of water and raised it again. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Aurore pointed the dagger outward and began to walk around the altar. With each step she took, Lumian sensed an invisible force emanating from the dagger. It was agile and lively, mingling with the air to create an impenetrable barrier.

As Aurore completed the circle, Lumian felt as if she had been transported to a different realm.

“Did you understand the steps?” Aurore’s voice sounded distant.

Lumian nodded truthfully.

“Yes, but I don’t understand what you mean.”

Aurore could not help but laugh.

“You’re completely illiterate when it comes to mysticism. Literally. That’s Hermes. When translated, it’s:

“I sanctify you, blade of pure silver!

“I cleanse and purify you, allowing you to serve me in this ritual!

…

“In the name of Warlock Aurore Lee,

“You have been sanctified!”

Lumian scratched his head. “It sounds ordinary.”

“That’s just the translation. The meaning of the incantation and the language used is what’s important,” Aurore explained, her eyes lighting up. “In Intisian, it might sound ordinary, but if you use Hermes, ancient Hermes, Elvish, Dragonese, or Jotun, you can tap into supernatural powers. That’s what sets them apart.”

Lumian asked curiously, “Are these the only languages that can communicate with the mysterious?”

“No, there are many other languages in the field of mysticism, each with its own specialties. For example, some are specifically meant for the undead, but most Beyonders won’t be able to use them unless they want to study a unique and rare domain or perform the corresponding ritual,” Aurore explained casually.

She went on to explain the incantation.

“During the sanctification ritual, the penultimate sentence should be in the name of a certain deity or a hidden existence, but as wild Beyonders, it’s best not to use them to avoid unnecessary trouble.

“As a Beyonder, it’s enough to use your name to sanctify an ordinary item. Although it won’t be as effective as the original version, it can

still be used."

Lumian nodded, then asked, "You came up with my name. Can I use it in the ritual?"

...

Aurore replied confidently, "Yes. A completely new name wouldn't work, but your name has been in use for several years, so there's a mystic connection."

She paused for a moment before continuing, "If you're in the wild and don't have many materials, you can complete the ritual with simple salt or clear water."

With that, Aurore pulled out a small silver-black metal bottle from her pocket.

"This is my own concoction of essential oil called 'Wizard of Oz.' What sets it apart is that it smells good," Aurore explained as she dripped three drops of light green liquid on the candle representing her.

The light of the candle flickered and sizzled, and a faint mist spread out, giving Aurore and the altar an air of mystique.

"Now for the important part," Aurore said, pulling a small imitation goatskin from her pocket. "If you're holding a ritualistic magic that prays to a deity, you need to draw the symbol of what you want on the paper and burn it during the ritual.

"The first part is a prayer for someone's power. This 'someone' needs to be replaced by the symbol of a deity, an honorific name, or a domain ruled over by Them. For example, I pray for the power of the Sun or the power of Order. Remember, there are always two sentences that correspond to the two candles that represent the deity.

"The second part is 'I pray for the God's loving grace.' Remember, don't call Him by His name. Doing so in a ritual is sacrilegious. The Eternal Blazing Sun can be referred to as God or Father.

"The third part is what you want to pray for. You must be brief and

finish it in one sentence.

“The fourth part is to give more power to the incantation. For example, ‘Sun Flower, a herb that belongs to the Sun. Please bestow your powers to my incantation.’ You can choose two to three types based on the materials used.

“After reciting the incantation, drip a drop of essential oil on each candle and burn the piece of paper that was used to draw the symbol. After the paper is burned, the ritual comes to an end. Then, thank the deity and extinguish the candles in the order of ‘me’, followed by ‘god’, right to left. Dispel the wall of spirituality. Oh, and remember to light the candles from left to right, beginning with ‘god’ followed by ‘me’.”

...

Lumian nodded twice in acknowledgement before asking, “What about praying to yourself?”

Aurore chuckled before explaining, “The incantation is even simpler. I’ll use summoning spirit world creatures as an example. For the first part, there’s only one word: ‘I’. Remember, you can’t use modern Hermes here. It has to be ancient Hermes, Elvish, Dragonese, or Jotun. The second part is ‘I summon in my name,’ which can be said in modern Hermes. The third part is the exact description of the summoned spirit world creature.”

Lumian was curious. “What’s an exact description?”

Aurore explained solemnly, “It needs to be limited to three lines to help us lock onto the creature we want to summon.”

“For instance, if someone said they were looking for the prankster of Cordu Village, Aurore Lee’s idiot brother, and a regular customer of Ol’ Tavern, we know exactly who they’re looking for because of the specific characteristics given.”

“I get it!” Lumian was enlightened. “So, if we don’t know the target’s name, appearance, or address, we can use their characteristics to help find them.”

Aurore said seriously, “That’s the principle, but there are many problems when put into practice. For example, when summoning creatures from the spirit world, the first sentence is often fixed. It’s either ‘the spirit that wanders about the unfounded’ or ‘spirit wandering above the world.’ Its function is to point to the spirit world and clearly state that we want to summon a spirit.

“The second sentence is also very universal. We don’t summon spirit world creatures to harm ourselves, so we must restrict it to friendly creatures. Sometimes, we also add the word ‘weak’. This is because some spirit world creatures may be very friendly, but their existence can bring great danger.

“Considering these circumstances, the description is fixed. ‘The friendly creature that can be subordinated’, ‘the friendly creature that can be consulted’, ‘the weak creature that can be subordinated’, and so on.

“But based on these two descriptions, the direction is still very broad. It doesn’t reflect our needs. Therefore, the third description is very important. You need to use a sentence to clearly explain what creature you want to summon.”

“Sounds very difficult.” Lumian felt a headache just thinking about it.

Aurore nodded.

“Not only is it difficult, but it’s also dangerous. When the direction is vague, it might summon a spirit you don’t need or a creature that brings danger. Remember, being weak doesn’t mean it can’t kill you, just like being friendly doesn’t mean it won’t pose a threat to you.”

Chapter 48 - 48: Knowledge Pursuer

Chapter 48: Knowledge Pursuer

Lumian deeply understood Aurore's words.

As a vagrant, he knew better than to underestimate anyone. Some adult vagrants suffered massive losses because they looked down on him and assumed him to be weak. As for some almsgivers, they provided food out of kindness but forgot to consider the starving bodies of the vagrants, causing them to make the wrong decisions.

After a moment of serious thought, Lumian said, "It seems like the description of a creature that can be summoned with relative precision is very valuable."

Aurore nodded solemnly. "That's right. A notebook that records the corresponding summoning incantations is very precious. Every incantation and commentary on it is exchanged with life, blood, or pain. For example, when I summoned White Paper, the three lines described it as 'the spirit that wanders about the unfounded, the friendly creature that can be subordinated, the weak ball that can telepathically connect with me'. You have to make countless attempts and experience countless failures before you can piece one together. And every failure implies a huge risk."

Is this a description that a normal person can come up with? In particular, the words 'weak' and 'ball'…?As Lumian criticized inwardly, he asked, "So, you bought this from someone else?"

"No." Aurore shook her head and said with a bitter expression, "The Mystery Pryer pathway is different from other pathways. From time

to time, it will be chased by a large amount of knowledge. It's impossible to ignore, and there's no way to reject it even if one can't handle it. And when one consumes a potion to advance, the situation of being chased by knowledge becomes even more serious.

"Although most of this knowledge is useless, there will always be some that are valuable. The incantation to summon White Paper was one of them."

Lumian understood. "Indoctrination from the Hidden Sage?"

Aurore looked at him in surprise. "You know that? Did that lady teach you?"

"Yeah." Lumian nodded.

Aurore pursed her lips, lost in thought.

"From my personal experience, Knowledge Pursuit isn't limited to the Hidden Sage's indoctrination. My so-called 'ear ringing' does indeed hear His voice, where I gain knowledge, but it always puts me in pain. My head is close to exploding, and I wish I could lose control.

"But occasionally, especially when I'm not in the best state and am about to lose control, I have an illusion that all the knowledge in the world has come to life. A small number of them will chase after me and rush towards me, but I can't dodge them. This is how the summoning incantation for White Paper barged into my brain.

"When consuming the potion, 99% of the Knowledge Pursuit comes from the Hidden Sage. 1% is related to revived knowledge."

"It's very magical and terrifying. It can scare everyone in the village." As Lumian sighed with emotion, he was thinking for his sister about whether there was a way to resolve the problem of Knowledge Pursuit or reduce its impact.

Aurore replied with a bitter smile, "It's precisely because I often suffer such torture that I don't want you to follow the path of Beyonders. But in our current situation, it's better to become a Beyonder than an ordinary person."

To make her brother remember the madness and danger of the path to transcendence, she pointed at her head.

“After being pursued by knowledge and experiencing pain for a long time, I feel that my mind and personality have undergone a certain mutation.

“Don’t I always tell you that I have a phobia for social interaction, but I am very talkative sometimes? I like to go out and chat with the old ladies in the village and tell stories to the children. Occasionally, I will go crazy and borrow Madame Pualis’s pony to ride free into the mountains and shout?

“Being especially talkative is a kind of rebound from prolonged isolation and being unable to return to my true home. The path to transcendence is also a form of oppression.

“And the occasional madness…”

At this point, Aurore chuckled and looked at Lumian.

“You don’t think that’s just an exaggerated adjective, do you?”

Lumian fell silent, feeling his sister’s smile was self-deprecating, lost, and filled with indescribable pain and struggle.

Aurore sighed.

“During those times, I wouldn’t even recognize myself.”

Lumian felt deeply helpless. “There should be a solution.”

“Hopefully, let’s continue,” Aurore said, pointing at the altar. “After we sign a contract with the summoned spirit world creature, it’ll be easy to summon it again. We can change the last description to ‘contracted creature that belongs to Aurore Lee.’ That will be very accurate, right? Besides, before the contract is terminated, no one can summon it again.”

Lumian was concerned. “Everyone can only have one contracted creature?”

“Not really. I’m not sure how high the upper limit is, but it’s definitely more than one, especially with some special Sequences. When summoning, say the first contract creature or second contract creature of the person to differentiate.” Aurore spoke the truth. “In addition, summoning creatures from the spirit world will consume your spirituality. The more you summon, the greater the consumption. With a Hunter’s spirituality, I estimate that it can only withstand one contract creature at most.”

Knowing her brother’s personality, she curbed any loopholes that Lumian might find.

“Every spirit world creature can only stay for a limited period of time after being summoned to reality. The weaker they are, the longer they can stay. You don’t have to think about summoning one first. You can summon the next one after your spirituality recovers, unless you choose a very weak one. And only when your spirituality is significantly stronger than it is now.” The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

She used White Paper as an example.

“If I didn’t let White Paper be a vessel for my powers, it could stay in reality for twelve hours. If I share the specialness of my eyes with it and let it do things for me, it can last at most three hours, and my spirituality would be constantly depleted.”

Lumian was disappointed. He had wanted to form an army of spirit world creatures.

He thought for a moment and asked, “Can I only summon creatures from the spirit world? Can I only summon spirits?”

“No,” Aurore shook her head. “We can also summon creatures affiliated with the spirit world, the real world, and the astral world, as well as creatures from alternate worlds or other planets. Regardless of whether they are spirits or not, this is very dangerous. Most of the Beyonders who have attempted this have died tragically, and a small number have mysteriously disappeared. Only the corresponding notebooks were left behind to prove what they had done.”

Lumian asked curiously, “Can I summon something from the real world?”

Aurore pondered for a moment before responding, “In theory, as long as the other party has a close relationship with the spirit world or has reached a certain level, they should be able to hear the summoning and decide if they want to respond. However, such a target is either very special or very powerful. If you want to live well, don’t try it.”

“Furthermore, when the summoning target isn’t a spirit, the requirements for the corresponding ritual will be even higher. It will require more spirituality, and it might even require a large number of sacrifices. Only then can we open the Door of Summoning that can be used by non-spiritual creatures.

“You can barely summon White Paper with a Hunter’s spirituality. If you want to try something more powerful, you can only pray to a deity or a hidden existence. For this, you might have to prepare something filled with spirituality as a sacrifice.”

Lumian roughly understood the ritualistic magic of summoning.

“So next, you are going to recite an incantation and complete the summoning?”

“How is that possible?” Aurore scoffed. “The ritual has been interrupted so many times. How can we continue? In fact, normally, as long as we follow the process, we can resume from any breaks. However, I was mainly explaining, and didn’t divert my attention to do the corresponding things.”

You probably forgot…?Lumian muttered inwardly but didn’t dare say it out loud.

Aurore then said, “However, I do want to hold a summoning ritual. On the one hand, I want to give you a complete demonstration of the entire process. On the other hand, I want to seek help.”

“Seek help?” Lumian asked in puzzlement.

Summoning powerful spirit world creatures to help?

Aurore explained, “Among the countless spirit world creatures, only a very small number of them can act as messengers. Private messengers —uh, messengers can be summoned by others based on special contracts.

“For example, if I have a contracted messenger, someone in Trier can summon it and give it a written letter. It will immediately pass through the spirit world and deliver the letter to me.

“Due to the special connection between the spirit world and the contract, it only takes a second or two to complete the letter delivery.”

Lumian sighed from the bottom of his heart. “Very impressive. It’s as fast as sending a telegram.”

But the thought that crossed his mind was:?*I want one too!*

“Don’t even think about it,” Aurore read his mind. “It’s very difficult to summon a messenger. Unless you obtain an exact incantation, it’s unlikely that you can succeed trying yourself. And only a few special Sequences can grasp an exact incantation. Even I don’t have one.”

…

Lumian was disappointed and asked,

“Are you going to summon a messenger and write a letter to them for help?”

“Yes,” Aurore nodded. “She’s one of the few among us who have gone the furthest on the path to transcendence. She has her own messenger. I don’t expect her to save me, but she should be able to give me some advice.”

I’m afraid it’s very difficult. That mysterious lady said that we can only rely on ourselves…?Lumian asked curiously,

“Us? You mean your pen pals?”

Aurore nodded and asked in confusion, “When did I ever mention pen pals to you?”

“Last cycle, no, last last cycle,” Lumian answered honestly.

“Alright,” Aurore facepalmed. “Actually, it’s a mutual support organization slowly established by those of us who can’t return home. We rely on letters to communicate daily, share knowledge, and solve problems. There will be small-scale gatherings or communication through messengers. She’s the vice president of our organization and one of the initiators. Her code name is ‘Hela’.”

“Code name?” Lumian was a little puzzled.

Aurore tersely acknowledged, “In the organization, everyone uses code names without exposing their real names. When they write letters, they emphasize that it’s a pseudonym to avoid being discovered by the officials.”

“What’s your code name?” Lumian was very curious.

…

Aurore was silent for a moment before she replied with a sigh, “Muggle.”

“What does it mean?” Lumian was puzzled.

Aurore’s eyes darkened as she replied, “Ordinary person without superpowers.”

Lumian knew that his sister wanted to become an ordinary person living back home more, so he quickly changed the topic.

“What’s the name of your organization?”

Aurore’s expression became complicated.

“Originally, everyone wanted to give it a classy name, but considering that we would write letters every day, a name that was too conspicuous would attract the attention of certain forces. Therefore, in the end, we decided on a name that sounds like a group of animal lovers.”

“What is it?” Lumian pressed.

Aurore replied in embarrassment, “The Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.”

Chapter 49 - 49 True Cogitation

49 True Cogitation

Lumian couldn't help but suppress his laughter at the name of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, but he managed to hold it in.

But even if he held it in, he couldn't help but say, "Those who know will understand that you're studying curly-haired baboons. Those who don't know will think that a group of curly-haired baboons are doing research."

Of course, he was only joking.

Aurore rolled her eyes at him. "We often tease ourselves as a group of curly-haired baboons being studied."

Seeing that his sister was in a better mood, Lumian asked, "Are all the members of your research society Beyonders?"

"Not all of them," Aurore answered briefly. "But some gatherings can't be attended by ordinary people."

She didn't say why they couldn't participate.

"Who's the president? How many vice presidents are there?" Lumian asked.

"Are you doing a census?" Aurore snapped back.

"Huh?" Lumian was confused.

Lumian was confused and realized that Aurore didn't like him asking too many questions about the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Aurore pouted and exhaled.

“The president’s code name is Gandalf. There are a total of five vice presidents.

“Alright, I’m going to summon Hela’s messenger.”

Lumian was puzzled and asked, “Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, didn’t you say that you only know the code name ‘Hela’ and don’t know her exact name? How are you going to summon her messenger?”

He remembered that his sister had just mentioned that by changing the last sentence of the summoning incantation to “the messenger that belongs to so-and-so”, he could very accurately pinpoint the target creature. However, she didn’t know who “so-and-so” was.

“Excellent,” Aurore praised him and said, “to be able to discover the problem is an excellent learning quality. Let’s put it this way. It doesn’t matter what name you use when you sign a contract with a spirit world creature. The contract will automatically extract a bit of your true aura from you, allowing the two parties to be related. However, remember, you can only use the name written when you sign the contract in the future. Changing it to your real name will be ineffective.”

Lumian pondered seriously and said, “Got it. The key is the aura and connection. The name when signing the contract is only equivalent to the incantation used for the subsequent summoning. It doesn’t matter what you write.”

“Yes.” Aurore nodded.

Lumian suddenly laughed.

“Is there such a situation? Let me say hypothetically. Grande Soeur, you obtained an exact incantation and summoned a messenger. You signed a contract with it in the name of Aurore Lee. After that, you taught me that incantation because you loved your younger brother, which is me. As for me, I successfully summoned another messenger. However, when signing the contract, I used Aurore Lee’s name to sign it for fun.

“Then the question is, which one will be summoned with the

description of ‘the messenger that belongs to Aurore Lee’?”

Aurore’s face turned livid. “I don’t have a messenger. How would I know!”

She exhaled and calmed herself down.

“This is actually a confusion caused by having the same name. Compared to ordinary contracted creatures that can only be summoned by oneself, it’s indeed easy for a messenger that can be summoned by others to have such problems. However, because I don’t have a messenger, I’m not sure if there’s a special mechanism to avoid such mistakes. I can only use my knowledge to attempt an analysis.

“First, very few people have a messenger. The probability of having the same name is so low that it’s almost negligible.

“Second, if there’s an overlap in names, you can place an item with the messenger’s owner’s aura in the summoning ritual and use it to accurately lock onto them.

“Third, if you’re really afraid of having the same name, you can make your name longer when signing a contract. For example, Lumian Torres Arri Lanos Arthur Gehrman Sparrow Lee. That way, you probably won’t have the same name.”

“But it’s very likely that I’ll forget this name after signing the contract. It’s too difficult to remember,” Lumian muttered. “Also, why did you add the name of the Pirate Hunter and Great Adventurer?”

“Because I like it. Madam Fors Wall’s adventurer series is a classic,” Aurore said confidently.

She turned around and tidied up the altar, preparing to officially hold the summoning ritual.

At that moment, Lumian thought of something and shouted, “Wait a minute!”

“What’s wrong?” Aurore turned around, looking confused.

Lumian asked seriously, “Does the messenger count as an outsider?”

“…” Aurore was confused at first, but quickly figured out the problem.

She deliberated and asked, “You mean that as an outsider, the messenger will fall into a cycle after coming to Cordu and won’t be able to leave?”

Without waiting for Lumian’s reply, Aurore came up with a new theory.

“No, the situation will be worse. It’s a contracted creature. After receiving the letter, it will immediately go to Hela. It’s equivalent to leaving Cordu. That will cause a restart.

“After that, it will instinctively attempt to leave again and again, while we restart again and again. We won’t have time to investigate the key to the loop.”

Lumian couldn’t help but imagine the scene his sister had described.

Just as he opened his eyes to see his familiar bedroom, he would open his eyes again to see the familiar bedroom. Only to open his eyes again to see the familiar bedroom… He would repeat this action countless times, and the root cause of this was that a certain messenger was in a hurry to “go home.”

Aurore raised her hand to cover her forehead.

“I can’t even imagine what kind of changes will happen then…”

After sighing, she analyzed seriously, “From the current situation, the departure of living things from Cordu and the surrounding area will cause the loop to restart, and inanimate objects won’t trigger the restrictions. The telegram and the letter that were sent are proof.

“If that’s the case, spirits definitely won’t do either. From the looks of it, I can’t summon the messenger.”

Lumian suddenly figured out why the livre bleu could maintain its state of having its words cut out.

The pieced together notes had left Cordu, making it no longer affected. Since it couldn't return, it naturally couldn't return to its original state!

He shared his speculation with his sister and asked, "The problem with livre bleu has been solved, but how did that letter get sent?

"There's definitely no way to send it out during the loop. The moment the messenger leaves Cordu, it will cause a reboot. And if it's before the loop, I have no impression of it. What about you?"

"Neither do I," Aurore thought for a few seconds before jokingly scolding, "You idiot, you almost led me astray. It's easy to send the letter in a loop!"

Lumian looked at his smart sister and asked, "Huh?"

Aurore chuckled before explaining, "There's no need for a postman to send the letter, nor is there a need to hire a messenger.

"When we discover an abnormality and don't want to alarm those who might be problematic, the best choice is to find a wooden box and place the distress letter inside. After sealing it, we will throw the wooden box into the river outside the village and let it float downstream naturally. When the other villages and even the people of Dariège pick it up, they will help us deliver it to the officials.

"You said that our last cycle confirmed that the loop contains a small portion of the river that can be reached."

...

"That's right!" Lumian exclaimed, pressing his palms together.

He thought of another question. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

"Will the fish in the river cause a reboot?"

"I don't think so," Aurore replied after thinking for a moment. "These creatures without any intelligence are very sensitive to invisible restrictions. Or rather, they're more prone to invisible influences.

There's a high chance that they'll instinctively stay away from places that might cause a reboot."

"What about your White Paper? It has no choice but to leave the real world after twelve hours." Lumian felt that this would also restart the cycle.

Aurore looked around and said thoughtfully, "I suspect that the loop not only includes Cordu and the surrounding mountainous areas but also the area that corresponds to everyone here in the spirit world.

"You probably don't know that there are actually more natural interactions between the spirit world and reality. If you don't include the corresponding spirit world, it might restart every now and then, but the current situation is clearly different.

"As my contracted creature, White Paper has a direct connection with Cordu. The spirit world it roams is most likely included."

I still don't know enough about mysticism… Lumian didn't ask further.

Aurore demonstrated the ritualistic magic process again and dispelled the wall of spirituality.

In the formless wind that suddenly blew, she said to Lumian, "It's already dark. I'll teach you true Cogitation and the way to activate Spirit Vision."

…

"Okay!" Lumian replied, showing that he had his sister's full attention.

Aurore explained, "You've long grasped the first half of Cogitation. Let's start from the second half. When you imagine the Sun, retract your spirit and enter a relatively calm state. Let your mind be slightly empty. Draw an outline of something that doesn't exist in reality to replace the Sun. Keep drawing and repeating until your body and mind obtain peace. Your thoughts will have a feeling that they are floating."

Lumian didn't quite understand. "Something that doesn't exist in reality?"

Aurore took out a pen and paper and drew a few strokes. "Look, is there anything like this in reality?" The paper had something very abstract on it, like a ball with eyes and a cross on its face. "Doesn't it exist once you draw it? This drawing is in reality."

Lumian felt that her sister's explanation was wrong. "Pictures and imaginations aren't real."

Aurore rolled her eyes. As her younger brother's teacher, she had to suffer this kind of anger often. Lumian acknowledged her comment tersely. "Then I'll try using this picture of yours." He pulled up a chair and sat down. He leaned back and focused.

The crimson sun quickly outlined itself in his mind, gradually calming him down. After a while, because he was in reality, he did not hear the terrifying and mysterious voice. He could calmly use the pattern that his sister had casually drawn to replace the Sun in Cogitation. The ball with eyes and a cross quickly appeared in Lumian's mind. As Lumian repeatedly outlined it, his body and heart became more and more peaceful, and his thoughts gradually felt ethereal.

He "saw" that there was a faint gray fog around him. There were many indescribable, non-existent things, and dense colored blocks mixed together. And high in the sky, perhaps deep in the depths, there was a clear light.

"There's no hurry. The probability of a Hunter succeeding in Cogitation on their first try is very low," Aurore consoled her brother.

Just as Lumian was about to report to his sister that he had successfully entered a Cogitation state, he suddenly felt something watching him from the depths of the gray fog and an infinite height! This seemed to be an illusion, but it made him break out in a cold sweat. He felt an inexplicable fear and immediately left the Cogitation state.

Chapter 50 - 50: Observation

Chapter 50: Observation

Aurore had intended to reassure him that non-spellcasting Sequences usually took several attempts at Cogitation to succeed. Some even had to practice for five or six days or even more than half a month. However, when she saw her brother open his eyes, she noticed that Lumian's forehead was drenched in cold sweat, and fear was evident in his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Aurore asked, concerned.

Lumian took a couple of deep breaths. The more he thought about it, the more frightened he became.

"I successfully Cogitated. My mind seemed to float, surrounded by a myriad of colors and an indescribable faint gray fog. There were a few particularly bright and pure beams of light up above. No, it might not have been the sky. It could have been far away. I can't be certain."

"From your description, it seems like you succeeded," Aurore explained. "What your Astral Projection sees or senses is the spirit world. There, many concepts of reality either don't exist or are intertwined. That's why you feel like you're high in the sky yet far away at the same time.

"Those seven lights are the Seven Lights of the spirit world, mentioned in ancient texts. They're believed to be near-deity level and omniscient. Moreover, they're considered relatively friendly hidden entities. If you can grasp their complete honorific names, you can pray to them. Unfortunately, I don't know them either.

“Those indescribable things that roam everywhere belong to the spirit world, but you didn’t seem to see much, nor did you perceive them clearly. This is likely a limitation of the Hunter Sequence. Your spirituality isn’t high enough. Hmm… Activating Spirit Vision later will probably prove difficult. The final effect certainly won’t be impressive. Still, it’s better than nothing.”

She had been monitoring her brother’s condition, ready to intervene and assist him at any moment.

Seeing Lumian gradually return to normal, she finished what she needed to say in one breath and asked, “But what you saw shouldn’t have scared you. Aren’t you known as Bold Lumian? Lately, you’ve experienced a time loop, people turning into sheep, men giving birth, and Madame Night’s patrols. How can ordinary spirit world creatures frighten you?”

Lumian’s forehead veins twitched at his sister’s words. He didn’t want to recall anything, especially anything related to Madame Pualis.

He exhaled and said, “I sensed something deep within the spirit world, or rather, extremely high up, observing me. Just being watched by it terrifies me. I couldn’t help but exit the Cogitation state.”

Aurore’s eyelashes flickered as she thoughtfully said, “I suspect that it has something to do with the two strange symbols on your chest you mentioned. They involve some hidden entity. They might point to the source of Cordu’s loop, or they might represent the ‘special’ trait that allows you to maintain your clarity and strength in the dream and the loop. As a Hunter, you succeeded in complete Cogitation on your first attempt. It’s highly likely that the two symbols influenced this.”

Lumian nodded as he listened, agreeing with his sister.

This realization left him somewhat disheartened.

“In that case, I can’t Cogitate. As soon as I succeed, I’ll be watched and forced to leave that state. Besides, I don’t think being constantly monitored is a good thing.”

“Do you think you aren’t being watched now?” Aurore couldn’t help but laugh. “It’s just that you can’t sense it without being in a state of Cogitation. Since there’s no way to evade it and you’re bound to suffer damage, it’s better to make more attempts to increase your resistance, allowing you to spend more time in Cogitation. In the future, when facing certain situations, this might give you an edge. Of course, before becoming a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, Hunters don’t need deep Cogitation. It’s best to wait for your spirituality to improve before trying again.”

“Why does that sound a bit depressing?” Lumian had already composed himself and mocked his predicament. “Since I can’t resist, I might as well enjoy it.”

Aurore scoffed.

“In our current situation, I’d rather have a unique trait like yours. Even if it means facing numerous unknown dangers and challenges, at least I can retain my memory during the next cycle. I wouldn’t need you to remind me, sparing many details.”

She then looked out the darkened window.

“It’s time to teach you how to activate Spirit Vision.

“Keep sitting and attempt Cogitation again. You don’t have to enter a state where your thoughts are floating. Although that would be more conducive to activating your Spirit Vision, aren’t there hidden entities watching you?”

“Yeah.” Lumian leaned back in his chair, relaxing his body. He first envisioned the Sun in his mind, then swapped it out for the ball his sister had sketched haphazardly.

He didn’t repeat the outlining process, stopping only when his body and mind were serene.

Aurore monitored his condition, offering a soothing voice.

“Lift your hands in your current state and place them in front of your eyes. You can open your eyes now.”

Lumian kept his cool as he slowly opened his eyes. At some point, his sister had snuffed out the kerosene lamp, casting the first floor into darkness. The crimson moonlight outside the window was the only thing illuminating the outlines of objects.

Once his eyes adjusted, he could barely see his hands.

“Point your index fingers at each other without touching. Then, concentrate on the back of your hand, which can be the back of the opposite point,” Aurore instructed. “After completing this step, slowly move your fingers to keep them facing each other without touching. And remember, they can’t leave your sight.”

Lumian followed her guidance, focusing his gaze on the empty space beyond his hands as he moved his fingers.

Despite repeating the process countless times, he saw no changes.

Soon after, he couldn’t sustain the Cogitation state and snapped out of it.

“See anything?” Aurore asked.

Lumian shook his head.

“It’s harder for Hunters. Don’t stress. If it doesn’t work now, it’ll work later. If it doesn’t happen today, it might happen tomorrow,” Aurore consoled. “Don’t fret. Regular folks with high spirituality can activate their Spirit Vision after professional training, let alone Beyonders. But the results vary.”

If this loop fails, I can try again next time, but if that doesn’t work, there may not be another chance…?Lumian thought to himself.

He was patient and resilient. After resting and regaining some strength, he tried again.

After multiple attempts, he finally saw a fiery red dot emerge from the void between his index fingers.

Success!?Lumian was thrilled. He turned to his sister.

But then he saw a red light radiating from Aurore's body, encompassing it entirely.

"Didn't you say you could see the different colors of the Ether Body?" Lumian asked, confused.

Aurore asked excitedly, "Did it work?"

Lumian nodded and recounted his experience.

"It's a success," Aurore breathed a sigh of relief. "You're impressive. It's probably due to your 'special' enhancement. Other Hunters would need at least two weeks of practice, and some might have to reach Sequence 8 before they can activate their Spirit Vision easily. You can only see a vague Ether Body. The red color means I'm healthy. You won't be able to see much else with your Soul Body's current strength as a Hunter."

She pulled out a tiny ink bottle and unscrewed the cap.

"Let's see if you can see White Paper."

Lumian focused and saw a transparent bubble emerge from the bottle.

It was similar to the bubbles he made while blowing soapy water, about the size of a fist and tinted red by the moonlight.

He could barely keep track of it and feared losing sight if he blinked.

The bubble floated towards Aurore's palm, which she scratched with her thumb, causing it to contract and expand.

Lumian composed himself and reported what he saw to his sister.

"It's blurry?" Aurore shook her head. "A Hunter's Spirit Vision is limited. You can only perceive basic Ether Body concepts and creatures like White Paper. Most things are invisible."

"It's better than nothing," Lumian replied with what his sister had just said.

Having never experienced a stronger Spirit Vision, he was rather content with his current situation.

Aurore instructed Lumian to use Cogitation to stop his Spirit Vision from deactivating and to establish simple activation and deactivation triggers.

...

Lumian practiced repeatedly until he mastered the method but never succeeded in the “express key” Aurore mentioned. He only vaguely understood the concept.

“Take a break. We’ll monitor the deputy padre later for any anomalies,” Aurore advised, noticing Lumian’s pale face from depleted spirituality. She urged him to rest.

They ascended to the second floor and lit the lamp in the study. Lumian dozed off in a recliner while Aurore read, waiting for night to deepen.

Lumian quickly fell asleep in the recliner, while Aurore casually read her book, waiting for the night to get deeper.

Lumian eventually fell asleep and forced himself to remain sleeping instead of exploring the dream world.

Aurore woke him up shortly after.

“We can observe the deputy padre now.”

“Okay.” Lumian sat up and faced his sister.

Aurore opened a miniature ink bottle and stroked White Paper with her right hand, her eyes darkening.

With the aid of the contract, she recited in Hermes, “My contracted creature, bear the uniqueness of my eyes.”

Lumian couldn’t understand or see anything without his Spirit Vision. He waited patiently.

...

In mere seconds, Aurore withdrew her hand and sat down.

“White Paper is on its way to the deputy padre’s house.”

Lumian inspected the scene and noticed that his sister’s eyes reflected trees swaying in the dark, not the study or himself.

The trees were left behind swiftly. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

That’s what White Paper sees??Lumian realized.

Aurore took out a mirror coated in mercury and sprinkled it with light white powder.

The powder quickly bloomed with light, covering the mirror with an aqueous layer.

In the water, the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, appeared.

White Paper had reached the target’s room and peered through a glass window.

Michel Garrigue slept soundly, his eyes closed and breathing steady.

Aurore and Lumian waited patiently, observing from all angles with White Paper.

Suddenly, Michel opened his mouth slightly, and a blurry, transparent figure emerged.

It was a lizard-like thing.

Chapter 51 - 51 Temporal Node

51 Temporal Node

The thing that slithered out of Deputy Padre Michel Garrigue's mouth was slender and covered in scaly brownish-green skin, like a diaphanous and fuzzy lizard.

As soon as it left Michel's body, its dark green vertical eye darted left and right, vigilantly sizing up its surroundings.

While doing so, it even peered out the window but didn't detect White Paper. Instead, Lumian and Aurore sensed the coldness and indifference in its eyes.

"What's this?" Lumian asked.

Aurore shook her head.

"I don't know. It looks like a special spirit."

Lumian immediately judged, "It sure doesn't look like something good!"

Even through White Paper and the mirror, the lizard-like creature still made him feel uneasy, and his hair stood on end.

Aurore glanced at him and reminded, "This lizard seems to possess an ability that leads to a degree of mental corruption. Just looking at it from afar makes one feel uncomfortable. If you stare at it for too long, you might end up with mental problems. You must be careful. If the discomfort is serious, immediately close your eyes and try Cogitation. Get your mind right before looking again."

"It's fine for now," Lumian tersely acknowledged. "What about you? Don't you feel uncomfortable?"

Aurore smiled and replied, “As a Mystery Pryer, I’ve seen things more corrupting than this. My resistance is much higher than yours.

“Besides, don’t I go crazy occasionally? It doesn’t seem to matter even if I go crazier a little more intensely and frequently.”

“I think it’s necessary to check your mental state when you said that last sentence,” Lumian said, half concerned and half joking.

Aurore chuckled. “That’s called being self-deprecating.

“Sometimes, it’s not as if I can stop looking just because I want to. The Mystery Pryer’s eyes are special and can’t be completely sealed. I can only barely prevent it from affecting my daily life.”

As the siblings spoke, the blurry lizard-like creature crawled along the wall and floor at an extremely fast speed to the bottom floor of the house.

A few animal skulls hung on the wall opposite the door on the first floor. They were from wolves, deer, and wild boars. The deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, wasn’t a Cordu native. He ought to have lived in the cathedral, but Guillaume Bénet had prevented him from doing so using an excuse. He could only rent a place from the hunter, Sabaté.

The lizard burrowed into the wolf’s skull and kept entering and exiting the socket.

Not long after, it switched to the wild boar’s skull and continued doing the same thing.

After coming out of the deer’s pale-white skull, the “lizard” crawled out of the house at a speed several times faster than a galloping horse. White Paper quietly floated in the night sky and followed it.

The “lizard” crawled all the way out of the village and finally arrived at the square.

It circled around the cathedral and arrived at the cemetery before plunging into a grave.

Ten seconds later, it crawled out and entered another tomb with a tombstone.

Just like that, the strange lizard-like creature moved through different graves. Lumian could even imagine the scene of it entering and exiting different human skulls in the coffins.

That scene made Lumian's skin protrude with tiny goosebumps. He couldn't help but ask, "What is this guy doing?"

Incomprehensible!

Aurore slowly shook her head. "It's a blind spot in my knowledge."

After "touring" the cemetery, the lizard-like diaphanous creature returned the way it came and entered Michel Garrigue's room.

It burrowed into Michel's mouth and disappeared.

After 20 to 30 seconds, Michel Garrigue opened his eyes and sat up. He gulped down water from the cup on the bedside table, looking extremely parched.

He put down the cup, wiped his mouth, and fell back to sleep.

Aurore turned her head and looked at Lumian.

"How is it? There's indeed something wrong with him, right?"

"How is this a problem? This is a huge problem!" Lumian didn't hide his emotions in front of his sister. "Pierre Berry, who grazes humans, the padre who's key to the time loop, Madame Pualis, who makes men give birth, Naroka, who went to Paramita, an owl who has lived for countless years, and the deputy padre who has a lizard living in him. Aren't there too many extraordinary individuals in Cordu?"

During the loop, Lumian had griped about how little help Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, the three official investigators, had been. In hindsight, how could he blame them? The abnormalities in Cordu were truly exceptional!

They might have taken action, but the results were probably

unsatisfactory.

Aurore glanced at her brother, half-warning and half-teasing, “You haven’t mentioned the most remarkable person yet.

“The only one in the village who can remember the loop and possess a unique dream ruin.”

“…” Lumian was speechless and felt a headache brewing.

Aurore turned to the mirror on the table, contemplating.

“I don’t expect any significant changes with the deputy padre. Although I could examine his Astral Projection more thoroughly, it could be hazardous.

“It’s fine if it endangers me because I’ll be another living Warlock in the next cycle, but we need more information. We should wait until we have enough before prying deeper. Starting the loop prematurely would waste time explaining and communicating.” Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Lumian agreed, sharing her perspective.

Aurore then suggested, “I plan on having White Paper monitor the padre now.”

“…” Lumian was taken aback. “Didn’t you just say we shouldn’t pry deeper to avoid triggering the abnormality prematurely?”

The padre was the linchpin to the mystery. Wasn’t it reckless to rush in like that?

Aurore smiled at Lumian. “I’m sure what I’m doing is safe.”

Noticing Lumian’s confusion and worry, she elaborated, “You heard the padre and Pons Bénet’s private conversation on April 1st during the previous cycle. The padre claimed to be an ordinary person, but he had a way to deal with me, a Beyonder.

“Based on the corresponding scene and the fact that there was no reason to lie to an ordinary person like you, I believe the padre was

truly powerless before April 1st. Today is March 29th, and we haven't crossed midnight, so it's safe to spy on him."

Lumian felt relieved. "That makes sense."

Aurore continued, "From their conversation, I deduced that the padre found a way to quickly gain Beyonder powers on April 1st. If he senses danger, he can become a Beyonder instantly. Maybe he has an item that can deal with me.

"Additionally, the padre's strength at the Lent celebration didn't match that of a Sequence 9. I suspect he's taking a path beyond the divine paths the mysterious woman mentioned. He's probably praying to a certain entity for a blessing. Otherwise, he wouldn't have grown so powerful in just a few days without any noticeable inclination to losing control."

Lumian listened quietly and suddenly recalled something.

"On the morning of Lent during that cycle, I had just become a Hunter when I ran into Pons Bénet. I wanted to test myself by fighting him, but he ran away as if he knew I had become a Beyonder beforehand.

…

"Maybe he had also received a blessing and could sense danger…"

Lumian added another crucial point.

"It was probably April 3rd when I saw Pons Bénet enter Naroka's house during her funeral.

"If he had already received a blessing, he wouldn't have failed to detect spying from an ordinary person like me, considering his keenness on the morning of Lent."

Aurore nodded. "In other words, it's highly likely that the padre's group became Beyonders between Naroka's funeral and Lent." Between April 3rd and the morning of April 5th.

"Of course, we can't rule out the possibility of them receiving

blessings in batches," Aurore added.

The situation became clearer after this discussion. Lumian smacked his forehead and sighed.

"What's wrong?" Aurore asked, confused.

Lumian praised her, "I should have discussed these things with you earlier. You're much better at analyzing than I am!"

Aurore chuckled. "You sure know how to praise me in various ways. You're inexperienced and lack knowledge, so you didn't think of it immediately. You would've discovered these details sooner or later."

Although she dismissed her brother's praise, her pleased expression was evident.

...

White Paper flew towards the Bénet residence at Aurore's command.

The Bénet residence was the tallest and most lavish in Cordu, aside from the cathedral and the castle's modified administrator's residence.

It was a grayish-blue three-story house with a chimney on top.

As the head of the Bénet family, the padre lived in a room on the top floor's east wing. The dark gray curtains were tightly drawn, and the master of the house appeared to be asleep.

This wasn't a problem for White Paper. It slipped through the wall and blended into the darkness in the corner.

In the room, Guillaume Bénet, who had finished his affair with Madame Pualis, was sitting in a recliner, staring at the curtain in front of the window, dressed in light-blue pajamas.

Aurore's eyes darkened, revealing Guillaume Bénet's aura.

The red, green, purple, and blue colors made Lumian dizzy.

Recalling his sister's teachings, he tried to differentiate between them and realized that the padre's body was relatively healthy except for his overzealous desires.

"What's he thinking about? Which mistress to meet tomorrow?" Lumian mocked him, even though the padre couldn't hear him.

At that moment, Guillaume Bénet stood up and punched the air in front of him.

"It's all your fault!"

Chapter 52 - 52: Entering the Ruins

Chapter 52: Entering the Ruins

“It’s all your fault!

“It’s all your fault!

“Damn it!

“Son of a bitch!”

Guillaume Bénet’s fists continued to hit the air, his rage boiling over at a seemingly invisible creature.

His expression was twisted with hatred, and he didn’t bother to suppress his emotions.

Aurore narrowed her eyes and gestured for White Paper to investigate the area.

But there was nothing there, just empty air.

Lumian clicked his tongue in annoyance. “He’s been itching for a fight for a while now. Who’s he blaming?”

Aurore shook her head and casually replied, “Maybe it’s a bishop holding him back, stopping him from rising in rank and gaining extraordinary abilities. Or perhaps someone lured him into secretly worshiping a hidden entity, hoping to receive blessings and grow stronger…”

She considered that, as the sub-deacon of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, a priest overseeing a rural cathedral, establishing contact with a concealed being wouldn't be easy on his own.

When it came to matters of supernatural power, he'd undoubtedly turn to the Dariège region's Church. The associated occult artifacts and sorcery grimoires would be handed over to the Inquisition for safekeeping or even sealing. They wouldn't be left at Cordu's cathedral. More importantly, it was impressive enough that he could command ancient Feysac. Languages capable of summoning supernatural forces like Hermes and Elvish weren't something a sub-deacon like him would encounter. And Aurore, through the Eye of Mystery Prying, had long determined he wasn't someone with innate spiritual prowess who could unintentionally attract malevolence.

Thus, without a certain someone's "guidance," how could the padre come into contact with a hidden existence?

Aurore considered the possibility that Guillaume Bénet had come into possession of a mysterious item without turning it over.

Lumian laughed at the idea.

"Can't the padre gripe over that hidden existence? He even dared to make Saint Sith feel aggrieved. It's not impossible for him to blame that hidden existence for enticing him."

After mocking Guillaume Bénet, Lumian analyzed seriously, "I've been thinking about why the padre suddenly fell into corruption. There are two suspects. The first is Madame Pualis. She's obviously very powerful. Whether it's Louis Lund, who gave birth in the castle, or the woman suspected to be her in the wilderness surrounded by the undead, it shows that she's not simple. She's involved with abnormal pathways and hidden existences. It's possible that she enticed the padre."

"By the way…"

Lumian smacked his head.

"What's wrong?" Aurore didn't know what her brother had realized.

Lumian replied solemnly, “Do you think the padre has ever given birth to Madame Pualis’ child?”

“…” Aurore was filled with regret for believing her brother was on the brink of an important discovery.

She snapped, “Who told you that Louis Lund’s child is Madame Pualis’s?

“What if it’s Administrator Béost’s or a hidden existence’s? No, no. If it was, you would have exploded and turned into a monster when you saw that scene.”

“I just find Madame Pualis to be more dominant in her relationship with the administrator.” Before the loop began, Lumian felt that the administrator, Béost, was a little weak. He couldn’t keep the butler in check and couldn’t keep an eye on his wife. When he appeared with Madame Pualis, he always tried to please the latter.

Lumian originally thought that the administrator loved his wife very much, but now, he had a new guess.

“Do you think the administrator is another fertility tool for Madame Pualis?”

“Perhaps.” Aurore held her forehead. “The world of mysticism has really broadened my horizons. Many scenes that only exist in novels and imaginations have been realized… in some warped manner…”

After sighing, she muttered to herself, “There seem to be more than one or two children born in the castle. Where are they?”

Lumian thought for a moment and expressed that he had no idea.

Infiltrating the castle and conducting a search was out of the question. Not after what happened to Louis Lund and the events in the wilderness. Whatever it took, he wasn’t about to cross paths with Madame Pualis again.

Aurore felt the same. After their run-in with Madame Pualis, the siblings wanted nothing more than to avoid her at all costs.

The padre grunted in frustration, downing a glass of red wine to take the edge off.

He let out a long breath, put down the tall glass, and walked to the bed.

It wasn't until the padre's breathing eased and he seemed to be asleep that Lumian mocked, "Look at him, crashing early. What, no late night rendezvous with his mistress? Oh, he doesn't smoke in private, either."

This was inferred from the absence of cigar cases, pipe, and other items in the bedroom.

Aurore chuckled and said, "He doesn't drink much alcohol either. Everyone says he's a pillar of propriety."

She dispatched White Paper to scout the bedroom. Finding nothing, it returned as instructed. Aurore turned to Lumian.

"You only mentioned one suspect. What about the other?"

"That sneaky owl. Always watching, never acting." Lumian voiced his guess. "It might have led the padre to the legendary Warlock's legacy."

"Mmm." Aurore felt that the possibility was quite high.

Lumian then suggested, "If that owl pays me another visit, we capture it and interrogate it."

"You sure you can take down an owl that has lived for centuries?" Aurore smirked.

"I've got you, haven't I?" Lumian flattered his sister.

Aurore scoffed. "Our chances aren't great, even with both of us."

"But we can't just sit around and do nothing. We need to find out what's going on before it's too late. As long as we don't interfere with the advent of the twelfth night, we'll be fine."

Lumian nodded heavily.

Aurore noticed his exhaustion and reached for White Paper, who had returned.

“You’ve been using your Spirit Vision too much today. Get some rest. We’ll continue tomorrow.”

She paused for a moment before continuing, “In the morning, I’ll teach you the basics of the Hermes language. Then, in the afternoon, go see Pierre Berry and have a drink. I’ll sneak into his sheep pen and see if I can get any useful information from his three sheep.”

She thought this was the easiest route to investigate.

“Isn’t that too risky?” Lumian asked, already on his feet.

Aurore reassured him with a smile.

“Don’t worry, I won’t pick a fight. I just need to talk to them in Highlander. It shouldn’t raise any alarms. They might know something useful.”

Lumian nodded.

…

“I’ll head to Ol’ Tavern tomorrow afternoon. I’ll try to get to know the three foreigners. They could be valuable allies.”

Of course, he had to be careful not to reveal their identities as Beyonders.

“Okay,” Aurore agreed with her brother’s plan.

…

Lumian woke up in his dream bedroom, shrouded in a faint gray fog.

As he expected, all the gold, silver, and copper coins, as well as the axe and pitchfork he had collected, were gone.

The cycle had reset the dream.

I have to gather them again…?Lumian muttered to himself as he left the bedroom and headed to the study.

He picked up the?*livre bleu*?from the table and flipped through it idly. Many of the words had been cut out.

Indeed, I was the one to send the request for help…?He no longer felt anything about being the one who had sent the request for help.

He suspected that Aurore had guided him in sending the request. After all, he had no knowledge of mysticism back then, so he would have relied on a reliable messenger or a postman.

...

Speaking of which, Lumian realized that the postman who came once a week wasn't in the loop.

He figured that the officials probably prevented ordinary people from entering Cordu after receiving the letter.

Lumian looked around for a box to store the letter, but he couldn't remember how many similar items Aurore had in her collection, so he gave up.

He got dressed in a way that didn't affect his movements, grabbed his iron-black axe, and headed out into the wilderness filled with crevices. He walked towards the ruins surrounding the dark red mountain peak.

Lumian easily dispatched the two familiar monsters. He slung the shotgun, cloth bag of lead rounds, and assortment of coins.

He moved forward cautiously, deliberately avoiding the path he had taken before, knowing that he was not prepared to face the three-faced monster.

As he made his way through the collapsed buildings and thin gray fog, the constantly alert him took a sniff.

He caught a whiff of blood.

After some thought, Lumian sneaked into the shadows and hid in a hidden space on the top of a half-collapsed house, peering through a gap between a few rocks.

In the distance, amidst the barren, rubble-filled wasteland, he saw a lump of flesh slowly wriggling towards a building.

The flesh was mixed with yellow fat, as if a creature had been crushed by a falling boulder. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Lumian pondered how to deal with such a monster.?*Should I behead it? But it doesn't even have a head.*

Suddenly, several dark-black, fleshy ropes appeared out of nowhere and bound the blob of flesh tightly.

Chapter 53 - 53 Mark

53 Mark

Tentacles? Lumian was momentarily dumbstruck before recognizing the appendages that ensnared the fleshy mass.

He knew Aurore's novels well and had seen all the illustrations. Not only did he recall every melodramatic scene, but he also grasped concepts typically beyond his ken, such as monstrous tentacles.

Seven or eight inky tendrils enveloped the fleshy lump, dragging it towards the crumbled building.

A figure emerged from the chaos of strewn rubble.

The creature bore a humanoid form, its upper body and feet bare, clad only in black pants.

But it lacked a head, sporting only a remnant of a neck. A whirl of razor-sharp teeth filled the cross-section, and its crimson skin gleamed between them.

Lumian couldn't help but imagine a human whose head and half their neck had been replaced by some bizarre, gaping orifice. He shook his head, unable to locate a weak point for attack.

Seven or eight fleshy tentacles sprouted from the monster's maw, swiftly hauling the fleshy mass before it and hoisting it up.

The creature's neck-mouth blossomed open like a morning glory.

Its pearly, needle-like teeth clamped onto the flesh, swallowing it whole like a snake devouring its prey.

Lumian scoffed silently.

So, you still need to eat. Thought you guys could survive without food…

He then fell into deep thought.

Monsters should be common in these ruins. Food must be scarce…

So some monsters feed on others, like now. Or maybe, everyone's both hunter and prey…

Could I lure an unbeatable monster to others and exploit the chaos?

Theoretically, yes. But it's risky. They might just team up to kill me first…

As Lumian mulled it over, he noticed the monster's chest—heaving from the effort of digestion—was beginning to swell and contract, as though it was undergoing intense digestion.

This attracted Lumian's attention and made him realize that the monster's chest was anything but ordinary.

Three black, seal-like marks adorned its pectorals and base of the neck.

Wh— Lumian's pupils dilated instinctively, straining for a better look.

He'd seen something similar on the padre!

At the end of the Lent celebration, the padre's body had swelled, tearing his clothes to reveal a black mark!

Upon closer inspection, Lumian confirmed that the three black seals on the monster matched the padre's.

Composed of cryptic words and symbols, they seemed to connect with an ineffable realm.

The difference? The padre bore at least 11 or 12 marks, whereas the monster had only three.

What's the deal with these marks? Are they bestowed by a hidden

power? And the more you have, the greater the boon? Lumian wondered, perplexed.

He tried in vain to memorize the markings but couldn't in such a short time. Without pen or paper, he couldn't reproduce them either.

The monster finished digesting the fleshy mass. It swung its arm, shaking the fleshy tentacles beside its mouth-orifice.

The mark beneath its neck glimmered, and a low hum emanated from its chest.

The sound swelled, evoking a maelstrom of air tearing through a beehive, whistling in and out of countless tunnels.

The trumpet-like orifice gaped wide, amplifying the maddening drone.

The cacophony grated on Lumian's nerves, making him itch to pummel the beast.

Your noise is unbearable, you know that?

As rage coursed through his veins, Lumian acted on impulse, leaping from the partially collapsed rooftop, shotgun in hand.

Bang!

Lumian hit the ground hard, his eyes locking onto the monster's gaping maw filled with razor-sharp teeth.

He was about to rip the other party a new one for being a stubborn old pig, but serenity gripped him like a vice. He felt helpless, like a bystander who had been thrust onto the stage of a deadly play.

The monster's blood-red mouth was trained on him, and it made no sound.

"Can I say that I'm sorry, that it's a misunderstanding?" he muttered, his voice barely audible.

He suspected that there was something wrong with the noise just

now, causing him to lose his mind. He jumped out of his hiding spot and tried to attack!

But it was too late for apologies. He had to make a choice: fight or flee.

With his experience, Lumian knew that running was not an option. The monster was unscathed and ready, its eight tentacles raised and poised for attack.

Therefore, if he really wanted to escape, he had to fight before finding an opportunity!

If he wanted to survive, he had to fight. Without hesitation, Lumian raised the shotgun in his hand, loaded with lead bullets.

Bang!

The monster was caught off guard by Lumian's speed and decisiveness. It had no idea what the shotgun was and didn't stand a chance as it was pelted with lead bullets.

"Ah!"

it howled in pain, its mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth opening instinctively. Its chest was a bloody mess, including the black mark on its right side,

However, the black mark seemed to be engraved in his blood and flesh. It was still clearly visible and remained unharmed. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Lumian didn't revel in the monster's screams. He quickly repositioned himself and pulled out a new round from his bag.

But before he could take aim again, the black mark on the creature's left side glowed, and it vanished into thin air.

Just like that, it disappeared in front of Lumian!

Had it escaped or turned invisible? He racked his brain for answers from the various novels Aurore had written and the mysticism

knowledge she had taught.

...

Lumian searched frantically for any sign of it, but it was gone.

This scene and difficulty that he had never faced before made Lumian panic. He wanted to take the opportunity to escape and subconsciously take a few steps back.

Lumian's ankles were suddenly yanked, and he lost his balance, flipping over and hanging upside down.

Dark, fleshy tentacles appeared out of nowhere, wrapping tightly around Lumian's legs and hoisting him up.

The monster was right in front of him, its black mark glowing on its right side. The vortex-shaped mouth filled with white, razor-sharp teeth widened to reveal a blood-red interior.

The stench was overwhelming, and Lumian felt dizzy as he hung upside down.

He could see the blood-colored skin of the monster's mouth and countless teeth.

Thinking quickly, he grabbed one of the tentacles and wrapped it tightly around his arm. In his hanging state, he aimed his shotgun at the monster's mouth and fired.

Bang!

The monster screamed as flesh and blood spewed from its mouth.

It flung Lumian away, and its body turned transparent before vanishing once again.

...

Lumian hit the ground and rolled before getting back up, determined to find his target.

Suddenly, he caught a whiff of blood approaching him.

Without hesitation, he leaped in the opposite direction.

Dark tentacles emerged from the air where he had been standing, but they missed their mark.

The monster reappeared three to four meters away, its vortex-shaped mouth wide open, ready to strike.

Lumian loaded his shotgun with lead rounds, but the black mark on the monster's left side glowed, and it vanished again.

Invisibility. It's indeed invisibility! Lumian instantly made a judgment.

Coupled with his previous encounter, he believed that this invisibility could not hide his scent and would lose its effect once he entered an attack state.

After figuring it out, Lumian calmed down and mocked inwardly,

How can you be invisible if you can't even hide your scent?

Capturing traces was a Hunter's forte.

Lumian regained his composure and calmly surveyed his surroundings as he circled the area.

Soon, he spotted the monster's footprints and caught the scent of blood and its unmistakable stench.

Using these clues, he dodged the monster's attacks and fired his shotgun, but it seemed to have no vital points. The creature only grew weaker after being hit multiple times.

With the lead rounds running low, Lumian quickly thought of a solution.

In just a few seconds, he had an answer.

He had scouted the area beforehand and found several natural traps

that could be used, including one that would be perfect for this monster.

As two faint footprints appeared in the distance, Lumian turned and ran, narrowly avoiding the dark, fleshy tentacle that missed its target.

He kept running, occasionally looking back to make sure the monster was still chasing him and to dodge any attacks.

Buzz, buzz, buzz!

The monster's "noise" only fueled Lumian's anger, making him want to turn around and attack with his axe. But he reminded himself that his goal was to kill the creature, not just vent his frustration.

Fortunately, he remembered that his goal in running was to kill that guy. At the moment, he wasn't really running away. Anger and frustration didn't change his plan. It only made him more motivated.

Thud thud thud!

Finally, he spotted the half-collapsed building and rushed inside, stopping at the edge and pretending to lie in ambush.

Soon, he heard the shallow footprints of the monster approaching, along with its stench and blood.

Lumian estimated the distance of the tentacle and took a couple of steps back. With a swing of his axe, he struck a stone pillar that was about to collapse, and then kicked it hard, using the reaction force to roll back.

The half-collapsed building couldn't withstand the impact and crumbled, a cascade of heavy rocks filling the passage. Boom!

The monster, hiding and ready to attack, let out a fierce scream that lasted only a second before it was silenced forever.

Chapter 54 - 54 Interpretation

54 Interpretation

Lumian rolled away before springing back to his feet.

The sudden scream and its abrupt end brought him a sense of relief.

Still, he remained vigilant. Shotgun slung and axe in hand, he cautiously approached the collapsed building.

Dust swirled in the air where bricks and wooden beams once stood, lingering on.

!!

Outside, Lumian couldn't spot the monster's corpse. It must be buried beneath the rubble. His sense of smell was compromised in the dusty environment. He raised a hand to shield his nose from the irritants.

Given the situation, Lumian retreated several steps, maintaining a safe distance as he patiently waited for the dust to settle.

As he stood watch, he scrutinized his surroundings, on alert for any subtle signs of movement or scent.

Finally, the air cleared, and his vision returned.

Lumian neared the wreckage once more, tracking the scent of blood to find the monster crushed beneath heavy stones.

With no need to rush, he employed his Hunter expertise to methodically remove the rocks, avoiding any secondary collapse.

Simultaneously, he kept his guard up against the monster, which might still be alive and awaiting an opportunity to strike.

He pulled away another massive stone, revealing the twisted creature, its head-neck a mangled vortex.

Its maw faced the sky, crushed into a gory mess. Its chest was flattened, and its sharp mouth impaled on a jagged stone pillar. Several dark, fleshy tentacles had snapped.

If not for its distinct features, Lumian wouldn't have recognized the semi-solid mass as his target.

The trap had worked better than he'd anticipated!

After confirming the monster's demise, Lumian noticed the three black markings on its chest, still clearly visible despite the carnage.

It's so odd… This can't be common, even in mysticism, right? Despite going through his sister's crash course, Lumian still had much to learn. He relied on his intuition for judgment.

He had planned to use his knife to remove the skin with the black mark, but the creature's chest was too mangled to salvage anything.

After pondering for a moment, he tore a piece of cloth from his linen shirt, using it as makeshift paper.

Next, he wrapped another strip around his finger, staining it with the monster's blood. Whether it sufficiently isolated potential contamination or poison, he couldn't be sure. If anything happened, he'd have to leave the dream quickly, minimizing any damage to reality. He should recover within hours or half a day.

Using the blood as ink, Lumian copied the three black marks.

As he drew, dizziness struck, and a swelling pain pulsed in his forehead.

Lumian surmised from his sister's teachings that his spirituality was nearly depleted.

Just copying these marks almost drained me entirely?

He was astonished by the bizarre markings and the meager spiritual

capacity of a Hunter, which he suspected was only slightly greater than a spiritually gifted person.

After resting briefly, Lumian continued copying. It took three intermittent attempts before completion, his head throbbing.

In his current state, further exploration was impossible. He pocketed the cloth, hoisted his axe, and headed back across the wilderness towards home.

Emerging from the ruins, he felt a sense of accomplishment, as if he had absorbed a significant portion of the Hunter potion.

Looks like it was a successful hunt, Lumian mused.

His unsorted experiences bubbled to the surface.

Staying calm is crucial… When faced with unexpected prey and no time to prepare, calmness is even more vital.

Always observe your surroundings and exploit opportunities.

With his thoughts racing, Lumian made his way home, ascended to the second floor, and entered the bedroom.

He forced himself to memorize the marks for a while before collapsing on the bed in exhaustion.

……

The next morning, when Lumian woke up, his temples were still throbbing a bit. That was a sign his spirituality had been drained in the dream ruins.

He shook his head and left the room to splash his face in the bathroom.

When he went downstairs, he realized his sister had already made breakfast—toast with jam, sliced sausages, and strong black coffee.

“So early?” Lumian blurted out in surprise.

His sister rarely woke up early.

Aurore replied grumpily, “Realizing we’re stuck in a time loop, and the people around us are getting weirder and creepier, how can you sleep well? Not me.”

“I’ve got no choice.” Lumian comforted his sister. “At least you can really sleep. I’ve got stuff to do in my dreams.”

“That’s true.” Aurore picked up the coffee laced with half a packet of sugar and took a swig.

After her brother sat down and wolfed most of the toast and sausage, she asked, “What did you get out of exploring the dream ruins?”

Lumian recounted his run-in with the monster and said, “Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, help me figure out what those three black marks mean. At the end of Lent, the priest had something similar on him, but even more.”

Aurore nodded and took out a fountain pen and a note from a hidden pocket in her beige dress.

Lumian began sketching, but he couldn’t accurately replicate the black marks.

Soon, he handed the note to his sister and “introduced,” “I only memorized it a few times. I can’t be sure if some of it’s right or wrong, but some of it must be. Here, here, and here are spot on.”

Just replicating part of the mark had drained a lot of his spirituality.

Aurore placed the note on the dining table in front of her and focused on it for a while.

“These words aren’t any I know. The symbols that go with them are more warped than those commonly seen in mysticism too.”

Lumian was a little disappointed when Aurore added, “Judging by the influence of transcendent words and symbols on the surroundings and the leverage the marks have on natural power, I suspect this is the outward manifestation of a special contract.”

As she spoke, she tapped the note with her index finger.

“Contract?” Lumian asked.

…

Aurore nodded.

“Paired with your battle with that monster, each black mark should represent a special contract.

“The effect of this contract is likely helping it gain a superpower from certain spirit world creatures, creatures from other dimensions, or extraterrestrial creatures. So, the black mark on its left chest emits light and grants invisibility. The one below its neck corresponds to a voice that makes people frustrated, resentful, and lose their minds. The one on its right chest didn’t show anything. I suspect it has something to do with its mouth orifice, tentacles, or digestion.”

“No wonder…” Lumian immediately understood some of the details of the previous battle.

He then laughed and said, “The padre signed more than ten contracts with different creatures?

“What does this mean? Everyone can be his daddy!”

“What a strange way to put it,” Aurore muttered. “From the looks of it, the priest who fought you at the end of Lent didn’t even show a tenth of his strength. He probably only used one ability he got through the contract. His body and mind went out of whack for no reason, and he was at your mercy.”

Lumian didn’t get the previous two cycles, but he clearly knew it was luck back then.

He eagerly asked, “Can I copy the contract obtained from the monster and contact the corresponding creature?”

He was very envious of that “invisibility” ability.

“A contract is a contract, and a ritual is a ritual. Do you know how to

conduct a ritual?" Aurore doused his enthusiasm. "Even if you master the ritual, do you know what the price of such a special contract is? The padre might have only completed it with the blessing of a hidden existence…"

…

Aurore paused for a second and muttered to herself, "Why does the monster in your dream ruin have such a black mark… Did it also receive the blessing of that entity?"

As she spoke, Aurore cast her gaze at Lumian's left chest.

"Could it be related to the black thorn symbol sealing your heart?

"The padre had one too. Hmm… Maybe the thorn symbol represents a hidden existence that created the dream ruin. The key to breaking the cycle might be hidden there. Or, maybe reality can only solve the problem by doing something simultaneously with the dream ruin…"

"It's possible," Lumian thought, realizing that this could explain why the monster had a black mark and why the mysterious lady wanted him to explore the dream ruins.

He let out an emotional sigh.

"Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, your imagination is indeed much richer than mine."

"That's what an author should be like," Aurore replied with a smile.

After breakfast, Aurore brought Lumian to the study to teach him Hermes.

They ended the lesson around three or four in the afternoon, only stopping to grab a quick bite to eat.

"Alright, you can go out and drink with Pierre Berry now," Aurore said, realizing it was time and that no one would suspect them. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian acknowledged her instruction briefly and expressed his

concern.

“You must be careful.”

Aurore was going to take the risk of coming into contact with the three sheep to gather information.

……

Lumian arrived at the dilapidated two-story house where Shepherd Pierre Berry lived and looked around before asking the old woman, “Where’s Pierre?”

The old woman, Pierre Berry’s mother, Martie, appeared to be in her early fifties but had many wrinkles due to overexertion from work. Her skin was freckled, and her black hair had turned gray. She looked almost as old as Naroka.

“He went to the cathedral,” Martie replied.

Lumian was alarmed. He went to the cathedral again?

Chapter 55 - 55 Persona

55 Persona

If Lumian remembered correctly, Pierre Berry would undoubtedly visit the cathedral to offer his prayers past noon of March 30th. He and Reimund had crossed paths with him during the previous cycle, and Lumian had also encountered him at the village square at a similar hour.

However, it was already three or four in the afternoon!

“When did he leave?” Lumian inquired.

Martie pondered for a moment and responded, “Around the time taken to cover a mile.”

In the countryside, except for a handful of people, hardly anyone owned a timepiece. Time was generally conveyed through specific activities and indications such as grape harvesting season, the duration of a mile’s walk, and so forth.

Obviously, if the timeframe was brief enough for people to perceive it more distinctly, “a few minutes” and “15 minutes” would be employed in verbal expressions.

A mile? That isn’t too far… Lumian speculated that Pierre Berry had already gone to the cathedral around noon and had yet to return.

One mile in Cordu was equivalent to one kilometer in the Intisian metric system.

After bidding farewell to Pierre’s mother, Martie, Lumian departed from the Berry residence and proceeded towards the village square.

He was unsure whether Pierre Berry had visited the cathedral at noon

and returned again in the afternoon, or if something had cropped up, delaying his return.

If it was the former scenario, Lumian could sense something brewing. It was highly unusual for Pierre Berry to frequently visit the cathedral to meet the padre. Something dreadful was certainly afoot.

If it was the latter scenario, it would be a massive problem!

Before Lumian, who retained his memories, and Aurore, who already knew the cycle, made an attempt, the history should remain unaltered!

If there were any deviations, it could indicate that the siblings had not completely comprehended the pattern of the cycles, or that there were others who could retain their memories.

With this in mind, Lumian heaved a sigh and raised his hand to strike his face.

He was so startled that he forgot to inquire if Pierre had visited the cathedral at noon.

That was crucial.

It was far too suspicious to turn back and ask now. Lumian could only obtain some information from Pierre when they drank together later. He quickly suppressed his frustration and strode towards the square.

Upon entering the cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun, he saw the padre, Guillaume Bénet, standing in front of the altar with several sunflowers. He was conversing with a few individuals seated in the front pew.

As soon as Lumian entered, Guillaume Bénet ceased speaking and glanced over.

Some plot? Lumian smiled as he approached the altar, observing the individuals listening to the padre's 'sermon.'

He spotted Shepherd Pierre Berry, the thug Pons Bénet, and a few of

his henchmen. He also saw the padre's mistress, Madonna Bénet, and Sybil Berry. He was surprised to see a man here but also found it reasonable—Arnault André, Naroka's youngest son, a farmer in his forties.

"Hello, Pierre…" Lumian greeted him with a smile, but he halted midway.

The second half of his sentence was meant to be, "Aren't you buying drinks? Why are you here?" However, he suddenly became vigilant and remembered that this arrangement had yet to occur in this cycle.

This was something that had only transpired in the previous cycle. This was the first time Lumian had encountered Shepherd Pierre Berry in this cycle.

As Cordu's Prankster King, Lumian's reflexes were lightning-quick. He promptly altered his posture and extended his arms towards the altar.

"Praise the Sun!"

Keeping up the facade, his thoughts raced as he conjured up a fresh alibi.

After paying homage to the Sun and receiving a response from the priest, Lumian pivoted and addressed Pierre Berry, who sat at the front row's edge, gazing at him with bewilderment.

"I heard you had returned to the village, so I went to your dwelling to seek you out. Lo and behold, you're here in the cathedral."

He didn't specify who had informed him, knowing that Pierre Berry would have been spotted en route to the cathedral.

With no witnesses to his lie, Lumian had a fallback option—Ava's father, the cobbler Guillaume Lizier.

"Why are you looking for me?" Pierre Berry rose to his feet, clad in a dark-brown robe, his blue eyes brimming with gentle amusement and perplexity.

Lumian had already prepared a plausible excuse. He grinned and

responded, “I yearn to hear your tales while tending to your flock. Diverse countries, varied hamlets, and sundry locales. They must be enthralling.”

In the past, he had frequently conversed with newly-returned shepherds to enrich his knowledge.

Without waiting for Pierre Berry’s reply, Lumian shifted his gaze from his disheveled and greasy black hair to his brand-new leather shoes.

“Did you make it rich?”

“My current employer was more generous this time and bestowed upon me quite a few things,” Pierre Berry replied with a smile. “I’ll treat you to a drink later.”

“Alright.” This was precisely what Lumian had been angling for.

He even inquired, “When will you be heading there?”

This displayed the panache of a regular patron of Ol’ Tavern. He was unashamed when it came to cadging a glass of wine.

Pierre Berry glanced at Guillaume Bénet, the priest, and received a corresponding hint.

“How about after dinner?” he suggested.

“Agreed,” Lumian assented readily.

Thereafter, under the scrutiny of the shepherd, priest, Pons Bénet, and company, he seated himself in the second pew closest to him.

“…” Pierre Berry was momentarily taken aback. “Aren’t you going back?”

Lumian beamed.

“I haven’t prayed in ages. I’ll seize this opportunity to pray, lest the deity thinks I’m not devout enough.”

“Carry on, carry on. Pretend I’m not here.”

Saying so, he closed his eyes, lowered his head slightly, and crossed his arms over his chest.

Pierre Berry, Guillaume Bénet, Pons Bénet, and the rest exchanged glances, at a loss for words.

After patiently waiting for an extended period and observing Lumian still engrossed in prayer, the priest turned to Pierre Berry, gesturing for him to inquire.

Pierre Berry approached Lumian's side and patted his shoulder.

"How long do you intend to pray?"

...

Lumian opened his eyes and stated gravely, "I plan to pray until dinnertime. Since there's nothing else to do, I can make a confession later."

Guillaume Bénet's forehead twitched upon hearing this.

Gazing at Madonna, Sybil, Pons, Arnault, and the others waiting for him, he exhaled slowly. He signaled to Pierre Berry and gestured towards the door.

Pierre Berry comprehended the priest's unspoken message and hastily informed Lumian, "I'm done praying. Shall we proceed to Ol' Tavern now?"

"Absolutely!" Lumian stood up, grinning from ear to ear. There was nary a hint of solemnity or piety in his demeanor.

Previously, he had discerned that his arrival had impeded the padre and his accomplices' machinations. In a mischievous attempt to play a prank, he feigned interest and lingered until Pierre Berry was required to depart prematurely.

He surmised that the padre saw through his act, but what use was being the Prankster King of Cordu if he didn't create a bit of mischief in such circumstances?

He had to maintain his persona to avoid arousing suspicion!

Lumian lamented his sister's probable departure to Berry's abode to confer with the three sheep. Had she been present, he could have dispatched White Paper to the cathedral to clandestinely overhear the padre's scheme and glean valuable intelligence.

Perhaps I can undertake this in the next cycle, but would Pierre detect our surveillance? Pierre is no simpleton. He is certainly more capable than an ordinary person like the padre… Lumian's thoughts raced as he trailed Pierre out of the cathedral and towards the Ol' Tavern.

……

...

In the sheep pen behind the Berry household.

Aurore, donned in a white gown, circumnavigated the woods and vaulted the wooden fence.

As an alluring woman seldom seen in the village, she had to choose this relatively secluded path. Otherwise, she would be subjected to small talk or worse, suspicion.

When will I learn the spells of invisibility and shadow concealment? Aurore ruminated wistfully as she advanced towards the three sheep that had huddled beside a haystack.

Speaking in Highlander, she said, "Do not fret. I am the adversary of Shepherd Pierre Berry."

The eyes of the three sheep, whose coats were besmirched with filth, underwent a rapid transformation. Their initial vigilance and apprehension gave way to hope and perplexity.

Despite their initial reservations, they did not retreat and permitted Aurore to approach.

Aurore continued, "I discovered your peculiarities through certain means. You were once human, were you not?"

The eyes of the three sheep were suddenly imbued with shock, elation, hope, and skepticism. They instinctually bleated.

Aurore surveyed them.

“You cannot speak, but you can write, can you not?”

One of the sheep was stupefied for a moment before hastily inscribing on the ground.

It scribbled a simple Highlander word: “Yes.”

The sheep was confirming that they were once human. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“What transpired? Why were you transformed into sheep?” Aurore pondered briefly before adding, “Write the beginning, middle, and end separately to save time.”

The three sheep divided the task and inscribed different portions of the narrative on the surface of the soil using their hooves.

Before long, they had each completed a sentence.

“We were caught.”

“A ritual was conducted.”

“Swaddled in sheepskin and metamorphosed into sheep.”

A ritualistic sorcery that can convert a human into a sheep using sheepskin? Hmph. That is decidedly easier than transfiguring a person into a sheep. The only question is, which deity was the ritual invoking? Aurore queried as her mind raced, “Did Pierre Berry capture you? Is he alone?”

She wished to ascertain Pierre Berry’s current strength.

“Yes.” One of the sheep responded.

The other sheep added more: “He has an accomplice. They were both exceedingly formidable.”

Pierre Berry was already immensely powerful before his return to the village? Aurore suddenly detected something amiss.

Why did Pierre Berry appear to be under the sway of Guillaume Bénet, the padre?

Guillaume Bénet was still an ordinary person!

Chapter 56 - 56 Intuition

56 Intuition

The more Aurore ruminated on the matter, the more her suspicions intensified.

How could the powerless Guillaume Bénet possibly subdue the mighty Pierre Berry, who possessed no less than supernatural abilities?

If the padre was indeed favored by the clandestine force to the extent that his clique considered him their leader, he should have been bestowed with a boon long ago and elevated above the common masses.

Should he decline the boon, he would inevitably face ostracism.

!!

In these circumstances, his standing, authority, and machinations paled in comparison to his might or the gulf that separated him from divinity.

Aurore lacked the luxury of time to ponder this and could only conceive of two plausible explanations.

Either Guillaume Bénet was not the true leader of the small group and was merely exploiting his status to orchestrate and conceal the anomaly from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church in Darìège.

Or, he was not rejecting the boon but merely biding his time to attain greater power.

Neither explanation boded well.

Aurore directed her gaze at the three sheep and inquired, “Who was

the man that accompanied Pierre Berry in his assault on you?”

The three sheep scribbled down their responses.

“Niort Best.”

“A shepherd named Niort.”

“He goes by the name Niort.”

Niort Best too has achieved extraordinary power? Aurore was acquainted with the individual in question.

Niort was a fellow shepherd from Cordu who frequently grazed his flock alongside Pierre Berry. But he had seemingly not returned early this time.

“Where is Niort? I did not spot him in the village,” Aurore queried.

The three sheep moved a few steps away and found a new patch of unmarked soil on which to write.

“He’s dead.”

“I killed him.”

“We took him out, but we were apprehended.”

Had he fallen victim to a counterattack? Aurore nodded pensively.

“Are all of you Beyonders?”

The three sheep ceased writing Highlander with their hooves and nodded in assent.

Aurore acknowledged them tersely as she raced to process the implications.

Pierre Berry and Niort Best are hunting Beyonders. What is their motive?

And one of them is now dead…

Either Niort's abilities paled in comparison to Pierre's, or they had acquired their powers through the boon and were far from proficient in wielding them. It was certain that the Beyonder battles would encounter complications…

Aurore glanced at the three sheep once more and asked, "Do you know why Pierre captured you?"

The three sheep resumed writing.

"I have heard him speak of God and devotion."

"It may be for a blood sacrifice."

"I suspect he wants to offer us as a sacrifice to an evil god."

Indeed, Beyonders possess remarkably high spirituality and unique characteristics. They are far superior to ordinary mortals as sacrificial offerings, and they can appease malevolent gods more effectively… Pierre Berry and Niort Best were using grazing sheep as a ruse to abduct Beyonders from other countries to offer them up as sacrifices? It is a scheme that can easily evade the local authorities' notice… Aurore nodded imperceptibly.

She spoke solemnly, "Did Pierre mention the honorific name of that god? Or rather, who were they praying to during the ritual that transformed you into sheep?"

The three sheep were taken aback, as if they were awash in recollections.

Suddenly, they lowered their heads and extended their hooves towards the soil before them.

For some inexplicable reason, Aurore felt that the temperature had plummeted, and the sun had been obscured by dark clouds, as a chilly mountain breeze swept past. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The three sheep began writing.

Aurore's spiritual intuition sounded a powerful alarm, prompting her

to bellow, “Hold on!”

The three sheep lifted their heads and looked at her.

At some point, blood-red tears had welled up in their eyes, and their fur was stained and ghastly.

In the next moment, they resumed writing.

Aurore whirled around and dashed towards the fence.

As she exited the pen and looked back, the three sheep were bathed in the sunlight.

If not for the bloodstains on their faces, everything seemed entirely ordinary.

Thump, thump… Aurore’s heart continued pounding.

Panting heavily, she breathed a sigh of relief.

If I had not learned to seal my sight and glimpsed things I should not have seen, I would not have reacted in time…

She produced a vial of iron-black powder and scattered it over the sheep pen.

The words etched in the soil vanished as though by an unseen hand.

As for the stains on the sheep’s faces, Aurore found it challenging to expunge them using spells, so she refrained from approaching them and merely washed them away with water.

She feared that the three sheep were different from before and harbored latent dangers.

…

...

In Ol’ Tavern, Lumian sat at the bar, sipping on light-green absinthe, his right elbow propped up casually as he surveyed the room.

He searched for the mysterious lady, but she was nowhere to be seen, nor were Ryan, Leah, and Valentine.

Lumian knew not when the former would arrive, and as for the latter three, he assumed they were wandering the village, engaging in idle chatter.

Pierre Berry, who had just finished his glass of absinthe, picked up a new pale green liquid and babbled, “I had a chance to get married.”

“Is that so?” Lumian scoffed, “Who would fancy a shepherd?”

Pierre sighed and replied, “Most of the pastures we graze in are owned by manor owners or nearby villages. If we want to graze, we have to pay a ranch tax or marry a village girl and settle down there.”

Lumian smiled. “That’s a good thing for a shepherd.”

Pierre took a sip of absinthe and glanced sideways at Lumian.

“That girl must fancy you and not ask for dowry.

“At one time, a lady thought I was not bad and didn’t mind that I was a pauper and a shepherd. She was willing to marry me. Was she very foolish?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded “honestly.”

…

Pierre took another sip of absinthe and was silent for a long time before saying, “Later, she died. She worked in a factory in the suburbs and fell ill due to exhaustion. I went to several cathedrals, got the priests to pray for her, and found doctors to treat her, but it was useless. After that day, I realized something.”

Lumian asked, taking a swig of absinthe, “What was it?”

Resentment flashed across Pierre’s face as he replied, “Those who possess flesh and excrete from their posterior cannot absolve us of our predicament!”

Lumian asked, “So, those without flesh and those who do not excrete from their posterior are acceptable?”

Pierre chuckled. “Those are saints and angels, but will they deign to look at us?”

Lumian tsked. “Then why did you go to the cathedral to seek the padre’s counsel? Not only does he possess flesh and excrete from his posterior, but he also indulges in the carnal pleasures with women.”

Pierre turned his head towards Lumian and cast a sidelong glance.

“You fail to comprehend. He possesses a certain intellectuality that can redeem our souls.”

“Intellectuality?” Lumian struggled to grasp the term.

Pierre took another sip of his light-green absinthe, seemingly oblivious to the question.

Lumian dared not press the matter further, and instead inquired, “I heard that you visited the cathedral at noon. Why did you return in the afternoon?”

Pierre’s warm smile illuminated his face as he replied, “In the afternoon, one can converse with like-minded individuals.”

He did not deny that he had visited the cathedral at noon.

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that for the time being, no one else would retain their memories and disrupt the flow of history.

He suspected that Pierre Berry had visited the cathedral at noon to confer with the padre in advance of their small group discussion scheduled for the afternoon.

After their libations and with the sun setting on the horizon, Lumian and Pierre Berry bid each other farewell and returned to their respective abodes.

Pons Bénet, the padre’s younger brother, abruptly emerged with a few thugs and obstructed Lumian’s way upon him reaching a

secluded path.

The brawny, raven-haired, azure-eyed Pons Bénet stared at Lumian and smirked maliciously.

“You were good at pranks in ze afternoon, no? Wasting our time in ze cathedral. If ze padre wasn’t there, I would have beaten you up, eh! Bastard, come and eat Daddy Pons’s XX.”

Initially taken aback by this imbecile’s foolishness, Lumian was elated.

His and Aurore’s judgment was correct. In the previous cycle, Pons Bénet likely hadn’t acquired supernatural abilities before Naroka’s funeral and thus had no sense of danger.

He had actually dared to obstruct a Beyonder’s path!

Without hesitation, Lumian turned and bolted, with Pons and his thugs in hot pursuit.

However, as soon as they exited the trail between two buildings, they lost sight of their quarry.

Pons Bénet scanned his surroundings and ordered his subordinates, “Spread out and search.”

He deemed it impossible for Lumian to have fled so swiftly and believed he was hiding nearby.

The thugs dispersed and combed the area for any potential hideouts, leaving Pons Bénet alone at the trail’s entrance.

Lumian, who had ascended to the second floor of the adjacent building, chuckled and leapt towards Pons.

Bang!

Pons was sent hurtling to the ground with tremendous force, gasping for breath and momentarily incapacitated.

Had Lumian not restrained himself and struck him directly, he might

have broken several bones.

Lumian stood up, clasped Pons's forearms, and smiled at him, saying, "Come, let us become better acquainted."

Before Pons could offer any resistance, Lumian pulled him into his embrace and kneed him.

Pons's eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets, and his face twisted in agony.

Thud!

Lumian released him, allowing the man to crumple to the ground like a shrimp.

He then turned and darted down the trail, vanishing from sight before the thugs returned.

…

In the kitchen, which also doubled as a part-time living and dining area, Lumian updated his sister on his situation.

"Pierre Berry visited the cathedral in the afternoon… It's confirmed that Pons Bénet still lacks any superpowers."

Aurore nodded slightly and recounted her own experience, particularly the inexplicable danger at the end.

Lumian pondered for a moment before remarking, "That enigmatic lady claimed that certain entities might corrupt you merely by acknowledging Their existence."

Chapter 57 - 57 Arrangements

57 Arrangements

Aurore recollected the situation and surmised that her brother's account was accurate.

She sighed, overcome with emotion and remarked, "To think that such dreadful corruption can be brought about by that concealed entity worshiped by Pierre Berry and his accomplices. Even the evil deities mentioned in ancient manuscripts fail to elicit such a reaction."

Lumian showed no signs of surprise and said, "Otherwise, why are we trapped in a time loop?"

The more Aurore contemplated, the more perplexed she became. She muttered, "Is it possible that we have to confront the concealed entity on the twelfth night and defeat it to end the cycle?

"This would entail gathering ingredients, digesting the potion, and undergoing repeated cycles to become a deity…"

Lumian interrupted her train of thought as he realized that his sister was becoming increasingly irrational.

"Stop! It cannot be this extreme."

Aurore acknowledged his remark tersely and nodded slightly.

"You are right. We have, at most, one more cycle. It is impossible for us to become deities within twenty days."

She then shrugged and added, "There is no hope. Let us wait for death."

"…" Even Lumian, who had an inventive mind, struggled to keep up

with his sister's thoughts.

Aurore exhaled and looked at her brother. "All right, I am done venting. Continue."

"Huh?" Lumian appeared puzzled and took a few seconds to understand what his sister meant by continuing.

"By the look of things, the three transformed sheep are to be offered as sacrifices and brought back to Cordu. It is no surprise that they did not wait until early May. The twelfth night is, in fact, the day of a grand-scale sacrifice to the concealed entity?"

Aurore's eyes scanned the surroundings, and she said, "That was my assumption, but why did the padre and his accomplices receive varying degrees of blessings before Lent? According to my understanding, it should have been an exchange through sacrifice."

Drawing on his malicious perspective, Lumian made a bold conjecture based on the previous cycle's events.

"A small sacrifice and a grand ritual? At the end of the Lent celebration, the padre, who had obtained extraordinary powers, no longer concealed his abnormality. It is evident that he was planning something significant!"

After pondering for a moment, Aurore said, "The Lent celebration could be a part of the grand ritual. Before the grand ritual, the padre made up his mind and offered his soul to the evil deity. With a certain amount of offerings, he obtained a plethora of blessings, completely revealing his true colors. By the looks of it, everyone in Cordu will be implicated once the Lent celebration commences. No one can escape."

The siblings exchanged glances and believed that their assumption was close to the truth.

However, if the abnormality erupted entirely from the Lent celebration until the twelfth night, how could they patiently wait until the final ritual to find the key to the cycle?

There was a high probability that everyone in the village, apart from

those who died as sacrifices, would be corrupted!

“I am only a Sequence 7…” Aurore covered her face and said, “And you are only a Sequence 9.”

They were facing such a dire situation! Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Based on Lumian’s account of the battle at the end of the Lent celebration and his recent experience hunting black-marked monsters, she knew that she was no match for the padre who had received a boon. She felt that she had to prepare in advance before she could confront Pierre Berry.

Lumian had fortunately defeated the mutated padre in a one-on-two battle.

Yet, preventing the padre and his accomplices from obtaining supernatural powers in advance could avert the twelfth night. The cycle would most likely restart in advance.

“Hell difficulty! Hell difficulty!” Aurore slammed the dining table with a mournful expression.

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, she raised her hands and tousled her blonde locks, as if releasing pent-up emotions.

After a series of gestures, Aurore composed herself and calmly addressed Lumian, “Seek out the trio of foreigners tomorrow morning. You may disclose the abnormality in the village to them. Concealing our status as Beyonders is unnecessary.”

“It’s very dangerous…” Lumian instinctively replied.

Was it not natural for wild Beyonders to be considered culpable when they encountered officials?

Aurore let out a slow exhale and stated, “In this predicament, we can’t care less. Other than the enigmatic lady, the trio are likely the most reliable individuals in the village. Moreover, each of them possesses strength that is on par with mine or even surpasses it. We are all in the same boat. Do not underestimate one another. Whether

one is a wild Beyonder or an official, we must band together. As for the possibility of being hunted down by officials in the future, we shall cross that bridge when we come to it. For now, we must focus on escaping this loop."

Lumian had heard his sister use the phrase 'all in the same boat' before. He knew it implied that everyone was in a similar predicament and facing the same problem. If something were to happen, no one could escape. They had to stand together.

"Very well, I will seek them out tomorrow," he assented.

Aurore continued, "I now suspect that someone else is behind the padre and Pierre. He is the root of the corruption."

"Madame Pualis?" Lumian guessed. "Not only is she powerful, but she is also the padre's mistress. She can control him in secret and use him to influence the others in the village."

"But she has no apparent connection to Pierre." Aurore gazed at her brother, frowning in contemplation. "From the encounter with the three sheep, Pierre and Niort should have gained supernatural powers when they grazed the plains last October. At the very least, they should have acquired the corresponding knowledge. This is because they did not return midway, so it is impossible to obtain it elsewhere.

"This means that the abnormality in the village can be traced back to July and August of last year. Did you notice any anomalies?"

Lumian shook his head slowly.

"No."

He had initially thought that he was thoroughly acquainted with Cordu, but now, he realized that the undercurrents had been present for over half a year. This realization filled him with dread and made him feel like a stranger in his own home.

What is the problem? Lumian felt as though he was shrouded in layers of fog. He could never discern the truth of the matter.

Aurore continued, "It could also be that owl. Perhaps the legendary

Warlock who died is not truly deceased. He may still be hiding somewhere in the village, or perhaps someone who we frequently encounter. He may have already discovered that I am a Warlock, and deliberately suppressed the legend from me. There are no such restrictions for ordinary individuals like you."

Aurore instructed in a low voice, "Notify me immediately the next time the owl pays a visit. I will get White Paper to track it and determine its whereabouts."

Lumian tersely acknowledged his sister's request, indicating that he too was waiting for the owl to appear.

This time, I will pluck all your feathers! He cursed inwardly.

Aurore pondered for a moment before issuing a third directive.

"Tomorrow afternoon, I shall extend an invitation to Madame Pualis. The administrator remains at his post, leaving the butler and the servants as the only occupants of the castle. You may clandestinely enter and scour for any clues. If you are successful in persuading the three foreigners in the morning to come, we can get their aid in this operation."

She dared not let White Paper venture to Madame Pualis's place whilst she was present. Nevertheless, she could not afford to be distracted whilst in Madame Pualis's company, thus she had to rely on her brother.

Lumian nodded before advancing the suggestion,

"I would advise against being alone with Madame Pualis. I fear she may seize the opportunity to deal with you."

"Shall we invite Nazélie and the others to an afternoon tea gathering?"

The more individuals present, the safer it would be.

"Indeed." Aurore deemed it a superior option.

...

She then remarked in a tone that was equal parts apprehensive and teasing, “You must exercise caution after infiltrating the castle. I do not wish to end up an aunt.”

Lumian dared not retort, but gave her a glance that conveyed, “I am more concerned about your safety, for Madame Pualis will be with you.”

During supper, Aurore set White Paper free to monitor the sheep pen. She discovered that the three sheep had licked the blood off their faces, preventing Shepherd Pierre Berry from detecting any anomaly.

Following that, Lumian resumed his education on mysticism until he fell asleep. He acquired mastery over many Hermes words, including “me,” “name,” “summon,” “need,” “light,” and “Sun.”

Light served as an incantation to activate the Integrity Brooch. There were three paragraphs in total.

……

Lumian awoke in the room shrouded in a faint gray mist.

He strode to the window and scrutinized the dark red “peak” and the dilapidated edifices that surrounded it once more.

I wonder what secrets lie here… Lumian muttered.

As he gazed, a thought suddenly struck him.

The ruins contained too many hazardous zones that he either could not or dared not approach. For instance, the lair of the three-faced monster. However, if he could summon a spirit world creature akin to White Paper and forge a pact with it, allowing it to infiltrate and observe, he ought to be able to gather more intelligence.

...

His vision, sense of smell, and hearing were all heightened by his Beyonder characteristics. In theory, they constituted a kind of supernatural power that could be conveyed upon White Paper.

As he ruminated, Lumian muttered to himself, The problem now is whether I can summon a spirit world creature in the dream ruins…

If I cannot, can I utilize our connection to bring it into the dream after summoning and forging the pact in reality?

What implications will the addition of a contracted creature have on the cycle? Can the corresponding spirit world be added to the mix? If not, once the summoning duration elapses, the contracted creature will return and the cycle will recommence…

The more Lumian thought about it, the more his head throbbed. He felt a profound reverence for mysticism. He could only hope to swiftly master a few languages that would enable him to complete a summoning ritual.

Without further ado, he seized his shotgun, the meager quantity of lead bullets that remained, and the sharp axe. He departed his home, traversed the wilderness, and re-entered the ruins.

Chapter 58 - 58 Cherishing Talent

58 Cherishing Talent

After two nights of reconnaissance, Lumian discovered that the monsters inhabiting the outskirts of the dream ruins were fewer in number than he'd initially believed.

Having dispatched the skinless creature, the shotgun-wielding monstrosity, and the monster with the black mark, Lumian found little else in his search of the area. All he uncovered were a few twitching chunks of flesh.

Their sole purpose seemed to be as sustenance.

Yet Lumian had long since realized that he had no need for food within the dream.

Each time he entered, he felt invigorated and hunger-free. His energy would wane only after extended bouts of exploration or combat, replaced by a sensation akin to hunger. But it was a mild feeling that didn't necessitate additional nourishment.

Once the hunger became unbearable, Lumian's spiritual reserves and stamina would be all but depleted. Physically and mentally drained, he'd be forced to exit the dream.

After consuming a meal and recovering in the real world, he would return to the dreamscape, his vigor restored and hunger vanquished.

As he delved deeper, Lumian surveyed his surroundings for any signs of collapsed structures. He discovered a smattering of coins, but their combined value amounted to little more than a Louis d'or.

He found merely a few livre bleu inscribed with words.

Left with no alternative, Lumian decided to venture further into the ruins.

He cautiously navigated through the faint gray fog and oppressive darkness, weaving between the ruins' standing and fallen walls.

Suddenly, he stumbled upon a series of shallow, bizarre footprints.

It was difficult to classify them as footprints—the left one appeared ordinary, but the right seemed more akin to a palm imprint.

Another monster? Lumian stealthily trailed the footprints, all the while scrutinizing his environment and envisioning the ideal battlefield for various scenarios.

Eventually, he detected movement, prompting him to halt. He skirted around the area and scaled a toppled building, using the scattered, hefty rubble as cover.

Peering out cautiously, Lumian surveyed the source of the noise.

There, in the center of an uncluttered wasteland, stood a figure that could scarcely be described as human.

While vaguely humanoid in shape, closer inspection revealed a host of incongruities.

Two eyes occupied the space where a nose should have been. Above them, a mouth, and below, a pair of ears. The nose was nestled near the temples, while a leg and an arm replaced each shoulder. The lower half of the figure consisted of another leg and arm. The entire form seemed to have been haphazardly assembled from mismatched human components.

This revelation instantly clarified the nature of the peculiar tracks Lumian had been following.

The creature was garbed in a brown short-sleeved shirt and dark blue trousers, typical attire for lower-class Intisians. It paced the barren landscape, shoeless and hatless.

Lumian refrained from attacking, opting instead to observe patiently.

Before long, the monster raised an arm and contorted its body backward, its head making contact with the ground.

It's incredibly flexible… it would make a great dancer… Lumian mused sardonically.

As if on cue, the creature launched into a dance.

Its movements alternated between bold and graceful, sometimes bizarre and comical, yet always rhythmic.

More notably, the creature seemed to possess no skeletal structure—its limbs twisted and folded behind its back, and its legs and arms intertwined with ease.

As the Prankster King of Cordu Village, Lumian quickly devised a fitting moniker for his newfound quarry: Noodle Man!

Drawing on his observations, he began to formulate a strategy for the impending confrontation.

I mustn't assume that I can evade its attacks simply by maneuvering behind it. Noodle Man is capable of treating its front and back interchangeably…

I must be wary of its potential to constrict me like a serpent…

Though its vital points remain uncertain, it does have a head—I'll start by chopping off that…

As Lumian's thoughts raced, the monster's dance grew increasingly frenetic. It leaped skyward, limbs splayed as if attempting to embrace the heavens.

Lumian found himself somewhat entranced, an urge to sway his body in sync with the creature's movements taking hold.

He couldn't help but recall a melody his sister often played, the beat echoing through his mind: Dum-tch, dum-tch…

Suddenly, a warmth spread across his left pec as whispers seemed to reverberate in his skull.

His scalp prickled and body shuddered, as though the phantom voice that had once pushed him to the brink of madness was about to speak again.

Uh… Lumian hastily undid the buttons of his leather coat and gray shirt with his left hand and gazed at his bare chest.

The inky thorn mark over his heart had returned. The bluish-black symbol, consisting of an eye and writhing worms, materialized and bore down on the former.

Lumian froze in shock as his mind raced.

I hadn't even entered Cogitation, let alone held it for a few seconds…

Did Noodle Man's dance somehow trigger this?

Is there something related to mysticism about that dance? Some hidden magic?

Luckily, when the mark activates like this, the horrific whispers are nearly mute. It won't drive me to death's door or strip me of all restraint. But I'll suffer a skull-splitting migraine, uncontrollable tremors, and disorientation…

Since becoming a Hunter, Lumian had avoided entering that Cogitation state to tap into his special trait. The danger seemed far greater now.

Before, he had flirted with death and emerged unscathed. But now, hovering at death's door might cause him to lose all self-control, with irreparable consequences!

Worse, excessive exposure to that ghastly whisper might drive him irreparably insane, even if he survived and retained control.

He dared not take that risk again unless it was a last resort.

After two or three seconds, Lumian was no longer astonished by the

thorn symbol being stimulated by Noodle Man's dance. An indescribable joy welled up in his heart. Updated from nov*e*lbIn. (c)om

He could endure such a negative state completely!

So, is there a chance that by learning Noodle Man's dance, I can dance it ahead of time to activate… uh—partially activate the special trait of my dream when hunting powerful monsters? Then, I'll charge at the stunned target and finish it off in a few moves.

Even if I can't fully trigger my special trait by dancing, it should be useful. I don't expect the target to give up resisting like the shotgun monster. It's enough to weaken them greatly… Lumian's thoughts raced. The more he watched the dancing Noodle Man, the more he found it pleasing.

The eyes on the nose, the mouth on the forehead, and the arm that acted as a leg. How could any of that be as beautiful as the magical dance?

In the blink of an eye, Lumian felt a strong sense of cherishing such talent, allowing him to find a reason.

…

Aurore said that we can't select talents with a uniform standard. So, why must it be a human and not a monster?

He decided not to hunt the Noodle Man before mastering the dance. He would come and observe it a few times every night to try to master it as soon as possible.

Of course, he planned to experiment with the other party first.

He wanted to see how the incomplete special trait would affect the monster!

Lumian quickly made up his mind. He didn't button his clothes and bared his left chest. He circled around the cover and jumped from the collapsed house to the wasteland.

Noodle Man's dance abruptly halted.

It began to tremble.

It turned to Lumian, prostrated itself, and lay on the ground.

Lumian stopped and didn't approach further, maintaining a safe distance.

Noodle Man didn't move.

Lumian nodded imperceptibly and muttered to himself, "Even when facing my 'special' trait that hasn't been fully activated, such a low-level monster will give up resisting and express its submission… I wonder what will happen to those at a higher level or those with Beyonder characteristics… What I can be sure of is that the effect won't be as good…"

…

Lumian looked at Noodle Man and smiled.

"Come on, dance again."

Noodle Man didn't dare look up. It was unknown if it understood what Lumian was saying.

Seeing that his sincere words were ineffective, Lumian emphasized, "Quick, dance for your pépé again!"

Noodle Man's body trembled as it continued to prostrate.

How can I communicate with it if monsters can't understand human language? Lumian felt a little helpless.

He immediately put his newly acquired Hermes vocabulary to use and said, "I. Need…"

Lumian didn't say another word and began a dance with his body movements.

The monster didn't even acknowledge him as it pressed its face

against the soil of the wasteland.

“Are you an imbecile?” Lumian couldn’t help but curse.

He felt his scolding was unjustified. After all, which monster he had encountered was not stupid?

Even the most intelligent shotgun monster was subdued by human intelligence!

At that moment, Lumian felt the warmth in his chest dissipate.

He instinctively lowered his head and noticed the thorn symbol and the bluish-black symbol vanish simultaneously.

Lumian quickly shifted his gaze towards Noodle Man.

Noodle Man happened to raise its head and looked at Lumian with its nose-located eyes.

The man and monster stared at each other, stunned for a second.

Thud, thud, thud. Lumian turned around and ran away.

Noodle Man leaped up and chased him ferociously.

Lumian was well acquainted with the area. His running speed was faster than the uncoordinated monster, so he easily shook it off and circled back to the wasteland to hide in his original location.

He didn’t flee because he was afraid of the other party, but he was concerned that he might not be able to control himself if they really fought. He didn’t know if he could find another dancing Noodle Man in the dream ruins.

Before learning that mysterious dance, he had no intention of hunting this strange monster.

After waiting for a while, Lumian saw Noodle Man return to the area.

He nodded and muttered to himself, As expected, monsters have their own territory. They are accustomed to moving around or patrolling a

certain route… This is very similar to wild beasts…

Next, Lumian patiently waited for the dance that might not happen.

After nearly two hours, he had expended quite a bit of his spirituality and felt a little hungry.

Noodle Man, who had rested for a long time, walked to the center of the wasteland and raised its arm and leg.

Chapter 59 - 59 Again

59 Again

Noodle Man danced once more, and Lumian confirmed that the mysterious dance could prevent the black thorn symbol on his chest from activating fully. It produced no terrifying sound, only an illusory whisper.

This was highly advantageous for Lumian's "special" trait in the dreamscape.

However, he discovered two problems:

Firstly, Noodle Man's dance moves were extremely difficult and violated the human body's structure. Only a monster with exaggerated flexibility like Noodle Man could complete them. Although Lumian was a Beyonder and a Hunter with a greatly enhanced body, he had no confidence in replicating them himself. He feared that dancing even once would result in ligament tears, muscle strains or worse, fractures.

Secondly, the dance stirred the surrounding powers of nature and depleted Lumian's spirituality considerably.

After watching it for the third time, Lumian sighed silently, realizing he needed rest. I have to go back and rest after watching this.

A Hunter's spirituality is really useless!

He was almost certain that the hidden existence corresponding to the thorn symbol was closely related to this dream ruin.

The padre had a black mark on his body, and there was a dancing monster that could activate the thorn symbol. It would be surprising to say that it had nothing to do with the hidden existence!

Lumian believed Aurore's guess even more, thinking of the similar symbol on the padre's chest and the dream ruins rebooting along with reality.

The key to resolving the loop might be hidden in the depths of this place, playing a vital role. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Is that why the mysterious lady kept hinting at me to unravel the secret of the dream ruins? The more Lumian thought about it, the more frustrated he became. He raised his left hand, which wasn't holding an axe, and made obscene gestures at the black thorn symbol on his chest.

Ignoring the question of whether the hidden existence could sense or see him, Lumian felt that the problem wouldn't deteriorate any further, given that he had already fallen into a time loop thanks to Him, and the people around him were becoming stranger and more dangerous.

After watching the dance for the third time, Lumian rubbed his somewhat empty head and left the ruins to return to his home on the other side of the wilderness, enduring the slight warmth in his chest.

Before leaving the dream, he attempted to consolidate the dance movements he had memorized and almost sprained his back, broke his knee ligaments and tore his calf muscles.

"Dogsh*t, this isn't something an ordinary human can do!" Lumian cursed and lay on the bed.

As his spirituality was greatly drained, he quickly fell asleep.

……

As Lumian awoke, the sky was just beginning to lighten. The sun had yet to rise, and the crimson moon had lost its luster.

He sat up slowly, feeling the satisfaction of a deep sleep. His exhausted spirituality had been perfectly replenished.

Walking to the window, Lumian drew back the curtains, allowing the

light of dawn to flood the room.

In the next moment, his eyes were fixed on the figure larger than an ordinary owl, perched on an elm tree not far away, staring down at him.

Lumian quickly snapped out of his daze and opened his mouth.

“Aurore! Aurore!”

The suspect is here!

Quick, follow it!

Upon hearing the shout, the owl unfurled its wings and soared towards the edge of the village.

It gradually descended and vanished into the forest bordering Cordu Village.

Aurore, dressed in a white silk nightgown, entered Lumian’s bedroom seconds later, her face contorted in irritation.

“Is it that owl again?”

Lumian gazed out of the window and replied, “Yes. Did White Paper manage to follow it?”

Aurore pulled at her long blonde tresses and spat, “Why does it always appear at such ungodly hours? I was sound asleep when you woke me up. By the time I could release White Paper, it had flown away.”

Lumian shot back, “But you said you couldn’t sleep well with something on your mind.”

Aurore rolled her eyes at him and sneered, “Humans tend to feel nervous, uneasy, and fearful at the beginning. Once they get used to it, they become numb to it. Only by sleeping well can they remain alert and rational. If you don’t sleep well, it will affect your mental state and signs of losing control will surface.”

Lumian's expression was remorseful as he said, "We can only wait for the next time."

After a moment of contemplation, Aurore suggested, "Let's try to identify a pattern in its appearances. We can't keep waiting around all the time. We need to rest and cannot be on guard constantly."

Lumian reminisced about the first few sightings.

"It's always in the latter half of the night and early morning hours…"

"Why only during that period?" Aurore inquired further. "It seems more like an act than a pattern. Think carefully. Did you do anything or repeat the same actions on the corresponding nights when it appeared in the first half of the night?"

"I was exploring the dream ruins," Lumian admitted to his sister as he began to recall. "Before it first appeared, I killed the first monster in the dream. Before it appeared the second time, I activated the symbol on my chest through Cogitation and discovered what was special about me. The third time, I consumed the potion in the dream and became a Hunter. The fourth time, which is today, I discovered a way to activate my specialness in the dream to a certain extent while incurring less damage."

"How did you do it?" Aurore asked eagerly.

Lumian recounted Noodle Man's dance and his attempt.

As Aurore listened, she thought about the owl. After her brother finished speaking, she deliberated and said, "The owl's visits seem to be related to significant progress in your exploration of the dream."

Uh… Lumian thought for a moment before his eyes lit up.

"Indeed!

"The first time I killed a monster, the first time I displayed my specialness, the first time I consumed a potion and stepped onto the Beyonder path, the first time I found a way to make use of that specialness…

“Similar major developments also have a certain reaction in reality. That owl sensed it and came over to observe? Heh, it smelled something.”

Aurore tersely acknowledged.

“In the future, we can deliberately create a similar opportunity to see if we can wait for that owl.”

“I believe the next time it appears is after I master the mysterious dance and can truly use the specialness brought about by the symbol on my chest in my dream,” Lumian pondered, revealing a malicious smile. “When the time comes, I’ll inform you before entering the dream. Be prepared.”

Aurore thought for a moment and nodded.

“I hope to figure out who the owl is related to and what role it plays in Cordu’s abnormality.”

Lumian seized the opportunity to inquire, “Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, do you possess any knowledge about that particular dance? As you are aware, my understanding of mysticism is still rudimentary.”

Aurore dragged a chair in front of Lumian’s wooden table and settled in. After pondering for a moment, she responded, “Several notebooks have alluded to the existence of large-scale ritualistic magic during the early Fifth Epoch and throughout the Fourth Epoch.”

…

“Those rituals entailed not only numerous sacrifices but also a multitude of participants. They employed specific dances to appease their desired entities in exchange for a response.”

“In essence, it was a form of sacrificial ritual and magic. Dancing, from the outset, was believed to influence nature and facilitate communication with deities. Its effects resemble those of Beyonder language and the combination of herbs, essential oils, and other ingredients.”

In Aurore and Lumian’s world, history was divided into five epochs.

The First Epoch was the Chaos Epoch, followed by the Dark Epoch, and then the Cataclysm Epoch. However, Aurore had heard from a pen pal that the Cataclysm Epoch was also known as the Glorious Epoch.

The Fourth Epoch was the Age of the Gods, or the Epoch of the Gods. The Fifth Epoch was the present day, which began 1,358 years ago and was referred to as the Iron Age.

Of the five epochs, the history of the first three remained unverifiable, with only myths and legends surviving. The Fourth Epoch occasionally yielded documents, information, notebooks, ruins, mausoleums, ancient cities, and so on. Nevertheless, history seemed shrouded in a thick fog, with only a faint outline discernible. The theological texts of the seven Churches often recounted stories from the Fourth Epoch, which served as the only source of illumination.

After listening to his sister's explanation, Lumian hazarded a guess.

"That Noodle Man employs dance to appease the hidden entity that corresponds to the thorn symbol. Is it hoping to elicit a response or a boon?

"Perhaps a significant portion of its ritual is absent, resulting in an extremely weak effect. Or is the problem with the dream ruins causing a failure that can only trigger a tiny fraction of the power contained in the symbol within my body?"

"Heh heh, it's as if I'm a god. Having witnessed Noodle Man's dance and being pleased by it, I decided to highlight the symbol and offer a certain response."

However, Lumian had no control over this. It was an automatic reaction of the thorn symbol.

Aurore smiled and replied, "You are more like a carrier of that symbol, a tool, in a sense."

...

She paused thoughtfully and said, "I suspect that the dance was specifically invented to please or communicate with the hidden entity

that corresponds to the thorn symbol. Otherwise, it wouldn't have elicited a reaction from the symbol…

"Furthermore, based on your description, this is not something an ordinary person can accomplish. Only Beyonders with special enhancements can do so.

"Although I am familiar with the names of the corresponding Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 pathways, I have a certain level of understanding of them. None of them can execute that kind of dance, and Noodle Man's performance does not seem like that of a higher Sequence. Otherwise, you would not have been able to escape."

"Perhaps it is not from the 22 pathways, but rather a boon from a hidden entity?" Lumian recalled the mysterious lady's words.

Aurore looked out the window and pursed her lips.

"I wonder if this has anything to do with the Circle Inhabitant or a power equivalent to Sequence 9 or Sequence 8?"

"Probably." Lumian suddenly laughed. "Let me name it. Noodle Man, Circle Inhabitant's corresponding Sequence 9!"

Aurore couldn't help but look up at the ceiling.

The siblings chatted for a while before heading downstairs for breakfast.

After studying Hermes until past ten, Lumian departed with important items.

Chapter 60 - 60 “Dancer”

60 “Dancer”

Lumian was in no rush to track down Ryan, Leah, and Valentine. Instead, he headed straight for the Ol’ Tavern, hoping to get lucky.

If that enigmatic woman showed up, he had a slew of questions for her!

Accepting her gift had bound him to some future cost. He might as well seize the chance to gain more benefits, as Aurore had advised.

The instant Lumian stepped into the Ol’ Tavern, his eyes sparkled.

The mysterious woman sat in her usual corner seat, two glasses of emerald absinthe before her.

Two glasses? She knew I’d come? Lumian approached her with a smile and greeted her.

“Good morning.”

She wore a white blouse with vine-leaf patterns at the collar and a beige ankle-length dress, a light-red beret beside her.

Lumian, no stranger to his sister’s fashion magazines, recognized this as Trier’s latest trend.

She glanced up at him.

“It’s getting late. Almost noon.”

This is to fit your schedule, isn’t it? Lumian thought, annoyed.

But seeing the enigmatic woman brought him a strange sense of calm.

He sat and cut to the chase.

“I’ve been through a lot lately.”

She slid a glass of absinthe his way. The swirling green liquid was like a beacon of joy.

She neither invited him to speak nor silenced him.

Lumian sipped the absinthe, finding it rich and invigorating, with a subtle bitter note. It tasted different from any absinthe he’d had before.

“What’s this?” he asked, puzzled.

“Another kind of absinthe—quite popular in Trier these days. To differentiate it from the original, people call it absinthe fennel. Authors, painters, and poets are particularly fond of it.” She took a small sip.

The green liquid in the clear glass seemed to possess a hypnotic hue.

Absinthe’s main ingredients were wormwood, fennel, and anise. Different producers used slightly varied recipes, some even adding lemon essential oils.

Lumian didn’t understand her motives. Had she traveled to Trier just to bring back absinthe fennel?

He didn’t ask. Instead, he recounted recent events, both real and dreamed.

She sipped from her small cup of absinthe fennel, listening quietly to Lumian’s account.

“That’s about it. Can I learn that mysterious dance as quickly as possible?” he asked, bluntly.

He didn’t bother inquiring about the loop’s key or the dream’s secret. Experience told him he wouldn’t get a straight answer.

The woman swirled her emerald liquid and smiled.

“Without a significant boost in flexibility, you’ll never master it.

“You could force yourself through a portion, but you’d risk ligament and muscle tears. How would you hunt monsters then?”

Lumian was attuned to the subtext in others’ words.

“Is there a way to greatly increase my flexibility?”

She chuckled. “That’s for you to figure out.”

“…” Lumian was stumped by her cryptic hint.

If she were a less mysterious acquaintance, he’d demand, “Explain yourself! Don’t make me kneel and beg!”

As if reading his mind, she smiled and added, “The solution to your flexibility lies within you.”

“Huh?” Lumian looked perplexed.

She sipped her absinthe fennel and sighed.

“Didn’t your sister teach you ritualistic magic?”

Lumian noticed the strange emotion flicker in her eyes once again.

“She did.” His heart quickened. “Pray to myself?”

She assessed him and laughed.

“Who do you think you are? What good would praying to you do?

“You can only summon the weakest creatures from the spirit world. Your spiritual perception improves with your body.”

Danger intuition, for example? Lumian grasped the gist of her words.

Though Hunters’ spirituality was enhanced, it focused on spiritual perception and fell short in ritualistic magic and other mystical matters.

“So, what do I need to do?” Lumian pressed. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on

novelb((in).(com)

The lady sighed wearily. “You’ve studied dualistic ritual law, haven’t you?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded.

The lady sighed again. “Luckily you have a sister. Otherwise, I’d have to teach you all this mystic mumbo jumbo. Too tiresome.”

You mean you didn’t tell me about ritual magic, Cogitation, Spirit Vision, contracted creatures, or magic languages because it was too much hassle? You just showed up after Aurore finished teaching me? Lumian felt rage bubbling up inside him.

He took a couple of deep breaths and said, “Dualistic rituals require items closely tied to deities or supernatural beings, but I don’t have any…”

His voice trailed off as a thought struck him.

The woman smirked and said, “Oh yes, you do.

…

“Don’t you remember?”

Lumian jabbed a finger at his chest.

“The thorn symbol and the bluish-black symbol?”

The lady nodded before reminding, “Forget the bluish-black symbol. The key to a dualistic ritual is channeling the divine power in the object. If its power decreases, the balance in your body will be disrupted. And when that happens…”

She left the sentence hanging but her expression told Lumian all he needed to know.

In Aurore’s usual grim words: “No hope. Just wait for death!”

“Is the bluish-black symbol protecting me from corruption?” Lumian

knew enough about the mysticism to recognize his current state as corruption.

“It’s the great existence I mentioned protecting you,” the woman said solemnly. “Once you solve the secret of the dream ruins, I’ll tell you His honorific name. You can pray to Him directly.”

Did this great existence seal the corruption symbolized by the thorn in my heart, preventing it from corrupting me completely? Lumian didn’t know if this great existence was good or evil, or had sinister intentions, but he felt an odd affinity with Him on this.

He thought for a moment and guessed, “Use a dualistic ritual to steal the power of the thorn symbol?

“If its power decreases, the corruption will weaken and the seal strengthen?”

…

“How can you call it stealing?” the lady retorted. “This is appealing to an entity for a boon. It just so happens He has some of His power nearby. The response follows the law of proximity. Thanks to the seal from the great existence and barriers attenuating it, the entity’s true form won’t sense it.”

Only mystics like you who speak in riddles understand how to sugarcoat it… What’s the difference between this and stealing? Lumian thought sourly.

From the lady’s explanation of divine boon and abnormal pathways, he asked shrewdly,

“Through the dualistic ritual, can I appeal to the power behind the thorn symbol and ask it to grant me the ability to greatly increase my flexibility?”

“Something like that,” the lady said. “To be precise, ask it to grant you the power of Dancer.”

“Dancer?” Lumian thought of Noodle Man’s performance.

The lady took a sip of absinthe and said, “For Beyonder pathways beyond the standard 22, we classify them into Sequence 9 to Sequence 0 for convenience.

“In a way, this Sequence division follows the rules of this world.

“Does Dancer correspond to Sequence 9 of the thorn symbol, just as Circle Inhabitant corresponds to its Sequence 4?” Lumian fired off. “Can it boost my flexibility and improve my mystic skills, allowing me to easily grasp that mysterious dance?”

The lady smiled in relief. “As expected, with a foundation in mysticism, communication is much easier. No need for me to explain further.”

Lumian asked eagerly, “Then what are Sequences 8, 7, 6 and 5 of the thorn symbol?”

“Sequence 8 is Alms Monk, and Sequence 7 is Contractee. Gosh, why do you want to know so much? Master the ritual first and strive to become a Dancer as soon as possible.” The woman was losing patience.

Alms Monk… Contractee… These names instantly clicked for Lumian.

Alms Monk referred to certain members of the various churches in reality.

The Eternal Blazing Sun Church was rife with factions, each with their own beliefs. Two main groups stood out; the Order of Preachers and the Brotherhood Minor, also known as the Alms Monk Brotherhood.

The former was made up of clergymen and the Purifiers of the Inquisition who were dedicated to the cruel persecution and purification of heretics, cultists, and wild Beyonders, all in the name of promoting the orthodox teachings of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

The latter, however, were mainly concentrated in the cloisters, with a few clergymen among their ranks. They espoused temperance, begging for food and ascetic training, preaching in various poor places, all with the aim of spreading the faith of the Eternal Blazing

Sun.

At the mention of the Alms Monk, Lumian immediately thought of missionaries, asceticism, and special ritualistic magic.

As for Contractee, the first thing that came to mind was the black mark on the padre and the mouth orifice monster.

Aurore explained that it might be a mark left behind by a special contract.

“Wait, the monster I killed was a Contractee?” Lumian asked in surprise.

I actually killed a monster equivalent to a Sequence 7?

The lady nodded slightly and said, “Yes, Contractees use special contracts and godhood provided by that existence as witnesses to obtain different powers from various creatures. One contract corresponds to one ability.

“Whether they’re powerful or not depends on the abilities they obtain and how many they have. It’s not impossible for ordinary people to kill them if they take the wrong path.

“In fact, similar situations occur in the Beyonder domain. It’s common for Beyonders who aren’t skilled in combat to be killed by those of an inferior Sequence.

“Ability is important, as is intelligence. Preparation in advance is equally significant.”

Chapter 61 - 61 Description

61 Description

The more Lumian listened to the lady in front of him, the more he concurred.

He was uncertain about what would happen at a higher Sequence. Among the few Beyonder creatures he had interacted with, the threat posed by the fellow with the vortex-shaped proboscis was far inferior to the monster carrying a shotgun.

Although he had become a Beyonder, significantly improving his close combat ability and exploitation of the environment, the problem primarily lay with the Contractee monster.

Firstly, it did not display a relatively strong pursuit ability. Secondly, it lacked long-range attacks. Thirdly, its invisibility ability was not ridiculous. It was completely countered by a Hunter's grasp of the surrounding environment and minute traces.

Moreover, it had the common problem of monsters. It did not have high intelligence and was not as combat-intelligent as the shotgun monster. It had easily stepped into the enemy's trap.

With all of this combined, the final outcome was obvious. Lumian just never expected it to be equivalent to a Sequence 7.

He didn't even compare it to the shotgun monster, recognizing the vast difference between the two. The shotgun monster was a force to be reckoned with, while the mouth orifice monster was weak.

Ability, intelligence, preparation, improvisation, environmental factors… There are too many variables that can affect the outcome of a battle… Lumian concluded inwardly and asked without much hope, "Can I directly pray for Contractee powers?"

The lady chuckled. “That’s a good way to kill yourself.”

She casually explained, “In theory, it’s possible. After all, the power sealed in your body isn’t limited to the Sequence 7 equivalent. But can your body withstand such a tremendous boon or rather, corruption? If you don’t mind turning into a monster, a puppet of that existence, or transforming into another creature, then go ahead. Tsk, then it won’t be long before I see you personally turning your sister into a sacrifice.”

Lumian’s hair stood on end from the woman’s words, and a chill ran down his spine, realizing that he wasn’t ready to advance beyond his current level.

He cautiously asked, “So, the most significant boon I can handle right now is a Dancer?”

“Yes, that’s why I waited for you to become a Beyonder and digest some of it before telling you about it,” the woman explained, taking another sip of her green liquid. “Only when your mind, spirituality, and body have improved significantly will you have a chance of resisting the corruption attached to the boon. Then, you can slowly control the power.

“As your Soul Body and Body of Heart and Mind strengthen, and your body adapts to the slight changes brought about by the power of the boon, you can consider Alms Monk.”

For Lumian, the most crucial thing was to learn the mysterious dance. Initiating the incomplete activation of the thorn symbol would significantly improve his ability to explore the dream ruins. Therefore, he nodded slightly, no longer thinking about Alms Monk and Contractee.

“How should I pray?”

He had already learned the duality ritual, but he still didn’t know the target’s honorific name, domain, and corresponding ingredients.

“Ahem,” the lady coughed.

Then, she spoke solemnly, “What I’m about to say shall leave my

mouth and enter your ears… You must not tell anyone, or you'll harm them."

Leave my mouth and enter your ears… This is a sentence Aurore likes to write… Has this lady read one of her novels? Lumian thought.

"I understand."

He thought for a moment and asked, "Will anything go wrong from hearing it?"

The lady took a sip of absinthe fennel and smiled.

"When did you have the illusion that there's nothing wrong with you?"

Lumian was stunned for a moment before looking down at his left pec.

The lady scoffed.

"You belong to the group of individuals who are on the brink of being corrupted. Luckily, the mark left by that great existence was activated, and the corresponding power descended upon you, sealing the source of corruption and establishing balance.

"Next, you will perform a ritual to confront the power within the seal and pray for the corresponding blessings. It is akin to proactively withstanding a certain level of corruption.

"So, why should you be afraid of minor issues that you hear?"

The more I hear, the more I feel that there's a huge problem… Lumian wasn't too confident.

The lady shook her head and smiled.

"Do not fret. When I reveal the corresponding words, I will provide you with a sufficiently concealed environment and secure protection. In the future, it would be best to perform the ritual in the ruins, where there is gray fog and the protection of the great existence. It will not directly draw the attention of that entity.

“Furthermore, before the ritual, scramble every segment and description. Attempt not to piece them together and analyze them in a complete manner. Otherwise, heh…”

She chuckled and did not elaborate on the outcome, but Lumian could imagine what would occur.

Observing that he did not inquire further, the woman nodded slightly.

“Let us commence.

“The first part is the Power of Inevitability.

“Using it is sufficient. It corresponds with your black thorn symbol. The complete name of that being is not something you can comprehend at the moment. Even I must provide some concealment before daring to contemplate it.”

For some reason, Lumian felt the light around him diminish slightly, but he was unsure.

At that moment, the woman controlled her expression and said solemnly, “The second part is:

“You are the past, the present, and the future.

“You are the reason, the result, and the process…”

As the lady enunciated each word with precision, Lumian felt his senses spin. He realized that a vortex of dark wind was enveloping him.

The table, on which his absinthe fennel rested, writhed as if imbued with a life force of its own.

Suddenly, a sharp sound echoed.

An ebony worm, as long as an adult’s index finger, slithered out of the wooden board, and an ominous aura spread instantaneously.

Before Lumian could observe the worm’s features, the woman sitting

across from him lowered her cup filled with the green liquid and slammed it onto the grotesque creature, reducing it to a pulpy mess.

Next, the woman produced a patterned napkin, wiped the glass's base clean, and wrapped the worm's remains in it.

She took another sip of the absinthe fennel, as if nothing untoward had occurred, and emphasized, "Remember, the first and second parts must be recited in ancient Hermes. Jotun, Dragonese, and Elvish are acceptable as well."

Similar to how the initial "I" in the rite that worships oneself cannot be in Hermes… Lumian nodded to indicate his comprehension.

Although he had always been audacious, he felt slightly discomfited and uneasy when confronted with the strange phenomena that kept manifesting during their conversation. His heart raced, but the enigmatic woman acted as if she had merely detected some impurities in their meal. She continued,

"The third part can be spoken in Hermes. The text is as follows:

"I implore you,

"I beseech your benediction.

…

"I plead with you to grant me the power of Dancer.

"Remember, the three sentences are progressive."

These words did not elicit a new environmental shift. The anomalies that had caused Lumian's unease and trepidation gradually subsided.

Lumian committed them to memory earnestly and followed the woman's instructions to scramble the words, to prevent any potential issues.

The woman savored the remaining absinthe fennel with satisfaction.

"The rest of the ritual is similar to common ritualistic magic."

“The corresponding ingredients are gray amber, tulips, cloves, and deer musk. Choose any two to make candles. The remaining two can be used as herbs, essential oil, and extract during the ritual.”

Lumian furrowed his brow as he recalled the dualistic ritual he had learned.

“The spot representing the deity should have an item that’s closely related to the deity, but my thorn symbol is on my chest. I can’t skin it, right? Besides, I doubt it’s useful even if I skin it.”

The power was sealed in his heart and Spirit Body.

The woman nodded slightly.

…

“Didn’t I tell you to make candles?

“When making the candle, take 5 milliliters of blood from your chest. It doesn’t matter if it’s more or less. In any case, fuse it into the material and let it become a part of the candle.

“In the ritual, the candle is placed in the deity’s location. There’s only one candle.

“Because of your blood, the candle is ‘awakened’ by ancient Hermes. After becoming a symbol, it will point directly at you. Then, with the subsequent description, it will activate the power sealed in you to a certain extent.”

It feels like a special variant of the dualistic ritual. Aurore didn’t mention that it could be done like this, so not many people know about it… Lumian thought for a moment and asked, “Can I use perfume with gray amber?”

He remembered that his sister had it, and she liked to call gray amber ‘ambergris.’

The woman nodded. “Sure, use it like an essential oil.”

I possess the gray amber in that case. I have some cloves at home…

Lumian pondered where he could acquire tulips and deer musk.

After much contemplation, he could only come up with three possibilities:

Firstly, Aurore, being a Warlock, might have already prepared the required materials. Secondly, the materials could be found at the administrator's residence. Thirdly, the padre's house could be a potential source.

Lumian decided to inform his sister about the ritual and break down the instructions into individual words. He planned to learn the corresponding ancient Hermes and Hermes words from her and inquire about the availability of the materials.

If she didn't have them, he would explore other options.

As the lady was about to depart, Lumian hastily questioned, "What was that lizard that crawled out of the deputy padre's mouth?"

The lady smiled and replied, "I cannot explain it to you."

Lumian struggled to maintain his composure and thought, Why not just say you don't want to tell me…

After the lady left, Lumian retrieved the pen and paper he had brought and jotted down the ritual instructions in a disordered manner. He then numbered them in the correct sequence.

…

Upon leaving Ol' Tavern, Lumian scoured the village for the trio of foreigners.

It didn't take long before he heard a faint tinkling sound. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian's lips curved into a smile as he quickened his pace. As expected, Leah wore two bells on her veil and boots, Ryan donned a dark bowler hat, and Valentine had sprinkled powder on his head.

Lumian had an urge to open his arms and exclaim, "My cabbages, I

missed you so much!” but he quickly remembered that he had not interacted with the foreigners in this cycle.

He kneaded his face to appear more serious and strode towards Ryan and the others.

As he brushed past them, he lowered his voice and said, “I know who you’re searching for.”

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine gaped at him in astonishment.

Lumian didn’t pause; he continued walking forward.

The three foreigners exchanged glances, suppressed their peculiar expressions, and followed behind Lumian as if nothing had happened.

Chapter 62 - 62 Date

62 Date

Lumian halted at the forest's edge, a short distance from his house, and glanced back at Leah and the others.

This spot was quite secluded, with no villagers passing through. The forest was thinly populated, making it easy to spot anyone hiding nearby.

As the tinkling sounds drew nearer, Leah asked with a smile, "How do you know we're looking for someone?"

Lumian remained silent. He pulled out the essential item he had brought with him.

The livre bleu from home!

He lifted the item and showed Ryan and the others the pages where some words had been cut out.

Without hesitation, Ryan nodded and said, "So you wrote the letter for help."

They had never mentioned a help letter in Cordu, let alone detailed that the letter was assembled from words cut from a livre bleu.

Unless the other party had a key informant in Bigorre, it had to be the letter writer.

Leah instinctively looked around.

The two small silver bells hanging from the veil above her head oddly didn't make a sound.

Valentine was about to ask what was weird about the people around

him when Ryan asked, puzzled, “How can you be sure that we’re here because of that letter?”

You told me yourself… Lumian smiled.

“There are very few foreigners who come to Cordu to begin with. Even fewer who don’t buy wool, cheese, and lambs and only wander around the village to chat with people.

“Besides, I didn’t say anything. I just showed you this livre bleu.”

Realization hit Leah, and she laughed.

“So it’s just a test.”

“That’s a brilliant idea. Those who don’t know the letter won’t understand your intentions, so they won’t be too suspicious. At most, they’ll think it’s a prank, and you’re the Prankster King of Cordu.” Ryan nodded slightly.

This seemingly innocent line revealed that the trio had gleaned something from chatting in Cordu over the past few days. At the very least, they had identified the more prominent villagers and taken appropriate measures.

Lumian immediately flashed a teasing smile.

“You believed it? You seriously believed it?”

Seeing Ryan and the others’ astonishment, he added, “I was just joking. I’ll tell you the real reason later.”

Leah gritted her teeth.

“As expected of the Prankster King of Cordu. Aren’t you afraid that we won’t believe what you’re about to say?”

“You can choose not to believe it.” Lumian wore an indifferent expression. “Or you can verify it yourself.”

Valentine, visibly dissatisfied, asked anxiously, “In your letter, you mentioned that the people around you are getting weirder. What’s so

weird about them?”

Lumian exclaimed and cracked his knuckles.

“There’s plenty. To be precise, the padre believing in an evil god, Shepherd Pierre Berry turning people into sheep and herding them back to Cordu. Madame Pualis rides a demon-drawn carriage through the wilderness. When the deputy padre sleeps, a translucent lizard-like creature crawls out of his mouth. Naroka is clearly not dead, but she wants to go to Paramita. Louis Lund, the administrator’s male butler, has just given birth to a baby. The owl from the Warlock legends flies back to the village from time to time…”

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine grew increasingly shocked as they listened. They didn’t want to believe it, but they felt that the kid before them couldn’t invent so many absurd stories.

They were all seasoned official investigators who had dealt with numerous Beyonder incidents, many involving evil gods and mystic arts. However, none were as ludicrous or exaggerated as what they were hearing now. Only the padre believing in evil gods sounded normal.

More importantly, most of the incidents they had previously handled stood independently. At most, two or three would occur simultaneously. Moreover, they were closely related to each other, but Cordu had too many horrifying abnormalities!

What kind of place is this? Almost instantly, similar thoughts raced through Leah, Ryan, and Valentine’s minds.

They suspected they had inadvertently entered the legendary Abyss or Hell!

When Lumian stopped, Leah couldn’t help but ask, “You’re not joking, are you?”

Was there anyone normal in this village?

Lumian smiled.

“I haven’t finished speaking. There’s another abnormality.

“This is the third or fourth time I’ve talked to you about something like this. Ryan, Leah, Valentine, my cabbages.”

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine weren’t surprised that Lumian knew their names. It was inevitable when they had been chatting in the village.

They were even more astonished and puzzled by the first half of the sentence.

“What do you mean?” Valentine asked with a frown.

“What I mean is that we’ve been repeatedly experiencing the past few days. In other words, we’ve fallen into a time loop.” Lumian didn’t let the three foreigners guess and provided a standard answer.

Without waiting for Ryan and the others to question him, he briefly mentioned what they had experienced together and finally said, “Think back carefully. Was it really March 29th when you entered the village?”

Leah and the others racked their brains.

After more than ten seconds, Valentine revealed a pained expression.

“My sense of time is hazy. I can’t remember the exact date of the previous two months… But I remember. I remember celebrating my youngest son’s birthday before I set off. His birthday is…”

Valentine raised his head and blurted out in shock, “April 10th!”

In other words, the actual date now is mid-to-late April? Judging from the looks of it, the number of cycles I went through before I had my memories wiped can’t be more than a couple. It can’t even be more than once… Yes, that was the first cycle. The loop hadn’t even begun, so I could send a letter without the river’s help. When the loop happened and time rewound, the corresponding memories would be replaced, but material objects beyond the range wouldn’t be able to turn back? Lumian had a new theory about the letter.

He nodded imperceptibly and said to Ryan and Leah, “You can also wire the outside world and get the current date in a way that won’t raise any red flags.

“When the time comes, you’ll believe me.”

“Yes, yes! Send a telegram!” Valentine snapped out of his stupor. “Ask the higher-ups for help!”

Lumian looked at him as if he were a fool.

“Ask for help?

“In the face of such a bizarre time loop, what do you officials usually do?”

…

Ryan fell silent for a moment before saying, “Stamp it out directly to prevent the corruption from spreading.”

“Therefore, asking for help now is as good as suicide.” Lumian smiled and shrugged.

Valentine replied fervently, “According to the rules, we have to report back ASAP. I’m willing to sacrifice myself for this!”

“…” Lumian was stunned.

Such people exist?

No, I have to get rid of this guy immediately, or everyone will die together!

Fortunately, Leah and Ryan clearly felt that they could still be saved. They exchanged a glance and nodded.

Ryan patted Valentine’s shoulder and said, “Stay calm. We still don’t know what’s going on. Perhaps there’s a better solution.

“If we really can’t save ourselves, we’ll report it to the higher-ups.”

“That’s right,” Lumian hurriedly added. He recounted the discoveries and speculations minus the symbol on his chest, the dream ruins, the mysterious lady, and the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Finally, he said, “The key to the problem most likely happens on the

twelfth night. We have to survive until then. Only then can we truly resolve the issue in the next cycle."

Seeing that he had revealed so many details and that they could verify them all, Ryan and the others were completely inclined to believe him. Valentine calmed down and remembered his wife and children.

...

Leah exhaled. "No wonder you know us and know we're looking for someone."

It turned out that they had communicated in a previous cycle.

She subconsciously touched the silver bell above her head, wanting to do a divination, but she held back when she recalled the abnormalities Lumian had described.

She didn't want to blow up because of a divination that shouldn't be done before the real investigation began.

Ryan thought for a moment and said to Lumian, "You're telling us this because you want us to cooperate with you and your sister?"

"Very astute, my cabbage." Lumian laughed and said seriously, "First, wire the outside world, saying that your investigation has made some progress. The padre seems to have a certain issue. Then, ask what the lizard-like thing that crawls out of a mouth is. This is the least likely to cause a destructive blowout of all the abnormalities. Ah, right, confirm the real date and be careful in how it's done. Don't let anyone outside suspect anything.

"Secondly, my sister will invite Madame Pualis to my house for afternoon tea this afternoon. I hope that you can sneak into the administrator's mansion with me and do a search.

"As for the future, it depends on the information we obtain today."

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine looked at each other and felt that Lumian's request wasn't too unreasonable.

This was what they would have done.

The four of them arrived at the village square. Ryan went to wire the outside world while Leah, Valentine, and Lumian waited under the elm tree outside.

After calming down, Leah glanced at Lumian and asked curiously, “You’re a Beyonder, and so is your sister?” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Yes.” Lumian didn’t hide it.

Leah laughed. “Aren’t you afraid of being arrested by us?”

“We’re in the same boat now. In the face of an emergency where the boat is about to sink, we can only help each other.” Lumian shrugged. “As for the future, we’ll talk about it later. It’s still unknown if we can escape this loop.”

“That’s true.” Leah turned her head and looked at Valentine.

The reason why she brought up this topic was to let her companion understand this and not do anything stupid.

Valentine’s expression remained cold as he nodded imperceptibly.

Leah then asked about something she was more concerned about.

“Why can you keep the memories from before?”

“I’m not telling you.” Lumian laughed.

Without waiting for Leah’s response, he spread his hands and said, “I’m just joking. Actually, I’m not sure either. I somehow retained my memories, and it’s only from the last two cycles.”

“Think back to what happened back then. Perhaps this is very important,” Leah said after some thought.

Lumian said sincerely, “I’ve been thinking, but I haven’t figured out anything. Perhaps I’ll only suddenly realize when I encounter something.”

Leah was about to help analyze the situation when Ryan, who had received a reply, walked out of the administration building.

Chapter 63 - 63 Shocking News

63 Shocking News

Leah and Valentine asked Ryan in unison, “How is it?”

Although they had already believed Lumian’s words, it was inevitable for people to hope for luck. They still held onto the hope that perhaps the problem wasn’t that serious because the kid wasn’t knowledgeable enough to exaggerate.

Ryan looked around and saw that there was no one else around the elm tree. He spoke in a low voice, “I was afraid to ask too directly. I only know that the real date is already late April. I don’t know the exact date.”

Leah and Valentine fell silent.

They had indeed fallen into a strange time loop!

Judging from the various files and information, this was definitely not something the three of them should face or deal with.

They were seasoned Beyonders who had handled many Beyonder incidents. It was the first time they had encountered such a serious and abnormal situation.

Leah couldn’t help but turn to look at Lumian. “What kind of place is Cordu?”

There were abnormalities everywhere, each more exaggerated than the last!

“I don’t know either.” Lumian had an “innocent” expression. “Before the loop, this place was beautiful and the people were simple. Everyone was normal and hospitable.”

He didn't tell the three foreigners that the person standing before them was also one of the abnormalities.

Ryan sighed and said, "I've never encountered so many abnormalities at once, and every one of them is serious."

"This is the most dangerous situation I've ever faced," echoed Valentine.

Lumian was already a little numb to this. He sneered and said, "It's normal that you haven't encountered it before, because those who have encountered one are dead."

"…" Leah looked at him with a smile. "Don't say anything if you can't say something nice. People like you won't survive past childhood elsewhere."

"Killed in the cradle?" Lumian mocked himself and asked Ryan, "Did you get an answer about the deputy padre?"

Ryan nodded.

"In the past few years, similar legends have emerged in various places across the Northern and Southern Continents.

"Legend has it that Heaven banished a group of sinful elves to the ground. They can only reside within human bodies, hoping to redeem their sins and gain absolution before returning to Heaven.

"In some versions of the legend, these elves appear as translucent lizards.

"However, the elf I'm referring to is not the ancient elf race. It is more akin to a mixture of fairies and various spirits."

Again in recent years? Lumian recalled that the legend of Madame Night had only surfaced recently.

What was wrong with this world?

He pondered for a moment before asking, "Did they specify which deity's Heaven it is?"

Ryan shook his head.

“What’s remarkable is that every person who claims to have seen an elf believes it is from the kingdom of their local deity.”

The local deity referred to the orthodox gods of the local faith.

Heavens of different deities? Lumian gazed up at the azure sky.

Did that lizard-like elf come from the sky?

However, according to Aurore, beyond the sky lay the cosmos. Each star represented a world.

So, were these extraterrestrial beings?

Or were they from an astral plane beyond mysticism?

As Lumian’s thoughts raced, he asked curiously, “In some versions of the legend, these elves appear as translucent lizards. What about the other details?”

Ryan shook his head once more.

“That’s all they could uncover in a short period. They may need to communicate with headquarters for more information.”

Leah pondered and spoke, “I am familiar with the legend of elves.”

“I once met a native of Lenburg who shared that farmers in many regions of the south-central zone have reported mischievous fairies in recent years. These creatures known as Alpes1 would vandalize their homes and fields or play pranks on them.”

The south-central zone referred to the area where Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other small countries were located. It also included a few areas in the Intis Republic, the Loen Kingdom, and the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Most of them were located in the highlands, mountains, forests, areas filled with ruins and legends.

Lumian listened attentively and concluded, This is not an isolated phenomenon…

“Each elf seems to have their unique way of causing trouble,” Ryan mused. “And the lizards that inhabit human bodies are perhaps the most malevolent. It is uncertain if they are the most dangerous. With so many abnormalities in Cordu, the parasitic elf shouldn’t be an isolated phenomenon. Perhaps someone wants to use it to control the deputy padre.”

Very clear line of thinking… Lumian looked at the villagers who were returning home after finishing their work and said to Leah and the others, “Meet me behind the hill where the administrator’s castle is at 3:30 p.m.

“Will you join me to search for clues?”

“Of course,” Ryan agreed.

Leah, however, called out to Lumian before he left, “Is that all? You should brief us on the situation in the castle, its inhabitants, and Madame Pualis’ abnormality. We cannot explore and search without preparation.”

Lumian did not want to recall Madame Pualis’ matters, but he had to admit that Leah’s request made sense. He had to endure the discomfort and tell them the entire story.

Ryan and the others were mentally prepared, but they still looked a little dull upon hearing the tale.

Leah lightened the mood with her tinkling laughter.

“It does not matter to me. I might experience such a thing in the future. This is an opportunity that most men never encounter. You must cherish it.”

However, Valentine ignored her joke and whispered with a cold expression, “All of this needs to be purified—purified!”

Lumian did not want to provoke Valentine and waved his hand.

“See you in the afternoon.”

After taking a few steps, Lumian turned around to look at Ryan warily and asked, “Did Bertrand have any knowledge of the contents of your telegram?”

Bertrand was responsible for the telegraph, and if he knew about the date and the legend of the elves, it meant that the administrator knew as well. And if the administrator knew, Madame Pualis would know too.

…

“Don’t worry,” Ryan said reassuringly. “We have a secret code. He won’t be able to decipher it.”

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief only then and left the village square, heading back to his building.

As he walked a distance away, he spotted Ava Lizier herding a flock of white geese back home.

“Hey there, isn’t this our Spring Elf?” Lumian tried to push the bloody and cruel scenes from the Lent celebration out of his mind and greeted Ava with his usual quip.

Ava seemed a little embarrassed.

“I haven’t been chosen yet!”

Her exquisite facial features made her grayish-white dress look less rustic.

“That won’t be a problem,” Lumian said with a smile. “Reimund and I will help you campaign for votes.”

Ava looked surprised. “You don’t know?”

“What don’t I know?” Lumian’s heart skipped a beat.

Had something happened in the village that wasn’t a part of the “historical” process?

...

Ava observed his expression and suspected that he was teasing her.

After a few seconds, the girl frowned in concern and said, “Reimund’s missing. You didn’t know?”

“Huh?” Lumian was so shocked that he couldn’t hide his expression as usual. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

In the previous, previous cycle, he and Reimund Greg had met almost every day from the second day of March 30th until April 5th, Lent.

Back then, they had followed the waterside ritual procedure to lift Reimund, who had thrown the last offering, and throw him into the river. Like the others in the past, Reimund swam further away and could only return home after leaving the ritual site. He wouldn’t leave the house until night.

In the two cycles that followed, Lumian had too much to do and didn’t have time to find Reimund.

But now, Ava was telling him that Reimund was missing today!

This was something that had never happened in the previous, previous cycle!

Upon seeing Lumian’s expression, Ava’s aqua-blue eyes cleared of confusion.

“You really have no idea… Reimund’s father may come to you today to ask where Reimund has gone.”

Lumian suppressed the tumultuous waves in his heart and asked, “When did Reimund disappear?”

Could it be that something happened because I didn’t follow the historical process of finding him?

“Two days ago,” Ava recalled. “It’s said that he didn’t return after leaving the house in the afternoon of the 29th. His family assumed he was at Ol’ Tavern or chatting with the Greenwatchers. They only

began searching for him last night. They should be asking you today…”

She paused and lowered her voice.

“They suspect Reimund of sneaking away because he doesn’t want to learn how to shepherd.”

They think I instigated him, and are questioning me later? Lumian roughly understood what had happened.

The afternoon of the 29th reminded him of the beginning of the cycle.

The last two cycles had started on the afternoon of the 29th!

In other words, Reimund disappeared from the beginning of the cycle? This means that perhaps no one deliberately changed the course of history because it was too late… Then why is there such an anomaly and difference? Lumian fell into deep thought.

Ava glanced at him and asked softly, “Do you know where Reimund went?”

“I haven’t seen him in the past few days,” Lumian said truthfully.

He began to suspect that Reimund’s disappearance had something to do with being thrown into the river during the previous, previous cycle.

However, it was impossible for Reimund to leave Cordu because of this. That would trigger the loop.

After bidding farewell to Ava, Lumian forced himself to remain calm and returned home.

He couldn’t be bothered to discuss anything else. Initially, he divulged Reimund’s disappearance to Aurore.

Aurore’s countenance turned solemn as she furrowed her brows and whispered, “If you hadn’t mentioned it, I would have completely forgotten about this person…”

She donned a simple rose-red dress and paced back and forth. Lumian began to contemplate potential reasons.

After a while, Aurore gazed at her brother and uttered solemnly, “I recollect that the crux of the Lent Waterside ritual is to offer sacrifices to the concept of a water source symbolized by the river. Is it probable that Reimund, who was thrown into the water, was also regarded as a sacrifice and was taken away by a certain entity?

“Subsequently, as there was no corresponding tangible reward, the cycle portrayed his absence as a disappearance.”

Lumian shook his head. “That will trigger the cycle.”

Humans departing Cordu and the surrounding vicinity acted as a trigger.

Aurore asked in a profound voice, “What if it’s in the form of a corpse?”

Chapter 64 - 64 Weapon

64 Weapon

In the form of a corpse?

Lumian's heart sank upon hearing that.

If Reimund's body had left the loop due to the sacrifice, he wouldn't be able to revive through the loop. Once the abnormality in Cordu was resolved, he would truly be dead and not just missing.

Although Lumian wasn't willing to admit that a foolish chap like Reimund was his friend, they had known each other for almost five years. They had played together, pranked together, and experienced many things together. Regardless, he couldn't treat him as a stranger.

Recalling the past, he realized that other than Aurore, Reimund was probably the person he interacted with the most.

Didn't Aurore often say that the fools are the lucky ones? Why is this happening? Lumian couldn't help but retort, "Even if he became a corpse, there will still be a spirit. It will trigger the cycle."

Aurore sighed softly.

"Perhaps the entity receiving the sacrifice isn't interested in spirits and only wants flesh and blood? Perhaps He didn't want to trigger the loop and only wanted flesh and blood instead of Reimund's spirit, leaving him in Cordu or directly destroying him?"

In that case, Reimund's corpse was equivalent to pure matter without any spirituality. It could leave the loop without triggering a reboot.

Upon hearing his sister's retort, Lumian's mind instantly replayed what might have happened.

After everyone left the water, Reimund swam further away. Suddenly, an invisible force grabbed his legs, covered his mouth, and dragged him to the depths of the river, where he drowned.

After that, his spirit would remain at the bottom of the river or be destroyed. His corpse would drift to an unknown place and become a sacrifice… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

At this thought, Lumian suddenly became inspired.

“Regardless of whether Reimund’s spirit was left behind or destroyed, once the cycle restarts, he should appear in the form of a ghost.”

“Logically speaking, that’s correct.” Aurore nodded thoughtfully. “After dark, I’ll hold a psychic ritual and see if I can find Reimund’s spirit. Yes, it’s best if we have something he often uses as a medium.”

Lumian replied without hesitation, “After exploring the castle in the afternoon, I’ll go to Reimund’s place. His parents are looking for me to ask about his whereabouts anyway.”

When the time came, with his Hunter skills and Lumian’s vigilance, it wouldn’t be difficult for him to obtain an item that Reimund had used.

“Okay.” Aurore didn’t object.

Lumian exhaled and asked, “Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, are you capable of channeling spirits?”

“As a Mystery Pryer, I possess knowledge on various subjects,” Aurore chuckled in self-deprecation. “How did your conversation with the three foreigners go?”

Lumian quickly recounted his discussion with the enigmatic lady and his conversation with Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, but he avoided mentioning the entity’s prayer.

Aurore listened attentively and let out a sigh.

“It’s perilous to actively resist corruption, but it’s the only way to explore the dream ruins, uncover their secrets, and find the key to

break the cycle. It'll be a difficult journey for you…"

"What's so terrible about it?" Lumian patted his chest. "I'm saving myself."

Aurore nodded slightly.

"You can use my gray amber perfume. We have lilac at home, and I also have deer musk and candle-making ingredients. Only tulips need to be acquired elsewhere.

"I remember Madame Pualis has a garden, but I don't know if it's blooming."

"It has bloomed," Lumian affirmed with certainty.

During the last cycle, when he and Aurore visited the castle to borrow the carriage, they noticed that many flowers in the garden had already bloomed, which was unusual for early spring in the mountains.

Aurore acknowledged tersely.

"Regardless, you must explore the castle in the afternoon. You can pick a few flowers while you're at it. Will that woman send those items into the dream ruins for you?"

"Yes," Lumian replied, feeling confident in his assumption.

Aurore pondered for a moment before saying, "I'll give you the Integrity Brooch before you depart this afternoon. Madame Pualis' castle is filthy, and it might involve the undead. It could be very useful."

"It's not necessary. Keep it with you to protect yourself from Madame Pualis," Lumian insisted, anticipating his sister's objections. "Valentine is a fanatical believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun. According to you, as a Beyonder, he should have chosen the Sun pathway. He would be more useful than the Integrity Brooch."

Based on Aurore's observations over the past few years, fanatical believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun typically chose the Sun pathway.

This also made sense. Eternal Blazing Sun believers who chose the Sun pathway tended to become more and more fanatical unless they didn't believe in this true god from the beginning.

"That's true," Aurore conceded. "You can practice the simplest way to activate Spirit Vision. Afterward, take a nap at noon to replenish your energy. I'll teach you the ancient Hermes and Hermes words required for the ritual tonight."

Upon hearing his sister's words, Lumian suddenly recalled something she often said when she was rushing her manuscripts: "The schedule is tight, and the task is enormous."

……

At 3:20 PM, Lumian stood on the hillside overlooking the administrator's castle when he spotted Madame Pualis approaching the village with her lady's maid, Cathy. Madame Pualis wore a stunning grayish-blue dress that had a slight fluffiness to it, and her hair was tied back in an elegant bun.

As soon as they were out of sight, Lumian hurried to the back of the hill where Ryan, Leah, and Valentine were already waiting. They appeared to be in their original clothes, having made no preparations for what was to come.

Lumian was surprised to see that they were unarmed and asked, "You're not carrying any weapons?"

Ryan, who was only slightly taller than 1.7 meters, smiled and replied, "I don't need to carry a weapon with me."

Valentine, dressed in a white vest and a thin blue tweed coat, echoed Ryan's sentiment, "I don't need a weapon."

Leah, on the other hand, pulled out a small, exquisite, silver revolver from her Marseillan boots. "This is my weapon."

She flipped open the barrel to reveal different colored bullets engraved with various patterns and symbols. "They have different Beyonder effects."

Pa! Leah snapped the barrel shut and asked Lumian with a smile, “What weapon did you bring?”

One of you doesn’t need a weapon, the other doesn’t need to carry a weapon with him, and one has such a good-looking and powerful revolver. It makes me look silly… He lifted the dark jacket on his back to reveal an iron-black axe tucked into his belt.

Without waiting for Ryan and the others to speak, he sighed and said, “You all act like Beyonders, and I’m like a gangster preparing for a fight.”

Leah chuckled, her bells tinkling along, “You have a talent for self-deprecation.”

“It’s better than being mocked by others,” Lumian pointed to the steep hill behind them. “Let’s climb up now. We can’t waste any more time.”

“Alright.” Leah, in her tight dress, was the first to climb.

She moved with agility and her balance was exceptional. Using the grooves in the terrain, she ascended the hill with ease.

What was even more remarkable was that the four silver bells on her person remained motionless and silent.

…

Lumian followed closely behind, using the Hunter potion to strengthen his body and scaling the previously unclimbable hill with the help of rocks and tree roots, although he wasn’t as carefree and nimble as his companion.

After regaining his balance, he glanced back and witnessed Ryan seizing Valentine’s shoulder and hoisting him up.

In a swift motion, Ryan vaulted onto a jutting boulder amidst the hill.

Without hesitation, he sprang forward once more, delivering Valentine to Lumian and Leah’s vicinity.

Throughout the entire endeavor, his physique appeared to have expanded in size.

This left Lumian in awe.

Although the hill wasn't high, it was still too exaggerated to be scaled with just two jumps.

Hunters definitely couldn't do it!

After snapping out of his daze, Lumian looked at the castle-shaped building with two towers and the surrounding garden. He suggested to the three foreigners, "We'll go around to the back door."

"Wait a moment." Ryan stopped him and glanced at Leah.

Leah remained silent and strode two steps towards the rear entrance of the castle-like structure.

...

Her lips moved soundlessly, muttering something under her breath.

In the next instant, the four small silver bells attached to her veil and boots jingled.

The sound was not deafening, but it was urgent and intense.

Leah pivoted and addressed Lumian and the rest, "It's a treacherous path. A grave problem, indeed."

With that, she took two steps towards the front entrance.

Ding, ding, ding. The bells continued to ring, growing even more insistent and pressing.

"We'll likely encounter significant trouble if we attempt to enter through the front," Leah's tone was severe, but there was a hint of a smile on her face.

"What if we climb in through a window?" Ryan inquired.

Leah nodded and altered course, making her way towards the garden.

This time, although the bells rang, they were faint and slow.

Leah grinned and exhaled, “This route is safe.”

Lumian, who had observed the entire process, felt bewildered. He couldn’t fathom what the three foreigners were up to.

Is this how Beyonders operate? He recollected his sister’s teachings and queried, “Divining the danger?”

“Indeed.” Leah nodded and turned to Valentine. “I’ll scout ahead. Be prepared.”

“Understood,” Valentine responded gravely.

“What preparations?” Lumian asked, confused.

Leah chuckled. “Prepare to cast divine spells and conjure flames.”

Then, what’s the purpose of creating flames? Before Lumian could ask, Leah had strolled into the garden and headed towards the castle.

She arrived at a window and signaled that everything was clear.

“Let’s go,” Ryan informed the group as he hastened towards Leah.

Valentine and Lumian followed closely behind.

As they passed a bed of tulips, Lumian reached out to pluck one, but Ryan stopped him with his forearm.

He didn’t ask Lumian why he was doing this and only said gently, “There’s no hurry. We can pick flowers later. If picking it causes some incident, our mission will be compromised.”

That’s true… Lumian fully drew upon this experience.

Soon, they arrived at a row of windows on the side of the castle.

Chapter 65 - 65 Third Floor

65 Third Floor

The administrator's official residence was originally the castle of the Dariège nobles, with defense being the top priority. The windows were narrow and high up, making the lighting poor even during the day. However, to make it suitable for living, the owner had installed many new glass windows on the ground floor later on.

Lumian peered through the patterned glass and saw that the banquet hall was empty and deserted.

"There are very few servants…" Leah sighed softly.

With many open windows during the day, fresh air mixed with the fragrance of flowers flowed in, creating excellent conditions for Lumian and the others to infiltrate.

Taking advantage of the lack of servants on the first floor, the four of them climbed into the hall one after another. However, they didn't rush to go deeper and instead found a hiding spot nearby.

Leah turned her head towards Valentine, who was clinging close behind an ornamental pillar, and said, "I'll scout ahead; make preparations."

"Okay," Valentine nodded coldly.

Lumian was squatting behind a stone platform with a porcelain vase. When he heard this, he stuck his head out and reminded them,

"There's no need to explore the first floor.

"It's often used to entertain guests, so there's nothing unusual."

Ever since Administrator Béost and Madame Pualis moved in, his

sister Aurore would visit the castle occasionally as a guest or borrow a pony. A few times, Lumian took the opportunity to follow her and freeload on cakes, bread, and drinks.

When the administrator and Madame Pualis were out, he would occasionally look for Louis Lund, the butler, and tour the first floor with him.

“I’ll head straight to the stairs,” Leah said, understanding.

She didn’t attempt to walk in a straight line through the empty banquet hall. Instead, she hugged the wall and circled around towards the stairs.

The four silver bells remained eerily silent.

As she passed by one of the rooms, she suddenly heard footsteps approaching from very close to the door.

Lumian, in a prime position, even caught a glimpse of a male servant in a red shirt and white pants, about to collide head-on with Leah. She had no cover in sight!

Leah didn’t panic. She turned around, placed her hand on the wall, and scaled the oil painting hanging two meters above the ground.

Then, she stood on her tiptoes and stepped onto the frame. She stood firmly with her back against the wall without letting the oil painting drop.

Lumian wanted to applaud because it reminded him of an acrobatic performance he had seen in Dariège last year at a circus.

The male servant left the room and instinctively looked around before walking towards the kitchen. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Just as he took a few steps forward, Leah slid soundlessly to the ground against the oil painting. Then, she rolled twice and hid behind a pillar. After the male servant disappeared from the banquet hall, she leaned against the wall again. Finally, she arrived at the staircase and confirmed that everything was clear.

Upon seeing this, Lumian darted out of the stone platform and ran over in a straight line.

He was so fast that he reached Leah in less than three seconds.

However, he wasn't the fastest. Ryan completed the journey in just the time it took to take one breath.

Valentine wasn't slow either. His physique was clearly stronger than ordinary people.

Without another word, Leah took the lead and the four of them hurriedly entered the stairs, arriving at the second floor of the residence.

There were closed rooms on both sides of the corridor, with two rooms having light shine in through the windows at the end of the corridor. The overall environment was abnormally dark.

Ryan suggested, surveying their surroundings.

"Let us split up and search different rooms. This will save time and make it easier to hide. However, we must remain no more than one room apart from each other, in case something happens and we cannot save each other in time."

Leah and the others nodded in agreement.

Lumian promptly approached the nearest room, pressing his ear to the door to listen for any movement inside. After a moment, he deftly turned the handle and slipped inside.

The room belonged to a maid.

He searched for a while, but found no clues. He moved on to the next room.

In this way, the four of them carefully avoided the servants and explored most of the second floor.

Towards the end of their search, Lumian arrived at the door of the room that had traumatized him: Louis Lund's bedroom!

According to the historical sequence of events, this butler should have given birth yesterday.

His stomach had been torn open and, even with sutures, he would not recover quickly. He must be recuperating in bed… Lumian thought to himself, contemplating whether to push the door open and have a “chat” with Louis Lund.

As someone who had personally experienced bizarre phenomena, this male butler undoubtedly knew a great deal.

However, this would contradict their principle of observation and exploration. Lumian couldn’t guarantee that Louis Lund wouldn’t reveal his presence to Madame Pualis.

The fact that he had given birth to the other party’s child meant there were no secrets between them.

Silencing him would only confirm Madame Pualis’s suspicions.

What a pity. If only I knew something about hypnosis… Lumian sighed inwardly. He habitually pressed his ear to the door, listening for any sound.

Nothing.

As a Hunter, Lumian’s hearing was acute enough to detect breathing from two to three meters away even with a barrier in between.

No one? Louis Lund has just given birth. Where can he go? Lumian turned the doorknob and slowly pushed the door open, peering inside.

The room was clean and free of the bloodstains he had seen before. Louis Lund was nowhere to be found.

Lumian furrowed his brow and stepped inside.

The signs of a recent human presence were evident: a blanket rumpled on the bed, a cigarette butt on the nightstand, a black coat hung on the chair, and faint footprints on the floor. In addition, there were blood stains on the edge of the bed that had not been cleaned.

Apart from this, Lumian also saw some blood stains that hadn't been wiped off from the edge of the bed.

Lumian nodded to himself. He had indeed given birth here yesterday…

Suddenly, faint voices outside the window caught his attention.

He hurried to the glass window, turned his body, and peered out.

In the stables, Louis Lund—black-haired, blue-eyed, and dressed in a white shirt, black suit, dark pants, and leather shoes—conversed with the carriage driver, Sewell, who had sent the siblings to Paramita.

…

Lumian was taken aback by Louis Lund's healthy and steady appearance.

Is this the person who had just given birth yesterday?

And it was a C-section!

Lumian suppressed the shock in his heart and listened carefully to what Louis Lund and Sewell were saying.

Unexpectedly, these two fellows were only exchanging experiences in gardening.

"What's the matter?" With Lumian inside the room for so long, Ryan, donning a dark bowler hat, pushed open the door and entered the room followed by Leah and Valentine.

Lumian quickly filled them in on Louis Lund's situation.

Ryan pondered for a moment before asking, "Have you heard of Earth Mother?"

The Dariège region had a border with the Feynapotter kingdom. Shepherds often went there. Coupled with his sister's basic education, Lumian was no stranger to this.

“Yes, the deity that Feynapotter believes in.”

Ryan nodded and said, “Earth Mother is associated with fertility, healing, and life. These domains are reflected in the Beyonder powers of the corresponding pathway. While I’m not saying that Louis Lund’s situation is related to the Earth Mother, it’s possible that his ability to give birth and quick recovery are linked to these domains.”

…

“Is that so…” Lumian found this plausible after some thought.

After all, men were already capable of giving birth. What was so strange about them being out and about after a C-section?

“Did you find anything?” Lumian asked Ryan and the others.

Ryan shook his head.

“They were all normal servant’s quarters. We may have to check the third floor.”

Lumian felt a sense of unease wash over him.

Madame Pualis and Administrator Béost’s quarters comprised a bedroom, study, solarium, and activity room, all located on the third floor.

This posed a significant risk.

“Very well,” Ryan replied without hesitation.

The four of them proceeded to sneak up to the third floor.

Many of the doors were ajar, and the corridor was brightly lit.

Lumian made a beeline for the bedroom, which was adorned with a light-colored velvet blanket on the bed, a small bookshelf stocked with bedtime reading materials, a capacious cloakroom brimming with a variety of clothes, a safe containing precious collections, a set of plush beige sofas, a table displaying five photo frames and documents, and a fluffy white carpet covering the entire room…

Lumian and company surveyed the room and simultaneously headed towards the table.

The books on the table were mostly popular novels, including Fors Wall's masterpiece, "The Adventurer 5: Vice Admiral Ailment," and Aurore's latest work, "The Substitute Detective." The documents pertained mainly to various matters in the Dariège area. As for the five photos displayed in the frames, four were of Madame Pualis, and one belonged to a man Lumian did not recognize.

"No photo of the administrator?" he exclaimed, surprised.

Madame Pualis was the sole subject of the four photos, each depicting her in different clothing and poses. The male photo was not of Administrator Béost, who, after all, was the male owner of the house. Wasn't this peculiar?

Leah nodded thoughtfully.

"Perhaps the administrator's status in this family is akin to that of a butler. Have you ever seen a butler's photograph displayed in someone's home?"

"Then who is this man?" Lumian inquired, pointing to the photo frame on the side.

The frame contained a color photograph of a man in his late twenties. He was wearing a red shirt, a black velvet coat, and dark pants with tassels. He sported a pair of short lace-up boots and was dressed very fashionably.

He bore a striking resemblance to Madame Pualis, with light eyebrows, bright brown eyes, and brown hair parted in an exaggerated 7-3 style. His lips were curled up, giving him the air of a hooligan who frequented high society.

All in all, this man's facial features were not extraordinary, but they were pleasing to the eye.

"Madame Pualis's brother?" Lumian hazarded a guess based on his appearance.

Chapter 66 - 66 Crib

66 Crib

Leah gazed at the man in the photo, lost in thought.

“After receiving the request for help, we set off two days later to gather relevant information,” she said.

“Madame Pualis’s full name is Pualis de Roquefort, isn’t it?” she paused for a moment before continuing, “We investigated the Roquefort family in Dariège and found no trace of Pualis.”

In Intis, a woman could choose to keep her maiden name after getting married. If there was a “de” in her name, it meant that she was once a noble. The Intis meaning of “de” was “from,” and the surname behind it was the fiefdom of the time.

“None?” Lumian was surprised. He knew something was wrong with Madame Pualis, but he didn’t expect her identity to be fake!

Ryan nodded. “In Dariège, Roquefort is a large family with many members, including a provincial senator. We were in a hurry and didn’t have time to conduct a more detailed investigation. We could only confirm that there was no such person as Pualis, but a man named Pulitt had been missing for over a year.”

“Pulitt?” Lumian asked. “What’s his relationship with Madame Pualis? They look alike.”

Ryan shook his head. “Without enough information, it’s impossible to make a guess. What we do know is that Pulitt de Roquefort was a popular dandy in Trier, and he had many illegitimate children. Many people hated and detested him. Perhaps this is why he had no choice but to leave or was forced to leave Dariège.”

“Dandyism?” Lumian was unfamiliar with the term.

Aurore subscribed to magazines and newspapers targeted towards women or focused on national affairs. There were some materials on the supernatural, but none involved male matters.

Leah chuckled. “To put it simply, it’s a casanova who dresses fashionably, speaks elegantly, and acts freely.”

Lumian sighed and mocked, “The people of Trier sure know how to live life. They package their affairs as a thought, a doctrine, and a trend.”

When it came to cheating, Triers were at the forefront. The padre? In front of the Triers, he was still a child.

…… Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

“In the past year, Trier has constructed numerous arcades,” Aurore remarked while sipping her marquis black tea, regaling Madame Pualis, Nazélie and the others with the latest trends from her two-story subterranean abode.

“What’s an arcade? It’s a covered street with glass roofing and marble flooring. Elegant and stunning shops line both sides. During the day, light filters in from above, and at night, gas lamps illuminate the area. Carriages are prohibited from entering. The most renowned arcade is called the Opera House arcade…”

Madame Pualis, holding a white porcelain cup filled with black tea, watched Aurore with her bright brown eyes, listening intently with a smile.

“That sounds like something I must see…” Nazélie sighed, imagining the elegance, fashion, cleanliness and brightness of the arcade.

Aurore’s knowledge of the latest Intis trends was the primary reason why they had accepted the afternoon tea invitation.

After chatting for a while, the discussion turned to Aurore’s work and relationships.

“Love is just so unfathomable and elusive…” Madame Pualis mused aloud.

So, this is why you fall in love with so many men at the same time? Aurore couldn’t help but inwardly criticize.

Madame Pualis gazed at her with a faint smile and sighed.

“Sometimes, I get so angry because of his mistakes. I wish I could kill him and send him to his death, but when he’s actually facing death, I can’t help but save him and refuse to tell him. Perhaps, this is love…”

……

In the master’s bedroom of the administrator’s residence.

“Madame Pualis may have once fallen in love with Pulitt, a believer in Dandyism, and engaged in a forbidden relationship, resulting in her disavowal by her family. She then had to marry someone and use her family’s connections to secure the administrative position in Cordu for him.” Lumian deduced this based on the stories and troupes written by his sister.

This explained why Administrator Béost’s standing in the family was relatively low.

“Perhaps,” Ryan replied simply, “Keep searching, but don’t attempt to open the safe or anything that may trigger an alarm.”

Lumian and his companions dispersed immediately and searched elsewhere.

Despite the Hunter’s ability to observe subtle traces, Lumian still found nothing.

The same was true for Leah and the others.

They had no choice but to move to the study and search patiently.

As time passed, the four of them arrived at the end of the corridor, where a closed room stood opposite an open solarium. Beside it was a staircase leading to one of the towers.

Ryan, who had finished searching the solarium, turned to Leah.

Leah touched the small silver bell hanging from her veil, mumbling to herself as she walked towards the tightly shut wooden door.

This time, the four bells did not ring.

Leah heaved a sigh of relief and gently pushed the wooden door open.

It was an empty room with a rocking crib in the middle.

The crib was made of brown wood and installed inside a wooden frame. It was covered in clean but slightly worn cotton swaddling cloth that showed its age. The crib was empty.

This was the nursery where Madame Pualis's two children had once slept. Apart from the bed, there were no toys in the room. Scattered on the ground were wheat, barley, rice, rye, wheat, and other plants, making it look rather strange.

Furthermore, these plants were well-preserved, as if they had only been brought in a few days ago.

Valentine's body glowed as he entered the room and circled around.

Soon, he returned to the door and shook his head at Ryan and Leah.

"There's no evil aura."

"Alright." Leah looked at Lumian. "Shall we head to the tower next?"

Lumian had always been curious about the castle's two towers. He never expected to have a chance to "visit" them today.

Valentine left the strange nursery. Ryan grabbed the handle and planned to close the wooden door and restore it to its original state.

At this moment, Lumian's gaze drifted inside.

The brown wooden crib swayed gently, yet the tightly shut windows of the room and the solarium opposite, with their floor-to-ceiling

panes, allowed no breeze to enter the corridor!

“Wh…” Lumian’s pupils dilated.

Leah noticed his distress and turned to look.

The crib continued to sway, as though an invisible baby lay within its swaddling cloths.

Leah raised her hand to her glabella, as if trying to ease her tired eyes.

…

She readied herself to activate her Spirit Vision and see what lay inside the crib.

Suddenly, the four small silver bells on her veil and boots jingled, as if they were about to burst!

Ryan’s face froze as he yelled, “Get out of here!”

With that, he dashed into the solarium, crashing through the floor-to-ceiling windows in an attempt to create a path of escape from the castle.

Bang!

A loud thud echoed throughout the room as Ryan hit the windows, yet there was no sound of glass shattering.

The transparent faces of young children appeared on the row of windows, some of them mere infants with pale, inexplicably terrifying faces.

As Ryan ‘bumped’ into them, they opened their mouths in unison and let out a haunting wail.

Their cries echoed through the third floor of the castle, casting an eerie gloom over the entire area. The walls and glass were adorned with the translucent faces of children, some wailing while others stared blankly at Lumian, Leah, Valentine, and Ryan.

Lumian shuddered with fear as he felt their cold gazes upon him.

Suddenly, Valentine's body was engulfed in a dark golden light, which quickly spread to envelop Lumian, Leah, and himself.

...

A warm sensation spread throughout Lumian's body, dispelling his fear and filling him with courage. He drew his iron-black axe with newfound confidence.

Meanwhile, Ryan seemed to grow taller and more imposing.

Dawn-like rays of light surrounded him, coalescing into a silver-white full-body armor and a massive broadsword of light.

With a mighty swing, Ryan cleaved at the floor-to-ceiling windows, dispersing the pale-white faces of the children into smoke as they screamed.

But the glass didn't break, and more faces appeared, their shrill cries tormenting Lumian and his companions.

"Who dares to trespass the castle?"

A woman's voice boomed, echoing through the halls.

Almost immediately, Lumian spotted a figure on the other side of the corridor, standing on the second floor.

She was a middle-aged woman with brown hair and eyes. She was rather good-looking without any wrinkles. She was the midwife who had helped Louis Lund's "delivery."

In her hand, she held a pair of enormous scissors that could decapitate a human while donning a grayish-white gown. It was as if she had just returned from pruning a branch in the garden.

She glared at Lumian and his companions and spoke in a deep, threatening voice.

"You deserve to die!"

……

In the subterranean two-story abode, Madame Pualis jolted suddenly, and her countenance altered.

She delicately placed the porcelain teacup on the table and smiled at Aurore.

“My apologies. I’ve just recollected an urgent matter that requires my immediate attention at home.”

“Huh?” Aurore was shocked.

Pualis rose from her seat, her expression filled with regret.

“I had intended to stay and discuss your work and its beautiful and poignant portrayal of love.”

Aurore responded quickly, “Please, you’re more than welcomed.”

“I cannot, unfortunately.” Madame Pualis shook her head. “It concerns my children.”

Chapter 67 - 67 Evil Spells

67 Evil Spells

Valentine caught sight of the woman in the grayish-white dress. His eyes brimmed with hatred as he stretched his arms out as if embracing the sun.

A blinding pillar of light descended from the sky and struck the target clutching the enormous scissors.

The surroundings burst into light in an instant. The transparent faces on the walls and glass vanished before they could even scream.

The woman's body had clearly caught fire and was evaporating, but then it suddenly vanished.

Lumian found this scene eerily familiar. The mouth-orifice monster had displayed similar behavior when he was hunting it.

Invisibility!

The woman might not have concealed herself, but she certainly wasn't dead. Thus, Lumian didn't feel any relief. Instead, he approached Ryan, who now towered over him.

Ryan, covered in silver armor and wielding a broadsword of light, was the person Lumian trusted the most among those present.

It was evident that Ryan excelled at combat!

Leah stood there when suddenly, the face of a pale child emerged on the wall behind her, transforming into the woman in the grayish-white dress.

The woman's enormous scissors clamped down on Leah's neck.

Crack!

Leah's head drooped, but no blood spurted forth. Her body and head swiftly shriveled and thinned, transforming into a ragged, paper effigy that softly settled onto the ground.

Not far away, her silhouette donning a pleated cashmere dress outlined itself.

With a clang, Ryan, his face concealed by a silver visor, hoisted the Sword of Dawn and strode towards the spot where Leah had stood, sweeping the weapon diagonally at the woman.

The woman brandished her scissors in an attempt to block the attack, but was pushed back into the wall by the force of the blow.

Her form vanished once again.

As Valentine, clad in a thin blue tweed jacket, stood with his back turned, the woman suddenly replaced the swollen and pallid visage.

She leaned out and struck the nape of Valentine's neck.

"Look out!" Leah cried out as soon as she spotted the woman, alerting her companion.

Valentine snorted and crossed his arms.

Golden, illusory flames burst forth from the void surrounding him, intertwining and transforming the corridor into an ocean pulsating with the radiance of the sun.

The woman winced in agony as her body was consumed by the intense flames.

She retreated back into the "interior" of the walls, reverting to the swollen, pallid face.

The translucent face melted instantly into wisps of black gas within the golden, illusory flames before dissipating.

Clang!

Ryan's Sword of Dawn struck the same spot again, causing the entire castle to tremble.

Despite his efforts, he was still a step too late to stop the woman.

Lumian quickly grasped the gravity of the situation. The woman who had delivered Louis Lund was linked to the transparent faces of children on the wall and glass. Not only could she transform into one of them, but she could also transform into a ghost form, evading attacks and deflecting damage.

In other words, she could attack from any wall or glass on the third floor of the castle at any given time, and Ryan and the others' counterattacks were ineffective.

With this realization, Lumian immediately distanced himself from the floor-to-ceiling windows and the surrounding walls, and walked to the middle of the solarium.

At that moment, ghostly faces appeared on the ground and ceiling.

The woman suddenly emerged from behind Lumian's feet and quickly reached for his thigh with the pair of scissors.

Lumian's heart raced with a sense of danger.

Without bothering to confirm where the attack was coming from, he jumped into the air and dodged to the side.

Despite his efforts, he was still half a beat too slow. A deep gash was left on the lower part of his thigh, and blood instantly gushed out.

As soon as the drops of blood landed on the ground, the woman—who had switched spots—pointed at them and they condensed into a thin blood-colored figure.

Without any hesitation, the blood-colored figure turned to Lumian, who had rolled to the recliner, and pounced at him,

feeding on his blood and growing stronger with each drop.

At the same time, Lumian endured intense pain and felt his blood

running out of control.

Almost instantly, Ryan jumped in.

In midair, he raised the broadsword of light high and slashed at the blood-colored figure, pinning it to the ground and shattering it with the transparent faces around him.

Leah had somersaulted to Lumian's side and pressed her right hand on his thigh wound.

To Lumian's surprise, the wound magically moved along with Leah's right palm, all the way down to the side of his calf, which wasn't rich in blood vessels.

The bleeding immediately decreased.

The woman suddenly appeared from the ceiling. Her brown eyes burned with a blazing life.

The blood dripping from Lumian's calf was ignited, producing a bright flame that resembled the spring sun. It quickly spread deep into the wound and into the blood vessels in his body.

At that moment, Lumian felt his life rapidly draining away.

With a pop, Ryan stabbed the two-handed broadsword condensed from light into the ground.

Around him, in the area where Lumian and Leah were, rays of dawn-like light appeared, filling all space.

In the morning light, the remaining blood-colored figures quickly melted, and the bright and beautiful flames on Lumian's calf quickly extinguished.

The second of burning had sealed his wounds together, stopping the bleeding.

Ryan pulled out his broadsword and bellowed in a deep, commanding voice, "This environment is unsuitable. We must depart at once!"

What he really meant was that the woman was not as powerful as she appeared. She was almost invincible and impossible to target due to the unique conditions on the third floor of the castle that greatly enhanced her abilities.

...

Without waiting for his companions to react, Ryan charged after the woman.

Although he was still slightly slower than his opponent, who could move with the aid of translucent faces, he spared no effort and attacked with powerful slashes, diagonal cuts, and stabs. He forced his adversary into a constant state of motion, forcing her to constantly shift positions after each attack.

Together with the holy light summoned by Valentine and the golden flames he conjured, the two of them managed to temporarily subdue the woman, thus preventing Leah and Lumian from being harmed.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Leah leapt onto the armchair and dashed back and forth across the sofa, tables, recliners, and ornaments, making sure to avoid touching the ground.

Throughout this process, the silver bells on her veil and boots chimed incessantly, sometimes melodious and sometimes grating.

Lumian no longer felt safe on the ground. He climbed onto the table and scanned the ceiling above and the floor below, analyzing Leah's movements.

Drawing from his previous experience, he deduced the route the woman was attempting to use to escape.

Soon, Leah ceased her acrobatic maneuvers.

"To the tower, quickly!"

Just as she finished speaking, the woman thrust her head out of the ceiling and barked in a stern voice, "You damned bastards!"

Each word was enunciated with precision, causing Lumian and his

companions' hearts to race, their heads to spin, and their vision to blur. It was a thoroughly unpleasant experience.

...

Valentine endured the discomfort and stretched his arms out once more.

A brilliant and pristine light flooded the ceiling.

"Let's move!" Ryan commanded.

Lumian immediately leaped off the table, enduring the pain in his calf. Stepping on the transparent faces, he raced towards the tower, with Leah and Valentine close behind. Only Ryan, covered in silver armor, wasn't in a rush to escape. He lifted the Sword of Dawn and sliced the woman who had poked her head out, preventing her from stopping his companions from fleeing.

After Leah and the others ascended the stairs leading to the tower, he turned around and gave chase with a leap.

A woman emerged from a transparent face on the side wall and let out a piercing scream.

Accompanied by the scream, a layer of black, malevolent flames ignited on the surface of Ryan's silver armor.

Ryan immediately felt his stamina rapidly depleting.

Without hesitation, he deactivated the Dawn Armor.

Spots of light resembling the morning sun scattered in all directions, along with the black flames, and dissipated into the air.

Holding the broadsword of light, Ryan took the opportunity to leap and depart from the castle's third floor, entering the stairs.

At this moment, Lumian, aware that he was a little weak and unable to make use of the environment, ran in second place. Ahead of him was Leah, whose silver bell was ringing softly.

Leah suddenly came to a halt.

Lumian hastily slowed down as he heard chattering.

He then looked ahead and was taken aback.

The tower was not large, and it could even be considered small. There were stairs leading to various firing ports.

The walls were densely packed with children.

They were dressed in different clothes. Some appeared to have just been born, while others were three or four years old. Their limbs resembled bird claws with unnaturally sharp tips.

Using their “bird claws,” these children were like birds in a forest, perching on the wall and occupying most of the area.

Lumian’s scalp tingled as he saw over a hundred human children’s faces, bodies, and wicked, sharp bird claws combined with an abnormal perching method. He once again felt as though his mind, eyes, and soul had been corrupted, just as when he had witnessed Louis Lund give birth.

The “children” had not yet noticed the intrusion. A small number of them were happily discussing different topics.

“The sky is so blue out there.”

“I want to go outside.”

“No way.”

“Mummy said we have to be able to retract our claws and be like normal humans before we can go out…”

At that moment, Ryan caught up to the three of them and said urgently, “Stay away!”

He then turned around and barricaded the entrance of the tower like a giant, holding the Sword of Dawn in his hand.

Leah and Valentine didn't inquire why. They ran frantically and found stairs and other obstacles to hide behind. Although Lumian didn't comprehend, his survival instincts told him to follow orders.

"All of you, come down here!" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in). (com)

The woman's sharp voice reverberated.

Each word drilled into Lumian and his companions' ears, weakening them simultaneously.

Immediately afterwards, the woman in the grayish-white dress appeared at the corner of the staircase. The entire tower was filled with the aura of life, and no pale faces were visible.

Chapter 68 - 68 Purification

68 Purification

Upon seeing that Ryan was blocking the entrance of the tower with the Sword of Dawn, the woman in the grayish-white dress felt a sense of foreboding.

She swiftly turned the enormous scissors around, clamped them around her neck, and pulled gently.

A vivid red stream of blood gushed out immediately, accompanied by her sharp cry. The blood flowed in every direction as if it had a life of its own, enveloping her entire body.

It was as though the woman had adorned herself with blood-colored full-body armor.

Meanwhile, Ryan held the Sword of Dawn in reverse with both hands and genuflected.

With a pop, he stabbed the two-handed broadsword, which had condensed from light, into the stone floor in front of him.

The broadsword disintegrated, transforming into specks of light that resembled the morning sun.

They were densely packed and innumerable, forming a flickering and violent hurricane that swept forward.

Wherever the Hurricane of Light passed, the stone floor was shaved thin. Some of the steps were flattened, and exaggerated cracks appeared. The woman was completely engulfed before she could dodge.

The blood-colored armor on her body lasted for a second before

completely shattering and melting into the light.

This time, she had left the special environment on the third floor and was in a place filled with life force. She could no longer use the pale and transparent faces to shift position. She could only watch as tiny blood-colored cracks appeared on her body.

The cracks expanded rapidly and instantly turned into a hideous wound that cut through the woman.

As her screams reverberated, her body crumbled into pieces of flesh. The pieces of flesh and her spirit were still being ravaged by the storm of light until the hurricane subsided. The flesh was ground, and the spirit dissipated.

Although Ryan tried his best to prevent the Hurricane of Light from implicating the others, he was still too weak to control it. He destroyed a large swath of the walls on the side and the stairs behind him. If Lumian, Leah, and Valentine hadn't found cover in advance, they would have more or less been injured.

"Waa! Waa! Waa!"

The bird-clawed children who were climbing the wall were frightened and cried out.

Lumian and the others' ears buzzed as if they had suffered a noise attack.

"Let's go!" Ryan turned around and slammed into the most damaged wall nearby.

Crash! The wall shattered, and a large number of rocks fell.

A huge hole that humans could crawl through appeared.

When Valentine and Lumian ran over, Ryan grabbed each of them with one hand and jumped from a height of more than ten meters to a tree outside the castle. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Bam! In midair, he kicked the tree and flew diagonally away from the castle.

Leah descended on her own, using the protrusion of the castle's outer walls to descend rapidly, landing on the ground in a breath or two.

Ryan, Lumian, and Valentine waited for Leah for a few seconds as the trees shook violently. After meeting up with her, they ran to the back of the hill and left before the other servants caught up.

……

In less than a minute, Madame Pualis stood expressionless beside the ruptured hole at the entrance of the tower, wearing a grayish-blue fluffy dress.

The children crawling on the walls quickly accused the outsiders of being barbaric and cruel, calling out for their mother.

Madame Pualis, with an ashen face, remained silent.

……

In the forest beside Cordu Village.

Lumian and his companions stopped and looked back at the castle.

Leah was about to speak when she frowned and said, "I hear a baby crying, it's very close!" She turned to Ryan and the others and asked, "Can you hear it?"

Lumian was startled and listened carefully, vaguely hearing the sound of a baby crying, but it was not as close as Leah had described, in fact, it sounded distant.

"I can hear it a little," Ryan answered truthfully.

Valentine's expression changed as if he had thought of something.

At the same time, Leah's face twisted in pain, and she instinctively pressed a hand to her abdomen, where there was a distinct swelling and squirming.

Valentine quickly went over to Leah and placed his hand on her head, saying a word in ancient Hermes that Lumian had just learned,

“Sun!”

Golden translucent liquid drops condensed out of thin air and sprinkled over Leah’s body.

Illusory black smoke immediately rose from Leah’s body, and her expression alternated between distortion and normalcy.

Finally, her abdomen returned to its original state and stopped squirming.

“Phew…” Leah breathed a sigh of relief. “I narrowly avoided becoming a monster’s mother. Luckily, we took care of it in time before it could take root.”

She wore a smile on her face, unfazed by the bizarre and terrifying experience.

Leah turned to Lumian, Ryan, and Valentine.

“Would you like to purify yourselves with holy water? I worry that you may unknowingly become mothers.”

“Yes!” Lumian agreed immediately, but Valentine approached Ryan first. Placing his hand on Ryan’s head, he uttered the ancient Hermes word, “Sun!” Holy water formed and sprinkled down, but nothing unusual happened to Ryan.

Valentine purified himself next, and no black smoke appeared.

He then walked over to Lumian and placed his hand on the hunter’s head. “Sun!” he repeated, and droplets of translucent liquid fell. Lumian suddenly felt a sharp pain in his heart, as if a snake were burrowing inside. Each time it moved, Lumian’s heart raced or slowed down, causing extreme discomfort.

In the next moment, Lumian heard the mysterious voice that seemed to come from an infinite distance but also sounded close by.

It wasn’t as clear as in his dream, so it prevented him from entering a near-death state.

Just as Lumian couldn't take it anymore, Valentine stopped the purification and nodded coldly.

"There's nothing wrong with you either."

Phew… Lumian breathed a silent sigh of relief, feeling as though he had been pulled back from the brink of death.

At that moment, he roughly understood what had just happened.

According to the mysterious lady, he was severely corrupted by a certain hidden evil god. He could only maintain his normal state by relying on the timely seal of that great existence.

…

Accepting the purification of holy water was like a devil embracing holy light—he was bound to experience problems.

In other words, he was an evil god pollutant that needed to be purified!

Thankfully, thankfully. If Valentine had kept going or had been a little stronger, I would've exposed my abnormality even with the seal of that great existence… I can't undergo purification in the future. I won't even be able to find someone to exorcise the evil. I'm the evil that needs to be exorcized… Lumian rejoiced and didn't let the remnant pain appear on his face.

Upon realizing that his companions had been cleansed and all risks had been eliminated, Ryan promptly suggested, "If we make our way to the edge of the village now, we'll activate the loop. In the event that Madame Pualis discovers a clue and catches up with us, we can attempt to flee and restart the cycle."

Noticing Valentine's perplexed expression, Ryan added, "I'm concerned that if we die once during a cycle, there may be repercussions once the loop is lifted. Therefore, it's best not to perish at this moment."

"Understood," Leah agreed before Valentine could interject with any radical ideas.

Observing that his two companions had arrived at the same conclusion, Valentine simply nodded.

At that moment, Lumian glanced at them before waving his hand and declaring, “You guys go on ahead. I’m going home!”

Ryan furrowed his brow in confusion and asked, “Aren’t you worried that Madame Pualis might come after you?”

Lumian grinned and replied, “I’m not like you. As soon as I entered the tower, I was attempting to avoid the monster children’s gaze. They didn’t spot me, and the midwife who saw me was killed by you. It seems that even channeling spirits is ineffective. How could Madame Pualis have suspected that a powerful infiltration team like yours had an ordinary person like me with them?”

“Think about it. Prior to your arrival in Cordu, no one had attempted to infiltrate the castle. The moment you arrived, something immediately occurred. Who else could be suspected but you guys?”

…

“If I escape with you, I’ll be dragged down with you!”

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine were left speechless.

This was clearly an operation concocted by Lumian. Why did it appear as though he had nothing to do with it in the end?

Were they going to shoulder all the blame?

“Goodbye! If Madame Pualis doesn’t dare to confront official Beyonders like you and the cycle isn’t restarted, I’ll see you at Ol’ Tavern tomorrow!” Lumian waved his hand and dashed towards the edge of the forest, reminding them, “Take care, my cabbages!”

Once he exited the forest, Lumian’s expression became serious.

The explanation he provided for not escaping with Ryan and the others wasn’t the only reason. It was more of an excuse.

His primary objective was to return home immediately and

rendezvous with Aurore.

As soon as Aurore invited Madame Pualis for afternoon tea, someone snuck into the castle, and they were the prime suspects.

Lumian had to inform his sister that if Madame Pualis came to interrogate and silence her, she should sell out the three foreigners and agree to Madame Pualis's imprisonment. She could discover and dangle a valuable secret to delay Madame Pualis for a while, preventing her from executing anyone on the spot.

Only by staying alive would there be a chance!

Even in the loop, Lumian couldn't afford to die easily in case something catastrophic occurred once the loop ended!

Furthermore, once Madame Pualis caught up with Leah and the others, if she emerged victorious, one of Ryan and the other two would trigger the loop and erase their memories. If she lost, what was there to be concerned about?

Lumian gritted his teeth and ran home through the village road, enduring the pain in his calf.

Upon seeing Aurore standing at the door, appearing completely unharmed, he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Is everything all right?"

"Is everything all right?"

The siblings both inquired simultaneously.

Chapter 69 - 69 Him?

69 Him?

In response to his sister's concern, Lumian shook his head and declared, "I'm fine."

He surveyed his surroundings and suggested, "Let us talk inside."

Upon reaching the stove, he briefly narrated his expedition with Ryan and the others. Lumian then advised his sister that if Madame Pualis were to attack them, she must surrender and betray the three foreigners without hesitation.

Considering the phenomena he had encountered in the castle, Lumian believed that the siblings could not defeat Madame Pualis. They were not even capable of handling the midwife.

Aurore listened attentively and couldn't help but chuckle.

"From a logical standpoint, your tactics are indeed the best, but why do I find it peculiar? It is as though I have become the villain in a story. Furthermore, I am not the principal antagonist—the charismatic kind."

"What is important is the consequence," Lumian stressed to his sister. "In your own words, one must endure the humiliation, bear the heavy burden, preserve the useful body, and wait for it to prove its worth in the future."

Aurore couldn't help but rub her forehead. "Have I taught you too many strange things?"

"Yes," Lumian earnestly nodded.

Aurore rolled her eyes.

“Okay, I understand. I will not confront Madame Pualis until the most crucial moment. When Madame Pualis noticed that the alarm had been triggered and attempted to leave, I did not stop her. I merely expressed reluctance and conversed with her for an additional minute. Right, please elaborate on the specifics of your exploration.”

She seated herself at the dining table and listened intently, just in case Madame Pualis were to interrogate her in anger.

Lumian pulled out a chair on the opposite side of the dining table and expounded on the expedition’s accomplishments and battle process.

As Aurore listened, her expression gradually became somewhat peculiar.

“What is the matter?” Lumian noticed his sister’s abnormality.

After considerable deliberation, Aurore inquired with a strange expression, “There is a portrait of a man in Madame Pualis’ bedroom, and he resembles her. It’s suspected that he is her brother?”

“Yes, the three foreigners speculated that he might be a missing member of the Roquefort family named Pulitt,” Lumian recounted Ryan and the others’ statements, including Dandyism and the vast number of illegitimate children.

He added, “According to the three foreigners’ investigation, there is no such person as Pualis in the Roquefort family.”

Aurore nodded and exhaled.

“Then I am quite sure that my guess is correct.”

Her expression remained peculiar, only growing more pronounced.

“What guess?” Lumian asked, perplexed.

Aurore gave him a sidelong glance before replying, “Perhaps Madame Pualis is actually Pulitt.”

“What? That’s absurd!” Lumian exclaimed. “One is a man, the other a woman, and Madame Pualis had two children!”

“Who’s to say she gave birth to them herself? Maybe the administrator did it for her,” Aurore countered, a sneer curling her lip. “And even if they are Madame Pualis’s children, it doesn’t necessarily mean anything. In the world of mysticism, anything is possible. Consider this: if Louis Lund can give birth to a man, then why can’t Pulitt become a woman?”

“That may be true, but…” Lumian was still unconvinced.

Aurore gave him a sly smile.

“The reason I dare to make such a guess, unlike the three foreigners, is because I’ve heard something. Or rather, I’ve witnessed something.”

“Do you remember which pathway neighbors the Hunter pathway?”

“Assassin,” Lumian replied without hesitation.

He had been drawn to the name, which was undoubtedly cooler than Hunter.

“In our organization, uh—the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, there was a man who was fascinated by the idea of an Assassin and chose that pathway,” Aurore explained, her expression growing stranger by the moment. “At a gathering, he confided in us with a melancholy and troubled air that the potion an Assassin needs to consume after reaching Sequence 7 is called Witch.”

“Witch?” Lumian had a sinking feeling the moment he heard the potion’s name.

“Yes, Witch. In the world of mysticism, Warlocks and Witches are two entirely different concepts. You used to get them mixed up and call me a Witch from time to time. It was rather unsettling,” Aurore said, taking the opportunity to enlighten him. “Drinking the Witch potion will turn you into a Witch. Acting as a Witch causes your body to undergo a complete transformation, turning you into a woman.”

Hiss… Lumian took a deep breath, relieved that his first obtained characteristic was that of a Hunter.

Had he obtained something related to the Assassin pathway, he might very well have been lost to it due to his eagerness.

“What happened to the man who was considering it? Did he drink it?” Lumian asked, unable to resist.

Aurore replied with a smile, “He agonized over it for a long time. He didn’t want to become a woman, but he also didn’t want to stay at Sequence 8. Eventually, someone persuaded him, ‘Life is short, why not give it a try?’”

“After that, I met him again at a gathering. No, he was already a her by then. She was already a woman by then. A beautiful and charming one at that.”

“…” Lumian was momentarily speechless.

Aurore grinned at him and added, clearly enjoying herself, “In the future, should you reach Sequence 5 and find yourself unable to obtain the Sequence 4 materials for the Hunter pathway, you might consider the Demoness pathway instead. The Assassin pathway is also known as the Demoness pathway…”

Demoness… Lumian found the name “Assassin” bewildering.

The mysticism world was fraught with dangers!

He deftly steered the conversation back on track.

“So Madame Pualis is truly Pulitt the casanova.”

Even an Assassin could transform into a Demoness. A path that enabled a man to bear children was likely to transform a man into a woman.

Aurore nodded warily and gazed out of the window.

“I suspect that Madame Pualis transitioned to a woman only after reaching a specific Sequence. She had to disappear to avoid discovery by the authorities. According to the mysterious lady, the power of a deity’s boon can also be divided into Sequences.

“Her abnormal pathway would also include the ability to promote fertility, manipulate life, and control the undead.”

Aurore deduced that she could manipulate life and control the undead from Lumian’s battle with the midwife.

That was the same performance Madame Night, who looked like Madame Pualis, had showcased in Paramita with the undead chasing after her.

Aurore suddenly exclaimed.

“What’s the matter?” Lumian asked cautiously.

Did his sister uncover another ominous truth?

…

Aurore scowled at her brother and replied, “At the afternoon tea, Madame Pualis said that love is unfathomable. She wished he would perish for his mistake, but when he faced death, she saved him and refused to tell the other party.

“I didn’t comprehend it then, and I didn’t dwell on it. Now, I wonder if she had an ulterior motive for saying that.”

Lumian was equally puzzled.

“She saved someone? When did she do that…”

Suddenly, he halted and stared at Aurore.

The siblings remembered that Madame Night had saved them by distracting the undead in Paramita.

“But that was from the preceding cycle…” Lumian was about to reject it, but he couldn’t.

He and Aurore exchanged a look and realized their eyes were filled with shock and dread.

If Madame Pualis was referring to that incident, it meant she retained

some of her memories from the loop.

“It’s impossible…” Aurore muttered to herself. “Never mind. Let’s assume it’s true. I’d rather overestimate our foe than underestimate them.”

Lumian concurred. Then, he had a thought.

…

“Aurore, uh, Grande Soeur, considering that Madame Pualis might have been a man, did she fall in love with you?”

“I didn’t do anything wrong. You were the one who spied on Louis Lund giving birth. Pualis is infatuated with you,” Aurore riposted.

Lumian muttered under his breath, “Perhaps she believes that you instigated me.

“I don’t usually associate with her, but I did once bring some people to see her having an affair with the padre. She teased me for it. You, on the other hand, discuss literature and trends with her occasionally. You even go to her house to borrow a pony.”

“Huh…” Aurore’s voice rose in disgust, “Then why was she trying to set me up with those awful men you told me about?”

Lumian paused before responding, “Maybe she’s trying to discourage your interest in men and lead you to her instead.”

“What kind of strange things have you been reading?” Aurore glared at her brother.

Not only could Lumian provide a rational answer, but he did it with forceful verve.

“Your novels. You wrote something similar in one of them.”

“Is that so…” Aurore fell into deep thought.

After a moment, she looked out the window and said, “It’s been a while, but Madame Pualis hasn’t come after us. The cycle hasn’t

started again…”

“Perhaps she doesn’t want to kill the foreigners. If an investigator sent by the officials were to be killed, it would cause even greater trouble,” Lumian speculated. “And she doesn’t suspect me, so she doesn’t suspect you either.”

The witness was dead, and no one else had seen him.

Aurore nodded and said self-deprecatingly, “I don’t even feel like eating dinner.”

Suddenly, Lumian had an idea. “What if we go to the castle?”

“Is the perpetrator returning to the scene of the crime?” Aurore laughed.

Lumian nodded.

“I want to investigate the castle. Madame Pualis doesn’t suspect me, so I can go unnoticed.”

“Oh, and I haven’t picked any tulips yet. I can ask for a few under the guise of making fragrances.”

Since Aurore and Madame Pualis appeared to be friends, there was no issue with Lumian’s actions.

Aurore thought for a moment before saying, “We can try, but we can’t be sure that Madame Pualis won’t cause trouble.

“Yes, if you don’t return in half an hour, I’ll go to the edge of the village and trigger the cycle to start again.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed.

……

As Lumian arrived at the administrator’s castle once again, the sun had already set behind the mountain, painting the horizon with a red hue.

Passing through the garden, Lumian reached the open main entrance and approached a male servant.

“Excuse me, my Grande Soeur Aurore is creating a fragrance. Could I please borrow some tulips from Madame Pualis?”

The male servant, dressed in a red shirt and white pants, responded without any hint of suspicion.

“I’ll inquire with Madame.”

He quickly disappeared into the castle. Shortly after, he reappeared.

“Madame says you may go straight to the garden to pluck them.”

She really doesn’t suspect me? Besides, it’s as if nothing happened… Nevertheless, he refrained from entering the castle and headed towards the garden to search for the tulips.

It was there that Lumian spotted the flowers and a lady’s maid pruning a flowering tree in the shadows.

As he casually sized her up, his gaze suddenly froze. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The lady’s maid was in her forties, with brown hair, brown eyes, and a pretty face devoid of wrinkles. She was none other than the midwife who had fought Valentine and the others and was eventually killed by Ryan!

Yet, here she stood, seemingly unscathed, her face shrouded in a shadow cast by the flowers and trees.

Chapter 70 - 70 Spirit Channeling

70 Spirit Channeling

The instant he laid eyes on the ‘midwife,’ Lumian’s heart seemed to cease beating.

She’s still alive?

I clearly saw her killed by Ryan, and her spirit was destroyed!

Lumian remembered vividly how the midwife had eventually been reduced to tiny pieces of flesh scattered on the ground. Some parts couldn’t even be found.

This must be a freaking ghost encounter! No, wait, there’s the sound of breathing! Lumian thought of some scenes from his sister’s novels, and his heart went from stillness to rapid beating.

If it weren’t for the ‘midwife’ not looking at him, preoccupied with trimming the branches of the flowering tree, he would have reacted to the stress.

Kacha, kacha. Tiny tree branches that grew haphazardly fell to the ground, snapping the stunned Lumian out of his daze.

He subconsciously took a step forward, walking towards the place where the tulips bloomed.

The ‘midwife’ didn’t stop him or even turn around.

Lumian couldn’t help but steal another glance at her. She was focused on pruning the branches. The shadows cast by the flowers and trees made her profile look dark and gloomy.

Not daring to linger, Lumian plucked a few tulips and left the administrator's castle.

His heart was still pounding even when he returned to the village.

After calming himself down, Lumian walked towards Reimund Greg's house. It was still too early for Aurore to trigger the cycle.

It was also a two-story building, but compared to Lumian and Aurore's house, it was clearly older, more dilapidated, and narrower. The outer wall revealed the gray color of stone amidst the many green plants creeping over it.

At that moment, the Gregs' door was wide open, allowing one to see the stove on the left, the table on the right, and the wooden buckets behind.

Lumian recalled that the wooden barrels were used for storage. There were two simple wooden beds in the space they isolated. They belonged to Reimund and his sister.

Lumian didn't knock and walked straight into the Gregs' house as usual.

Reimund's elder and younger sisters were helping their mother prepare dinner. Reimund's father, Pierre Greg, was sitting on a chair at the wooden table, drinking cheap wine with a gloomy expression.

"I heard that Reimund is missing?" Lumian asked Pierre Greg with a concerned look.

Pierre Greg seemed to have aged significantly, and the few wrinkles on his face were even more pronounced.

He looked up at Lumian and asked in confusion and surprise, "You don't know?"

At this moment, Reimund's mother and two sisters stopped what they were doing and turned to look at Lumian.

Lumian couldn't be any more honest.

“I’ve been busy with my own matters. I haven’t seen Reimund for days.”

Pierre Greg had already inquired and knew that Lumian was telling the truth. Otherwise, suspecting that this rascal had instigated Reimund to run away from home, he would have gone questioning him that afternoon.

“Two afternoons ago—they said it was the 29th—Reimund didn’t return after he left,” Pierre Gregg said with a gloomy expression. “We’ve been looking for him. His two brothers are still out searching. Where do you think he’d have gone?”

Lumian hesitated before responding, “He usually says that he doesn’t want to learn shepherding, but he doesn’t have much money on him. It’s impossible for him to leave on his own. Let me see if he left anything behind…”

As he spoke, he walked naturally to the wooden barrels at the back of the first floor and passed through them to reach Reimund’s bed.

The bed was very simple, as if pieced together with a few planks of wood. However, the grayish-blue bedsheets, the pillow stuffed with straw, and the quilt with traces of mending were all clean. It was evident that they were often washed.

This was because Aurore loved cleanliness and didn’t allow lice to appear at home or on her body. Even Lumian had developed this habit. Therefore, when he interacted with his playmates, he would consciously urge them to maintain personal hygiene. He didn’t allow those fellows to be dirty and live with lice and fleas all day.

If Reimund and the others slacked off at some point and were discovered by him to have lice, they would definitely be pranked. They might even be pushed into the river and made to wash up even if they refused to.

After a few years of “oppression,” Reimund habitually helped clean up the environment when he returned home.

“We didn’t find any message,” Pierre Gregg said with a worried

expression as he followed him to the bed.

Lumian sat by Reimund's bed and reached under the pillow.

He found two items—a cracked, dark-red fountain pen and an exercise book filled with handwriting.

Reimund was hungry for knowledge, but had little chance to receive an education.

In Emperor Roselle's time, villages like Cordu had mandatory township schools, housed in the same building as the administrator's office. The building also contained an army recruitment center, a recruit physical examination committee, and other institutions, but ultimately, there were only a few staff members.

In recent decades, many villages had lost their schools. The Church provided Sunday school for larger populations, but Cordu had to rely on educated elders to teach the children sporadically. Over time, some young people became illiterate again.

When Lumian was in a good mood, he would claim he needed money for drinks. So, he sold his old fountain pens and workbooks to Reimund, Ava, and others at a low price, teaching them some words in the process.

Reimund took every lesson as seriously as he did combat training and helping shepherds make cheese in the mountains to earn money.

He was determined to change his fate.

Lumian removed the fountain pen and exercise book, staring at them for a long time.

"I asked the padre. He said these are just simple words that don't form a sentence." Pierre Gregg sighed.

Lumian flipped through the exercise book, noting how the handwriting had improved from messy and ugly to something acceptable.

"True, there's no message." He agreed with Pierre Gregg before

adding, “But I wonder if it’s a code that can be deciphered into a sentence. You’ve heard a similar story, right? Aurore told it to many village children. Did they mention it at home?”

This included Reimund’s younger brother and sister.

“Yes, they did.” Pierre Gregg nodded.

Cordu villagers would often gather in the kitchen at night for conversation, laughter, and storytelling when they couldn’t afford the tavern. First-time guests had to follow Intis social norms and bring a bottle of wine, even a cheap one.

Pierre Gregg had heard a similar story from his youngest son during such a gathering.

Lumian held up the exercise book confidently.

“I’ll take it back to Aurore for her to examine and see if she can find anything.”

“Alright,” Pierre Gregg didn’t think it was anything valuable.

After leaving the area surrounded by wooden barrels, Lumian walked toward the door, and Pierre Gregg sat down again.

A few steps later, Lumian heard Pierre Gregg sigh and mutter,”If he didn’t want to learn shepherding, he could’ve told me. Why did he just leave… Our family will soon be wealthy. He won’t need to learn shepherding anymore…”

…

Wealthy? Lumian’s heart raced as he turned around, feigning curiosity.

“What’s this chance for wealth?”

Pierre Gregg didn’t look up, keeping his head lowered as he said despondently,

“Our family’s horoscope is about to change. Our luck will improve…”

What— Lumian felt a chill down his spine.

“Who told you this?” he asked.

Pierre Gregg didn’t answer, continuing to lament.

……

Upon returning home, Lumian immediately informed his sister that the ‘midwife’ was still alive.

Aurore frowned her blonde brows. “She’s not necessarily a living person.”

“Huh?” Lumian was taken aback.

...

Aurore pondered and said, “Didn’t we discuss this before? Madame Pualis’ pathway might have the power to control the undead. That might be a zombie.”

“Impossible,” Lumian said. “I saw her without activating my Spirit Vision. Besides, there were no signs of stitching on her body. Back then, she was diced into many small pieces by Ryan.” Lumian recalled and said, “Also, I heard her breathing!”

At this point, Lumian paused.

“However, she was indeed a little sluggish. Her expression was gloomy, and her eyes weren’t lively enough. She looked almost exactly like Naroka! The one I saw on the night of the previous, previous loop when Naroka took the initiative to enter Paramita!”

Naroka, whose face was pale and eyes were blank.

Of course, the ‘midwife’ obviously resembled a living person more.

Aurore nodded and said, “A special state that’s closer to the undead?”

Unable to deduce an answer, she gestured for Lumian to say something else.

Lumian recounted everything that had happened in Reimund's father's words in detail, as if nothing had happened in the castle.

Aurore listened quietly and nodded.

"Madame Pualis doesn't seem to want to pursue the matter of the castle. I wonder what she's holding back…

"Also, your discovery proves that a portion of the abnormality in the village is related to her, but she doesn't seem to be involved in the cycle…"

What she meant was that Madame Pualis's involvement in the abnormality was mainly the fertility, death, soul, and Paramita. Nothing to do with the time loop.

"I think so too." Lumian had such an inkling during his explorations. "It seems that the person behind the padre and company is most likely not Madame Pualis."

Referring to Reimund's father's words, he guessed,

"The one who spread the news that doing something can affect the horoscope and obtain good luck?"

Aurore acknowledged tersely.

"We'll investigate tomorrow and see if we can channel Reimund's spirit tonight."

……

After dinner, Aurore saw that it was about time and began to set up the altar.

She was praying to herself, so she only placed a single candle, but the candle was replaced by another one made of slumber flowers and other materials.

Aurore sanctified a silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality. Then, she dripped the extract made of night vanilla and moon flowers onto the orange flames, stirring up a misty fog.

Seeing that the preparations were complete, Aurore glanced at the workbook on the altar and took a step back. She said in ancient Hermes, “I!”

As she uttered the word, her eyes darkened, as if an invisible wind was swirling around her.

“I summon in my name:”

This was the second sentence she said, and she changed it to Hermes.

As she didn’t know where Reimund’s spirit was, she couldn’t directly communicate with it. She could only try summoning it. As a wild Beyonder, she didn’t dare pray to the Evernight Goddess, who was in charge of this domain. She could only rely on herself. The chances of success weren’t high, unless Reimund’s spirit was indeed somewhere in Cordu and was very close.

Aurore continued to recite, “The spirit lingering in Cordu Village.

“The man named Reimund Greg.

“The owner of this exercise book…”

The orange candle flame suddenly swayed, absorbing the surrounding fog and becoming slightly larger.

Its light rippled and was dyed with a deep blue color.

Beads of sweat appeared on Aurore’s forehead as she began to borrow strength from various materials.

Amidst the howling wind, a figure appeared above the blue flames.

Having already activated his Spirit Vision, Lumian saw a translucent figure. He had brown hair and eyes, looking rather ordinary. It was Reimund Greg.

He was indeed still in the village.

Reimund’s body was bloated, his face pale, and blood-colored tears were dripping from the corners of his eyes.

Wh— Aurore was clearly stunned.

After the cycle was restarted, Reimund had only gone missing and hadn't drowned. How did his spirit end up like this? New n***o***vel chapters are published on

That's right. If he hadn't drowned, how could he have become a spirit?

They were self-contradictory…

Amidst her confusion, Aurore asked, "Reimund Greg, why did you disappear?"

Reimund's expression suddenly turned ferocious as he shouted sharply, "They drowned me!"

Chapter 71 - 71 Underground

71 Underground

They? Lumian couldn't hide his surprise at Reimund's response.

He had assumed that Reimund had drowned in the river of his 'own accord,' becoming a sacrifice to some unknown entity. But now, it seemed there were others involved. It wasn't just an unseen force that had pulled Reimund into the depths.

"Who are they?" Aurore demanded.

Reimund's face contorted with pain and fury. His eyes burned with hatred. He spat the words, "Pons Bénet, Pons Bénet and his men!

"They held me down in the water!"

After Ava and the others had left the riverbank, Pons Bénet and his thugs appeared where Reimund had washed ashore. They forced him back into the water, drowning him to turn him into a sacrifice? Lumian pieced together the scenario from Reimund's words.

The entire Lent celebration had been twisted into a dark, sacrificial ritual!

Aurore pressed for more information, but Reimund only repeated the same few phrases, as if they were all that remained of his memory.

Damn, we missed the best time for spirit channeling. All we have left is this lingering obsession… Aurore thought for a moment, formulating a question that Reimund might or might not recall.

"Did they sacrifice you to a specific being?

"What's so special about Him? Where is He?"

This time, Aurore was more cautious. She didn't ask for the full name, only seeking indirect information to aid her judgment.

She believed that if Reimund's spirit had sensed anything during the sacrifice, it would have left a strong impression. Otherwise, it wouldn't.

Reimund hesitated, tears welling up in his ghostly eyes, turning the corners red.

Lumian's expression darkened. Unconsciously, he began clenching his fists.

Suddenly, Reimund cried out, "Underground! Beneath the cathedral!"
Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

What? Aurore could hardly believe her ears.

Based on her question, Reimund was implying that the secret entity he had been sacrificed to resided beneath the cathedral!

That's impossible. It's the Fifth Epoch. How can a god walk the land? Aurore composed herself, considering that Reimund's spirit retained only a fragment of his obsession and some spirituality. His answers were disjointed and fixated on certain points. In other words, his testimony might not actually confirm the being's location beneath the cathedral. It could simply be a reaction to her prompting.

But regardless of whether Reimund's answer was true or a reflection of his obsession, something was amiss beneath the cathedral. It held the key to the sacrificial ritual!

Aurore could only hope that the secrets hidden there wouldn't prove too horrifying or outlandish.

She tried asking about other matters, but Reimund's spirit could only repeat phrases like "they drowned me," "Pons Bénet," and "beneath the cathedral."

Seeing no further gains, Aurore ended the spirit channeling and watched as Reimund's form vanished above the candle flame. The blue hue that had stained the altar swiftly receded.

After dispelling the wall of spirituality, she noticed Lumian lost in thought, silent.

“Wh-what are you thinking about?” Aurore waved her hand in front of her brother’s eyes.

The corners of Lumian’s mouth curled up as he forced a smile.

“I regret not hitting Pons Bénet harder yesterday.”

He had kneed Pons Bénet, causing him considerable pain, but he had held back, not wanting to escalate the conflict with the padre and his allies before the twelfth night. He had rationally restrained himself, not crippling Pons Bénet outright.

“There’ll be a chance,” Aurore reassured him.

Lumian nodded and chuckled.

“Actually, we’ve been overlooking something. Before Lent, we’re not the only ones afraid of escalating the conflict. The padre and his goons are too. They’re not ready, and they haven’t started the ritual.”

In other words, if Lumian had truly wanted Pons Bénet to suffer irreversible harm, the padre would likely only feign retribution and avoid any real action.

They would bide their time until Lent. Regardless of whether Lumian had offended them or not, once the Lent celebration “began,” everyone in the village would be in their sights.

Aurore understood Lumian’s point and nodded slightly.

“You can decide how to exact revenge on Pons Bénet.

“What we need to focus on now is how we can survive until the twelfth night after the padre and his cronies gain immense power during Lent.”

Lumian immediately sank into deep contemplation.

Aurore shared her thoughts.

“We have two options. We either join forces with the three foreigners, or we find a way to strengthen ourselves.”

She hesitated for a moment before continuing, “If we can confirm that Madame Pualis has no connection to the loop and is trapped here like us, we might even cooperate with her.”

“Huh?” Lumian was taken aback.

Madame Pualis was a terrifying and malevolent Beyonder!

Aurore sighed and said, “A philosopher from my homeland once said that balance is needed between principal and secondary contradictions. We must unite all possible forces.

“Yes, there’s definitely something off about the cathedral’s underground. It might hold crucial clues. We have to investigate it before Lent, as we may not get another opportunity.”

From Aurore’s knowledge, most of the cathedrals in this world had underground chambers. Some stored Sealed Artifacts, while others served as burial sites for important figures. Although Cordu’s cathedral didn’t contain Sealed Artifacts or notable people to be buried, it still featured a large basement when constructed.

“Alright,” Lumian agreed. “I’ll talk to the three foreigners tomorrow.”

He then brought up Reimund’s condition.

“Why can he only say those few words? Was the spirit not summoned properly?”

Aurore sighed again.

“There’s a critical period for mediumship. Within an hour of death.

“After an hour, the spirit of the deceased rapidly dissipates, losing their original memories. All that remains are some thoughts, emotions, and images they can’t let go. In the technical terms of our homeland, it’s called obsession.”

Lumian nodded slightly.

“When the next cycle starts, we’ll summon Reimund from the beginning. Does that count as an hour of death?

“But wait; why does Reimund remember the last, last cycle?”

…

Only then did he recognize the issue. After the cycle reset, shouldn’t Reimund forget about drowning?

Aurore was stumped. Combining her thoughts from the ritual, she pondered and said, “I believe it counts. It’s not Lent yet. According to the timeline, Reimund hasn’t drowned, so he shouldn’t know the murderer’s identity. However, because he lost his body, he can only exist as a spirit. It’s similar to death. There will be lingering obsessions. Thus, the person we summoned just now remembers certain events from the previous, previous cycle.

“In simpler terms, Reimund’s state has become unique due to his body’s loss. He retains a certain amount of memories when the cycle resets!

“Heh, it’s like a glitch.”

The loop created a tiny error because Reimund’s body was sacrificed? Lumian roughly understood his sister’s explanation.

Aurore chuckled and added, “It seems that the power allowing us to loop is very mechanical and rigid. It probably isn’t under the original owner’s control and operates autonomously. Otherwise, it could easily target Reimund’s spirit.”

At this point, she appeared to relax somewhat.

“Haha, in that case, we still have a chance to break the cycle.”

Influenced by his sister’s emotions, Lumian’s somber mood lifted slightly.

After all their efforts, they finally saw a glimmer of hope.

The two of them cleaned up the altar and moved to the second-floor

study. Aurore taught Lumian Hermes and ancient Hermes, word by word, based on the disordered and incorrect ritual he had written.

...

Lumian had already learned some words, so his progress was promising.

Under the bright electric lamp, Aurore explained the pronunciation and structure of the words to her brother. While he revised, she used musk, cloves, blood, and other materials to create candles.

As Lumian studied intently, he occasionally glanced at his sister working beside him, feeling as if he had returned to their warm life—free from loops or malevolent gods.

Outside the window, the night was tranquil.

……

Lumian woke up to find himself in his misty room.

As he got out of bed, he walked over to the table and grabbed a pen and paper. He then wrote down the ancient Hermes and Hermes words, but in the wrong order. He then corrected them by labeling each with a number.

After finishing, Lumian let out a sigh of relief and looked over to the table.

There were four items there, the two grayish-white musk candles made by Aurore (one with Lumian's blood, and the other without), the bottle of gray amber perfume, the metal bottle containing tulip powder, and the silver dagger provided by Aurore.

That lady really sent them in… Lumian's heart calmed down when he saw the items.

Lumian grabbed the items and looked for Aurore's homemade incense. When he found it, he went downstairs and placed everything on the dining table. Then, he went to the kitchen to grab a glass of water and a pile of coarse salt.

The materials for the ritual were now prepared.

Before falling asleep, Aurore was worried that Lumian didn't have the corresponding symbol to pray for the boon. This would prevent him from burning the items on the replica goatskin to inform the target deity of his desires. However, since the mysterious lady didn't mention it, there was probably no need for it. After all, it was essentially praying to the power in Lumian's body. It could 'hear' all the prayers without any additional 'paperwork.'

Lumian took a deep breath and slowly exhaled as he looked at the items on the dining table.

Without wasting a moment, Lumian placed one of the grayish-white musk candles, the one with his own blood, at the top of the altar, representing the deity. He placed the other candle in front of him.

Following the order of god before man, Lumian lit the candle by sparking his spirituality. He wasn't an expert at sanctifying the ritual's silver dagger or creating a wall of spirituality.

As Lumian's spirituality flowed out from the tip of the silver dagger and connected with the air around him, he felt a mystical sensation that he couldn't explain.

Soon, the wall of spirituality was complete, and Lumian's own spirituality was significantly depleted.

He cleared his mind using Aurore's homemade incense and Cogitation, allowing him to enter a state where he could perform the ritualistic magic.

With a sizzling sound, Lumian dripped the gray amber perfume and tulip powder onto the candle that represented the deity. A strange fragrance filled the air, and Lumian felt a magical energy pulsing around him.

Lumian took a step back, glancing at the small notebook beside the altar. He looked at the burning candle and shouted in ancient Hermes, "Power of Inevitability!"

Chapter 72 - 72 Sacrificial Dance

72 Sacrificial Dance

“Power of Inevitability!”

As Lumian uttered the words in ancient Hermes, the light above the altar dimmed ominously. The orange candle flame flickered wildly, as if buffeted by an unseen wind, compressing to the size of a peppercorn.

Simultaneously, heat bloomed in his chest, and his head spun. His ears buzzed, as if once again on the verge of hearing that terrifying voice emanating from an infinite distance, yet remaining unnervingly close.

Lumian steadied himself and had a sudden realization.

The corruption within him had been sealed by the master of the bluish-black symbol. Even if he delved into deep Cogitation, he could only summon the thorn symbol and release a meager aura. He couldn’t harness its true power.

Could this ritual bypass the seal and absorb the boon?

Only if the owner of the bluish-black symbol, that great existence, had tacitly granted permission!

Remembering the enigmatic lady’s self-assured demeanor, Lumian felt a surge of confidence. He even suspected that the ritual itself contained a component for seeking the great presence’s approval.

As for which part, his knowledge of mysticism was too limited to speculate.

In the throes of the ritual, Lumian dared not delay. With a focused mind, he began reciting the subsequent incantations in ancient Hermes.

“You are the past, the present, and the future;

“You are the cause, the effect, and the process.”

These words resonated within the sealed altar. The floor and artifacts seemed to writhe, as if innumerable bizarre entities were about to burst forth and invade the dream ruins.

Ooo!

A black wind materialized out of nowhere, encircling Lumian. The candle flame, previously shrunk to a peppercorn size, swelled, suffused with a silvery hue and a touch of black.

Lumian heard the voice that had always pushed him to the brink of death once more. But at some point, a faint gray fog had emerged from the altar, coalescing around him.

The sensation left him suspended between deep Cogitation and witnessing the Noodle Man’s dance. He wasn’t on the edge of death, but he wasn’t comfortable either. It felt like severe tinnitus—dizzy, nauseous, and agitated to a degree, his mind a swirling mess.

Barely maintaining control, Lumian continued the ritual.

“I implore you,

“I beseech your benediction.

“I plead with you to grant me the power of Dancer.

“Tulip, a herb that belongs to inevitability, please pass your powers to my incantation!

“Gray amber, a herb that belongs to inevitability, please pass your powers to my incantation!”

As the ritual progressed, Lumian’s tinnitus and dizziness intensified.

It felt as if countless maggots writhed beneath his skin.

Finally, he completed the incantation.

Almost instantaneously, the silver-black candle flame condensed, transforming into a pillar of light that illuminated his left pectoral.

Silver-black phantom liquid poured forth, swiftly enveloping Lumian, rendering him sinister and fearsome.

It felt as if his skin was pierced by a thousand needles, his muscles and ligaments torn asunder. The mysterious voice became deafening, reverberating within his mind.

Lumian was consumed by excruciating pain, his mind teetering on the edge of madness.

His blood vessels seared as if incinerated from within.

This torment far exceeded the near-death state induced by deep Cogitation.

All he could do was clench his teeth and endure, desperately clinging to his fraying sanity. As for everything else, it didn't matter.

Amid the tempestuous onslaught, he was adrift. Time became an enigma.

At last, the agonizing pain abated. Lumian felt as if he had been unburdened or had emerged from drowning, a sudden sense of relief washing over him.

He swiftly collected his thoughts and looked up.

The candle flame had returned to its original size, but retained its silver and black hues.

Regaining his senses, Lumian took two hasty steps forward and snuffed out the candle representing him to avert any mishaps.

Next was the candle symbolizing the deity.

He meticulously followed the procedure, completing the ritual step by step. As he dissolved the wall of spirituality, he felt mentally drained and his body sore, as if he had battled a formidable beast.

Before long, the dining table was cleared. Lumian began to assess his condition and discovered a wealth of knowledge had materialized in his mind.

There were three primary parts to this:

First, it involved harnessing the power of dance, rhythm, and spirituality to tap into the forces of nature and communicate with unknown entities. This was the essence of being a Dancer. With this knowledge, Lumian could not only beseech Inevitability but also craft new sacrificial dances tailored to various situations, in order to "appease" other beings.

The second and third parts were applications of the first.

What Lumian desired most was the enigmatic dance performed by Noodle Man. The knowledge was directly implanted into his mind, enabling him to comprehend it instantly; all that remained was to practice.

With this arcane sacrificial dance, Lumian could activate the black thorn symbol on his chest while exploring the dream ruins, suppressing or weakening the formidable monsters therein.

The third segment involved another bizarre dance. It didn't resemble a traditional sacrificial rite but rather a blend of sacrifice and summoning.

By executing this dance, Lumian could attract nearby objects, and at the cost of his own blood, bond one of them to himself, thereby gaining access to one of its abilities or traits.

Of course, Lumian would first need to endure such possession. Some attachments could inflict significant adverse effects on humans, while others might prove reluctant to depart, creating complications.

Lumian felt it was crucial to understand the summoned entities fully. It would be far too hazardous to experiment without anticipating

potential issues.

The value of mystical knowledge was apparent in such a situation. Lumian desperately required resources like Mysterious Creatures Illustrated or Spirit World Creatures Illustrated, but even a Warlock, renowned for their extensive knowledge, could not possess such information.

Moments later, Lumian stretched and discovered that his flexibility had indeed improved dramatically.

Although not quite on par with Noodle Man, a mutated monster with reassembled organs, he now surpassed nearly all ordinary humans, enabling him to execute the enigmatic sacrificial dance.

Lumian effortlessly kicked backward, touching the back of his head, and nodded contentedly, murmuring, That's right. I can perform many actions that were once impossible. My Hunter combat skills have also greatly improved.

Lumian practiced the mysterious dance to familiarize his body with the corresponding movements, aiming to reduce the time needed to complete the routine.

Sometimes his movements were forceful and resonant, as if in combat, while other times they were gentle and unhurried, as if conveying a message, yet always rhythmic.

... The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

As Lumian danced, his spiritual energy radiated outward, merging with the ambient natural forces.

Gradually, his thoughts concentrated, his mind quieted, and he entered a transcendent, mystical state.

This allowed him to perceive various subtle phenomena surrounding him, as if his Spirit Vision had been activated.

Simultaneously, he seemed to connect with the unseen power within him.

His chest warmed once more, and a faint, horrifying voice echoed, but without consequence.

Phew… Lumian ceased dancing, unfastened his clothing, and inspected his chest.

The black thorn symbol reemerged, accompanied by the bluish-black one.

Lumian's thoughts briefly scattered but quickly returned to normal. He had achieved the desired effect perfectly.

He then calculated the precise duration from the emergence of the black thorn symbol to its disappearance.

It lasted approximately one minute.

Lumian fastened his clothes and prepared to try the other bizarre dance.

...

It was crazy and warped, and he couldn't describe it properly.

As he danced, his spirituality spread out again, blending with the natural forces surrounding him.

In the last third of the dance, he sensed something strange approaching.

Three figures appeared on the first-floor window, but they were blurry and transparent. Lumian recognized them as the skinless monster, the shotgun monster, and the mouth orifice monster with the black mark.

He muttered in amusement, Is this a victims' complaints meeting?

Lumian could make one of the monsters attach to him and borrow their abilities by taking out a ritual silver dagger and making a cut on his body to release some blood.

He craved the mouth orifice monster's "invisibility" but resisted the

urge—lest something happened via allowing a monster he murdered to possess him—and finished the dance.

As Lumian danced the last few moves, he heard weak and soft voices.

It sounded like many people communicating, but it was unclear where the voices came from.

Lumian analyzed it and realized the voices seemed to come from his body, from the corruption that had been sealed.

After the last move, Lumian stood there and muttered to himself, What did I hear?

Lumian was only semi-literate in the field of mysticism and couldn't identify the source of the soft sounds he heard. He had no choice but to give up, as it wasn't more terrifying than the corruption itself.

After the sounds subsided and him finishing the two mysterious dances, Lumian confirmed that the Dancer had enhanced his spirituality. Although he knew he was most likely inferior to Sequence 9s who excelled in spirituality, he had escaped the shackles of being a Hunter. He felt he was above average.

My shortcomings have been compensated for. Lumian was very happy about this.

Lumian didn't dwell on what would happen to his body after enduring the Dancer's power and the corresponding corruption. He couldn't stop it, so he decided not to think about it. He rubbed his tired head and made up his mind to rest for the night, returning to the real world to wait for the owl!

Chapter 73 - 73 Tracking

73 Tracking

Lumian's eyes snapped open, his aches gone and his spirituality restored.

He sprang up, strode to the window, and yanked the curtains aside.

Dawn had yet to break. The blood-red moon sank in the west while stars speckled the sky. On a nearby elm, the large owl with piercing eyes reappeared, gazing down at Lumian.

Instead of alarm or anger, Lumian flashed a dazzling smile.

"You're back," he said, almost too eagerly. His mannerisms, his tone, even his facial expression—it all made the target want to punch him.

The owl stared for a few seconds before spreading its wings and vanishing into the darkness.

Almost simultaneously, Aurore emerged from her bedroom, turned the handle, and entered Lumian's room.

"How'd it go?" Lumian asked immediately.

Aurore nodded.

"White Paper is on it."

Her once light-blue eyes had darkened, and the trees in them grew larger as they receded.

She produced a mercury-plated mirror and set it on Lumian's table. Using pale-white powder, she cast a spell that showed him what she was seeing.

Lumian glimpsed the owl's silhouette. It circled Cordu at a low altitude, as if trying to shake off any pursuers. But White Paper, a creature from the spirit world, was swift and unfazed, maintaining a constant distance.

After a minute or two, the owl reached the village square.

Without hesitation, it dove into the cemetery beside the cathedral.

Why is it here again? Lumian sighed inwardly.

The last time the siblings spied on Michel Garrigue, the "lizard" that crawled from the deputy padre's mouth also wound up in the cemetery, slipping in and out of various graves!

Lumian glanced at his sister. "You don't think it's like in stories, where the cemetery doubles as a villain's lair or hideout, do you?"

Aurore scoffed. "You know life inspires art, right?"

"I suppose…" Lumian conceded, accepting the professional author's explanation.

At that moment, the owl landed on an unremarkable grave.

Like most graves in Intis, it featured a deep pit filled with a coffin and covered with soil. One or two stone slabs lay atop it, and a tombstone marked its head.

This was Lumian's guess, at least; from the outside, the grave seemed ordinary.

The owl settled on the slabs sealing the grave.

With White Paper's aid, Aurore and Lumian uncovered suspicious traces.

The tombstone was blank. The stone slab, which should have been dirty and overgrown, was clean, as if regularly tended.

"Something's off about this grave," Aurore remarked.

As she spoke, the slabs sealing the grave fell.

No, not fell—opened.

Inward, like a door, revealing darkness and stone stairs descending deeper.

“Wow,” Lumian marveled. “It’s huge!”

Not the average grave he’d pictured, but more like a spacious mausoleum. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Cordu has such a place… Aurore had thought six years in town taught her everything about Cordu, but it was growing stranger by the day.

As the siblings talked, the owl swooped into the depths of the mausoleum.

The underground space was no exaggeration. As White Paper followed, it entered a tomb chamber.

About the size of Lumian’s kitchen, the chamber held a black coffin at its center.

The coffin wasn’t closed. The lid leaned against the side, resting on the ground.

The owl flew over and perched on the coffin’s edge.

“The dead Warlock?” Lumian tensed.

Aurore tersely agreed and instructed White Paper to approach the coffin and peer inside.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian spotted a figure lurking in a corner of the tomb.

Before he could tell his sister to check it out, White Paper’s gaze fell into the open coffin.

With a bang, the mercury mirror before them shattered, and Aurore

let out a pained, muffled cry.

Lumian spun to face his sister, only to find her eyes squeezed shut. Blood-streaked tears traced her cheeks, and her facial muscles spasmed as if they might split.

Without waiting for the semi-illiterate mysticism student to react, Aurore retrieved a short incense stick from a hidden pocket and lit it with a match.

A subtle scent wafted, distant and faint, soothing the body and mind.

Aurore's facial distortion eased. Finally, she exhaled and wiped her tears with a handkerchief.

"Are you okay?" Lumian asked, concerned.

Aurore's eyes remained closed.

"It's not serious. I'll recover after some sleep. Luckily, White Paper is weak. Sometimes, weakness is an advantage!"

She rejoiced.

"Huh?" Lumian didn't understand.

Aurore laughed at herself.

"In short, I saw something I shouldn't have, but White Paper was too weak to handle it. It caught only a fleeting glimpse before suffering severe injuries that forced it to retreat into the spirit world. The impact on me lessened significantly as well. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been so easy to keep things under control. It could have been quite problematic."

...

The world of mysticism is perilous… Lumian truly grasped the meaning of not seeing what one shouldn't.

He waited for his sister to recover slightly before asking, "What did White Paper see? Why was it so harmful?"

“I saw a silver-black speck of light.” Aurore didn’t dare to remember. “As for things that can cause damage just by looking at them, there are countless possibilities. Perhaps it’s an object that reveals godhood, or a High-Sequence Beyonder’s Mythical Creature form, or something laden with curses and malice…”

“Mythical Creature form?” Lumian had never encountered this term before.

Aurore casually elucidated, “The essence of the divine pathway is to transform Beyonders into deities. At Sequence 4, we can assume our own Mythical Creature form, albeit incomplete. For those below Sequence 4, merely witnessing this form can inflict harm. They might even lose control.”

Saints are that formidable? They’re worlds apart from Beyonders below Sequence 4… No wonder they’re deemed demigods at Sequence 4… Lumian instantly recognized his own ignorance. He had naively believed that the demigod title was basically no different from lower-ranked Beyonders.

He then said, “Aurore, when White Paper neared the coffin, I think I saw a figure in a corner of the tomb, but I couldn’t make out who it was, what they looked like, or what they wore.”

“Another person was there?” Aurore was taken aback.

Lumian nodded.

“So, is the one inside the coffin the deceased Warlock or the one in the corner?”

“I think it’s the one in the coffin.” Aurore, eyes still closed, pondered before continuing, “The one in the corner is either his puppet or subordinate, or another Beyonder. They control the Warlock’s corpse.”

...

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words.

“This means the Warlock issue hasn’t been fully resolved. Perhaps

this is the root cause slowly corrupting Cordu."

This discovery left him both elated and frustrated.

He was pleased that their investigation had advanced significantly, but disheartened that merely glimpsing the Warlock's corpse could injure them. Losing control was a high probability. How could they return to the tomb for further confirmation and pursue additional actions?

Aurore also considered this.

"Let's not visit the tomb for now. We'll concentrate on the area beneath the cathedral. Maybe we can uncover vital clues there to help us resolve the tomb situation."

"Alright." Lumian had previously planned to discuss exploring the cathedral's underground with the three foreigners at dawn.

In response, Aurore added, "If I fully recover, I'll accompany you to the cathedral."

Lumian hesitated for two seconds before consenting.

At this point, they needed to marshal all their strength to find hope!

With her eyes still closed, Aurore asked, "Your ritual appears to have succeeded. How do you feel?"

Lumian recounted the entire ritual process and his gains, but omitted the precise description of the being.

"I nearly lost control when I received the boon. It stabilized afterward, and my body underwent no abnormal changes. Perhaps it's because my Sequence is low enough."

Aurore smiled, eyes still closed.

"The dance that summons abnormal creatures around and allows one to be possessed by them is quite intriguing.

"It reminds me of a legendary ability from our homeland, the

Spiritual Boxer!”

“Huh?” Lumian couldn’t comprehend.

Aurore laughed and replied, “It entails requesting partial possession from demigod-level creatures to utilize their combat prowess.”

“That would require an incredibly robust body, soul, and mind, right?” Lumian speculated.

Aurore didn’t pursue the topic further and instructed her brother, “Help me back to my room. I need to rest.”

As Lumian assisted his sister and they walked to her bedroom, he casually inquired, “What I find odd about that ritual is that I extracted a bit of power from the seal without the bluish-black symbol’s owner’s consent. Could it be that He has been watching me the entire time? That’s impossible. How could He have that much free time?”

Aurore mulled it over for a moment before responding, “You mentioned that the mysterious woman’s description of the honorific name was vague and inaccurate to avoid drawing the attention of the corresponding being.

“Could it be that the black thorns and the bluish-black symbol have some sort of shared authority?” Lumian pondered aloud. “Maybe They both have power in the Fate domain. And when you use a vague honorific name, it could refer not only to the person with the black thorns, but also the owner of the bluish-black symbol.

“Under normal circumstances, this wouldn’t matter much, but because you have the corresponding symbols and power on the altar, they reacted to the stimulation and the existence discovered your actions. And since you were guided by the mysterious lady, it was easy for you to obtain permission.

“So when you finish reciting all the honorific names and point to the corruption in your body, there won’t be any obstacles in extracting some strength. The ‘back door’ has already been opened.”

“What an ingenious ritual design… It has to be an expert at

exploiting bugs.”

“I see,” Lumian said, finally understanding the situation.

Chapter 74 - 74 Mute

74 Mute

His sister needed rest, so Lumian couldn't learn new Hermes and ancient Hermes words. He could only revise what he had already learned. Around ten o'clock, he left the house and headed straight to Ol' Tavern.

He had two objectives: first, he wanted to see if the mysterious lady would appear after he became a Dancer and provide him with some knowledge. Second, Leah and the other foreigners lived there. After yesterday's incident, they might not be out today.

Upon entering Ol' Tavern, Lumian quickly scanned the room and was disappointed to find that the spot where the lady usually sat was vacant.

With a slow exhale, he walked to the bar counter, intending to ask if the three foreigners were around.

At this moment, the tavern owner, Maurice Bénet, appeared to have just woken up and was clearly not in high spirits. He had a bulbous nose and was conversing with a customer at the bar.

The customer seemed agitated, gesturing wildly and making muffled sounds, but he couldn't speak.

Mute? Lumian approached curiously and realized the customer wasn't one of the village mutes but Jean Maury, Sybil Berry's husband.

Sybil was the mistress of Padre Guillaume Bénet, sister of Shepherd Pierre Berry, and a member of their small group.

Jean Maury isn't mute… Lumian assessed the middle-aged man in

confusion.

His black hair was unkempt, and his stubble was uneven. His eyes were filled with anger and fear.

Uncharacteristically agitated, he gestured urgently, trying to communicate something to the tavern owner.

As Lumian thought, “Odd,” he approached the bar counter and knocked on it with a smile.

“Hey, what’s going on?

“Maurice, did you sell fake alcohol to Jean? He looks so angry he can’t speak.”

“What’s that got to do with me?” Maurice Bénet quickly defended himself. “He muted himself.”

Jean Maury paused and glanced at Lumian, reverting to his usual sullen demeanor.

He then turned and left Ol’ Tavern.

After he disappeared through the door, Lumian lowered his voice and asked, “What’s wrong with him?”

Maurice Bénet looked outside and whispered, “I heard he caught Sybil and the padre in bed together last night, and it made him so mad he went mute. Today, he’s been telling everyone he sees. Heh, he doesn’t even have the guts to go to Dariège to confront the padre. What a coward. Serves him right!”

Lumian was baffled and shocked.

If he remembered correctly, Jean Maury knew about his wife Sybil’s prolonged affair with the padre. He just didn’t want her to be with another man. How could he be so angry that he went mute over something he was prepared for?

Something was off!

Moreover, in the previous cycle, there had been no instance of Jean Maury becoming mute from anger. Otherwise, Lumian would have known.

In Cordu, this was headline news. It would have spread rapidly.

Could it be that their investigations had caused a disturbance, making Jean Maury encounter something he wouldn't have otherwise? As Lumian speculated, he showed an excited expression.

"Is that so?

"Then I'll have to ask him properly!"

Maurice Bénet wasn't surprised by his eagerness for gossip, thinking it was typical.

He scolded jokingly, "Damned kid, be decent and don't provoke that poor man. Besides, he's mute and can't write. How can he tell you what happened?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian chuckled and said, "Can't he gesture?"

He raised his hands and clenched his left fist, gently hitting his right palm.

Throughout the Dariège region and even across southern Intis, this was a universal gesture for the act between a man and a woman.

Maurice Bénet cursed angrily, "I hope you've got some decency left and don't play pranks on that poor man."

"Don't worry. I just want to 'hear' the story." Lumian waved his hand and dashed out of Ol' Tavern, searching for Jean Maury.

However, Lumian didn't know where the man had gone, nor was he gesturing his story to other villagers. Lumian scoured Cordu but found no trace of him.

Finally, he arrived at Jean Maury's house.

At the entrance, Sybil Berry, clad in a grayish-white dress, was

sorting through spoiled potatoes.

“What’s the matter?” The woman looked up at Lumian.

Like Pierre Berry, she had blue eyes, and her long black hair flowed softly down her back, unlike other married women who always wore their hair in a bun.

Lumian answered frankly, “I’m looking for Jean Maury?”

With plump cheeks and gentle features, Sybil replied indifferently,”He’s not home.”

“Then do you know where he went?” Lumian pressed.

Sybil replied calmly, “We had an argument last night. He might have left Cordu and doesn’t want to return for the time being.”

Lumian’s brows twitched. He sensed that something bad had happened.

Clearly, Jean Maury couldn’t leave Cordu. That would trigger the cycle and cause a restart!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian wore a mischievous grin.

“Why did you guys quarrel? I heard that you and the padre…”

He didn’t finish the sentence but instead punched his right palm with his left fist.

Sybil’s face turned cold as she cursed in a low voice, “Get lost! Get out of my house!”

Lumian clicked his tongue and left Jean Maury’s house.

After walking for a distance, the smile on his face vanished.

In truth, he didn’t want to ask about Sybil’s affair with the padre. He had seen the padre and Madame Pualis naked. What else was there to ask?

But if he didn't ask, it didn't fit his persona in the eyes of the villagers. He had already "visited" them. If he didn't anger the mistress of the house, could he still live up to the name of Prankster King of Cordu?

Therefore, Lumian had no choice but to ask. Otherwise, he might be suspected.

...

The persona of a character was sometimes useful and sometimes troublesome.

Judging by the padre's actions and the information he had, Lumian suspected that Jean Maury hadn't become mute because of the affair but had uncovered something else.

It was highly likely that he had been poisoned and rendered mute!

I have to find him as soon as possible. If he goes around looking for people to complain to, he might just die like the previous one. No, he's already missing… The more Lumian thought about it, the more he felt that something had happened to Jean Maury.

The villager who had snitched in Dariège previously had fallen to his death for no reason!

Just as Lumian was making his last effort to find Jean Maury, he encountered Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, who were "hanging around" in the village.

They were still wearing their original clothes.

"Good morning, my cabbages," Lumian greeted them with a smile.

As soon as they approached, he immediately asked in a low voice, "Did anything happen yesterday?"

Leah replied with a smile, "That madame doesn't seem to want to pursue the matter. She didn't appear."

As expected… Lumian looked around and saw that there was no one

nearby. Only then did he tell the three official investigators about his sister's deduction of the Madame Pualis pathway and her guess of Pulitt's identity.

...

Valentine's expression soured as he listened, while Leah was rather excited.

Ryan recalled and said, "It's rare for a Demoness to appear in Riston Province. We don't know much about this, but the higher-ups should know very well. I'll send a telegram later and tell them about Madame Pualis. Hmm, I'll only mention how Madame Pualis's room has Pulitt's photo, but the Roquefort family doesn't have Pualis."

Seeing Lumian's puzzled expression, Ryan added, "In Intis, Demoness-related matters often happen."

So, my sister's pen pal is also in Intis? Lumian nodded and said, "So far, Madame Pualis doesn't seem to have anything to do with the loop. Also, she seems to be aware of the loop. That might be why she didn't pursue our search of the castle.

"Is it possible that we can join forces with her to some extent?"

Valentine blurted out, "How can I work with such an evil and filthy person who's even more terrifying than a demon?"

Lumian didn't even look at him. He turned his gaze to Ryan and Leah.

Seeing that they were somewhat hesitant, he tried to persuade them earnestly.

"A limited cooperation, only in the loop. When this damned loop is resolved, you can deal with her however you want! You can even tell her directly about this. I believe she can understand and accept it."

Ryan thought for a few seconds, patted Valentine's shoulder, and said to Lumian, "Indeed, the most important thing now is to resolve this loop. However, we can't be sure of that madame's attitude. We don't dare to visit her directly. I'm afraid we'll have to trouble you or your

sister to communicate with her and inquire."

"Alright," Lumian agreed.

He planned to do it himself.

He didn't want his sister to be alone with Madame Pualis when he realized that she might harbor abnormal feelings for his sister.

Valentine kept a poker face as he listened to their conversation. He neither agreed nor disagreed.

Lumian peered around furtively once more.

"There are three more clues…"

He recounted Reimund's case, Jean Maury's situation, and the "burial chamber" where the owl had flown into.

Leah was stunned.

"How did you get so many clues so quickly?"

She even suspected this guy or his sister were off. That was why there were red flags and clues everywhere.

Who were the real investigators here? Why hadn't we caught on?

"Blame yourselves for not remembering the first two cycles." Lumian smirked, spreading his hands in mock innocence.

Leah nodded, swallowing his explanation.

Ryan mulled it over for a beat before uttering in a gravelly voice, "Then we gotta investigate the cathedral catacombs ASAP. Yeah, it's probably very dangerous down there. You should contact Madame Pualis first. If she's down to joining, we'll have a way higher chance of nailing this."

Chapter 75 - 75 Meeting Madame Pualis Again

75 Meeting Madame Pualis Again

Outside the administrator's residence, a building transformed from an old castle.

Lumian strolled through the gardens and approached the front door. He said to the valet standing guard, "I need a word with Madame Pualis."

The valet—clad in a crimson shirt and ivory pants—sized him up warily and asked, "What's this about?"

Is this brat here to make trouble?

!!

Lumian scoffed. "That's not for you to know."

Why would some servant care so much? Who do you think you are? How many kids have you popped out?

The valet hesitated before deciding to pass the message to Madame Pualis and let her decide if she wanted to entertain this cheeky young man.

Lumian loitered by the entrance for a few minutes. When the valet returned, Lumian said, "Madame will see you in the small parlor."

The small parlor was familiar to Lumian. The few times he had accompanied his sister here, he had been entertained in that very room. Without needing directions, Lumian made his way to the correct room. The valet trailed behind like an obedient dog.

Lumian sprawled on the sofa in the parlor and helped himself to the black tea. Then Madame Pualis glided through the doorway.

The lady was dressed to kill in an exquisite black corset dress, a matching shawl draped over her shoulders. She wore a slightly askew lady's round hat and a diamond necklace laced in gold.

The outfit struck Lumian as familiar. He realized that Madame Pualis had worn this very ensemble when she came to seduce him.

She did that on purpose, didn't she? Lumian thought with an icy smile.

"Good morning, Madame Pualis."

Just as the greeting left his lips, Lumian suddenly noticed the figure beside Madame Pualis. It wasn't Cathy, the lady's maid, but the 'midwife' who had met her demise at Ryan's hands just yesterday.

The 'midwife' wore a grayish white dress. Her eyes were blank, her face expressionless. Her skin had a bluish tinge, identical to when Lumian had seen her corpse in the garden the previous evening. However, she wasn't carrying any gardening tools this time.

Bringing the 'midwife' instead of her maid? She did that on purpose too, didn't she? Lumian couldn't help the cynical thought.

Madame Pualis smiled. "It should be noon by now."

She settled into the armchair that signified the host, while the 'midwife' stood to one side like an accessory.

"If you haven't eaten lunch, it's not noon yet," Lumian quipped.

His heart raced underneath the retort. He suspected Madame Pualis had brought the 'midwife' here to interrogate him about yesterday's events.

If he didn't handle this well and Leah's group didn't restart the cycle in time, Lumian suspected he might have to play 'daddy' for a few minutes. Or longer.

Madame Pualis glanced at him, her bright eyes sparkling with an inscrutable smile. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Casually, she asked, “What seems to be the trouble?”

Lumian decided to cut to the chase. Solemnly, he said, “Madame, you must have realized we’re stuck in a time loop.”

As he spoke, he watched Madame Pualis’s face closely, alert for any reaction.

If she revealed surprise, shock or confusion, he would quickly add, “Just kidding!” Then, he would start with something odd and see how she responded. Only then would he consider telling her about the time loop.

Of course, if Madame Pualis looked like she already knew and her ‘secret’ was out, escape would be his top priority.

The odds of escape were slim in that scenario, but how would he know if there was any hope without trying?

Madame Pualis sized Lumian up for a few seconds, then smiled.

“Looks like you’ve found a boss too.”

She didn’t seem surprised by the time loop concept, nor did she look puzzled. That was as good as admitting she knew what was going on.

Boss? That was a favorite word in Aurore’s books. Did she mean some higher power that granted boons? Lumian interpreted Madame Pualis’s words.

He believed she could retain memories across loops only because she had a ‘boss’—some kind of protection.

Lumian smiled and pretended to sigh in relief. “Seems I won’t need to explain much.”

“What are you getting at?” Pualis asked, still smiling.

The ‘midwife’ stood motionless beside her like a mannequin.

Lumian had an excuse prepared and launched into it with enough charm to convince anyone.

“People outside already know about Cordu’s abnormality. If we don’t end this loop soon, this place will be wiped out. Everyone dies.

“We’re in the same boat. Only by uniting can we avoid sinking. Only then do we have a chance of finding the key to escape this loop and return to normal life.

“Madame, time is running out. Let’s work together.”

Madame Pualis listened with a faint smile, not interrupting Lumian’s story.

At this, she chuckled. “Who said we’re in this together?”

What? Could she be the one wanting to sink the boat? Lumian grew alarmed.

Madame Pualis maintained her smile. “Why should I cooperate with you? I can leave here at a specific time.”

Wh… Lumian was stunned, but a glimmer of hope flickered.

“Are you saying you have a way out of the time loop? You only need to do something at a precise time?”

Madame Pualis nodded and sipped her tea from fine porcelain. She said nothing else.

The perks of a higher power’s protection… Wait, this isn’t the first cycle. Why is she still here? Could other cycles have restarted before that specific time? Hmm… That explains why she didn’t pursue us infiltrating the castle and killing the ‘midwife’. She fears the three Beyonders causing trouble and forcibly restarting the cycle… Lumian grasped things that had puzzled him.

He suspected Madame Pualis was also waiting for the twelfth night.

Amid his thoughts, Lumian smiled. “I wonder if you can take Aurore and me out of this cycle?”

What official investigators? I've never heard of them!

Madame Pualis appraised him with amusement.

"Why should I help you?"

…

"Didn't you say that love…" Lumian stopped, unable to continue.

He meant to mention Madame Pualis's words about love, hoping she might save him and Aurore out of kindness. But since Madame Pualis likely desired his sister, he couldn't say it.

If Madame Pualis loved him, a shameless man like Lumian would have played the love card and offered to bear her child to get them out of this loop.

Well, he would grit his teeth and give birth himself if it meant Madame Pualis evacuating him and Aurore from this cycle.

Madame Pualis's expression shifted slightly. After a few seconds of silence, she said, "Are you suggesting love is unfathomable? Saving her despite clearly wanting her dead for her mistake?"

Lumian didn't answer. He could tell Madame Pualis referred to a 'she'.

Madame Pualis didn't expect a response. She sighed, "But what if it's irredeemable?"

Irredeemable… Lumian's heart sank like plunging into an icy lake in early spring.

Regaining his breath, he asked for confirmation,

"You mean, at that time, you can only take a few people, but that doesn't include me or Aurore?"

Madame Pualis nodded.

…

“You can see it that way.”

Looks like I still have to rely on myself… Lumian sighed, forcing calm.

The rise and crash of hope was unpleasant indeed.

He thought for a moment, then smiled.

“Madame, the three foreigners and I will explore the cathedral’s underground later. If anything happens, the cycle might restart ahead of time. We won’t even make it to Lent.”

Let alone the twelfth night.

Madame Pualis narrowed her eyes, chin raised. “Are you threatening me?”

“No, just a reminder.” Lumian smiled sincerely, the picture of relaxed.

Outwardly, he feared angering Madame Pualis and being confined here to give birth. The three investigators would restart the cycle if he didn’t emerge fifteen minutes later.

Madame Pualis gazed into Lumian’s eyes for a few seconds. Seeing no flinch or evasion, she suddenly smiled.

“You’re truly interesting. It would be lovely if you and your sister became my lovers.”

Without waiting for a response, she turned to the ‘midwife’.

“You destroyed a Heretic Spellmaster, yet I didn’t blame you. I’m merciful enough, but you still expect my help?”

Heretic Spellmaster? Lumian filed away the term and said earnestly, “This isn’t about help. It’s about doing what benefits everyone.”

Madame Pualis fell silent for a few seconds before smiling again.

“I won’t explore the cathedral’s underground with you, but for

Aurore's sake and your courage, I'll provide some help if anything happens."

Lumian was satisfied to negotiate this much. He stood and mimicked the gentlemanly posture from his sister's books. Pressing a hand to his chest, he bowed. "I thank you, my lady."

Madame Pualis chuckled. "Shouldn't it be 'my sunshine'?"

She referred to what Lumian had said in a previous loop: "Madame, you are my sunshine."

Lumian felt embarrassed but had always been shameless. Pretending not to hear, he left the small parlor.

……

After descending the hill from the castle and entering Cordu, Lumian spotted Leah, Ryan and Valentine waiting to greet him.

"How did it go?" Leah asked with a smile.

Lumian recounted his conversation with Madame Pualis, concluding, "This is the best outcome we could hope for."

"That's right. We can still count on someone to help in our direst moment." Ryan nodded.

Lumian asked, "Did you get a reply?"

Before visiting the castle, Ryan had reported Madame Pualis wasn't truly of the Roquefort family and Pulitt's photo was in her room. Leah exhaled, answering for Ryan, "Our superiors remind us to consider the possibility of Pulitt becoming a woman through potion or power."

"As expected," Lumian tersely acknowledged. "When do we explore the cathedral's underground?"

Ryan had already decided. In a deep voice, he said, "Now."

Chapter 76 - 76 Physical Examination

76 Physical Examination

“Now?” Lumian jumped in fright.

Though eager to explore the cathedral’s underground, not to this extent!

A thought occurred. “Can’t we wait until nightfall?”

In the dead of night with only two or three servants left in the cathedral, wouldn’t it be easy for Beyonders like them to infiltrate?

Ryan replied gently yet firmly, “Now is the ideal time. Think about it. If we realize there’s no one in the cathedral at night and it lacks protection, how could the padre and company not realize the same? I suspect they’ll send their strongest to guard it in shifts or set subtle traps. Once triggered, there’ll be an alarm.

“And now, it’s nearly noon. All villagers have gone home, so no one will come pray at this hour. Furthermore, it’s daytime, so the traps won’t activate to prevent accidents. With the two padres and servants in the cathedral, it’s easy for people to lower their guard. In short, their strongest will be home eating in peace. We only face the padre, deputy padre and three odd-job workers.”

Lumian nodded, grasping it, and finished Ryan’s thought.

“And before April 3rd, the padre is still an ordinary person without supernatural powers.”

Today was April 1st.

“Plus, though the deputy padre seems off, he’s clearly not a core member of the padre’s team. Same for the three odd-job workers,” Leah added with a smile. “Can’t four Beyonders handle five ordinary people silently?”

Lumian hesitated before replying, “But won’t this make it impossible to reach the twelfth night?”

This amounted to triggering an abnormality on the padre’s side. History would change accordingly.

“You said it yourself. Compared to us, the padre and company will hold back until Lent to usher in the twelfth night. As long as we don’t kill him, finding someone entering the basement will make him pretend not to notice and accelerate gaining supernatural powers,” Leah said smiling. “Gaining power, he might hunt us with the others, but Cordu isn’t small and we’re not weak. We can hide and stall until Lent.”

Lumian accepted this reasoning. “Alright, let’s do it now.” He reminded them, “But Aurore’s eyes haven’t fully healed. I’m afraid she can’t help us.”

Before seeing Madame Pualis, Lumian had checked on Aurore. Her eyes might only recover by evening.

“It’s fine. Madame Pualis backs us, doesn’t she?” Leah said half-jokingly, the bells above her head ringing.

Lumian no longer objected and cautiously suggested, “Before the cathedral, let’s walk around the village and confirm Shepherd Pierre Berry and the dangerous ones are home.”

He wanted to avoid running into Pierre and the others, who had received a boon, upon entering the basement.

Ryan nodded approval, agreeing.

Discussing details, Valentine glanced coldly at Lumian. “Do you need cleansing?”

Leah quickly explained on her companion’s behalf, “You went into

the castle and spoke with Madame Pualis. You might have been corrupted again."

"No, I believe Madame Pualis won't do that this time. It's meaningless." Lumian felt certain.

He had no choice but to feel certain. He dared not let Valentine purify him again. Compared to yesterday, he was already a Dancer. Evil aura had seeped from the seal inside. Once purified by holy water, there would likely be huge trouble.

According to Aurore's analysis, he needed full-body purification.

Seeing Lumian having no issue with it, Valentine, just being kind, naturally said no more.

Then, wandering Cordu, Lumian made his way home and told Aurore their plan.

Aurore was vexed at the inability to join and help. She could only offer to wait in the village edge and restart the cycle if anything went wrong. This required little vision. It sufficed to vaguely see the road. Agreeing to have her restart before anyone came for her at 12:30, Lumian bid Aurore farewell and reconvened with Leah's group.

By then, the three official Beyonders had confirmed where Shepherd Pierre Berry and the padre's core members were.

Making a half detour, they reached the cathedral's side along a small path, the door they had used to catch the padre and Madame Pualis's affair in a previous cycle.

Lumian readied to volunteer when Leah strode over, using a wire to fiddle with the lock and push open the dark wooden door.

Seeing Lumian's surprise, she smiled. "It's a necessary technique for investigation."

Don't make it sound so noble… Lumian didn't voice his thoughts as Leah had already entered the cathedral.

The small silver bells on her veil and boots didn't move or make a

sound.

Lumian tried interpreting this.

“It’s very safe entering the cathedral. No danger?”

Leah glanced back. “Please add ‘limited to dealing with the cathedral’s people.’”

Did this mean danger in the basement remained unknown? Lumian roughly understood, gaining insight into divination. However, even improved by Dancer, he lacked divination. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Ryan passed him, following Leah into the cathedral.

Steps in, a servant approached.

In a blink, Ryan rushed over, raised a hand and chopped the servant behind an ear.

The servant crumpled soundlessly. Ryan caught and dragged him into the nearest room.

Leah rushed over, taking a colorless liquid-filled bottle and pouring it down the servant’s throat.

“What’s this?” Lumian asked, curious.

Leah maintained her smile.

“A sedative.”

You’re well prepared… Lumian sighed inwardly.

Taking down the three odd-job workers without alerting the padre, Leah crept into the padre’s room through the shadows, silently turning the handle and cracking the wooden door. She saw Cordu’s mightiest man in a gold-threaded white robe, breathing slowly and deeply on a simple bed.

Plates for lunch and silver cutlery were on a table by the door.

Leah sized him up and leapt in, chopping the padre behind his ear.

Immediately, she poured most of the remaining sedative down Guillaume Bénet's throat.

"That's it?" Lumian stuck his head out from behind Leah.

Wasn't this too easy?

"What else? What did you expect of an ordinary person?" Leah asked, amused.

Lumian tersely acknowledged, lifting the padre's robe.

...

"What are you doing?" Leah was shocked yet smiling.

Lumian said without turning, "Checking his body."

He wanted to see if the padre had the black thorn symbol on his chest.

Soon, the padre Guillaume Bénet's top half was exposed, revealing nothing but tufts of black hair.

No black thorn symbol. No black mark of a special contract.

Lumian nodded imperceptibly, muttering, Looks like the symbol is received after accepting the boon. Or does it exist now but only activates through Cogitation?

And how did I get mine? The twelfth night?

Thinking the padre Guillaume Bénet might lack the black thorn symbol now, Lumian couldn't help evil thoughts.

If I kill him now, will it trigger the cycle?

How would killing this man in advance impact later events?

Considering the padre's importance later, Lumian— still wanting to wait for the twelfth night—convinced himself otherwise.

...

Leaving the padre's room, Ryan said to Lumian and Leah, "Can't find the deputy padre."

"Ah?" Lumian hesitated before understanding. "Maybe he's home. He's not allowed to live in the cathedral, and no one brings him food."

"This demon's lackey is truly tyrannical," Valentine cursed, glancing at the padre in the room.

Without further ado, the quartet headed in the opposite direction for the altar.

In a corner loomed a stone staircase, narrow and steep, allowing only one person to pass through.

It ascended into the cathedral's roof before winding deeper underground.

Leah took point. After taking a few flights of stairs to the bottom, the veil and the four small silver bells on her boots rang at the same time.

Ding ding dang dang. The sound wasn't loud but echoed faintly in the small space. Sometimes urgent, sometimes soothing.

"What does this mean?" Lumian struggled to interpret it based on his past encounters.

Leah turned aside and grinned.

"It means there's a level of risk, but I can't determine how serious."

"The divination had worked for the castle…" Lumian muttered to himself in surprise. "Doesn't this mean it's even more dangerous underground?"

"Not necessarily," Leah soothed. "Perhaps it's just interference. Hadn't Madame Pualis been absent at the castle?"

At this point, it was impossible to back out over such a trivial hiccup. They descended the stairs one by one into the depths.

Soon, the four saw an old brown wooden door in the basement.

Leah pinched her glabella and activated her Spirit Vision before approaching the wooden door.

Though Lumian hadn't mastered activating Spirit Vision, with the Dancer's spirituality boost, it didn't take long for him to activate it. He saw everyone glowing red and healthy.

When her companions were set, Leah opened the basement door.

Amidst the creaking, Lumian caught a whiff of a familiar fragrance. Elegant and sweet.

He instantly made the connection and hurriedly told Ryan and the others, "Smells like gray amber."

This was the material used to revere the hidden entity called Inevitability!

Chapter 77 - 77 Changes

77 Changes

Lumian had briefly informed Ryan and the others about the black thorn symbol on Guillaume Bénet's chest, "Inevitability" in the hidden entity's honorific, gray amber, tulips, cloves, and deer musk for the corresponding domain. He claimed the source was the padre, and it had nothing to do with him.

Hearing this, Leah, Ryan, and Valentine immediately grew alert with guesses.

"The sacrificial site?" Ryan muttered.

As he spoke, all looked to the basement.

!!

With dim light trickling down the stairs, they could barely see inside.

The space under the cathedral was bigger than Lumian's whole first floor. The floor was grayish-white stone slabs, and it looked pitch black due to the lack of light. In the middle stood a stone platform half a man's height.

The top of the stone platform caved in slightly, as if hiding something, but nobody could see clearly.

As Lumian pondered, he whispered, "This might be where the padre and company pray to the evil entity for boons."

"They actually built the evil god's altar under the cathedral!" Valentine was furious. Lumian suspected he would combust any second and turn to holy light to purify everything here.

"Calm down," Ryan patted Valentine's shoulder. "Get ready to light

the fire."

He then gestured for Leah to scout.

Leah kept her sweet smile and sniffed.

"That hidden entity with 'Inevitability' as an honorific name really likes fragrance…"

Sighing, she entered the basement, lips moving as if chanting.

The four silver bells chimed again, sometimes intense, sometimes soothing.

One step, two steps, three steps… Leah turned and said to Ryan and the others, "Nothing unusual around the entrance."

Ryan, Lumian, and Valentine entered the basement through the old brown wooden door and came to where Leah had stopped.

Leah kept moving forward.

After a few steps, the silver bell on her veil and boots shook violently.

Ding ding dang dang!

The sound spread everywhere.

Specks of dawn-like light immediately appeared around Ryan and condensed, forming silver full-body armor over him.

Simultaneously, a pure broadsword of light appeared in Ryan's hand.

Valentine spread his arms, letting golden illusory flames burn around him.

One flame suddenly lengthened and widened, and Leah walked out of it.

She returned to Lumian and the others from near the altar.

How magical… Lumian marveled at Leah's act again. Compared to the Sun pathway's abilities and Ryan's combat state he could

understand and imagine, Leah's various acts were even more bizarre and more magical. For example, her ability to transfer his wound from his thigh to his calf edge yesterday blew his mind. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Faced with the sudden 'alarm,' Lumian responded the only way he could.

He drew the iron-black axe and hid behind Ryan, whose body had grown much larger.

In this, he sized up his surroundings but found no abnormal changes.

He had his Spirit Vision on, after all.

Of course, Lumian had found something. With the golden flames' help, he saw piles of human bones at the basement edge. Some were even covered in light sheepskin.

Sacrificial offerings from before? The padre and company have conducted cultist rituals here for at least half a year, but Aurore and I didn't notice at all… Lumian's thoughts raced as he again felt Cordu, where he'd lived nearly five years, was unfamiliar. At some point, this place had become abnormal. Perhaps, it had been abnormal from the beginning.

Ryan warily eyed the altar direction and asked, "Is everything alright?"

Leah shook her head. "I don't feel any issues, just signs of danger."

"Strange…" Lumian's voice trailed off as he turned to Leah.

He saw that the beautiful woman's face had turned translucent, and twisted maggots seemed to crawl below. She was even scarier and eviler than legendary evil spirits, making his scalp tingle and heart race wildly.

This exceeded Lumian's imagination. He suspected he'd have nightmares for a long time.

"Y-your face!" he warned Leah, unable to contain his fear.

Leah subconsciously touched her face with her right hand, and her expression changed.

As for whether her expression changed, Lumian couldn't tell from the transparent and distorted maggots.

Leah hurriedly looked at her hand back. The skin there had also turned translucent, and the flesh below seemed to have turned into strange maggots.

"You're losing control!" Valentine also noticed Leah's condition.

Leah muttered confused, "But my mental state is alright."

Ryan tilted his head and reminded, "Make sure you're not hallucinating."

Almost simultaneously, Lumian realized the tall warrior was rapidly shrinking. The silver armor over him and broadsword of light disintegrated.

In a blink, Ryan turned into a short man only about 1.5 meters tall. His brown coat and light yellow strides were either too big or too long.

He's also mutating? Only Valentine and I are fine… Lumian's pupils dilated as he subconsciously looked at Valentine.

"Ryan, you've shrunk!" Valentine, already a pure light figure, warned his companion anxiously.

Lumian, nearly blinded, hurriedly asked Leah, "Any changes for me?"

Leah said with countless transparent maggots that seemed to want to crawl out but couldn't leave the flesh, "You're very normal. But under such circumstances, normality might be the greatest abnormality."

I'm normal? Could the black thorn symbol have protected me, causing the danger here to think I'm one of them? Lumian suddenly guessed.

At this, Ryan had finished checking his body. He said warily, "I'm not

shrinking, but I've returned to my former self. I've even lost my superpowers."

"Former self?" Lumian blurted.

…

He vaguely thought of something.

Ryan nodded. "Yes, I'm naturally short. As a man, this is a huge misfortune. So I chose Warrior when selecting my potion. It could effectively change my height.

"I don't know if I'm lucky or not. The past five to six years had many Beyonder monsters and abnormalities related to the Warrior pathway appear, allowing me to be less worried about the materials needed to advance."

Hearing Ryan's words, Lumian roughly understood the anomaly's source.

"You've returned to the past! As far as I know, the authority of that hidden existence is related to the past…"

With that, he mimicked the mysterious lady and deliberately paused a few seconds before adding another word.

"It also involves the present and— and— and the future."

Though now speaking Intis, he still had to be cautious.

Leah reacted quickly and blurted, "Valentine and I have entered the future. Is this the state of one of our futures?"

"And I'm the present?" Lumian asked, confirming Leah's guess.

He then thought of the three-faced monster he had encountered in the dream ruins.

…

The monster had only one head, but it bore three faces: one aged, one

in its prime, one youthful.

Lumian suspected this was another gift from the owner of the black thorn symbol. Moreover, it was of a higher order, but the recipient couldn't withstand it or had met with an accident, turning into a three-faced monster.

Leah nodded gently.

"Likely, but this change in state doesn't affect my mind. I don't feel like I'm about to lose control at all."

"Nor do I feel like I'm immolating," Valentine added.

Ryan pondered a moment and said, "Similarly, I didn't lose my memories.

"Perhaps there's only a little power left here that can't affect the mind, heart, and memories, but if we maintain this state for too long, I'm unsure if there will be any serious aftereffects."

"I'm fine. At most, I'll consume the potion again and advance again. As for you, there should be many possibilities in the future, but now, perhaps the future has been determined, one will lose control, and the other will transform into holy light. This is an inevitability I understand."

"How frightening," Leah exclaimed with a smile. "Luckily, we can restart the cycle while also attempting to seek the present here."

Seeing that there were no terrifying monsters attacking, Lumian suggested, "Shall we go out first and see if we can recover naturally?

"Besides, we might encounter a power that represents the present along the way."

Ryan didn't object. "We can give it a shot."

He was now an ordinary person, and it would be dangerous for him to go any further.

"I'm afraid that another change in state will cause me to lose

control," Leah said cautiously.

It would definitely be good to encounter the 'present,' but it would be troublesome to encounter the 'past.' They didn't know what would happen if 'future' was additionally stacked on them.

Lumian took the initiative to say, "Let me scout the way. I still have a chance to change my state."

He mainly wanted to see if his luck was good enough to encounter the 'present' or if the black thorn symbol on his chest protected him.

"Be careful," Ryan warned, and Leah nodded.

Valentine's gaze on Lumian grew less cold.

He couldn't help but think, This lad has a very sacrificial spirit. Furthermore, he's a devout believer of the lord. Once the cycle is lifted, let's see if there's a way to remove the hidden corruption on his body and let him join our team.

Seeing that Lumian was about to take a step forward, Valentine, who had regained his composure, suggested, "Let me see if I can rid myself of this state first."

No one objected. Lumian was the same. This was because he was in the present. He didn't need to remove any negative state or undergo purification.

In the next second, he realized he had miscalculated.

Valentine didn't directly use Holy Water Creation to purify Leah and Ryan. Instead, he used Sun Halo.

A dark golden light flashed, and an invisible force spread in all directions.

Chapter 78 - 78 Traces

78 Traces

Lumian jumped in fright. It was too late to evade, so he could only brace for the invisible force to crash upon him.

He instantly felt warmth, and valor flooded his body. It was as if the sun had at last arrived in winter when he lacked clothes.

Other than that, he felt nothing peculiar. It was precisely the same as the experience in the castle yesterday afternoon.

Eh, as a Dancer, am I actually unscathed? Lumian couldn't help but swivel his head to glimpse the short Ryan and the terrifying Leah. He realized that there was no black fog or smoke billowing from them.

Promptly after, Valentine, who was in the form of a figure of light, conjured Holy Water Creation and let fall a few drops on Leah and Ryan. However, the two of them retained their transformed semblances with no signs of improvement.

"Purification and exorcism are futile?" Lumian asked.

He hoped to determine why it was possible and why not. Only then would he, who had already received a boon, know what to evade or feign that nothing had transpired when encountering something similar in the future.

Ryan briefly explained to him, "Purification and exorcism aren't omnipotent. The correspondent power is in the category of evil. For instance, the aura of depravity and all undead. The last isn't necessarily evil, but it's incompatible with the real world. It needs to return to the spirit world, so it can still be purified and exorcized."

"Just like how our definition of an evil god is based on Their style of

acting, the power of an evil god isn't necessarily evil."

Lumian roughly fathomed and thoughtfully asked, "Inevitability's, uh, power doesn't belong to evil, nor does it signify depravity?"

So there is no way to purify or exorcize it?

"Yes." Valentine had already affirmed this through his previous attempt.

From the looks of it, it's normal for me to be able to withstand the halo. But why can the holy water activate the black thorn symbol on my chest and permit me to hear the terrifying sound? This is because the corruption in the seal doesn't belong to me at the moment. It's incompatible with my body, rendering my body impure. Therefore, it needs to be purified? Lumian made a guess.

He had wanted to use Shepherd Pierre Berry, who had already received a boon, as an example to ask if the mutation of the body was also in the category of evil and depravity, but the current situation was rather urgent, so he didn't have the luxury to discuss the topic.

Lumian tried to walk to the basement door.

After taking two steps, he suddenly heard a buzzing sound in his ears. He could vaguely hear a voice that seemed to come from an infinite distance but also seemed to be right before him. However, it wasn't clear enough and was very fuzzy. It only made his chest heat up slightly and his mind enter a state of disorder.

This was very similar to when he saw Noodle Man dancing.

This made Lumian confirm that the black thorn symbol on his chest had been partially activated.

He quickly pivoted around and gazed at Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, only to find that they didn't react abnormally. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian was immediately disheartened. He originally believed that the two symbols on his chest could suppress and weaken Beyonders to a certain extent, but from the looks of it, they could only target the

monsters in the dream ruins, especially those that had been bestowed by the owner of the black thorn symbol.

Of course, he wasn't sure if fully activating the symbol on his chest would affect the surrounding Beyonders.

"Has my condition changed?" he asked Leah and the others.

"No." Leah and the others shook their heads in unison.

Lumian nodded indistinctly and affirmed two things.

The first was the black thorn symbol on his chest, or rather, the evil god corruption sealed in his body. It could indeed help him "resist" the abnormality in the basement.

Secondly, luck was on his side. He was affected by the power of the present.

After a few seconds, Lumian attempted to take a diagonal step forward.

The slight heat in his chest did not weaken, maintaining its previous intensity.

"Any changes this time?" he asked Ryan and the others again.

Leah was the first to shake her head. "You're fine."

Lumian exhaled and muttered inwardly, With the protection of the black thorn symbol, I can move freely here. Shepherd Pierre Berry and company should be the same…

Wait, the padre hasn't received any blessings yet. There's no thorn symbol! How did he reach the altar unscathed?

With this in mind, Lumian grasped something as he turned his gaze to the ground.

With the help of Valentine's light, he saw many messy footprints that ordinary humans couldn't see.

Apart from a small number of them, which were everywhere, they followed a certain pattern and extended to the front of the altar.

Lumian immediately overlapped with the nearest footprint, and the slight heat in his chest began to weaken.

This meant that he had returned to the present.

As expected, there's a safe route here that leads to the present! Lumian suddenly became very happy. This was because the three powerful Beyonders, Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, hadn't discovered it, and he, a mere Hunter, had found it.

This reminded him of something his sister Aurore had said: "Every pathway has its strengths. Before becoming a demigod, Sequence 9 of some paths might trump Sequence 5 of others in certain situations."

Lumian had originally felt inferior and suppressed, useless before the powerful Beyonders these past two days of exploration. Now, he'd regained a good amount of confidence.

Finding faint traces in reality is a Hunter's specialty. Can you?

Of course, Lumian didn't forget that Aurore added: "But there are pathways good at everything."

He gathered his thoughts, turned around, and commanded Ryan, Leah, and Valentine. "Take a step toward the altar at the same time."

Ryan and the others were clearly puzzled. They couldn't just trust Lumian blindly without knowing why.

Lumian could only explain, "Look closely at the ground There are many footprints marking a safe path left behind by the padre's group!"

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, lacking Lumian's abilities, could barely see a trace in the sun's dim light. They believed him.

They knew that in Intis, many Hunter pathway Beyonders had collaborated. Some Sequences were skilled at detecting faint signs.

Following Lumian's guidance, they trekked the secure route.

Instantly, Lumian saw Ryan regain height, Valentine darken, and Leah's face normalize.

They had returned to the present, no longer trapped in the past or future.

Lumian easily rejoined the team on the safe route.

He grinned and said, "No more slip-ups. There may be no coming back if anything else goes south."

He was mimicking Ryan's tone and felt it fit their current situation.

Typically, his attitude would've had him mocking them: "Haha, are you blind? Can't you see any of the obvious signs? Another mistake and you're done for!"

...

Leah touched her face and breathed a sigh of relief. "We're with you."

Lumian wasn't humble. He carefully picked out the footprints on the ground and crept up to the altar.

It wasn't as straightforward as heading back just now since it didn't matter if he took a wrong turn, but Ryan and the others couldn't.

This time, Leah's silver bells stayed silent.

Only once all four had reached the altar did they start ringing, sometimes soothing, other times intense.

"It's dangerous, but we can find a way around it," Leah, experienced enough, explained.

Ryan instantly nodded.

"Don't touch anything here for now. We'll just observe."

Lumian had already set his sights above the altar.

There was a depression at the bottom, as if hollowed out to hold something. Inside were grayish-white candles, a small bottle of clear liquid, and an unopened wooden box.

But the most striking item was a black object—a long robe with a hood.

…

In front, in the center of the circle, was a circular symbol made of thorns.

Every part of it was twisted and pitch-black, as if painted with some strange substance. It gave the feeling of slowly oozing.

Seeing the symbol, Lumian felt dizzy and ringing in his ears.

Ryan snorted, and a dawn-like light naturally emanated from him.

This helped Leah and Valentine suppress the mental confusion.

“Don’t stare at that symbol too long,” Ryan said in a deep voice.

Lumian quickly shifted his gaze aside.

The dizziness and ringing in his ears lessened.

That seems to be all for the altar. Lumian was about to suggest searching the area when he heard Leah ask Ryan, “Will your Sunrise Gleam activate the altar?”

Huh? Lumian whipped his head around and unconsciously looked at the altar again.

Ding ding ding. Leah’s veil and silver boots rang harshly, an urgent warning.

In the same breath, the black altar robe leaped up as if inhabited by an invisible being.

Ooo! A chill wind gusted. Lumian glimpsed transparent faces under the hood—ferocious, warped heads radiating hatred. They swarmed

into a strange, terrifying gestalt.

Lumian recognized one face: pale, swollen, with blood and tears pooling in its eyes. Reimund.

Lumian dodged behind Ryan, uninterested in a closer look.

“Save us! Save us!”

The translucent faces shrieked in unison. Their shrill cries pierced Ryan and the others like needles, threatening to fell them.

Valentine was unmoved. Arms spread, he summoned a holy flame-wreathed pillar of light from the sky. It landed over the black robe.

Light erupted. Lumian and Leah shut their eyes on instinct.

Chapter 79 - 79 Sufferer

79 Sufferer

Sensing the light dim, Lumian hurriedly opened his eyes.

The black robe lay charred on the altar, resisting the golden flames licking at its edges. Yet still it struggled to stand, like a cursed puppet refusing to die.

The translucent faces of Reimund and the others flickered in and out of existence around him, ghosts trapped between the present and a future obliterated.

“Down!” Ryan bellowed.

!!

Lumian dropped without hesitation. If there had been time, he would have thrown himself flat to the ground.

Leah and Valentine were a heartbeat behind, scrambling to duck.

In the same instant, Ryan plunged the Sword of Dawn into the altar’s heart, piercing the robe.

Silently the broadsword shattered into a resplendent storm of light, tearing the altar asunder.

When the radiance cleared, Lumian peered up to find the altar a ruin, reduced by a third. Candles, thorns, and black cloth had vanished, ground to dust floating on the air.

Incredible power… Lumian had pondered this strike since the day before.

“Everything okay?” he asked.

Leah rose and spun swiftly around. The four silver bells decorating her veil and boots jangled ominously, their tune neither reassuring nor alarming.

“This isn’t over.” She warned Ryan and Valentine before murmuring. “The altar’s gone—so what’s the catch?”

As she spoke, Valentine conjured golden flames that floated in the air and lit up the space.

At the far end of the basement, there was naught but piled human bones and a few sheepskins. The ceiling was bare and unadorned—not even a chandelier.

Lumian snickered. “No Beyonder characteristics?”

“Maybe they were sacrificed,” Ryan said bluntly. “It’s also likely they didn’t get many boons in the beginning and weren’t tough enough. They could only nab normal folks as sacrifices and only go after Beyonders once they had decent powers. For instance, this time.”

It was clear they weren’t unfamiliar with getting boons.

Ryan then said, “There’s nothing else here. We should bail. No point tangling with danger we can’t see.”

Lumian didn’t react. Lumian scanned the room again, searching for any hidden doors from the subtle traces.

The answer was no.

He led the way out of the basement, Leah, Ryan and Valentine trailing behind.

As soon as Lumian emerged, Ryan grunted in pain.

His body flew backward, slamming into the basement door. The rickety stairs shuddered.

Wham!

Some invisible spear had pierced Ryan’s chest, pinning him to the

wall. Blood gushed from the gaping wound. If Ryan hadn't jerked aside just in time, that spear would've skewered his heart.

Leah, who had her Spirit Vision activated the entire time, couldn't detect their attacker.

It was as if some deity had singled Ryan out for punishment.

Before they could figure out what was going on, Leah's smile twisted into a grimace.

Her arms snapped back on their own. Bones shattered with a crunch as her limbs went limp. A crater bloomed in her stomach, as if she'd been sucker-punched. The impact sent her staggering backwards into the wall.

Valentine shrieked from the foot of the stairs.

His ribs collapsed one by one, like a sledgehammer was pounding his chest. With a series of bangs, bloody holes tore through Leah and Valentine's stomach and chest, spearing them to the stone wall.

Lumian was stunned for a moment. While this inexplicable change confused him, he was relieved that he didn't appear to be the target of this bizarre attack.

Did that black thorn symbol protect me? As this thought flashed through his mind, he suddenly felt an invisible force slam him against the wall by the stairs.

There was nothing visible with his Spirit Vision.

Remembering what had happened to Ryan and the others, Lumian immediately dodged to the side.

Intense agony instantly filled his mind. The skin on his right chest tore open, roughly exposing his lungs.

Lumian felt as if an invisible rod had impaled him and nailed him to the wall.

As his bright red blood flowed out, Ryan lit up the area with spots of

light that looked like dawn. This would effectively banish evil and dispel illusions.

However, the four of them still couldn't see anything.

Bang!

Ryan's chest caved in, hit by an invisible hammer.

As Leah's veil and silver bell boots rang out intensely, her nails were pried out by an invisible force, staining them red.

This indescribable pain contorted her face in terror.

Valentine spread his arms and let the holy pillar of light descend upon him. The light of the sun suddenly erupted, obliterating all evil and igniting Valentine's body. However, in the sun's glare, his arms were uncontrollably wrenched backward and stuck to the wall. Two blood-red holes appeared on his wrists, nailing them in place.

When the light faded, Valentine's face was charred, and his skin peeled off inch by inch.

Seeing their ordeal, Lumian couldn't help but feel anguish for them.

It was unknown if it was because of the black thorn symbol, but his misery had abated. His face felt as if slapped by an invisible hand repeatedly. His face was red and swollen, and his teeth were loose. He could hardly speak.

Just as another round of attacks were about to descend, Lumian's vision blurred and he glimpsed a wilderness.

In the distance loomed a mountain range, and close by stretched a grassy wilderness.

Two demon-like creatures with goat horns hauled a dark red, conch-like carriage from afar, hastening before Lumian and company.

Seated in the carriage was a woman in emerald robes and laurel wreath. Chestnut locks swept up, hazel eyes bright and watery. Dignified and noble, reminiscent of Madame Pualis matured.

She kept her pledge to proffer aid? Lumian startled, then delighted as the invisible force assailed them not.

Somehow he knew the woman before him was not quite Madame Pualis. Or rather, not Madame Pualis precisely. More an unearthly construct Madame Pualis had fashioned by dint of will.

...

Lumian chose to call her Madame Night.

Unlike his Paramita encounter, Madame Pualis grasped an oak branch mistletoe-wreathed at its tip in one hand, a jadeite bowl of sparkling liquid in the other. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Madame Pualis dipped the oak branch in the bowl and sprinkled them.

After the third sprinkle, Lumian saw his chest wound heal apace. The swelling receded swiftly, and no more was he pinned immobile to the wall.

Leah, Ryan and Valentine wholly healed, no trace of cruel injuries.

“What attacked us?” Lumian asked, figuring nothing ventured, nothing lost.

Madame Pualis, seated in the crimson carriage, replied superciliously, “There’s a hint of Sufferer taint on you now. Thankfully, it’s minor. Otherwise, you’d have to restart the loop.”

“Sufferer taint? What’s that supposed to mean?” Lumian exchanged puzzled looks with Ryan and the others.

Madame Pualis replied gently, “That’s all I know.”

“Then do you know what happened to the dead Warlock and owl in the cemetery?” Lumian pressed.

Madame Pualis glanced at him. “If I’d known, things wouldn’t have turned out this way. I’d originally planned to rule this place, but now I have no choice but to leave.”

...

Rule this place? Alarm bells rang in Lumian's head. Falling into a loop might not be the worst fate.

Aurore and I have no idea how many babies we'd have if Madame Pualis gets her way!

Compared to that, getting looped and destroyed at any moment doesn't seem so bad.

At least we'd die unadulterated!

Madame Pualis glanced at them but said nothing more. She had her pitch-black demon beasts pull her conch carriage into the wilderness.

By the time she disappeared from Lumian and the others' sight, the wilderness was gone.

Just then, they realized they were still in the basement. Half of them were on the stairs, the other half by the wooden door.

If not for the blood and fallen nails on the ground and walls, they'd have thought they'd experienced a hyper-realistic illusion.

"Let's get out of here first." Ryan quickly regained his senses and told Valentine, "Get rid of any traces we left."

Valentine nodded and conjured illusory golden flames to burn the blood and nails away.

The four of them faced no further attacks on their way back to the cathedral.

It was unclear if the Sufferer taint had been expended or if Madame Pualis had wiped it out.

Just as Lumian was about to leave through the side door, he suddenly spotted the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, standing dazed outside the room where sleeping servants had been stowed.

Was this fellow back from filling his stomach? Lumian was about to

avoid him when Michel, with his curly brown hair and delicate features, suddenly turned and saw them.

Ryan was poised to knock this guy out when Michel Garrigue asked with an unnaturally cheerful smile, “Here to pray? Need a confession?”

Everyone else in the cathedral has collapsed, but you’re concerned with confessions? Lumian looked at Michel as if he were mad.

Compared to before, this guy’s abnormality was glaringly obvious!

Chapter 80 - 80 Joint Investigation Team

80 Joint Investigation Team

Leah sensed Michel's abnormality and turned to Ryan, asking with her eyes if she should knock him out.

At this moment, Lumian spoke up. "Is the padre not here?"

Michel's eyes lit up, unable to hide his excitement. "The padre is resting. You can pray to me."

His face was filled with pleading.

Lumian hesitated, obviously uneasy, before reluctantly saying, "Fine."

Seeing Michel's elated expression, Lumian turned to Leah and the others, feigning annoyance.

"What's wrong with you lot? Coming to the cathedral to pray is what any true believer would do. What is there to be afraid of?"

What he really meant was that they had already escaped the basement without getting caught. Why worry now? As believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun, it was perfectly normal for them to come to the cathedral to pray. Using a side door was a trivial matter. As for the padre and his lackeys taking an extended lunch, what did that have to do with them?

Lumian knew such excuses would only fool dimwits, but they should placate the padre, at least for now. The padre wouldn't expose them until Ryan's group tried reporting the irregularities to the higher-ups and put an end to Cordu's depravities.

As long as Leah and the others continued strolling around the village, casually chatting with people as if they hadn't found anything incriminating in the cathedral's basement, the padre would be content to maintain the status quo.

Add to that, Ryan had demolished their underground altar. It would take time for them to restore it. Lumian estimated the padre wouldn't gain any boons for at least a couple of days, if not until after Lent began.

By then, it wouldn't matter if the padre suspected them or not. Appearing "normal" was the most pressing concern.

Upon hearing Lumian's words, Deputy Padre Michel Garrigue vigorously nodded.

"Absolutely! No matter your past sins, if you pray sincerely and repent, God will forgive you."

Is that so? What if the padre repented to the Eternal Blazing Sun and confessed that I had strayed long ago, believing in an evil god? Now, I want to return to the righteous path? Lumian appeared pious as he strode to the altar, but he didn't buy it.

Michel hastened ahead, seeming poised to take flight in his zeal.

Leah couldn't help but glance sideways at Valentine, seeing his complicated expression at the fanatical clergyman. This should have earned Valentine's praise, but he knew the deputy padre was clearly deranged.

Redirecting her gaze from Valentine, Leah rushed to Lumian's side and whispered in his ear, "Did you consider that half those present don't believe in the Eternal Blazing Sun?"

"You're not?" Lumian seemed genuinely surprised.

Not because he was perceptive and grasped her hint, but of the five there, aside from the unhinged deputy padre, Valentine was certainly one of the remaining four. Lumian himself barely counted as half.

Leah nodded slightly, her bells chiming.

She smiled and whispered, “Ryan hails from the Machinery Hivemind. I’m from Bureau 8, we don’t belong to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.”

Lumian had heard his sister mention that the Machinery Hivemind was on par with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Inquisition. It was a branch of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery dealing with matters concerning those from beyond. Bureau 8’s full name was Bureau 8 under the Intis Intelligence and Homeland Security Committee. It was the Republic’s most official organization in the domain of the Beyonders.

“Weren’t you sent by the Church?” Lumian asked curiously, finding a chair and sitting down.

Leah sat beside him, smiling thinly.

“Too many dangerous run-ins with those from beyond have happened at country borders in recent years, especially in disputed territories. When Cordu called for help, the higher-ups decided to set up a joint task force to get into Cordu, figure out what’s really going down, and give the best recommendation for how to handle it.

“Who knew that this place…”

She shook her head, seeming at a loss for words while her bells chimed.

The strangeness and horror of this place was beyond her imagination.

At times she felt Valentine was right to suggest reporting everything and requesting Cordu’s destruction.

But she wasn’t ready to die yet. She had to choke back her professional instincts and morals.

At that moment, Deputy Padre Michel Garrigue picked up the book on the altar and glanced at the four praying. Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Leah then crossed her arms over her chest and bowed her head.

"…" Lumian was a little stunned.

And you claim not to believe in the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Leah sensed his gaze and turned, flashing him a wry grin.

"God won't fault me for posing as a sheep of another flock during a crusade. If you doubt it, look…" She jerked her chin to the other side.

Ryan, hailing from Machinery Hivemind, folded his arms over his chest in a pious fashion.

So your moral compass possesses flexibility when questing… Lumian longed to jibe Leah and Ryan, but worship had commenced. He couldn't lag behind.

After adopting a reverent mien and closing his eyes, the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, riffled through the Holy Bible and intoned gravely, "God spake, 'Let there be light,' and there was light…"

Lumian suddenly felt a surge of nostalgia as he listened to the familiar sermon in the cathedral.

Though he used to just go with the flow and float through the service, whispering and gazing around, he now longed for the simplicity of the past—even if he had to pray with the greatest devotion.

Even the unpleasant events that had once annoyed him were now a source of comfort.

By the time Lumian and the others left the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral, the padre and servants were still knocked out cold.

Ryan glanced toward the castle and sighed emotionally.

"That woman's far more powerful than I realized."

"How powerful?" Lumian asked, curious.

Ryan deliberated a moment. "It's like she's touched the threshold of godhood, yet not quite."

You seem to have said something yet not quite… If Lumian didn't need Ryan and the others recently, he'd have spoken his mind.

However, thanks to his extensive knowledge of mysticism, he could roughly guess what Ryan meant by "the threshold of godhood."

Sequence 4! The beginnings of a demigod!

He pondered a moment.

"I think Pualis seemed off when she appeared as Madame Night."

He'd told them about Madame Night in Paramita.

…

"I got the same impression," Leah said with a smile. "Like a botched patchwork monster."

Ryan nodded.

"We have an understanding of Madame Night to some extent. In the border region between Intis and Feynapotter, similar incidents have occurred frequently in recent years. Some call her Madame Night, some call her Madam H?rt, some call her The Benevolent, and some call her The Vile. But so far, we haven't caught any of them. We still lack a systematic grasp of them.

"Yes, this is the first time I've heard of Paramita."

Leah strode to the edge of the village square with a tinkling gait. "Something about Paramita occurred to me from the description."

"What?" Lumian never felt embarrassed to inquire.

Leah glanced southward. "In Feynapotter's Church of Earth Mother, there's a saying: 'The soul returns to the land.'"

The soul returns to the land… Images of the wilderness and wandering undead surfaced in Lumian's mind.

He had to admit Leah's association made sense.

Arriving at the elm tree at the village entrance, Ryan surveyed the area and remarked,

“Let’s not provoke that madame further. Regarding escaping the loop, even if she doesn’t provide aid, she won’t become an enemy. We just need to monitor her movements and see if we can utilize the specific temporal node she mentioned.”

...

Wasn’t it because you clearly couldn’t defeat her if you didn’t provoke her? Lumian suppressed his mouth, ready to retort.

He then asked Valentine, “How many minutes?”

He worried that if he mistimed, his sister would trigger the loop and restart everything.

Valentine extracted a gold pocket watch and popped it open.

“Ten minutes remaining.”

“That’s good…” Lumian sighed in relief and waved at Ryan and the others. “I’m going to search for Aurore. If you’ve nothing else to do, help me locate Sybil’s husband, Jean Maury. Investigate who’s spreading the rumor that the horoscopes are about to change and everyone will usher in good fortune. If you discover anything, come to my house to find me. Goodbye, my cabbages!”

That was what Leah and the others had planned to do, so no one objected.

……

Lumian fell into deep thought as he bade farewell to the Joint Investigation Team and walked to the agreed-upon spot at the edge of the village.

After completing his exploration of the cathedral’s underground, he had a darn good hunch about the anomaly in Cordu.

The ones responsible for the loop were definitely the padre’s group.

They'd been secretly worshiping an evil god for at least six months and had secretly sacrificed quite a few foreigners under the cathedral in exchange for loads of boons.

Before Lent, the padre, Pons Bénet, and their lot had received a boon using the three Beyonders that Shepherd Pierre Berry had brought back—or at least one of them. The former instantly became a pretty powerful Beyonder. Hence, they kicked off a grand ritual at the start of Lent.

On the twelfth night, in the final stage of the ritual, the hidden being with the name of Inevitability would accept the large-scale sacrifice and complete something that the padre and company had prayed for. But at that moment, something unexpected happened. The ritual failed to complete, and the power involving the past, present, and future dissipated, bringing about a time loop.

As for what unexpected event had occurred, Lumian recalled something the mysterious lady had once said: "You belong to the group of individuals who are on the brink of being corrupted. Luckily, the mark left by that great existence was activated, and the corresponding power descended upon you, sealing the source of corruption and establishing balance…"

Chapter 81 - 81 Key

81 Key

Beside the serpentine river outside Cordu Village, under the piercing sunlight, Aurore, clad in a casual blue dress, sat on the ground with her eyes closed, listening to Lumian's conjectures and analysis.

She remained silent for a while, as if lost in thought.

After nearly a minute of contemplation, Aurore spoke, "If something truly occurred during the ritual on the twelfth night, causing the hidden entity's power to disperse and trigger a time loop in Cordu and its surroundings, I believe that the people and even the spirits in this area at that time wouldn't have been spared."

"What do you mean?" Lumian, also seated on the ground, struggled to grasp his sister's reasoning.

Aurore elaborated, "I mean that it's both power and corruption. Once it disperses, everyone in this area will endure the corruption on relatively equal footing. Only those bearing the black thorn symbol or under the protection of other high-level entities can barely remain unaffected.

"Consider this: isn't it like a dam bursting, flooding the entire place up to the rafters? Unless a boat was prepared beforehand, we'd undoubtedly be drenched."

Lumian envisioned such a scene and hesitantly inquired, "So, does that mean everyone in the village has been tainted by the dissipating power, effectively becoming a component of the loop?"

By "component," he didn't mean participating in or being affected by the loop. More precisely, people became part of the loop's structure.

Aurore, her eyes still closed and her blonde hair tied up, gently nodded.

“I suspect that not only will killing the padre result in a reset, but also slaying other villagers in Cordu will trigger a similar effect. It’s like trying to dismantle the loop’s components. There will surely be a reaction to such disruption.”

“But we just killed the midwife yesterday afternoon…” Lumian trailed off before finishing his sentence.

Suddenly, numerous thoughts raced through his mind, and he hesitantly proposed, “Is it because the people in the castle are protected by other high-level entities?

“Is that why Madame Pualis claimed she could leave the loop at a specific moment?

“She wasn’t tainted by that power. She’s not part of the loop. She’s affected, but she can exploit loopholes or seize opportunities to escape?”

Aurore sighed softly. “That’s why she said she can’t save us or take us with her. We’ve already been corrupted and are fused with the loop.”

At this, she managed a bitter smile. “Or rather, we’re already dead. We’re merely existing in the form of loop components.

“No wonder that mysterious lady said that if she forcibly ended the loop, everyone here would die. That’s because we are the forcibly dispersed loop itself.”

Lumian fell silent. He yearned to contradict his sister and argue that they shouldn’t be so pessimistic, but her words aligned with the mysterious woman’s.

What he couldn’t comprehend all this time was that, given the woman’s ability to freely enter and exit the loop and her audacity to mention the hidden entity, even if she couldn’t break the loop without causing any harm, it ought to be simple for her to safeguard two or three people and facilitate their departure.

Now, there was a more plausible and disheartening explanation to this conundrum.

After a few seconds, Lumian found a counterargument.

“Ava, Reimund, and Naroka are all dead, but their deaths didn’t cause the loop to restart.”

Aurore, her eyes still closed, offered a complex smile. “Perhaps they died before the loop began, so without participating in the ritual on the twelfth night, they weren’t tainted.”

Her implication was clear. In the timeline before the loop transpired, Naroka had perished before Lent, while Ava and Reimund had been sacrificed during the celebration. They didn’t survive until the twelfth night and were not part of the loop.

She paused for a moment and continued, “Jean Maury, who vanished today, might be in a similar situation. According to normal developments, he should have discovered something abnormal after Lent and before the twelfth night. He wanted to escape, but was silenced. Our investigation merely expedited this event. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

“The only thing I don’t understand is that Reimund’s corpse was sacrificed, right? He shouldn’t have been in the loop from the start…”

Hearing his sister’s words, Lumian instantly recalled the events beneath the cathedral.

The invisible figure in the black robe was composed of Reimund and the others’ spirits!

Lumian combined his knowledge of mysticism and attempted to speculate.

“Maybe the Lenten sacrifice wasn’t made directly to the hidden entity, but to the altar. It’s part of the twelfth night’s ritual, so Reimund’s spirit appeared beneath the cathedral.

“His body is useless, but before the loop began, Pons Bénet and his associates could leave Cordu. To stop those downstream from finding

the body and alerting the higher-ups, they might retrieve it after completing the ritual of sending it downriver.

“Once the loop started, the power had limits. It can’t cover the area where Pons Bénet and the others recovered the body. They’re affected by the corruption in their bodies and won’t consider leaving this area.”

Aurore pondered for a moment and nodded in agreement.

“In the past few days of the loop, other than you, the three foreigners, and Madame Pualis and her subordinates, none of the villagers have thought of leaving Cordu to hunt or gather wild fruit.

“If you hadn’t reminded me, I would’ve been the same.”

Aurore revealed a desolate, self-deprecating smile.

“We’re already a group of monsters. We’re barely surviving as humans by relying on the loop.”

“No, there must be a way for redemption. That lady said it exists!” Lumian interrupted his sister’s self-pity.

Aurore exhaled slowly and stated, “Can’t you let your sister be vulnerable for a few minutes?”

She continued, “Based on this line of thought, we can only rely on ourselves. Breaking the cycle with external forces is equivalent to killing us.”

Lumian sighed. “Unfortunately, there’s no way to verify this speculation at the moment. We can only confirm it on the twelfth night.”

“We can verify it, but it’ll waste a lot of our time. Besides, I can’t do it,” Aurore replied.

That’s true… Lumian roughly grasped his sister’s meaning and plan: Kill a villager not currently on the padre’s team to see if it would trigger a reboot. If it did, they could find a way to lure one of the three foreigners into a death trap and see if it triggered the cycle. If

not, it would validate Aurore and Lumian's guesses. Most people in Cordu Village had been corrupted and were part of the loop. Those who came later were only affected by the loop and had a chance to escape it with the help of loopholes or external forces.

However, that would squander many of the past few days, and Aurore wasn't the type to kill innocents, especially those they had a good partnership with.

Lumian had no moral qualms in this regard. From his perspective, dying in the loop wasn't true death. There was a high chance of only residual problems. That was much better than being trapped in the loop.

Of course, if he really wanted to do so, he wouldn't try to murder Leah and the others. Instead, he would reason with the three foreigners.

With Valentine's fanaticism and piety, he was confident he could persuade him to commit suicide.

The siblings exchanged glances and fell silent, unsure of what to say.

After a while, Lumian changed the subject.

"Grande Soeur, what do you think is the key to ending the loop from the inside?"

Aurore had been pondering this question. As she thought, she said, "We can't just end the loop from the inside. We have to use this situation to remove the corruption in everyone's bodies. Otherwise, what's the difference between this and suicide?

"Yes, according to my previous guess, something happened to the ritual, causing the entire village to enter a loop. And the reason an accident occurred was that you bear the mark of that great entity. It was activated and sealed the heavy corruption in your heart…"

Aurore assessed her brother as she spoke.

Lumian instantly grasped her meaning.

“You mean I’m the key to ending the cycle?”

…

Aurore nodded. “The source of the accident lies with you, so naturally, the key to ending the cycle is with you.

“Of course, this is only a guess. Perhaps the key to the loop is the vessel that will bear the power of the hidden entity’s descent during the twelfth night’s ritual. For example, the padre or someone else…”

Aurore suddenly fell silent and looked at her brother for a few seconds.

“Could these two speculations be equivalent? You are the vessel? Otherwise, as an auxiliary sacrifice and contaminant, even if something unexpected happened, the ritual wouldn’t have failed disastrously and its power dissipated uncontrollably.”

Uh… The more Lumian thought about it, the more he felt that his sister’s guess made sense.

He muttered to himself, “That black thorn mark on my chest is darker than the padre’s was…

“So when the priest tried to deal with me, he showed signs of losing control, allowing me to kill him…

“Therefore, that mysterious lady never said how to end this loop. She just told me to explore the dream ruins and figure out their secrets…”

Aurore got a little pumped. “Yeah, that’s probably a clue!

“Maybe the dream ruins stem from the corruption in your body or are closely linked to it. So you can rely on the black thorn mark to take down every monster you run into there.

“Once you unlock the secrets, you can rein in or safely tap into the power in your body to some extent and siphon off the corruption from everyone in Cordu. The loop will break on its own.

…

“Yeah, maybe this can only be done at certain times. Like at the ritual on the twelfth night.”

Lumian leapt to his feet. “I’m heading back to dream now!”

“No rush.” Aurore slowly sat up. “Aren’t you hurt? Aren’t you going to rest?”

Lumian patted his chest.

“The liquid Madame Pualis sprinkled healed all my wounds and restored my spirituality.”

“Oh, was that pomelo sago… child-giving Guanyin…” Aurore muttered.

“Huh?” Lumian didn’t get it at all. His sister was speaking a totally foreign language.

Aurore smiled with her eyes closed.

“What I mean is, go home, fill your belly, take a nap, and explore your dreams!”

Chapter 82 - 82 Dream Divination

82 Dream Divination

In the semi-subterranean two-story building, Lumian and Aurore quietly consumed their belated lunch.

The mutton, which should have been succulent and tender, tasted utterly bland on their palates.

Barely satiated, Lumian was about to clear the table when tinkling sounds reached his ears.

“Leah and the others?” He glanced towards the door.

Aurore, too, sensed something. She set down her cutlery and fixed her gaze upon the entrance.

Moments later, the doorbell chimed.

Without hesitation, Lumian abandoned his seat and strode towards the door, peering at the visitors through the peephole.

It was indeed Leah, accompanied by the other two foreigners.

Valentine had finally changed his attire. Previously engulfed in flames due to the Sufferer’s aura, Madame Pualis had tended to his wounds, but his scorched clothing was beyond repair.

Lumian swung the door open and greeted them with a warm smile.

“My cabbages, you already miss me?

“Oh, you actually can change clothes?”

Valentine had swapped his white vest, blue tweed jacket, and black trousers for a yellow vest, black formal jacket, and dark pants. White fabric flowers adorned Leah's white cashmere dress—one large and two small—concealing signs of damage with impressive sewing skills. As for Ryan, Lumian couldn't detect any difference in his outfit or evidence of his previous injuries. Lumian suspected the man had packed at least two identical sets of clothing.

"We've gathered information on those two matters," Ryan replied coolly, his eyes hinting that details would follow once they were inside.

Lumian sought Aurore's approval before fully opening the door and ushering the three investigators in.

This was the first time Ryan and his colleagues had met Aurore, and they exchanged polite introductions.

"About the impending horoscope shift, and the villagers' supposed good fortune, it's tentatively confirmed that the padre orchestrated the rumors," Ryan revealed, wasting no time as they settled around the dining table. "But I don't think it's that simple. The methods and rhetoric resemble those of a village witch. Under normal circumstances, the padre wouldn't devise such a scheme."

Village witches were part-time fortune-tellers who frequented small towns and villages.

Aurore nodded thoughtfully.

"Could it be the influence of the deceased Warlock? Hmm, a way to lure villagers into secretly worshiping the evil god."

"And they believed it so easily?" Valentine seethed.

His expression conveyed utter disbelief at the gullibility of Cordu's inhabitants.

It's all because believing in the Eternal Blazing Sun doesn't alleviate their poverty, and they're still oppressed by the padre and the administrator… Aurore held her tongue, fearing a confrontation with Valentine.

She could envision villagers experiencing tangible benefits from the padre and his followers after turning to the evil god, such as reduced contributions to the Eternal Blazing Sun or protection from Pons Bénet's harassment. They could even scare their irritating neighbors using the thug's name. In short, their lives would genuinely improve, giving them hope and fueling their devotion.

Nevertheless, Aurore didn't condone their actions. While the government and Church primarily sought money, the cults demanded lives.

Ignoring Valentine's question, Lumian 'helpfully' suggested, "You should ask the villagers yourself and thoroughly investigate the cause of their wavering faith. If you uncover the truth, I believe the papacy will hold you in high regard."

The papacy referred to the Eternal Blazing Sun's pope, a title shared by many church leaders. Lumian had recently learned this after perusing the materials Aurore had procured.

Valentine fell silent, evidently intrigued.

Aurore shifted the focus to Ryan.

"Did you locate Sybil's husband, Jean Maury?"

Ryan glanced at Leah, prompting her to speak.

Leah nodded and said, "We infiltrated Jean Maury's residence and obtained one of his belongings. Using this item, I performed a dream divination."

Dream divination… Aurore nodded, unsurprised.

As Lumian recounted their exploration of the castle the day before, Aurore had already pieced together their pathways and approximate Sequences based on the performance of the three official investigators.

Clearly, Leah belonged to the more common Seer pathway in Intis. Moreover, she wasn't a Sequence 9 Seer or Sequence 8 Clown, but at least a Sequence 7 Magician. This could be inferred from her

Beyonder powers like Paper Figurine Substitutes and Damage Transfer, as well as her skills in divination and acrobatics.

Aurore wasn't certain if Leah had reached Sequence 6, as her knowledge of the pathway's subsequent stages was limited.

Valentine belonged to one of the main pathways controlled by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church: the Sun. Likewise, he wasn't a Sequence 9 Bard or Sequence 8 Light Suppliant. Aurore deduced from his Holy Light Summoning, Holy Water Creation, and Sun Halo that he was a Sequence 7 Solar High Priest. Furthermore, he likely hadn't reached Sequence 6 Notary, as he hadn't displayed the corresponding abilities.

Ryan's Beyonder powers were uncommon in Intis; he was likely a Warrior.

This pathway was primarily controlled by the Church of the God of Combat from the Feysac Empire in the north. However, in the past five to six years, numerous Beyonders and Beyonder creatures of the Warrior pathway had appeared in various countries.

Several members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had either actively or passively chosen this pathway.

According to Aurore's knowledge, this was also known as the Giant pathway. Sequence 9 was Warrior, Sequence 8 was Pugilist, and Sequence 7 was Weapon Master. Sequence 6 was a level that experienced a qualitative shift compared to previous Sequences. They were called Dawn Paladins, who possessed the strength of Giants and could create Sunrise Gleam in a certain area to eliminate illusions and negative or evil energies.

They could also condense full-body armor known as Dawn and weapons they were proficient with. Among them, the most potent was the two-handed broadsword, the Sword of Dawn. With the Sword of Dawn, they could unleash their Sequence's most powerful attack—Hurricane of Light. This could annihilate the human body, exterminate vengeful spirits, and even wound evil spirits.

Considering Ryan's performance, Aurore believed he was a Sequence

6 Dawn Paladin, though he probably hadn't become a Sequence 5 Guardian yet.

Aurore had always felt that these three official investigators were on par with her. Now, she realized that each of them was stronger than the last. If she wasn't prepared, she wouldn't stand a chance in a one-on-one battle.

It was well-known that in the official categorization, Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 were considered Low-Sequence Beyonders. They had some unique abilities compared to ordinary people, but their flaws were apparent. Sequence 7 to Sequence 5 were Mid-Sequence, where they began to possess extraordinary powers. Sequence 4 and above belonged to the demigod domain, making them worthy of the title 'High-Sequence Beyonders.'

According to some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society who had infiltrated official organizations, when dealing with ordinary Beyonder matters, a team of one Mid-Sequence and two Low-Sequence Beyonders would be assembled to carry out the first round of investigations. They would then deploy more high-level forces depending on the situation. This time, facing the anomalies in Cordu, the Intis officials had sent three Mid-Sequence Beyonders. They weren't taking the situation lightly.

However, even this joint investigation team didn't seem to be enough for Cordu.

Aurore had shared all this information with Lumian, and the siblings listened intently as Leah continued.

"In the dream divination, I saw Shepherd Pierre Berry. He emerged with a few nails wrapped in hair and stuffed them into the hay," Leah described the scene in the simplest terms.

Haystacks… nails and hair… Lumian instantly recalled his discovery under the guidance of the three sheep.

He had also found some nails wrapped in hair in the haystack of the Berrys' sheep pen.

He frowned and said, “Are those Jean Maury’s nails and hair? Was he killed by Shepherd Pierre Berry at the Berrys’ place?”

Aurore nodded.

“Originally, the custom of hiding one’s nails and hair outside the house was to prevent it from affecting one’s family horoscope and luck. It was limited to family members with a bad reputation or who committed suicide, as well as those who were murdered by their relatives. But because Jean Maury was killed at the shepherd’s house, Pierre Berry still carefully cut off the other party’s nails and took some hair to hide in the haystack outside the house?”

…

“No wonder it was there before… That must be from their previous victim. How many people have they killed in secret?” Lumian scoffed under his breath. “At this point, he’s still worried about messing up his horoscope and luck?”

“Imbecile!” Valentine cursed aloud.

They had been briefed by Lumian earlier and knew about the three sheep, the haystack, and the old folk customs they represented.

After discussing for a while and confirming they wouldn’t try anything else for now, Leah and the others bid Lumian and Aurore farewell and returned to Ol’ Tavern.

The siblings didn’t mention their speculations at noon, afraid it might deter the official investigators from cracking this case open from the inside. After all, they could only be affected and might escape with outside help.

After clearing the table and helping wipe it down, Lumian returned to his room and lay on the bed.

With conflicting thoughts and many unanswered questions, sleep eluded him for a long time. He relied on some meditation techniques to slowly calm his mind and finally drifted off.

…… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

In the room shrouded in faint gray fog, Lumian opened his eyes and sat up straight.

He lowered his gaze and looked at his chest. His vision seemed to cut through the thin cotton shirt and flesh, allowing him to see the black thorn tattoo and the bluish-black pattern underneath.

Is this the root cause of this endless loop? Lumian thought.

...

The black thorn symbol was at the heart of the issue, and the bluish-black pattern brought protection from that ominous force, allowing Cordu to be salvaged.

All of this could be traced back nearly six years.

Lumian remembered clearly that he had still been a street rat at the time. He had barely survived by relying on seeming unthreatening due to his young age and extreme ruthlessness.

Then, one day, he met a dying old man.

Maybe it was because he had picked up some street smarts, or maybe because the old man reminded him of his only family, Pépé, who had raised him until his early teens but sadly passed on, Lumian chose to lend a hand.

Though he ultimately failed to save the old man's life, Lumian still sent him to the crematorium and buried him in a public grave.

He had found the bluish-black symbol on the old man's corpse during this. From then on, he often dreamed of the vast expanse of gray fog.

His luck also turned sour, and he began struggling to scavenge enough food. Thankfully, he met Aurore not long after.

Chapter 83 - 83 A Sudden Encounter

83 A Sudden Encounter

Phew… Lumian exhaled steadily and reined in his racing thoughts. He slung his shotgun over his shoulder and clipped on his axe. Leaving the semi-subterranean two-story building perched on the edge of the wild, he strode into the dream ruins.

Tracking a familiar route through the dense forest, he crept deeper into the tangle of collapsed houses towards the hulking “peak” of crumbling red stone.

Thick fog clung to the somber sky, weeds rasped at his feet. The whole world was darkened, bleak.

Soon Lumian left familiar ground behind, plunging into the heart of the ruins.

He scanned the ruins constantly, cataloging every trace, theorizing how each might be useful in a fight.

Caution slowed his progress but hunting taught caution and carefulness above all.

Finally, a clue. Fresh footprints, seemingly human. Tucked behind a jumble of rubble at the road’s edge, cunningly concealed.

This one knows how to move unseen… Capable of eliminating traces to a certain extent… Lumian observed for a while and made a preliminary judgment.

He suspected that it was something similar to the shotgun monster, perhaps bearing clues to Sequence 8 of the Hunter’s pathway.

Experience and Aurore's speculation told him three types of monsters likely infested these ruins.

The first bore no boons or Beyonder characteristics, like Noodle Man or the mouth-orifice monster, probably under the sway of that hidden being called Inevitability.

The second displayed Beyonder characteristics but no boons, typified by the shotgun monster. The black thorn on Lumian's chest would suppress them. It meant that they were tainted by some hidden corruption, resulting in them turning into monsters.

The third showed no boons or Beyonder characteristics, mere humans or creatures twisted into horrors like the skinless monster he first found.

Whether monsters with both boons and Beyonder characteristics existed, he and Aurore suspected so but lacked proof.

Therefore, it was very likely that a monster with Hunter traits possessed Beyonder characteristics!

Lumian tracked the footprints and discovered two lethal traps along the way, validating his hypothesis.

Had he not tread carefully or lacked his Hunter abilities, he might have become prey instead of predator.

Soon, the footprints grew fresher.

This meant a high probability of encountering his target if he pressed on.

Rather than rushing to "greet" his target, Lumian circled around and located an ideal ambush spot.

Then he began to dance.

Amid the intangible melody, he stamped with powerful steps and spun in a gentle, graceful semicircle, reenacting Noodle Man's strange, mysterious sacrificial dance.

His skills were rough and rusty, but with his Dancer power, Lumian felt his chest heat up.

After undoing his shirt and confirming the black thorn symbol's materialization, Lumian climbed into the collapsed house's center and settled into his chosen hiding place.

He quickly glanced into the distance and spied a figure digging a trap.

It was certainly a "person," but its whole body was charred black, and crimson flames blazed on its surface endlessly.

No way it's a Pyromaniac, right? I've landed a big one… Lumian was both thrilled and vexed.

He was thrilled that the primary ingredient matching a Sequence 8 Provoker had appeared. What troubled him was that it was much stronger than the prey he had anticipated.

Pyromaniac was a Sequence 7 of the Hunter pathway. According to Aurore, it was a Sequence that had undergone a qualitative change. Its ancient name was Fire Mage.

Lumian believed that with him being a Hunter, a Dancer, and possessing the black thorn symbol, as long as he wasn't careless, hunting a Provoker monster shouldn't be an issue. However, he wasn't confident against a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac.

As long as the monster attacked him from afar, it might not be weakened by the black thorn symbol!

After some thought, Lumian decided to retreat.

He planned to devise an effective plan to handle the flaming monster after setting up a targeted trap.

His initial idea was to head home and dance the dance that could summon the strange objects in the surrounding area and see what kind of adverse effects it would have on him when allowing the remnant spirit of the mouth-orifice monster to possess him.

If it wasn't severe and acceptable, he could borrow the other party's ability in the future, such as Invisibility.

Lumian wasn't too worried about the aftereffects of being possessed or whether the vengeful spirit would be willing to leave after successfully possessing him.

In any case, he was in the dream ruins. As long as he didn't die on the spot, he could recover fully after returning to reality to rest.

Just as Lumian made a move, the flaming monster suddenly raised its charred face and bulging eyes, looking right at him.

Not good! Lumian thought. Instead of climbing, he jumped down from his hiding spot.

Almost instantly, a massive fireball smashed into where he'd been, sending bricks and rocks flying, erupting in flames.

Lumian staggered in a sorry state. When he crashed, he could barely control his body. All he could do was tumble and roll to cushion the impact.

If not for Dancer's extraordinary flexibility, his muscles and ligaments would have torn from the twisted movement.

By the time Lumian stood up again, the flaming monster had already materialized atop the collapsed building. Phantasmal fire ravens coalesced from flames around it.

Upon seeing this, Lumian felt as if surrounded by soldiers with guns trained on him.

Without hesitation, he bolted towards the collapsed building where the flaming monster stood.

Faced with such a scene, he felt the only way to turn defeat into victory was by using the black thorn symbol on his chest.

And this seemed to require closing the distance!

Thud thud thud!

As Lumian ran, half the Fire Ravens descended from the sky and detonated behind him, causing heat waves to surge and explosions to reverberate.

The remaining illusory Fire Ravens banked and locked onto their running target.

At that moment, Lumian arrived at the bottom of the collapsed building, no more than five meters from the flaming monster.

In the next second, the charred monster enveloped in crimson flames froze. The remaining Fire Ravens around it were instantly snuffed out.

It's working! Just as joy flooded Lumian's heart, the flaming monster pivoted and fled from the collapsed building in the opposite direction.

"Hey, don't run!" Lumian blurted subconsciously.

...

He circled around the ruins before him and chased after the flaming monster.

Lumian chased it for two blocks. As the monster was too swift, he completely lost sight of it.

At this moment, the searing sensation in Lumian's chest vanished.

He had no choice but to stop and adjust his breathing, gearing himself up to track the footprints and watch out for traps.

As he panted, Lumian's gaze swept around and suddenly froze.

Not far away, a figure loomed in the doorway of a half-collapsed building.

The figure wore a black robe with a hood. Aside from that, it seemed ordinary enough, except it had three faces on its head.

The front face was an old man's. Milky eyes, scraggly brows,

wrinkled as a prune.

The left was in its prime, chiseled and stubbled, icy blue eyes gleaming.

The right was a child's—one less than five years old—smooth and round, blue eyes wide with innocence and ignorance.

The three-faced monster! That three-faced monster! Lumian was truly frightened.

...

As he was chasing after the flaming monster, he'd wandered deep into the ruins and stumbled on the three-faced monster!

Despite mastering the mysterious Sacrificial Dance and activating the black thorn symbol, Lumian had no intention of using the three-faced monster as target practice. His instincts screamed that this foe was lethal. According to the mysterious lady's words, even weakened by the black thorn symbol, the monster could easily slay a weak hunter.

Lumian's plan was to steer clear of the three-faced monster's territory and practice on other monsters. He wanted to test the black thorn mark's power against enemies of varying might before deciding whether to hunt the three-faced monster.

Unexpectedly, the monster left its domain and stumbled upon Lumian!

Eh… would a little dance of contrition perhaps appease you? Lumian thought, taking an involuntary step back.

At the entrance of the crumbling building, the three-faced monster in a black robe and hood retreated a step. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian spun around.

The three-faced monster mirrored him.

Lumian bolted.

The three-faced monster fled as well.

Lumian, who had meant to flee and try dancing, ran a few paces before sensing something amiss.

He halted and glanced back. By chance, he saw the three-faced monster retreating.

"…" Lumian stared, stunned.

After a moment, Lumian vaguely grasped the situation. He touched his face and muttered, "Am I that scary?"

The three-faced monster's actions reminded him of their first encounter.

Back then, Lumian stole a glance at the three-faced monster and cowered in terror, praying to the Eternal Blazing Sun to conceal him. Though the three-faced monster clearly peered toward his hiding spot, it didn't seem to notice anything. Instead, it took the initiative to retreat further away.

So it wasn't the Eternal Blazing Sun that shielded me, nor was I very fortunate. Did the three-faced monster sense my "specialness" and flee? Lumian nodded thoughtfully, hazarding a guess.

In the dream ruins, can monsters of a certain level directly perceive my "specialness" without me half-activating the black thorn symbol?

Chapter 84 - 84 Dirk

84 Dirk

Lumian broke the monsters in the dream ruins into three levels based on how the flaming monster and the three-faced monster reacted when they encountered him.

The lowest level ones acted on instinct alone. As soon as they saw him, they would attack. When he activated or partially activated the black thorn symbol on his chest, they would immediately give up and submit fully to his mercy.

The higher level ones would hunt him down before he partially activated the black thorn symbol. After he finished the sacrificial dance, they would cunningly opt to escape. But they couldn't sense the existence of the black thorn symbol beyond five meters. The flaming monster likely only remained in fear and associated the corrupting aura from the seal with Lumian.

At a certain level, Lumian didn't even need to activate or partially activate the black thorn symbol on his chest, nor did they need to be within five meters of Lumian for them to obviously feel his "specialness" and show conspicuous dread.

!!

Were there any other levels above these three? Lumian felt there should be at least one, at most three. For instance, the kind that wouldn't fear the partially activated black thorn symbol so much that they immediately fled. They would persist in attacking despite significant weakening. Or for example, the kind that were so high in level that they wouldn't react to the black thorn symbol at all…

Therefore, while Lumian was delighted that he could scare off the three-faced monster and seemed capable of doing whatever he

wanted in the dream ruins, he didn't dare to be careless.

Disregarding terrifying beings that might be higher in level than the three-faced monster, just the flaming monster could incinerate him to ashes without being impacted by the partially activated black thorn symbol with its powerful long-range attack.

With this in mind, Lumian hesitated for a moment before stealthily delving deeper into the dream ruins along the three-faced monster's escape route. He planned to scout the blood-colored "peak" and surrounding area today to gather information for the subsequent unlocking of the dream's secret.

Along the way, he proceeded to a relatively concealed area less easily discovered, on guard against any monsters that might suddenly burst out.

Perhaps because the three-faced monster had just passed by, frightening off the other monsters, Lumian didn't see a single 'person.' He successfully passed collapsed buildings and gray gravel everywhere and arrived at the base of the blood-colored "peak."

There was still a circle of ruins, but unlike the outer layers, the buildings here hadn't collapsed, but seemed to have completed a warped reassembly as if they had a life of their own. They were interconnected, as if a strange thorny city wall had been built.

The "wall" was dyed a faint grayish black. The windows and doors of the original buildings were embedded messily on its surface. Some were open, permitting one to see the shattered tables and chairs inside. Some were tightly shut, as if they couldn't be pulled open.

Lumian scanned the area and gazed up at the blood-colored mountain behind the city wall.

At this range, even with the heavy fog blanketing the sky and the dim light filtering into this realm, Lumian could see every detail of the mountain peak clearly.

It was made of rocks and soil, no more than 30 meters tall, but it gave off a towering menace. The color on its surface was unnatural,

neither the brownish-red of the rocks nor the reddish-brown of the soil. They seemed dyed at a later time, making it look sinister.

According to Aurore's novels and paranormal magazines, this might be dyed red by human blood… Lumian thought. He raised his gaze higher and higher, glancing at the peak shrouded in thick fog.

Suddenly, an unseen wind blew away some of the fog.

The peak came into view.

Sitting cross-legged was a giant four to five meters tall with three heads.

"He" was naked and had three heads growing from "his" neck. One faced left, revealing anger, greed, and hatred. Extremely evil. One faced forward with a warped expression of pain and regret. The other faced right, holy, with pity in its eyes.

The giant had six arms stretching out at odd angles. Its entire body, including the three heads, was made of flesh and organ fragments stitched together with pus flowing everywhere. Especially, transparent blood-like tears dripped from the head facing Lumian.

Seeing the giant, Lumian's mind buzzed as he heard a terrifying voice seeming infinitely far yet right beside him.

His head felt as if it had been split open with an axe, and intense agony occupied his mind, robbing him of all thoughts.

Thick and thin blood vessels protruded from his body surface, so red that they were about to be ignited.

When Lumian "woke up" from his near-death state, he realized that he was curled up on the ground, rolling back and forth, as if this wasn't enough to resolve the pain in his body.

His vision was blurry, stained with blood, and everything he saw was misty.

In this state, Lumian felt that even the skinless monster could easily kill him. However, perhaps because the black thorn symbol had been

completely activated, no “person” dared to enter this area.

As for the giant at the summit of the blood-colored mountain, it was unknown if it couldn’t leave or if it had been affected by the black thorn symbol and hadn’t attacked Lumian, who had nearly lost control.

After regaining his composure, Lumian stood up and noticed the linen shirt beneath his dark-colored jacket stained with blood and sweat.

What the hell was that? The more he pondered it, the more dread crept in.

With a mere glance, the black thorn symbol had flared to life and nearly overpowered him. It posed an even greater threat than wielding the Dancer’s might.

He dared not recall the giant’s visage, only deduce what he could from fractured impressions. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

An advanced variant of the three-faced monster?

Sheer corruptive influence?

Aurore was right, there are sights not meant to be seen…

It occupies the crimson mountaintop, the heart of this dreamscape in ruins… Does that signify it’s integral to the dream’s mysteries?

“…”

As his thoughts raced, Lumian forced down the urge to gaze up at the mountain’s summit.

If he took another look, it would spell certain death!

He resolved to withdraw for now and return to the real world to recover. He would resume his exploration at night.

Lumian spun on his heel, ready to retrace his steps out of here, when a sudden clanging caught his ear.

What's that? Curiosity seized him, and he devised a plan to sidle over for a peek.

Of course, he would proceed judiciously, not hastily or rashly. He tucked himself into a half-collapsed building facing the city wall to recoup his spirituality.

After a time, Lumian again performed the mysterious sacrificial dance.

He seemed to morph into a high priest of the hidden existence, gratifying that existence with movements that could marshal the ambient forces of nature.

When a burning sensation flared in his chest, Lumian halted and honed in on the intermittent clanging.

Skirting the blood-hued mountain crest and dilapidated city wall, dancing anew, he spied an orange glimmer through a half-open brownish-red wooden door in the 'wall.'

A flickering orange flame shone behind a half-open wooden door.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The figure in the room was reflected in a grimy, diagonal glass window above. It looked humanoid, but too spindly in the dim light.

In that moment, the figure raised a hammer-like object and smashed it down with formidable might.

Clang!

Another metallic clash rang out, crisp and ominous.

A blacksmith? There's a blacksmith in these ruins? Lumian guessed, relying on his knowledge.

...

Trusting that the thorn emblem on his chest hadn't vanished yet, he dropped into a crouch and darted to the glass. He turned and peered

in.

Though Lumian's eyes weren't healed, and his vision unclear, he could just make out the scene beyond the city wall.

Shattered furniture and debris littered the space. In the center was a stove, its top half gone, housing a fire. On top, an iron plate cobbled together, mismatched.

A pewter-black dirk lay on the plate, twice as long as a normal dagger, strange patterns coating its surface. Just looking at it made Lumian dizzy.

Clang!

The figure pounded the dirk like a skilled blacksmith, hammer blows ringing out in a steady beat.

'He' wore a black robe, decay marring the side of its face visible to Lumian, even revealing bone in places.

Another monster? Is it picking up where it left off when it was still human? That dirk isn't run-of-the-mill. It's a tad sinister. I wonder if it's a Sealed Artifact or a Beyonder weapon, Lumian thought.

He was less than three meters from the rotting 'blacksmith,' but the other party didn't seem to detect the black thorn symbol on his chest. 'He' kept pounding the dirk in silence.

Given that the black thorn symbol was about to vanish, Lumian recoiled and tiptoed away from the window.

He had only taken a few steps when the searing sensation in his chest disappeared.

...

The next moment, a creaking sound came from behind him.

Lumian whipped around and saw the mahogany door swing open.

The black-robed 'blacksmith' emerged. There were four or five putrid

gashes on ‘his’ face that bared its bones. Half of ‘his’ left eyeball dangled from its eye socket. It looked like a corpse that had been dead for some time.

‘He’ clutched the hammer in ‘his’ right hand and the pewter-black dirk in ‘his’ left. Lumian’s reflection glinted in ‘his’ lifeless eyes.

“F*ck!”

Lumian couldn’t help cursing.

He instantly grasped the situation.

The ‘blacksmith’ monster had clearly been influenced by the black thorn symbol, so ‘he’ had been ‘quietly’ pounding the malicious dirk, feigning nonchalance.

When the black thorn symbol disappeared, ‘he’ immediately seized ‘his’ weapon and emerged to hunt him.

How cunning!

Chapter 85 - 85 Appropriating

85 Appropriating

As soon as Lumian confirmed the situation, he pivoted on his heel and bolted.

He couldn't leverage the environment here, and he was clueless about the 'blacksmith' monster's abilities. What choice did he have but to run?

Once he escaped to the nearest natural trap and it was still in hot pursuit, he'd consider counterattacking.

Thud thud thud!

Lumian didn't run in a straight line but snaked left and right in an S-shape.

He worried it might predict his trajectory and hurl a fireball or long-range weapon.

The old Lumian could run on a curve, but he'd have to throttle back at points. Otherwise, his body couldn't take it and he'd eat dirt.

Things were different now. He was extremely limber, far beyond ordinary humans. His muscles and tendons easily let him arch his body in a smooth semicircle.

With this move, he felt that unless the 'blacksmith' monster had special abilities, he should reach the ruins seven to eight meters away.

Suddenly, dread gripped his heart with premonition.

Without thinking, Lumian plunged forward, riding his momentum.

Sizzling, sharp pain seared his back. The evil pewter-black dirk had sliced him, spurting bright red blood.

The ‘blacksmith’ monster had caught up in a single bound and swung its weapon.

It seemed to have shortened over a dozen steps to one!

Lumian endured the pain and rolled twice before finally touching a half-collapsed building.

He vaulted in with a whoosh. Slithering through the walls and furnishings as cover, he bolted out the back entrance.

Being back in this area was like a tiger returning to the deep mountains or a trout in a river. He adeptly wove through the ruins and buildings, at times circling around, other times going straight.

Within ten seconds, he arrived at a natural snare he had spotted earlier. He ducked behind the roof that had slid to the ground and held on for the ‘blacksmith’ monster to turn up.

He didn’t try the sacrificial dance because he felt there wasn’t enough time. The other side clearly had some distinctive tracking prowess.

As time passed, Lumian didn’t spot the ‘blacksmith’ monster, nor did he catch any sound approaching. He didn’t note any indistinct footprints around him.

It didn’t chase after me? Lumian couldn’t help but frown.

He was glad, but he also felt this situation was a bit odd.

After some thought, he guessed the ‘blacksmith’ monster couldn’t leave the city wall, so the moment he went into the building ruins, it gave up chasing him.

Considering he had already suffered two injuries and was drained, Lumian decided not to explore further.

Leveraging his terrifying flexibility, he treated the wound on his back and headed toward the edge of the ruins.

After walking a long time, he looked at the familiar collapsed buildings and suddenly felt something was off.

It has already… been more than enough time to finish a meal. The dream ruins… aren't especially large. I should be able… to walk out in a straight line. Why haven't I… escaped yet?

The more Lumian contemplated it, the more he sensed that something was amiss. His thoughts were becoming foggy and disjointed, as if severe exhaustion was overtaking him or he was about to drift off to sleep.

He forced himself to focus, relying on his Hunter abilities to locate the path, hoping to get out of these ruins immediately.

However, as he walked, he couldn't help periodically slipping into a daze. Eventually, he didn't even know what he was doing.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Lumian's eyes abruptly reflected the flickering orange glow of a fire.

He found himself back by the "city wall" and the chamber where the 'blacksmith' monster was.

Not good… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

I'm… under… its influence…

No wonder… it didn't… chase me…

It seems… I can't force my way… out. I can… only… think of a solution… starting… with that monster…

Lumian's thoughts slowed and fogged.

As he approached the chamber involuntarily, he struggled to perform the mysterious sacrificial dance.

Since he had to confront the 'blacksmith' monster, his greatest reliance was the black thorn symbol on his chest. He had to activate it immediately!

Amid the sonorous but intermittent noises from within, Lumian saw the door emitting orange flames open. The monster in a black robe holding a pewter-black dirk and hammer appeared in the doorway.

Unlike before, much of the rotting marks on its face had vanished, and fresh flesh had grown over the wounds that exposed its bones.

Its eyes lit up as it gazed at Lumian with undisguised greed and amusement.

This made it appear more human than zombie.

At the same time, Lumian saw himself reflected in the glass window.

His face was pale, and his eyes were dull. Some of his skin showed signs of decay.

He looked more like a zombie than a human.

Lumian instantly realized the truth.

I will… take its place… It will… walk out… as a human…

Lumian, who didn't know what ability had affected him or when he had encountered the anomaly, only had one thought—giving it his all by finishing the sacrificial dance and partially activating the black thorn symbol on his chest.

He slowly but firmly began his dance, but the 'blacksmith' monster didn't seize the opportunity to attack. It seemed to be patiently waiting for the outcome, afraid that additional actions would impact its fate.

As he edged closer and danced each step, Lumian's vision grew increasingly blurry. He only knew that the 'blacksmith' monster's smile was becoming more and more human.

After advancing some distance, Lumian's mind buzzed.

He heard a terrifying sound that seemed to come from an infinite distance yet also seemed close at hand.

This wasn't clear enough and was very illusory. It only caused some disorder in his mind, preventing him from experiencing a near-death experience.

...

Amid his grogginess, Lumian's thoughts cleared, and his vision returned to normal.

He felt a burning sensation in his chest and knew that the partially activated black thorn symbol meant trouble.

Almost simultaneously, he saw the smile on the 'blacksmith' monster's face freeze.

Numerous silver and black warts protruded from the monster's face, head, and hands.

The wicked dirk in its hand buzzed and vibrated violently, as if trembling in fear.

Pa!

Amidst a crisp metallic snap, a jagged fracture shot across the pewter-black dirk's demon-etched blade.

The 'blacksmith' monster crumbled into silver-black warts and warped maggots crawling across its black robe.

The maggots and warts stopped moving, turning into lifeless gray flesh.

Lumian gawked at the scene, dumbstruck. It was as if the enemy had suddenly committed suicide mid-battle while he stood by helpless.

After over ten seconds, he snorted at the fleshy lumps in bemused disbelief.

...

"So you dragged me here to attend your own funeral?

“You should’ve said so earlier. No need for all this pomp and show. I’d have gladly shown up and applauded your swan song!”

He strode over to the chunks of flesh the ‘blacksmith’ monster had crumbled into and scrutinized them intently.

Nothing else seemed amiss. Save that the slightly cracked pewter-black dirk still quivered minutely, like a wounded animal encountering its mortal foe.

Lumian’s heart raced as he looked down at his chest, sensing the black thorn symbol beneath his clothes.

He realized the truth and grabbed the pewter-black dirk with his right hand.

The evil dirk trembled vigorously but didn’t struggle or resist. It was docile.

As soon as he held it, the heat in his chest intensified.

Something leaked out, resonating with the pewter-black dirk.

Amidst the metallic hum, Lumian grasped a greater understanding of the sinister dirk in his grip.

It was a corrupted Beyonder weapon, gaining power and a semblance of life.

In other words, Lumian hadn’t encountered a ‘blacksmith’ monster—the dirk was the true menace. The ‘blacksmith’ monster was its puppet, or rather, wielder.

It could gradually transform any living being who touched its cold steel and drew blood into a zombie, robbing them of will and reason. They would always clutch it and act on its desires.

Those who were cut by it, spilling crimson, would have their destiny appropriated by its edge.

When seizing one’s fate, it could inflict no further harm.

Just now, it had bartered the fate of the 'blacksmith' monster becoming a puppet to exchange for Lumian leaving the wilderness as a human.

If there was nothing to trade, he had to kill the target completely to strip a portion of his fate from him and store it in the dirk.

This ability came from the Dancer's corresponding Sequence 5, Fate Appropriator!

Therefore, after the corruption in Lumian's body was half-activated, it resonated with the evil dirk through flesh and blood, letting some knowledge seep out.

Otherwise, he could only get someone to use divination and figure out patterns to grasp the pewter-black dirk's abilities and characteristics. He could also rely on his repeated experiments to gather information.

After sorting out the additional knowledge in his mind, Lumian looked at the evil dirk that was still trembling in his hand and chuckled.

"Actually, I don't mind you appropriating some of my destiny, but you'll have to bear the consequences!

"If you can swap with my fate of being trapped in this time loop, I'll kneel and grovel before you three times.

"Tsk, but randomly appropriating destinies will only hurt you!"

The pewter-black dirk merely trembled, not daring to respond.

Lumian now understood why the dirk was so obedient.

First, the half-activated black thorn symbol suppressed it. Second, encountering Lumian had traumatized the sentient weapon.

Exhaling, Lumian said, "From today onward, your name is Fate Appropriator Dirk. Got it?"

The dirk bobbed up and down twice, as if nodding.

“Unfortunately, you’re only a Beyonder weapon. Your power will gradually fade. You could have lasted two years, but now, severely damaged from your foolishness, you’ll only survive half a year,” Lumian said regretfully.

In fact, he could replenish Fate Appropriator by extracting power from the corruption in his body, but that required finding someone to repair the crack.

No sooner had he spoken than the heat in his chest quickly vanished. The minute was up.

Wasting no time, he hurled Fate Appropriator Dirk away as if it were red-hot coal.

Chapter 86 - 86 Another Idea

86 Another Idea

The pewter-black dirk clattered to the ground, bouncing a few times before coming to rest.

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief and muttered to himself, Without the protection of the half-activated black thorn symbol, this thing's a ticking time bomb…

Luckily, he already knew how to avoid the sinister dirk's adverse effects.

Lumian approached the grayish-white remains and picked up the black robe left behind by the monstrous 'blacksmith.'

He tore off several strips of cloth and wrapped them tightly around his right hand, as if applying a thorough bandage.

Then, Lumian grasped the Fate Appropriator Dirk.

The pewter-black dirk remained unresponsive the entire time.

Prepared to discard the item in his hand at any moment, Lumian relaxed and whispered, "I need to find a scabbard to carry it around safely.

"Do I have to permanently bandage my left or right hand just to have time to protect myself when I need to draw the blade in an emergency?

"This thing is dangerous, but it's also incredibly powerful. Besides its short lifespan, it outclasses all the Beyonder weapons Aurore mentioned. Many Level 3 Sealed Artifacts might not even compare."

While muttering to himself, Lumian swaddled the Fate Appropriator

Dirk in layers of black cloth.

Once wrapped securely in three layers, he slid the evil dirk into his left belt with a sense of relief.

Having done this, Lumian rubbed his temples and, despite his physical and mental exhaustion, entered the room from which the 'blacksmith' monster had emerged. He searched the room meticulously.

Aside from the smoldering furnace, he found nothing.

Lumian's investigation concluded cautiously and carefully as he retraced his steps.

Unhindered by fate, he successfully left the ruins, crossed the desolate wasteland, and entered his semi-subterranean two-story building.

Not in a rush to sleep, Lumian left the room, stowed the Fate Appropriator Dirk, and rested briefly. Once his spirituality recovered and his needs were met, he performed the bizarre dance—alternating between madness and distortion—in his bedroom.

He aimed to attract the peculiar creatures in the vicinity and let one of them possess him to test the negative effects.

Having sensed the fear and reverence of the flaming monster, the three-faced monster, and the Fate Appropriator Dirk towards the black thorn symbol, he was no longer as terrified of allowing certain entities to possess him.

His corruption was far more powerful!

Moreover, he was quite exhausted and would soon fall asleep. When the time came, even if the strange being he harbored was reluctant to leave or caused severe negative effects, he would recover after resting in the real world for a day.

Is this what Aurore often calls cheating and exploiting loopholes? Lumian mused as he danced.

As the dance intensified, his spirituality expanded, merging with a certain force of nature that radiated in all directions.

Gradually, Lumian, seemingly fused with his surroundings, sensed something entering the area.

He lifted his leg, took a step, and spun around. Without activating his Spirit Vision, he saw three translucent figures materialize at the bedroom's glass window.

They were the familiar skinless monster, shotgun monster, and mouth-orifice monster.

Seems like my spiritual perception isn't strong enough, or my level is too low. I can only 'summon' them… Lumian didn't mind. He drew the ritual silver dagger Aurore had given him and sliced a wound on the back of his left hand.

A drop of crimson blood quickly welled up but didn't spread.

On the spot, it congealed and took on a demonic hue.

The three ghostly figures outside the window instantly stirred.

Lumian deftly used the ritual silver dagger to pick up the congealed drop of blood. With a final flourish of his dance moves, he pointed the blade towards the mouth-orifice monster.

He was inviting the entity to latch onto him.

The monster, bearing three black marks on its upper body, opened its vortex-shaped mouth as if responding to Lumian's call, but it hesitated to take further action.

That's right. The window is still closed, and the monsters in the dream ruins don't dare enter my house… Lumian swiftly grasped the situation. In sync with his dance rhythm, he leapt, landing gracefully on the desk before the window.

With his left hand, he slid the tightly shut glass window open. Then, he extended the ritual silver dagger, bloodied tip first, outside the house.

Instead of devouring the drop of blood and entering Lumian's body through the ritual silver dagger, the maw-like creature retreated seven or eight meters, floating amidst the howling wind, still mesmerized by the dance.

"Hey, come over!" Lumian, on the verge of completing his final dance step, couldn't help but urge anxiously.

The three hazy, translucent figures outside the house drifted further away. As Lumian's dance came to a halt, they vanished entirely.

"…" Lumian stared at the scene, baffled by the mouth-orifice monster's refusal to possess him.

He carefully reviewed the dance and the bloodletting process, certain he had made no mistakes.

Could it be that its fixation remembers that I killed it, so it's unwilling to attach itself to me?

But the knowledge that came with Dancer didn't mention this. Logically, it should be more eager to possess me and take revenge… Lumian pondered.

Recalling the three-faced monster's flight upon seeing him, he formulated a new hypothesis.

I'm corrupted by an evil god and sealed by a greater being. Are these strange creatures terrified and unwilling to attach themselves to me?

This was an extremely rare circumstance. It made sense that Dancer's corresponding mystical knowledge wouldn't cover such anomalies.

The more Lumian considered it, the more he believed this was the cause, and the angrier he became.

"So you guys just watch me dance, but aren't willing to possess me?

"What's this called? In Aurore's words, freeloading!"

Lumian's disappointment grew as he realized that, before reaching Contractee, one of Dancer's abilities was rendered useless. He

couldn't attract strange creatures and exploit their traits or powers.

He consoled himself, hoping that only the dream ruins' creatures behaved like this. After all, they were closely tied to the owner of the black thorn symbol.

I wonder what I can attract in reality. Will they dare to attach themselves to me… Lumian mused, walking to his bed and lying down.

His mood lifted as he glanced at the Fate Appropriator Dirk, ensconced in layers of black cloth, on the cabinet beside him.

This powerful Beyonder weapon would aid him in delving deeper into the dream ruins and uncovering their secrets. The only drawback was its inability to be brought into the real world.

I wonder if that mysterious lady can help bring it out, just like how she brought the potion and ritual ingredients into the dream ruins…

…

But the next time I explore the dream ruins, I'll have to trouble her to bring the Fate Appropriator Dirk back in…

She's definitely unwilling to keep providing help. She's clearly averse to hassle and prefers slacking off…

With these thoughts, Lumian drifted into a deep sleep.

……

When Lumian woke up, the sky was an unnatural shade of inky black. Only a smoldering crimson smear of sunset remained in the distance, filling him with a bleak melancholy as if the entire world had abandoned him.

Adjusting his emotions, Lumian left the room and descended to the first floor.

Aurore was busy cooking dinner.

“Are your eyes okay?” Lumian went over to help.

“Pretty much.” Aurore tucked a stray lock of blonde hair behind her ear and widened her eyes at him.

Lumian peered into their light blue depths but saw nothing amiss beyond a hint of blood.

Aurore continued frying the lamb chops and casually asked, “Discovered anything interesting in the dream ruins this time?”

…

Lumian began chopping ingredients for the last dish, recounting his encounters.

“That blade is powerful indeed.” Seeing her brother was unharmed, Aurore stifled her concern with a laugh. “If it were me, I’d never call it Fate Appropriator Dirk. Too straightforward, lacking charm.”

Lumian asked curiously, “What would you name it then?”

Aurore smiled and said, “Fallen Mercury!”

“Fallen Mercury it is!” Lumian nodded immediately.

He had to use the name his sister gave!

Aurore burst out laughing.

“Actually, it’s not the best name, but that’s all I could think of on short notice.

“Hmm, the monsters’ behavior confirms our theory. The black thorn symbol on your chest, or rather, the corruption in your body isn’t simple. It can suppress something powerful to an extent and relates closely to that hidden existence.

“Perhaps the key to the loop lies with you.”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded. “Let’s see what secrets the dream ruins hold. Then we’ll wait patiently for the twelfth night.”

So far, they had investigated almost all abnormalities. Only the tomb where the owl was had not been explored.

It was far too dangerous. Aurore didn't believe she, Lumian and the three foreigners could face it. Her only hope was asking Madame Pualis for help, but she clearly didn't intend to interfere, merely waiting for the opportune moment.

Lumian didn't hold much hope recounting how the strange creatures his dance attracted were hindered by the two symbols on his body, preventing success.

"Grande Soeur, any ideas to circumvent this restriction?"

Aurore scooped up the lamb chops, pondering a moment.

"Since it's impossible to invite a 'god' to possess you, why not try giving an order?"

"Order?" Lumian's eyes lit up.

Aurore nodded slightly. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

"Since those strange creatures fear the corruption in your body and the seal of that great existence, use their fear like a fox assuming the authority of a tiger. Order them to attach themselves to you. Right, use ancient Hermes when you try."

"That's an idea…" Lumian understood what his sister meant by "a fox assuming the authority of a tiger."

Chapter 87 - 87 Catharsis

87 Catharsis

Aurore carried the plate of lamb chops to the table and said, “I’m not sure if ordering them under those circumstances will work. After all, I’m not a Dancer, and I don’t have any relevant mysticism knowledge. However, you won’t lose anything by trying.”

“That’s true.” Lumian took over at the stove and said with a grin, “It’ll just be another wound while I bleed a little. I’ll recover after a nap. What do you think the three-headed giant at the top of the mountain is? What does it have to do with the hidden existence and the corruption in my body?”

Aurore set the plates down and turned around.

“Don’t you think you’re overestimating me? I’ve never encountered or heard of such strange things.”

!!

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, she added thoughtfully, “However, there are many similar concepts in the myths and legends of my hometown. They have three heads and six arms, gods or demons…”

She continued, “And according to our guesses, the dream ruins are closely related to the corruption in your body. There’s a high chance that the giant’s image reflects some aspects of the hidden existence.

“You said that the honorific name or description of that person is different from the usual ones. Every segment contains three aspects and three forms that symbolize a certain authority. Therefore, it’s very normal to correspond to three heads, just like how the three-faced monster has faces that represent the three stages of humanity.

“As for why it has six arms and why it sits atop the blood-colored mountain, there’s too little information. I can’t guess.

“Hmm… Focus on the circle of ‘walls’ for the time being. I feel that we can find many useful clues.”

“Alright.” Lumian followed his sister’s instructions and placed the sliced shredded potatoes into the pot, stir-frying them with oil.

Aurore ended the topic regarding the dream ruins and said to Lumian, “When you went to bed in the afternoon, I thought about it seriously and decided to invite the three foreigners to stay with us.”

“Why?” Lumian was puzzled.

Aurore watched her brother bustling around and sighed.

“We assumed the padre would react like a normal person, but we can’t forget that some of his followers have already accepted a boon. In a way, they’re corrupted.

“According to the mysterious lady, the boon’s effects concentrate on the body and mind. So, besides gaining abilities, one’s personality will shift. The more boons a person takes, the more severe the change will be, especially if they can’t handle it.”

“Right.” Lumian recalled the mysterious lady’s words.

She warned that if the body couldn’t endure such a massive “boon,” the recipient would either turn into a monster, become a puppet of an unknown entity, or transform into someone else who’d treat things they cherished in the past with indifference.

Aurore concluded, “Thus, Shepherd Pierre Berry and his followers, who’ve received the boons long ago, might disregard the padre’s plan and seek greater vengeance.

“If the five of us stick together and support each other, we can effectively improve our chances of survival until the twelfth night.”

Lumian pondered her proposal and agreed.

But he raised a logistical issue.

“So, where do they stay? In the living room downstairs?”

“It won’t work as well if we’re on separate floors.” Aurore glanced at her brother, who approached with a plate of stir-fried shredded potatoes. “You can move into my room, and we’ll let the three foreigners use your bedroom and the study upstairs. They can divide the rooms among themselves.”

“Huh?” Lumian didn’t expect such an arrangement. “I’ll share a bed with you?” Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Aurore couldn’t help but laugh.

“No big deal. Strong, independent women don’t sweat the small stuff!”

“Huh?” Lumian didn’t grasp his sister’s last remark.

Aurore chuckled, explaining, “I’m saying that given our situation, let’s not get hung up on trivial matters.

“Do you want to share a bed with Ryan and Valentine, or should I sleep with Leah?”

“True, I can’t fully trust them.” Lumian nodded.

The three official investigators only cooperated with the siblings because they were trapped in a loop. Who knew if they’d secretly manipulate the situation while they slept together, planning to capture the two wild Beyonders once the loop ended?

Aurore chuckled and suggested, “If they’re concerned about us and decide to share a room, you can sleep in the other one.”

“Better to stay in the same room.” Lumian felt the walls offered little protection.

Aurore said no more, only adding, “Remind me to restock our food supply tomorrow. After Lent, the villagers will grow stranger. We might need to defend this place or hide in the nearest high mountain

pasture.”

Then, she urged her brother to eat dinner.

Before sunset, Lumian left the semi-subterranean two-story building, ready to invite Ryan and the others to move into his home.

Upon seeing Ol’ Tavern in sight, Lumian spotted a few familiar faces.

Pons Bénet was strolling down the village’s main road with his three thugs.

Almost instantly, the black-haired, blue-eyed, musclebound villain noticed Lumian.

He couldn’t help but clamp his legs together, as if recalling some excruciating agony.

Eyeing Lumian, Pons Bénet faced a dilemma.

He craved revenge, but feared history would repeat itself with him and his men beaten to a pulp.

As Pons Bénet wavered, Lumian flashed a brilliant grin.

“Hey, isn’t this my rebellious son?”

He strode towards the villain and his three thugs who had drowned Reimund, poised to pummel them.

Pons Bénet saw this and didn’t hesitate. With his eyes, he signaled to the three brutes beside him, ordering them to charge.

The three thugs immediately rushed at Lumian and pulled out short sticks, iron rods, and other weapons.

Lumian sped up too.

Just as he was about to collide with the three thugs, he abruptly leapt at one of the enemies.

This unorthodox move caused the three thugs’ attacks to miss.

Lumian grabbed the target's shoulder and did a somersault.

His back seemed to flex like a spring, helping him grab the enemy and build up enough force for the roll.

In an agile, exaggerated forward somersault, Lumian hurled the enemy and smashed him into the ground.

Bang! The thug's vision darkened. His whole body ached, and he couldn't rise for a moment.

...

At that instant, Lumian landed behind the other two, only seven or eight steps from Pons Bénet.

He crouched slightly and charged at the villain. As Pons Bénet frantically dodged, he shouted, "Quick, quick! Stop him!"

The remaining two thugs hastily turned and chased after Lumian. Pons Bénet composed himself and brazenly charged at the bastard, preparing to stall him before they surrounded him.

Just as the two thugs were about to catch up to Lumian, who had deliberately not run at full speed, suddenly stopped and squatted.

Amid grinding sounds, not only did the two thugs fail to hit their target's back, but because they couldn't halt in time, they lost their balance and collided with Pons Bénet.

Lumian pounced like a tiger and grabbed the two thugs' necks. He lifted their bodies and smashed their heads together.

Bang!

The two thugs' foreheads instantly swelled and they fainted on the spot.

Immediately after, Lumian tossed away the burden and exerted strength with his feet. He twisted his body and slid behind Pons, who had just risen.

He grabbed the other party's arms and bent them backward.

With a cracking sound, Pons Bénet let out an extremely pained scream.

...

"How is it? Does it feel good?" Lumian asked Pons Bénet with a smile as he hoisted him and marched out of the village.

Before long, he arrived beside the river, grabbed the back of Pons Bénet's head, and forced him underwater.

As bubbles surfaced, Lumian lifted Pons Bénet's head, turned his face, and asked with a smile, "Does it feel good to bully others?"

Pons Bénet's face was soaked, and he looked to be in extreme agony. Snot and saliva flowed out, making it impossible for him to answer.

"Doesn't it feel great?" Lumian's voice suddenly intensified. He grabbed the villain's head and smashed his forehead into the water, hitting the cobblestones.

Bright crimson liquid seeped out of the water. Pons Bénet struggled uselessly with his legs, unable to lift his head.

Gulp. Gulp. As time dragged on, his struggles weakened.

Only then did Lumian haul him up. He thrust out his left hand and smacked Pons across the face.

"I'm asking you, does it feel good to bully others?"

Pure terror filled Pons's eyes. He didn't know how to respond.

Just then, a figure ambled over to the riverside. It was the hooded Shepherd Pierre Berry.

He glanced at the pathetic Pons and gently told Lumian, "We're all from the same village. Enough. You want to kill him?"

Lumian immediately released Pons's head and stood up. He grinned

at Pierre Berry, replying,

“I’ll listen to you. Make sure this jerk doesn’t bully others again.”

Without waiting for Pierre’s response, Lumian strode past the shepherd into the village.

……

On the second floor of Ol’ Tavern, in Ryan’s room, Lumian relayed his sister’s thoughts to the three official investigators.

Ryan exchanged a look with Leah and Valentine and nodded.

“Smart thinking. In a situation like this, spreading ourselves too thin just makes us an easy target. We can move into your house now.”

As they headed to Lumian and Aurore’s house with her luggage, Leah asked Lumian amidst her tinkling sounds, “So what’s the plan for the tomb?”

“The plan?” Lumian snorted. “You think we can just waltz in there?”

Leah smiled, relieved. “Good, you’re still being cautious.”

Ryan chimed in, “What we mean is if whatever’s in that tomb really leads to the cycle’s key, it’ll show up during the twelfth night ritual. And if it’s got nothing to do with the source of the cycle, why take the risk going in?”

“In short,” Lumian said, catching on, “we just wait patiently for the twelfth night?”

Chapter 88 - 88 EQ

88 EQ

Ryan nodded at Lumian's confirmation.

"You can interpret it that way, but if there are any other abnormalities worth investigating, we can't ignore them."

"Alright." Lumian actually shared the same thought.

He hadn't even planned on participating in Lent, just in case he couldn't resist attacking when he saw the "performance" at the celebration.

The four of them rapidly reached Lumian's residence, where Aurore led them to the second floor.

Now dressed in a pure white cotton dress that accentuated her down-to-earth charm, Aurore pointed to Lumian's bedroom and study, offering the three official investigators a choice.

"You can choose either room."

Ryan glanced at Leah, seeking her opinion.

After pondering for a few seconds, Leah raised her right hand, pointed at the study with a smile, and said, "That recliner looks pretty good; I could sleep there. Ryan, bunk in that room with Valentine."

While Aurore had the same question in mind, Lumian asked, "You trust us that much?"

He assumed the three foreigners would opt to sleep in the same room on the floor, fearing an attack if they were separated.

Leah grinned and answered Lumian's half-mocking, half-doubtful query, "My divination tells me the two of you can be trusted."

As she spoke, she walked into the study. Accompanied by tinkling sounds, she lay on the recliner with a contented expression.

Aurore found Leah intriguing and approachable. She smiled and advised, "A friend once told me that you can believe in divination, but not blindly. Divination is not all-powerful."

"My mentor said something similar, but we're all in the same situation. If I don't trust it, what else can we do?" Leah replied with a grin, snuggling into the recliner.

Aurore didn't mind relinquishing her favorite seat. She pulled over a chair and sat down.

Their study also served as a small living room. It occasionally hosted afternoon tea parties, so there was ample space and chairs.

Ryan surveyed the corridor briefly before returning to the study. He said to Aurore and Lumian, "I have some suggestions."

"Please, go ahead." Aurore politely assumed an attentive posture.

Ryan nodded and offered, "First, when you sleep at night, don't close any doors. Let everyone be in the same space. This way, no matter where an abnormality occurs, we can react promptly.

"Second, considering we've destroyed the altar, someone might attempt to deal with us before Lent. Starting tonight, everyone will take turns on night duty. Yes, from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. the next morning, two hours per person…"

How professional… Aurore muttered almost silently.

Lumian glanced at her, as if asking why she hadn't thought of it.

Aurore spread her hands slightly, signaling her lack of experience in team operations.

She then turned to Ryan and Valentine, stating confidently, "Lumian

will cover the period between 10 p.m. and midnight."

Leah and the others didn't object to this arrangement.

From their perspective, it made sense. Among the five present, Lumian had the lowest Sequence and least experience. He was most prone to mistakes on night duty, but from 10 p.m. to midnight, others would still be awake to cover for him.

Lumian knew his sister's intentions extended beyond this.

He had to explore the dream ruins undisturbed after falling asleep.

After finalizing the first schedule, Valentine volunteered, "I'm used to sleeping and waking early. I'll take the 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. slot."

"You get up early to welcome the sunrise?" Lumian teased instinctively.

Valentine's gaze on him softened.

"Yes, I want to greet the rising sun and praise the light."

His eyes seemed to say: "As expected, only a devout believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun understands me."

Hey, I'm mocking you, brother! Lumian felt slightly defeated by Valentine.

In the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, "brother" was a term used among believers. The two mainstream organizations within it, the Order of Preachers and the Brotherhood Minor, employed the term.

"I'm not used to being woken up mid-sleep," Leah chimed in. "I'll take the midnight to 2 a.m. slot."

Aurore nodded.

"I like to wake up late. I can take 2 a.m. to 4 a.m. And don't wake me for breakfast tomorrow. I'll get up around noon."

"Leave the rest to me." Ryan claimed the worst period with

satisfaction.

He also entered the study and found a chair to sit on.

A conversation flowed effortlessly. Aurore, though seldom venturing out, possessed a wealth of knowledge spanning from astronomy to geography. She had her finger on the pulse of the latest trends, scandals, and supernatural events in metropolises like Trier and Backlund. This left Leah, Ryan, and the others secretly in awe of her.

“As expected of the renowned author, Aurore Lee,” Leah couldn’t help but exclaim. “No wonder you can tackle any theme.” Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Aurore inquired with genuine curiosity, “Have you read my novels?”

Leah’s eyes sparkled as she replied with a smile, “I’ve been reading your first novel since I was a young girl. By the way, I’d love your autograph!”

As she searched for papers and fountain pens, the silver bells on her veil and boots jingled.

“Are those Sealed Artifacts?” Having heard Lumian mention Leah’s performance with the four bells, Aurore couldn’t resist asking.

Leah produced a stack of post-it notes and a fountain pen, casually responding, “Yes, they can proactively warn me and enhance my divination abilities. The downside is they’re rather noisy and not exactly discreet. Plus, the wearer must dress fashionably, with a dress being mandatory. It has to look good, or it’ll be not only useless but also potentially misleading or even dangerous.”

Aurore chuckled. “I can’t decide if these bells were originally a man or a woman.”

Lumian agreed. If they were from a woman, it was a remnant of her vanity. If a man, he was undoubtedly a pervert.

Leah offered a faint smile.

“That involves some confidentiality, so I can’t say any more.”

She stood up, handing Aurore a post-it note and the fountain pen.

Aurore signed and asked, “Which genre of my novels do you prefer?”

…

“Romance,” Leah replied without hesitation. “Your first novel, Eternal Love, left a deep impression on me.”

“I wrote that book too early,” Aurore admitted with a hint of embarrassment. “I was young, and my writing skills were unpolished. I lacked experience. Many scenes felt rigid, and much of the dialogue was overly emotional and unrealistic…”

Lumian chimed in, “But it’s sincere and original.”

Having read his sister’s novel, he knew it dealt with a couple’s separation through life and death, interwoven with adventure, misunderstandings, and terminal illness. It was a trailblazing piece in the Intis literary world.

Naturally, this drew criticism from conservative authors and critics. They echoed Aurore’s self-assessment and claimed it couldn’t qualify as literature, deeming it a mere pedestrian novel.

“That’s right,” Leah agreed, retrieving the paper and pen. She looked at Aurore and asked with a smile, “Ms. Author, would you consider becoming our informant at Bureau 8?”

Seeing Aurore’s surprise, she continued, “Our primary objective in targeting wild Beyonders is that they’re unpredictable and may lose control or cause disaster at any moment. Otherwise, they can use their Beyonder powers for all sorts of malicious purposes to satisfy their desires.

“Over the past few days in the village, I’ve carefully observed both of you and confirmed that you’re orderly Beyonders. Prior to arriving in Cordu, the information we gathered indicated that you haven’t committed any wrongdoing on the surface.

“This meets our recruitment standards. Moreover, once you become our informants, you won’t need to worry about being targeted by

official Beyonders.”

Aurore found the proposition enticing. She glanced at Lumian and gave a slight nod.

“I’ll think about it. I’ll give you my answer when the cycle is over.”

...

Lumian immediately understood why his sister had looked his way.

I don’t have a problem, but will a heavily corrupted guy like you bomb the test?

After chatting briefly, the siblings bid adieu to Leah and the others and headed back to Aurore’s room.

Aurore perched on the edge of the bed and glanced at the door. She hushed her voice and muttered, “Leah’s socially adept.”

“What do you mean?” Lumian also sensed Leah had made the vibe harmonious in the study.

Aurore smiled and said, “She took the initiative to bring up my novel and asked for my autograph to bond with me, so she could pitch recruiting me. The recruiting was to fix the distrust and barriers we have, easing teamwork the next few days.

“The whole process seemed natural, not off-putting or wary. That’s a sign of high EQ. You should follow her lead!”

Lumian remembered the chat and said self-deprecatingly, “If it were me, I might’ve been booted by now.”

Amused, Aurore leaned back and said, “At least you know yourself!”

She ruffled her blonde hair and said, “I’ll nap a bit. My eyes haven’t fully healed so I need more rest. Rouse me at ten and I’ll keep watch over you. It’s your first night shift, so better safe than sorry.”

Lumian didn’t object and agreed instantly. He watched his sister lie on the bed unhesitatingly, pull the blanket over her and close her

eyes.

The room instantly turned eerily silent.

Lumian quietly switched off the electric lamp and drew the curtains.

Then, he sat on the chair by the desk and quietly watched his sister sleeping peacefully under the crimson moonlight. His heart gradually calmed down.

Chapter 89 - 89 Nothing Happened

89 Nothing Happened

The wind outside rustled, almost silent. Lumian allowed his thoughts to wander in this tranquil state as instinctive questions ran through his mind.

There's still light in the corridor. Leah must be awake still, reading Aurore's book collection…

Pitch darkness blankets my bedroom. Valentine should be resting in bed. I wonder what Ryan's up to…

Heh heh, they didn't bring any alcohol on their first visit. They've no clue about Dariège's customs…

!!

If the cycle lifts, Grande Soeur can turn informant for Bureau 8. When the time comes, she won't fret over any investigation if she goes to Trier… As for me, I needn't undergo any special tests as an informant, right?

Now we've a full theory of the whole affair. The sole thing we can't be sure of is the owl and the dead warlock in the tomb's role…

If they bewitched the padre and company, causing the abnormality to achieve some goal with the twelfth night ritual, why did they do nothing but monitor my progress exploring the dream ruins?

Could it be that, like Madame Pualis, they await a specific time or the ritual on the twelfth night, intending to complete the disrupted part? Is that why they want no changes to the loop restarting it ahead of

time?

Their actions in turn prove the key to the loop lies with me. That's why they repeatedly try to confirm how far I've explored the dream ruins…

If I unlock the dream's secret before the twelfth night comes and master recycling the corruption, will they ignore the possibility of the cycle restarting ahead of time and attack me to hold me in custody?

Yes, it's very likely they still have their memories…

As all sorts of thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly heard faint commotion.

"Baa…"

It was a sheep's bleat, as if from afar.

Lumian instantly thought of the three people turned sheep and Shepherd Pierre Berry.

Don't tell me he really wants to attack us dead of night? Lumian stood up and listened intently.

Outside the window was but the wind's sound through leaves and branches. No bleating.

It seemed Lumian so engrossed in his thoughts was hallucinating.

But he didn't think so because he felt slight heat in his left chest.

The black thorn symbol seemed to have appeared again!

This meant an invisible force closely tied to the hidden existence had quietly invaded the room.

Lumian had no time to think. He rushed to the bed and shook Aurore.

"Wake up! Wake up!" he shouted in a hushed voice.

He instinctively worried Leah, Ryan and Valentine would sense something amiss with him.

Aurore opened her eyes, her light-blue eyes clearly dazed.

“What time is it?” she asked in a weak voice. Obviously she was still not fully awake.

“There’s a situation,” Lumian said decisively before continuing, “Half past nine.”

They were one of the few families in the village with wall clocks.

Aurore’s eyes snapped open. She bolted upright, threw out her right hand, and massaged her temples.

She had no time to consider what she might see that she shouldn’t.

If she couldn’t pinpoint the anomaly and confirm the problem as soon as possible, she might not have to worry about seeing anything again. The dead had no need for eyes!

Aurore scanned the room, her gaze darkening as if reflecting strange, indescribable lights and shadows.

Lumian seized the chance to tell his sister about the sheep’s bleat he’d heard in the distance and the triggered heat in the black thorn symbol on his chest.

Aurore frowned. “But I didn’t detect anything…”

“The burning in my chest remains,” Lumian rumbled.

He felt inexplicably terrified. The darkness around him was not simple. An indescribable danger lurked.

Aurore scrutinized every corner of the room, trying to find the unknown.

Silently, Lumian broke into a cold sweat—a stark contrast to the searing heat in his left chest.

He deliberated for a moment and said, “Why not tell Ryan and the others? Maybe they can find something.”

Aurore pondered, then nodded.

“Use your sudden sense of impending danger as an excuse.”

“Right.” Lumian opened his mouth, about to yell outside—then froze.

“What is it?” Aurore asked, alarmed.

Lumian frowned. “The heat in my chest is dimming fast…”

Meaning the black thorn symbol was “fading” rapidly.

“The danger invading our room has left?” Aurore mused. “Because we prepared, it did nothing?”

“Perhaps.” Lumian turned to the corridor and bellowed, “Something’s wrong!”

Ryan appeared in the doorway in the blink of an eye, followed by Leah, then Valentine, who looked jolted from sleep.

Without waiting to be asked, Lumian recounted what had happened, using his sense of danger in place of the burning in his chest.

Ryan listened intently, not doubting this was Lumian’s hallucination. He sighed,

“It’s useful indeed to take turns on night watch.

“Mostly it’s boredom, but if it saves everyone, it’s almost life and death.”

As he spoke, he conjured pure Sunrise Gleam around him, circling every room on the second floor.

Though he couldn’t find the sinister power, he could at least sanctify the environment.

…

Leah paced around, muttering under her breath. Her veil and boots jangled ominously, then fell silent just as abruptly.

Finally, she said to Aurore and Lumian, “It was dicey just now. On top of that, whatever it was could block my Sealed Artifact from giving me any warning. I’m afraid these stupid bells will only go off once that thing really starts targeting someone. But now, it has left.”

“Well, that’s reassuring.” Aurore sighed in relief.

“Maybe it wasn’t a single creature.” Lumian relaxed and grinned. “Could’ve been more than one.”

Ryan and the others were silent.

“That’s even worse!” Aurore lashed out at Lumian and told the investigators, “Now that the alarm’s off, let’s get back to our schedule.”

She didn’t mention who might’ve snuck in to attack them. There were too many possibilities: Shepherd Pierre Berry, the unknown corpse in the tomb, or the shady deputy padre.

Without solid clues, speculating would just waste time. Better to wait until daylight.

For now, they just had to remember that nighttime held real danger. Someone was out to get them, so they’d need to stay on high alert.

Once Leah and the others had gone to their rooms, Lumian glanced at the wall clock and asked Aurore, “Want to sleep in a bit more?”

“No way, waking up and crashing this late sucks.” Aurore stretched her arms overhead. “Ugh, just to handle emergencies, I got this dress with pockets for spell components and useful stuff. I didn’t even dare roll over, scared I might stab myself. I slept like a board.”

…

As she spoke, she hopped off the bed and strode to the window. She yanked back the curtains and peered outside.

Cordu was silent. Many houses were still lit up.

“I thought that owl would come after us for sure, but there’s no sign

of it out there." Aurore surveyed the area and explained to Lumian.

Lumian nodded.

"That was my guess too."

He then leaned in and whispered everything he had figured out to his sister.

"Not bad," Aurore said with a smile. "You're getting better at analyzing situations. I've got nothing to add." She paused. "But we can't take matters into our own hands. That tomb is too dangerous…"

At this point, she exclaimed, "At dawn, we'll pay Madame Pualis a visit and tell her your theory. Let her know the Warlock's and owl's motives might affect her escape from this time loop at that precise moment."

"I'll go myself," Lumian said. He didn't want Aurore anywhere near Madame Pualis who had designs on her.

Aurore didn't argue. She only reminded him, "Watch your back. Don't piss her off, or else…"

She eyed his abdomen meaningfully.

Aurore sighed and said, "Truth is, that mysterious lady at Ol' Tavern is clearly stronger, but she wants nothing to do with this time loop. No way she'll help us investigate that tomb."

"Yeah," Lumian agreed.

He then said, "Still, I'll drop by Ol' Tavern tomorrow to see if I can run into her. What if she changes her mind?"

"Fair enough." Aurore didn't object.

They chatted in hushed tones until midnight.

After Lumian relieving his post with Leah in the study, he returned to Aurore's room. He lay beside his sister, inhaling her familiar scent and sinking into the soft mattress. Sleep eluded him.

“What’s wrong?” Aurore asked, noticing his tenseness.

“Just not used to this,” Lumian said carefully.

Aurore scoffed.

“What happened to the bold Lumian I know?”

Lumian didn’t reply. Aurore exhaled slowly and smiled.

“Remember when you first started tailing me? You were scared I’d slip away and refused to sleep at night. You were super vigilant.”

“Yeah, I do.” Lumian drifted into the past. “Back then, you’d hum me a lullaby and let me doze off to the sound of your voice.”

As soon as the words left his lips, a familiar melody reached his ears. Light and soothing, it calmed his body and mind.

Leaning against the bed, Aurore gazed into the deep crimson dark before her. She hummed the lullaby from her hometown, soft and wistful.

It was a song their mother had crooned when Aurore was just a kid, coaxing her to sleep.

“Go to sleep, go to sleep…”

Lost in the gentle tune, Lumian gradually unwound and slipped under.

……

Lumian woke up amidst the faint gray fog. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

He scoped the room and realized that he wasn’t in his sister’s room. He was still in his own room.

Chapter 90 - 90 Trying Again

90 Trying Again

Indeed, no matter where I fall asleep, I'll wake up here. Lumian tumbled out of bed and glimpsed at the Fate Appropriator Dirk beside him. No, Fallen Mercury. He paced to the window in the faint gray fog.

He planted his hands on the desk and cast his gaze at the blood-colored "peak."

At the summit of the mountain, the fog was dense and stratified, utterly masking the three-headed, six-armed colossus.

I nearly lost control with just a glance the last time. I really have no idea what to do if I have to face it in the future… Lumian sighed in frustration.

He didn't sink into such emotions for long and quickly broke free because he still had numerous things to do.

Lumian contorted himself into a deranged dance within his bedroom, emitting a distorted spiritual pulse. Combined with the stirred forces of nature, he 'broadcasted' himself in an unspecific direction.

Before long, he sensed approaching entities and saw the translucent forms of the mouth-orifice monster, the shotgun monster, and the skinless monster reflected in his glass window.

Lumian was in no hurry. Following his dance, he withdrew a ritual silver dagger and stabbed the back of his left hand.

A droplet of crimson swiftly surfaced and congealed into a bead atop his skin, guided by his spirituality and the forces of nature.

The trio of creatures shifted but did not dare enter Lumian's abode or attach themselves to him.

Lumian spun around, elevated his left hand and bellowed, "I!"

Shouting in the ancient tongue of Hermes, it caused the room to rock faintly.

Employing his ritual dagger, Lumian collected the droplet of blood and aimed it at the mouth-orifice beast. "I command you! Onto me!"

Again in ancient Hermes. An imperceptible gust blew.

The translucent form of the mouth-orifice monster trembled visibly, as if seized and vigorously shaken by an invisible entity.

Just as Lumian completed his dance, believing it would have no effect, the mouth-orifice monster hurtled into the house and landed upon the ritual silver dagger, devouring the droplet of crimson.

It then convulsed violently as it tunneled into Lumian's body through the silver dagger.

Lumian could not help but gasp, his mind flooded with thoughts of 'So hungry, so hungry, starving, starving.'

He hastily turned and stared at the full-length mirror on his wardrobe. He saw his visage was pallid and tinged cerulean. His maw gaped wildly, resembling a cadaver more than a living being.

Success… Lumian exulted gazing at his reflection as if regarding a stranger.

It felt somewhat alien.

He resisted his intense hunger and attempted to sense the mouth-orifice monster possessing him.

It was like acquiring an additional brain. Much of it brimmed with hunger, bloodlust, madness and more. Instinctively, he had a proclivity to harness its characteristics.

Lumian could utilize his will and spirituality to magnify one of those instincts. It equated to employing the mouth-orifice monster's traits or abilities.

Without a second thought, Lumian chose invisibility.

In the blink of an eye, his reflection vanished from the full-length mirror. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Everything from his body to his clothes to the ritual silver dagger had disappeared.

Lumian took a few steps forward and back, but he couldn't spot any traces of himself in the mirror or glass.

Of course, his footprints and scent remained.

Lumian stuffed the silver dagger Aurore had given him, raised his arms, and punched the air a few times.

With each whooshing punch, the full-body mirror stayed empty until Lumian swung a fist at its surface.

The moment his knuckles connected with the mirror, his outline materialized. His face was pale with a tinge of blue, and his eyes glinted dangerously.

Unbelievable… No matter what I do, the invisibility stays on, but I can't mute it. However, as long as I attack the mirror, I lose invisibility… I thought it was optical invisibility like Aurore said, but it seems to be a result of mysticism… Attacking something forms a bond with it, rendering me invisible to its 'gaze?' Lumian hovered his right fist over the mirror.

After verifying the effects and limits of invisibility, ravenous hunger overwhelmed him. He stomped downstairs into the cellar and found two steaks.

If not for his rationality, he would've sunk his teeth into the dark meat.

Lumian abandoned the ingredients and grabbed the cheese he had

stockpiled, realizing he had to fry the steak medium rare with no fire set up.

He didn't care if it was clean or delectable. Like a ghost starved to death, he shoved food into his mouth.

After eating a few cheese slices, Lumian finally satiated his intense hunger.

Looks like this is the downside of the mouth-orifice monster… he evaluated seriously. Luckily, I can still control my body and haven't lost my mind… That thing is obsessed with revenge but overpowered by even greater fear… If I utter 'leave' in ancient Hermes now, it'll bolt faster than anything…

By now, Lumian was sure the mouth-orifice monster's possession had acceptable side effects. Invisibility would become a potent weapon to explore and battle in the dream ruins.

Coupled with Fallen Mercury, he felt his combat ability had more than doubled.

Lumian returned to the dining table, pulled out a chair, and sat down, patiently awaiting the possession's end.

Soon, his spirituality nearly depleted.

He didn't strain himself. He stood up and performed some seemingly insane moves.

It was the same dance to attract monsters. Its purpose was to force the possessing creature out.

Without Lumian's command in ancient Hermes, the mouth-orifice monster's blurry and translucent figure flew out and vanished through the glass window on the first floor without glancing back.

Lumian couldn't help but make a self-deprecating remark. "Don't run so fast. You're acting like I have a cesspit on me."

He knew he could maintain possession for about three minutes given his spirituality. Once invisible, his consumption rate would double.

Of course, that was under normal circumstances. In danger, he could strain himself to last longer. But that risked losing control, best avoided if possible.

Though the mouth-orifice monster had left, Lumian still felt ravenous. He lit the stove and fried the steak medium well.

Then, he picked up his knife and fork and quickly cut, forked it, and put it into his mouth. He felt that the juice locked in the meat was delicious.

Lumian devoured two steaks in under ten minutes, sating his hunger.

Looking at the empty plate, he sighed, “Three minutes of possession needs at least two hours to recover…”

This didn’t only mean eradicating hunger, but a recovery of spirituality too.

Lumian knew his current state wasn’t fit for exploring. He found flour, sugar and other bits, using the oven at home to bake biscuits.

…

With cheese, this would be his main source of fuel in the ruins.

Had he more time, he’d have gotten jerky too—food shepherds often carried. As a Cordu resident, he knew how to make them.

Busy with this, Lumian pondered his dream ruin plans.

First, circle the city wall. Then hunt that flaming beast…

Only by amping up my strength can I better explore and unravel the secrets of the dream…

The flaming monster’s strength was at least Sequence 7, and there was a high chance it was from the Hunter pathway. Its various abilities perfectly squashed Lumian. He hadn’t planned on dealing with that dude anytime soon, hoping to first seek out prey that was weaker and on par with a Provoker. But now, scoring Fallen Mercury and Invisibility gave him a certain level of hope.

When his spirituality had mostly recovered, Lumian placed the baked biscuits and sliced cheese into a cloth pouch and slung it around his waist.

Then, he seriously wrapped his left hand in layers of white bandages and grabbed the evil dirk called Fallen Mercury.

Hauling his shotgun and axe, Lumian strode towards the door on the first floor with the other stuff he needed.

Suddenly, he had the feeling that he was a fully armed hunter preparing for a dangerous hunt.

Many thoughts surfaced in his mind.

…

My first move is to track the flaming monster's movements. Then I'll use Invisibility to sneak up on it and stab it with Fallen Mercury.

Before that, I'll hunt a weak monster and steal its bad fate. Then swap that fate with the flaming monster's.

I can't do the sacrificial dance while possessed and half-activate the black thorn symbol. Otherwise, the mouth-orifice monster will bolt from my body immediately. So, how do I get away from the flaming monster after hurting it and wait for the fate swap to finish? It'll easily lock onto me through my traces. Invisibility alone won't cut it…

Lumian hadn't figured out the last part yet. That depended on early intel.

As he opened the door and went into the wilderness, he had an odd feeling.

If I can successfully hunt the flaming monster, my Hunter potion will be fully digested.

……

In the area where he'd met the flaming monster before, Lumian held

his pewter-black dirk in his left hand. He carefully searched for any traces, on high alert for sudden attacks.

After circling cautiously for nearly ten minutes, he finally found signs of the flaming monster.

In a collapsed house's corner, there were black scorch marks on a stone unlike any around it.

Where there's one, there's two. Lumian quickly tracked the flaming monster's location and slowly, cautiously followed its trail.

When the marks were fresh, he stopped and began to dance.

Chapter 91 - 91 Scheming

91 Scheming

Lumian danced to lure in strange creatures. His objective: to use Invisibility to slip closer and analyze the flaming monster's habits and movements, gathering intel for future hunts.

Within a mere 30 to 40 seconds, he used ancient Hermes to reattach the mouth-orifice creature to himself.

An overwhelming hunger consumed Lumian, compelling him to open his mouth. It was as if his mouth had sprouted vortex-shaped teeth.

Swiftly, he stifled the ravenous and insane thoughts flooding his being, pulled out a small biscuit and a cube of cheese, and shoved them into his mouth, chewing and swallowing.

!!

Simultaneously, he strengthened the mouth-orifice creature's invisibility, causing him to vanish from sight.

Having quelled his hunger, Lumian tried hard to clamp his mouth shut to prevent the aroma of biscuit and cheese from escaping.

He then trailed the flaming monster along the road's edge.

Before long, Lumian spotted the charred monster, its every limb ablaze.

It was constructing a new trap in the clearing from before.

You're already a monster, yet you're still so dedicated? Lumian silently jeered.

Naturally, he understood this was merely an expression of the

monster's instinctive behavior.

Lumian dared not approach too closely, halting beside a crumbling wall at the clearing's perimeter.

He studied the flaming monster for a few moments before glancing back at the path he had traversed. He noticed that, although his footprints were faint and concealed in less conspicuous areas, they still existed.

Lumian eyed his current position and hatched a plan.

Closely monitoring the monster's movements, he seized a larger rock and hurled it to the side. As it flew, he pressed his right hand against the decaying wall and vaulted up, landing securely atop the wall.

Crash! Lumian's actions were flawlessly masked by the sound of the rock striking the ground.

After changing his vantage point, Lumian felt much more at ease. Monitoring his dwindling spirituality, he intently observed the flaming monster.

He discerned that the flaming monster's traps were neither concealed nor challenging to detect. They didn't exploit any logical vulnerabilities or inertia-driven movement. They were simple and exposed.

The most elementary example was the flaming monster stretching a rope slightly above one's ankle between two ruined buildings across the clearing.

Any human or monster with normal vision could easily discover this trap.

At first, Lumian didn't grasp its purpose, but after placing himself in the monster's position, he gradually discerned its potential significance.

The intent of such traps was not to directly harm or ensnare enemies, but to forge an environment that enabled Hunters to exhibit their full potential.

In the heat of battle, one struggled to observe the environment and maintain situational awareness. Constantly distracted by these limitations, they occasionally had to slow down or alter their stance to evade traps. Hunters possessed the unique ability to remain alert to their surroundings at all times and exploit the environment to their advantage.

This disparity widened the gulf between their strengths.

An open conspiracy… Lumian nodded in understanding, recalling Aurore's words.

Suddenly, he perceived the flaming monster as a stern instructor imparting valuable lessons about Hunters to him.

Simultaneously, he remembered the content of Aurore's novel: Stealing from a master is punishable by death!

Eventually, the flaming monster ceased its activity. Its charred face instinctively scanned the vicinity.

Then, it strode towards the edge of the clearing near Lumian, flames dancing from its body.

Following a predetermined route to the next location? Lumian mused to himself, his excitement mounting.

For Hunters, discerning a quarry's path was invaluable.

Most traps lay hidden along such routes!

As the flaming monster ambled, it scrutinized its surroundings and examined the ground, remaining vigilant.

This caused Lumian to furrow his brow. He realized that a higher Sequence Hunter wouldn't be easily handled.

The most effective counter to Beyonders was often individuals or objects of a higher Sequence from the same pathway, even if the gap was only one or two Sequences.

I'm better at your strengths than you are. You may lack what I

possess!

If not for his Dancer-related abilities and the Fallen Mercury dirk, Lumian wouldn't have dared to entertain any designs on the flaming monster.

Seven to eight seconds later, the flaming monster reached the edge of the clearing, approximately five to six meters from the crumbling wall.

As before, the flaming monster's gaze instinctively roved.

It paused, as if observing footprints near the wall's edge that appeared to have been left by someone. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Thump, thump. Lumian's heart pounded involuntarily.

He wasn't prepared to hunt the flaming monster just yet.

Despite the five to six meters between them, Lumian hesitated to kill the enemy with Fallen Mercury, knowing the latter hadn't stored an exchangeable fate.

If a fight erupted, he'd be hunted before he could activate the black thorn symbol!

Lumian struggled to control his heartbeat and breathing. His right hand hovered over the black cloth covering Fallen Mercury's blade, ready to tear it away at any moment.

If he leaped with full force from his current position, he might reach the flaming monster and avoid a long-range battle that favored his opponent.

Two or three seconds ticked by. The flaming monster averted its gaze and moved on.

It didn't seem to have noticed Lumian's footprints.

After covering another ten meters, the flaming monster suddenly spun around.

Flames erupted from its body, condensing into a massive, searing white fireball.

The fireball rocketed like a cannonball toward the spot where Lumian had been perched at the edge of the crumbling wall.

Following his instincts, Lumian, who was crouching on the wall, leaped down to the other side, where the flaming monster had laid its trap.

Boom!

A fiery blast erupted, causing the already unstable wall to collapse.

...

Upon landing, Lumian rolled twice to avoid falling debris and the shockwave laced with flames.

He immediately sprang back up, maintaining his “invisibility” as he sped through the traps left by the flaming monster and headed toward another exit in the clearing.

The flaming monster couldn’t detect its enemy right away, so it focused on searching for clues.

Finally, it spotted a series of faint footprints.

By then, Lumian had reached the rope stretched between two collapsed buildings, easily jumping over it and fleeing the clearing.

He dashed to a natural trap and shook off his pursuer.

Having deactivated his invisibility, Lumian cursed in pain, “Too treacherous, too treacherous! One of these monsters’ heads is worth two of Pons’s. After finding my footprints, it pretended not to see them and deliberately increased the distance between us, fearing it might be defeated!”

As Lumian cursed, he felt like he had learned something new.

Of course, there were drawbacks to this approach: the increased

distance gave Lumian room to escape.

Furthermore, his invisibility meant the flaming monster couldn't lock onto him right away. His chances of escaping were high.

After catching his breath and restoring some energy, Lumian mused while eating biscuits and cheese, "Based on what just happened, as long as I plan carefully and strike at the right moment, I can rely on Invisibility to create distance and escape to a safe location, waiting for the fate exchange to complete."

...

Lumian's Invisibility would break upon attacking, but as long as he avoided contact, he could use it again.

This valuable insight emerged from his reconnaissance.

However, he also realized a problem. As a Hunter, I didn't bring water when I went 'hunting in the mountains!' I'm so thirsty!

Both cheese and biscuits required water.

The jerky Lumian intended to make in the future fell into this category too.

After resting briefly, he resolved to hunt Noodle Man, strip its bad fate, and store it in Fallen Mercury. He couldn't risk being defenseless in an emergency again.

A puppet's fate also belonged to Fallen Mercury and could be exchanged. But Lumian wasn't a wielder. He couldn't swap his fate with others. If he could, he'd gladly give away the bomb on him.

……

About thirty minutes later, Lumian tracked down Noodle Man, the grotesque hodgepodge of limbs and features.

Having completed the ritualistic dance in advance, Lumian strode towards Noodle Man openly. As expected, he found Noodle Man prostrate on the fetid ground, trembling uncontrollably.

Very obedient… Lumian praised, gripping an iron-black axe in his right hand and the pewter-black Fallen Mercury dirk in his left.

Though Fallen Mercury dirk's malignant aura seeped into Lumian's skin even without contact, he had long grown immune to its corrupting influence. What might drive ordinary Beyonders to losing control was nothing to him.

Lumian glowered at the pathetic Noodle Man cowering before him, retracting his gaze from the gnashing maw on its forehead.

"According to Aurore, death is a mercy for your kind. The sooner you expire, the sooner your suffering will end."

As he spoke, Lumian crouched and plunged the pewter-black dirk deep into the back of Noodle Man's neck.

Noodle Man spasmed, but did not resist or struggle.

Lumian wrenched the dirk free and gripped his axe, swinging the weapon down with fluid grace.

The axehead cleaved through flesh and bone, sending Noodle Man's head tumbling across the ground with Fallen Mercury's swipe.

Blood erupted from the severed neck, splattering everywhere.

Noodle Man's twitching remains soon fell still, lifeless at last.

Lumian strode over to the head and retrieved FalleN mercury with his left hand.

In the fleeting second between breaths, an illusory river shimmered before his eyes.

The river appeared to be constructed from intricate mercury symbols, and each symbol seemed formed by the river itself.

At once, the river's branches disappeared, leaving only the primary current. It fractured midway and kinked as if wanting to double back to its source but for now could not prevail.

Chapter 92 - 92 Stripping Fate

92 Stripping Fate

Lumian couldn't grasp the meaning of the illusory river he saw or sensed. All he could surmise was that it symbolized fate. Guided by Fallen Mercury's instincts, he lifted the blade's tip and aimed it at a mercury symbol within the river.

As soon as he made contact with the mercury river, a series of scenes flashed through Lumian's mind: Noodle Man performing an enigmatic sacrificial dance; Noodle Man cowering before the black thorn symbol and prostrating itself; Noodle Man gathering the scattered flesh and blood throughout the dream ruins to satiate its hunger; Noodle Man attempting to approach the 'city wall' circle, but retreating each time as if afraid of something; Noodle Man's head severed by an axe…

Is this its entire existence since the loop began? Lumian realized this as he tried to stab the tip of Fallen Mercury at the mercury symbol representing Noodle Man's demise—the end of the illusory river.

It was too immense and heavy for him to succeed.

At that moment, the mercury symbol started to dissipate, and the illusory river gradually faded. The images in Lumian's mind grew hazy.

There's a time limit? Lumian didn't dare to dawdle. Adhering to the principle of proximity, he aimed the dark pewter dirk at Noodle Man's fate of succumbing to the black thorn symbol.

The mercury symbol, seemingly formed by the river's entanglement, was pried open, condensing into a droplet that seeped into the blade of Fallen Mercury.

In the next instant, the illusory river vanished entirely, preventing Lumian from witnessing Noodle Man's fate again.

He glanced down at Fallen Mercury and noticed the heretic symbols on the pewter-black blade undulating gently like water, as though infused with some vital force.

They had been mesmerizing from the start, but now they appeared even more sinister.

"Success…" Lumian whispered to himself in relief.

Fallen Mercury was now complete.

In the future, as long as he could wound the flaming monster with this heretic dirk in battle, he could swap the monster's fate of cowering before the black thorn symbol with the former.

Lumian wrapped the blade of Fallen Mercury in black cloth and sheathed it in his belt. He dealt with Noodle Man's corpse briefly, moving it into a half-collapsed building. He destroyed the building's last support, allowing rubble and wood to fall, burying everything inside.

After this, Lumian circled back to where the flaming monster had appeared.

This time, he didn't approach for observation. Instead, he searched for footprints and other traces, taking time to identify which ones the target left while deliberately circling around.

After nearly two hours, Lumian gradually deciphered the flaming monster's habits and patterns. A mental hunting map emerged.

He spent some time surveying the predetermined battlefields, seeking natural traps to exploit.

Eventually, Lumian rubbed his forehead and decided to delve deeper into the ruins while he still had energy, gathering information for future explorations.

He remained vigilant and performed the sacrificial dance again,

partially triggering the black thorn symbol.

With the ‘amulet’ in hand, Lumian quickly followed the same path as before.

He encountered monsters along the way, but they either fled before attacking or vanished from sight at a distance. The deeper he went, the more similar situations occurred.

Finally, when the burning sensation in his chest from the second sacrificial dance subsided, Lumian spotted the ‘city wall’ composed of twisted houses once more.

He rested a while, waiting for his spirituality to recover before performing the sacrificial dance again.

After the dance, sometimes forceful, sometimes graceful, Lumian headed in the direction where he found Fallen Mercury, the black thorn symbol activated.

After passing through the room where the flames had been extinguished, he slowed his pace, wary of a sudden assault.

After walking a while, Lumian noticed the light ahead had dimmed considerably. It was as if a massive creature high in the sky blocked the light, or the sun was obscured by something.

Lumian instinctively looked up, but saw only thick fog.

Unable to determine the cause, he could only draw Fallen Mercury and cautiously proceed.

In a moment, it felt as if he had transitioned from day to night.

Of course, this was an exaggeration. Lumian thought it more accurate to liken the foggy weather to a place shrouded in dark clouds.

Almost simultaneously, he yawned involuntarily, his exhaustion intensifying.

No, I can’t sleep… Lumian forced himself to keep his eyes open as he retreated from the shadowy base of the mountain.

His mental state improved significantly. Although still tired, he could endure it.

You fall asleep the moment you enter. The deeper you go, the sleepier you become? Lumian mused silently. He turned and walked in another direction.

After another sacrificial dance, he arrived at an unfamiliar area.

To his right were ‘walls’ stacked with doors and windows. To his left lay a wasteland connected to the circle of building ruins, and ahead stood brown trees.

In the desolate ruins, the trees seemed incredibly resilient. They intertwined and embraced each other, forming a wooden wall five to six meters tall.

This wooden wall had numerous green leaves and branches, a stark contrast to the deathly silence and desolation surrounding it.

If it hadn’t blocked the path to the back of the city wall, Lumian might have praised its tenacious vitality. But now, he could only express his dissatisfaction with the crude gesture of raising two middle fingers.

He could have chosen to take a detour and enter from the other side of the dream ruins, but he wasn’t familiar with that area. His spirituality was nearly depleted, so there was no need to take the risk.

Lumian yawned unabashedly, his chest still burning as he retraced his steps.

……

As Lumian awoke, the first light of dawn had already crept through the thick curtains, casting an outline of the desk, chair, wardrobe, and other furnishings within the room.

Still early, he thought, glancing over at Aurore beside him.

Aurore’s blonde hair lay strewn across the white pillow, her eyes

closed in peaceful slumber.

Her right hand gripped the edge of the blanket, occasionally attempting to turn over but stopping instinctively. Her brow furrowed before gradually smoothing out.

Lumian had a good idea why his sister reacted this way.

She had hidden numerous bottles within her nightgown as a precaution. Sleeping on her side or stomach would undoubtedly cause her harm.

How exhausting, Lumian sighed inwardly, his expression tender and his heart at ease.

After a moment, he carefully slid out of bed and left the bedroom.

He moved toward a side balcony that led to the rooftop. Facing the distant crimson sky, he stretched his body.

Within a minute, Valentine emerged from his room and stood in the corridor.

“Are you also greeting the sun?” he asked, his usual cold demeanor replaced with warmth and approval.

…

Can I say no? Lumian smiled. “That’s right.”

Satisfied, Valentine stepped onto the balcony and stood tall, facing the rising sun.

He spread his arms wide, lifted his face toward the sky, and whispered, “Praise the Sun!”

With no other choice, Lumian mimicked the gesture. “Praise the Sun!”

Valentine lowered his arms and crossed them over his chest. After a moment of silent prayer, he opened his eyes and said to Lumian, “If the loop is successfully resolved, I’ll introduce you to the bishop of

Dariège. Or would you prefer Bigorre?"

"I prefer Trier," Lumian answered, smiling. "But where I go isn't up to me. It's up to my sister."

Valentine nodded and dropped the subject. He turned back toward the corridor and began patrolling.

Nothing happened until eight o'clock. The pair then went downstairs and prepared breakfast together.

Soon after, Ryan joined them to help. Leah woke up just before nine, leaving Aurore still asleep.

Ryan bit into his toast and asked Lumian, "Do you have any plans for today?"

Lumian hesitated before responding, "We should leave someone at home. Aurore can't be left to face a potential attack alone. The remaining two will accompany me to stock up on food and fetch some water. We must hold out until the twelfth night."

...

Cordu lacked a proper water supply. Aurore had installed a water tank on the roof during her renovations. As long as it was regularly filled and disinfected, it was as good as having running water.

"Yes, we need to do all this before Lent," Ryan agreed.

Lumian smiled brightly. "By the way, we should visit Madame Pualis and ask if she can help us investigate the dead Warlock and the owl in the tomb."

As expected, Valentine frowned, and Ryan's smile stiffened.

Leah sipped her water and offered a smile. "I'll stay with Aurore."

"No problem," Lumian agreed on behalf of Ryan and Valentine.

With no other choice, the two men acquiesced to visit the administrator's residence that morning.

Following breakfast, the trio exited the semi-subterranean two-story building and made their way toward Ol' Tavern.

They passed Shepherd Pierre Berry's home along the way.

Lumian's heart raced as he suggested to Ryan and Valentine, "Let's check on the three sheep."

He recalled the bleating he had heard the night before.

Understanding his meaning, Ryan and Valentine offered no objection.

They circled around to the rear of the Berrys' home, only to find an empty sheep pen. nove(l)bi(n.)com

The three sheep were gone.

Chapter 93 - 93 An Early Sacrifice

93 An Early Sacrifice

Gazing at the empty sheep pen littered with hay and dung, Ryan furrowed his brow and said, “Did they really fix the underground altar so quickly?”

He suspected the three missing sheep had been taken for sacrifice.

“Maybe these heretics have some special powers,” Valentine replied with disdain.

As Lumian listened to their conversation, he suddenly remembered the faint sound of a sheep’s bleating he heard the night before.
Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Could it have been one of the sheep being sacrificed? Puzzled, he shared his suspicion with Ryan and Valentine.

“That seems unlikely,” Ryan dismissed, shaking his head. “The cathedral is hundreds of meters from your house, and the altar is underground.”

What he meant was that even with a Hunter’s enhanced hearing, it would be impossible to hear anything from the cathedral’s underground.

Lumian shared that doubt, but couldn’t explain why he heard the bleating. Simultaneously, a distinct burning sensation appeared in his chest as the black thorn symbol partially activated.

There was no way to fake this!

Burning sensation… Lumian's heart raced, recalling something the mysterious woman had said.

Pray to yourself… the principle of proximity…

Thinking back to the ritual that invoked Dancer's power and the black thorn symbol, he formed a new hypothesis.

He heard the sheep bleating during the sacrifice because of mysticism!

In simpler terms, when the padre and his group performed their ritual and prayed to the hidden being, the principle of proximity also targeted the corruption in Lumian's body, partially triggering the black thorn symbol. As a result, Lumian could faintly hear the sheep's cries from afar.

Him being unable to respond or knowing how—with the corruption now sealed by the owner of the bluish-black pattern—the padre's ritual ultimately 'contacted' the hidden entity.

After the ritual, the burning sensation in Lumian's chest faded.

It seems no invisible, strange power had invaded Aurore's room last night. The anomaly in my body was just half-activated by the padre's ritual… Lumian roughly understood how events had unfolded.

At that moment, Ryan warned his companions, "It appears our investigation of the cathedral's underground has alarmed the padre and his people. They've found a way to repair the altar and pray for strength ahead of time. From now on, we need to be extra vigilant. Don't assume things will only turn dangerous as Lent approaches."

"If I weren't worried about restarting the loop, I'd have dealt with them already!" Valentine spat hatefully.

Then, he added gloomily, "Can you stop calling that servant of the evil god a padre? He's not worthy!"

Why was he a padre if he wasn't worthy? Lumian dared not voice his thoughts.

He wasn't afraid to voice his thoughts; but wanting to maintain his image in Valentine's eyes, he kept silent. After all, he might need to persuade this fanatic to do something later, like using his suicide to verify the essence of the cycle.

Ryan nodded.

"Let's visit Madame Pualis as soon as possible to replenish our supplies. We should stay inside as much as we can in the future."

Lumian said nothing more, leaving Shepherd Pierre Berry's house through the back door and heading towards the castle on the hill.

Passing through the vibrant garden, the trio approached the partially opened door and informed the red-coated, white-panted manservant, "We need to see Madame Pualis."

"Wait a moment." The valet glanced at Ryan and Valentine before swiftly turning and vanishing through the door.

Soon after, the pale-faced 'midwife' in a grayish-white dress emerged.

Compared to last time, her face was even paler, and her eyes were so blank that it made one's heart turn cold.

Had Lumian not informed Ryan and Valentine beforehand that the 'midwife' wasn't 'dead,' they would have been shocked.

They had seen plenty of dead people turn into zombies. The Solar High Priest specialized in such matters. Valentine had purified dozens of similar cases, but it was beyond their understanding how a person diced into pieces could revert to their original appearance and seem more alive than dead.

The 'midwife' spoke in a monotone.

"Madame doesn't want to see you. Please leave."

"We have urgent matters," Lumian insisted. "Isn't Madame Pualis concerned that the person underground will disrupt her plans?"

The 'midwife' maintained her tone.

“Madame says it won’t affect her.”

Hearing this, a chill ran down Lumian’s spine.

It meant they would have a hard time getting Madame Pualis’ help again.

Lumian smiled without displaying frustration or disappointment. Looking at the ‘midwife,’ he said, “But we might explore the tomb.”

He implied that during the exploration, either side could encounter trouble, triggering the loop to restart prematurely.

Unfazed, the ‘midwife’ remained stiff and blank.

“You can try, but you’ll only be disappointed.”

What does she mean? Lumian couldn’t grasp Madame Pualis’ message.

Does she mean they could explore all they wanted, and she would offer some help at crucial moments, but they wouldn’t find any valuable clues? The more Lumian pondered, the more he doubted that was her intended meaning. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have refused their meeting request through the ‘midwife.’

Before Lumian could consider other possibilities, Ryan thoughtfully asked, “Is Madame Pualis trying to tell us that the person in the tomb can easily control us and prevent our investigation without triggering the loop?”

“Yes.” The ‘midwife’ nodded slowly, turned, and retreated deeper into the castle.

Lumian, Valentine, and Ryan exchanged glances and left, feeling helpless.

Their next stop was Ol’ Tavern, where they could purchase plenty of provisions and barrels of cheap wine.

Compared to potable water that spoiled easily, wine was more stable. As long as its alcohol content wasn’t too high, it could substitute for

water.

Entering Ol' Tavern, Lumian scanned the room but didn't spot the mysterious woman.

Disappointed, he focused on the bar counter, telling tavern owner Maurice Bénet what they needed.

After Ryan and Valentine hauled out wine barrels, Lumian lowered his voice and inquired, "Where's the other lady?"

Maurice Bénet shook his head.

"I don't know. Maybe she's in her room, somewhere else in the village, or even in Liège. She rented the room until the 9th. She's free to do as she pleases."

...

The 9th? The twelfth night? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

April 9th was the so-called twelfth night that he and Aurore had deduced.

This also confirmed that March 29th was indeed the loop's first day.

If Ryan and the two other foreigners hadn't happened to enter Cordu on a particular cycle's first day, the loop would immediately restart and commence on March 29th whenever outsiders invaded the area.

"Damn." Lumian slapped his forehead and told the tavern owner, Maurice Bénet, "My stomach's acting up. I need the restroom. Tell them to wait for me."

Maurice Bénet's expression seemed to say: What are you up to now?

"Don't mess with me!"

The downside of having a bad reputation rears its ugly head once more… Lumian chuckled.

"Don't worry, I'm really just using the restroom!"

As he spoke, he waved and sprinted toward the staircase.

He did want to use the restroom, but he was heading for the one upstairs.

…

Maurice Bénet glanced at his retreating figure and muttered, “Spring is here, and this scoundrel’s hormones are raging…”

His voice barely reached Lumian’s ears.

Upon reaching the second floor, Lumian approached the restroom and positioned himself in front of the mysterious lady’s room.

Knock, knock, knock. He rapped on the door.

No answer.

Noticing the absence of a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the handle, Lumian knocked twice more, each time louder than before.

Unfortunately, the mysterious lady never showed.

Lumian pondered for a moment before producing a slim wire and jiggling it in the keyhole.

The door creaked open, revealing an empty room.

The bed’s blanket lay neatly folded, as though no one had occupied the space recently.

Lumian exhaled quietly and closed the door without venturing inside.

…

In the afternoon, the siblings congregated in Aurore’s bedroom under the guise of instructing Lumian in the art of Hermes to swiftly enhance his strength.

Lumian kept his voice low as he recounted his excursion into the dream ruins the previous night. At last, he inquired, “Anything to add? About hunting the flaming monster?”

Though he was armed with Fallen Mercury and Invisibility, his confidence in hunting the flaming beast remained low.

It was a Sequence of the Hunter pathway that had experienced a qualitative transformation!

Aurore chuckled.

“You’ve covered all the bases. The only thing I can add is…”

She lifted her hands, formed fists, and shook them gently.

“Break a leg!”

“…” Lumian felt defeated by his sister’s jest.

However, the tension in his chest subsided.

Aurore then said, “What remains are some clichéd words: be careful, be careful, be very careful.”

She sighed.

“It’s a shame the mysterious lady isn’t here. Otherwise, I could’ve crafted some simple, supplementary talismans, along with the Integrity Brooch, and had them brought into your dream.”

“That’s true.” While Lumian felt disappointed, he wasn’t disheartened. He had no intention of giving up.

…

At 9:50 pm, Lumian slid out of Aurore’s bedroom and stalked down the hallway towards the washroom.

He intended to relieve himself before beginning his night watch.

Bathed in the crimson glow of the moon, the washroom was shrouded in darkness. Only the toilet was faintly visible.

Lumian bent over and unfastened his belt.

Behind him, the shadow on the wall abruptly writhed and morphed

into a silhouette brandishing an axe high above its head!

Chapter 94 - 94 Attack

94 Attack nove(l)bi(n.)com

Lumian's eyes were narrowed, his body tensing as he sensed the pores on his skin open. An overwhelming premonition of danger washed over him.

In the dream ruins, he'd had no shortage of similar experiences. Instantly, he halted and tumbled to the side, like a boneless sack of flesh.

A whistling wind filled his ears as a razor-sharp axe grazed his body, slicing through the air.

Lumian hit the ground with a thud, attempting to roll to his feet. But pale-white and pitch-black, eerie arms extended from the surrounding shadows, grabbing his clothes and coiling around his body.

The cold sensation and stiffness seeped into Lumian's flesh. Twisting wildly, trying to escape the restraints with his powerful agility, he shouted, "Help…"

Two malicious, bumpy palms smothered his mouth, stifling his voice abruptly, leaving only a whimper.

Simultaneously, Lumian glimpsed an elongated humanoid shadow on the wall, raising the axe at him.

Clang!

A two-handed broadsword of pure light blocked the axe's slash.

Ryan was the first to rush over, not bothering with his Dawn Armor, and simply summoned a Sword of Dawn.

The shadowy axe took on a heavy, sharp, and dark appearance the moment it detached from the wall.

The second person to arrive at the washroom door was Leah, who had been in the opposite study. The silver bells on her veil and boots tinkled softly.

Leah raised her right palm and aimed her silver revolver at the strange arms grabbing Lumian.

They tightened, as if trying to drag Lumian into the shadows.

Blue blood vessels bulged from Lumian's neck, forehead, and hands, straining with all his might.

Yet, he couldn't fend off the pale-white and pitch-black arms. His body dissolved into the shadows piece by piece.

Bang!

Leah fired, and a golden bullet wrapped in blazing flames struck a pitch-black arm that seemed to drip ink.

The arm ignited, quickly releasing Lumian's neck and retreating into the shadowy corner.

Aurore arrived at the washroom to find such a scene.

Seeing a third of her brother's body thinned and darkened into a shadow, his expression growing increasingly rigid, Aurore wasted no time. She pulled iron-black materials from her hidden pocket and sprinkled the powder at Lumian, her light-blue eyes darkening.

Lumian felt an invisible hand grasp him and pull him toward Aurore.

He recalled his sister using a similar spell before, but it had pushed him away—this time, she yanked him closer.

The colossal hand's strength equaled that of the sinister arms, stopping Lumian's slide into the shadows.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ryan drove the figure with the sharp axe back into the wall.

The next second, Valentine appeared behind Leah and Aurore.

Witnessing Lumian's state, he spread his arms wide.

Golden illusory flames materialized around Lumian, incinerating countless wicked arms.

The pitch-black or pale-white arms either melted like candles or evaporated into black wisps of smoke.

Within seconds, four-fifths of the strange arms grabbing Lumian vanished.

The remaining arms struggled to resist the invisible hand and Lumian's efforts, releasing him one after another.

Feeling the grip on him loosen, Lumian was pulled by the invisible hand, half-flying and half-pouncing toward Aurore.

As the pitch-black and pale-white arms retracted, the axe-wielding figure froze on the wall, merging with the surrounding shadows, leaving no trace.

Lumian stood and surveyed the area, sneering.

"Is that it? Aren't you looking down on us by only sending one person?"

Aurore glared at him.

"Don't speak!"

How could he utter such ill-omened words at a time like this?

As Aurore's voice echoed in the corridor, a black, spiked vine, abnormally thick as if from the Abyss, descended from the study's ceiling.

At its top bloomed a massive, blood-red flower with a foul odor.

The flower expanded, as if stretching its mouth to the limit.

It suddenly engulfed Leah's head and writhed frantically.

As it chewed, the object in its mouth turned into a thin piece of paper and was shredded.

Immediately after, the radiant broadsword of light flew from the washroom, impaling the massive evil flower to the wall.

Streams of bright red blood oozed from the sword, evaporating into mist.

Simultaneously, tendrils of black vines cascaded from the ceiling of the Lumian residence, enveloping the walls and sealing the windows with enormous red blossoms.

Aurore swiftly produced a pearl-like powder and tossed it into the air, mingling it with summoned natural forces.

An unseen warm breeze blew, causing the black vines to wither and lose their vigor, no longer able to support the vivid red flowers suspended in midair.

The wilted vines dangled lifelessly from the second floor.

Not a bad result… Aurore mused to herself.

She had obtained the spell from a member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Intended as a gardening spell for weeding, Aurore had acquired it at a bargain price, thinking it would be useful someday. Typically, it was used to clear weeds from building walls, but today it proved invaluable.

Nonetheless, the abyssal black vines were unnaturally resilient. They merely withered and didn't perish instantly.

This bought time for Valentine, who summoned the golden and illusory Fire of Light to incinerate the vile creatures in the corridor and rooms.

...

Ryan then flooded the area with the pure Sunrise Gleam, banishing

all evil and obliterating all illusions.

Confronted with this situation he was powerless in, Hunter Lumian stifled his urge to perform the enigmatic dance. He observed his sister and the three outsiders collaborate to eradicate the anomaly that had invaded the second floor.

Soon, the black vines and red flowers disintegrated into smoke.

But Leah's veil and the silver bells on her boots continued to jingle, signaling that danger still lurked.

Lumian swiftly surveyed the scene and sniffed.

"The air doesn't smell right…"

A faint, sweet scent lingered.

"I feel a little dizzy and want to sleep," Leah confessed her unease.

The fumes from the burning vines and flowers contain an anesthetic? How sinister! Aurore, possessing extensive mysticism knowledge, acted promptly.

She produced a handful of transparent powder and scattered it forward.

A fierce wind materialized from nowhere, gusting through every corner of the second floor.

…

Ryan, Lumian, Valentine, and Leah dashed into separate rooms, throwing open the windows that had been sealed by the black vines.

As the innocuous wind subsided, Aurore turned to Lumian and inquired, "And now?"

Lumian sniffed cautiously. "Don't smell it anymore."

"I feel better, too," Leah chimed in.

At that moment, the silver bells on her veil and boots ceased their

movement.

The crisis was averted.

“A probing attack from the padre and company?” Aurore speculated.

Lumian glanced at Valentine, who appeared troubled.

“Could be Guillaume Bénet, who just received a boon, or the already powerful Shepherd Pierre Berry.”

Valentine’s expression softened at Lumian’s choice of words.

Ryan surveyed the area and declared in a deep voice, “Whichever the case, we must heighten our vigilance. From now on, let’s split into two groups for shifts. We’ll alternate between resting and standing guard, day or night.”

A single guard risked being ambushed without timely assistance.

“No problem.” Aurore and Lumian exchanged glances before adding, “I’ll be in the same group as my brother.”

Ryan and the others didn’t object.

Over the next few days, the two groups maintained a watchful eye in six-hour rotations. Although nothing transpired, as Lent drew near, they all felt the impending danger, anticipating relentless waves of peril.

During this period, Lumian continued exploring the dream while resting.

He didn’t immediately hunt the flaming monster. Instead, he suppressed his impatience and sought to understand the creature’s patterns.

With his Invisibility, long-range tracking, daily observation, and ample patience, Lumian finally gleaned the information he desired.

The flaming monster would set traps in the dream clearing each morning, practicing techniques it had mastered for 45 to 90 minutes.

It would then follow a fixed route into a flesh-strewn area to replenish its energy.

Its afternoon activities were unpredictable, mainly patrolling its territory via different paths. Lumian had yet to discern its criteria for choosing routes.

In the evening, it would retrace the fixed route and re-enter the hunting zone.

Lumian remained ignorant of its nocturnal activities. He had only spent a maximum of six hours in the dream ruins and never ventured there at night.

…

The night before Lent.

Lumian jolted awake in the hazy gray fog of the dreamscape bedroom. He glanced at Fallen Mercury beside him and his mind snapped into sharp focus.

This was the night. He would hunt down the flaming monster.

Chapter 95 - 95 An “Out in the Open” Ambush

95 An “Out in the Open” Ambush

Lumian meticulously wrapped his left hand in layers of white bandages. He gathered his supplies: Fallen Mercury, his iron-black axe, gray amber perfume, biscuits, cheese, bloodied mutton chops, rope for traps, and a bag of cooled boiled water. Slipping his shotgun over his shoulder, he left his semi-subterranean dwelling.

Through the thin gray fog, he ventured into a barren wasteland, riddled with cracks. He entered the dreamlike ruins and strode toward the clearing where the flaming monster often lurked.

Hearing a distant noise, Lumian veered towards a path he anticipated the creature would take, arriving at a natural trap he’d discovered earlier.

A deep pit lay beside the road, with collapsed walls to the front and left. Stacked rocks bordered the right side, and behind it, a mostly collapsed house loomed.

Such a trap was difficult to spot. Lumian had found it only after scouring the area multiple times.

He crouched behind the pit, tossing in a few sharpened wooden stakes. He covered it with a rope net he’d woven earlier and camouflaged it with soil.

With the simple trap set, he placed his bait: two blood-soaked lamb chops, half on solid ground and half suspended above the pit.

Lumian stepped back, assessing the precarious balance. He retreated into the mostly collapsed house, perching himself on the remains of

an outer wall.

He adjusted his position to watch the trap without being seen by passing monsters.

Next, he took out the gray amber perfume and sprayed it on the wall.

A delicate, sweet scent wafted through the air, carried by sporadic gusts of wind that blew through the ruins.

The fragrance clung to the wall and to Lumian.

Without hesitation, he leaped away, looping back to the path where the flaming monster would appear, positioning himself closer to its hunting grounds.

Once more, he changed direction, crossing the path and entering the ruins of a building opposite.

Reaching the rear of the crumbling structure, he stopped, leaned against the wall, and waited.

As with his strategy against the shotgun monster, Lumian never expected his trap to fool the flaming monster or wound it severely.

These decoys and alarms targeted the creature's keen senses, observation, and behavior.

Only a Hunter knew how to exploit a Hunter's strengths!

Of course, all this relied on the target operating primarily on instinct, its intelligence limited to combat.

Leaning against the wall, Lumian gripped Fallen Mercury in his bandaged left hand, tearing off the pitch-black cloth shrouding its surface.

He couldn't know how long it would take for the flaming monster to arrive; all he could do was be patient.

Patience was his strong suit—a remnant from his vagrant days.

Time crawled by. Unseen by Lumian, a charred, flame-tinged monster entered the path.

After walking over 20 meters, its nose twitched.

It detected the faint scent of blood.

The monster didn't immediately turn. As it continued, it surreptitiously scanned the source of the smell.

Passing the collapsed wall, the bloody lamb chops caught its eye.

Tempting food, but the flaming monster resisted its instincts, not devouring the bait.

It pressed on, slowing its pace.

Soon, an unusual fragrance filled its nostrils.

It instantly deduced the meat was a trap and a Hunter lay in ambush nearby.

This Hunter seemed different from the one who had previously observed it while invisible. It lacked sufficient knowledge of Hunters and hadn't masked its scent beforehand.

Taking a few more steps, the flaming monster used the fragrance and subtle footprints to pinpoint the enemy hiding on the outer wall of the building behind the trap.

Feigning ignorance, it increased its distance by another seven to eight meters.

Suddenly, it whirled around, its scarlet flames rapidly condensing into a fireball tinged with white.

Boom!

With a flick of its right palm, the fireball hurtled towards Lumian's 'ambush' location, collapsing the outer wall and causing the house to shudder.

Hearing the explosion from a distance, Lumian abandoned his hiding spot, darting into the clearing, his movements a wild, distorted dance.

The explosion was like a signal flare, a stark reminder for him to swiftly ready the second phase of the trap.

Lumian and Aurore had devised this intricate plan, luring their prey into sending out their own signal flares.

In the midst of his mesmerizing dance, Lumian detected the hazy forms of the mouth-orifice monster, the shotgun monster, and the skinless monster.

By then, the flaming monster had already approached the collapsed wall, searching for any trace of its enemy.

Lumian danced for another ten to twenty seconds, his movements growing more intense. He drew out the ritual silver dagger with his right hand, making a small incision on his left wrist. nove(l)bi(n.)com

A single drop of blood emerged, congealing into a tiny sphere.

Lumian stepped forward, pivoted, and snatched up the blood droplet, aiming it at the mouth-orifice monster.

“I!”

He uttered the word in ancient Hermes, his voice barely above a whisper.

At that moment, the flaming monster had discovered the faint footprints Lumian had left behind. Catching a whiff of a subtle scent, it started tracking him.

Quickly shouting his follow-up command, Lumian watched as the mouth-orifice monster swallowed the blood droplet from the tip of the silver dagger and entered his body.

A wave of madness, bloodlust, cruel intent, and ravenous hunger washed over him.

Lumian fought back the discomfort, hastily bandaging his insignificant wound with a white strip he'd brought along.

Next, he popped a piece of cheese into his mouth, chewing and swallowing to make sure the residual gray amber scent on his body would mask any other mingled odors.

Throughout this process, Lumian sprinted to the edge of the road and halted at an inconspicuous spot.

He clenched his jaw tight and spun around, carefully retracing his steps along his previous path.

...

Relying on a Hunter's observation skills and Dancer's exaggerated flexibility, Lumian made sure to leave only faint footprints and no additional marks.

It wasn't long before he reached the center of the road and stopped.

Maintaining his invisibility, Lumian remained in plain sight on the road.

He waited, using shallow Cogitation and constant suspension to suppress any thoughts of attacking the flaming monster, a rudimentary way to disrupt its danger premonition.

His inspiration came from a Hunter's keen self-awareness.

Aurore had once written about the tactic of retracing one's footsteps to lie in ambush mid-road in a novel.

After seven or eight seconds, the flaming monster's pitch-black form appeared in Lumian's sight. Utilizing his uncanny flexibility, he twisted his body to observe the approaching target.

The flaming monster followed the faint footprints and scent left behind by its enemy. Uninterrupted, it continued its pursuit.

Once back on the main road, it sniffed the air, unsurprised to detect a mild fragrance.

It instinctively lowered its head and found the inconspicuous footprints.

But it found no trace of traps in the vicinity.

…

Without hesitation, the flaming monster tracked the footprints to the other side of the road.

The charred face and displaced eyeballs loomed larger and clearer in Lumian's sight.

Holding his breath, Lumian didn't disrupt his Cogitation again, striving to empty his mind.

Five meters, three meters, one meter… He lunged at the target, raising the Fallen Mercury in his left hand for a swift slash!

He didn't wait to close the gap further, fearing that it would trigger the prey's danger sense and prompt evasive maneuvers.

The flaming monster suddenly felt an overwhelming sense of danger.

Without thinking, it leaped to the side.

Simultaneously, its vision captured Lumian's figure, attacking with a pewter-black dirk in his bandaged left hand.

They were so close that despite the flaming monster's reaction, evasion was impossible. Lumian collided with it.

With a tearing sound, Fallen Mercury's sharp blade sank into the flaming monster's right chest.

The fate extracted from Noodle Man infiltrated the target's body as an illusory mercury bead.

Meanwhile, a river of countless intricate mercury symbols briefly surfaced. Some of the destinies rapidly converged towards the pewter-black blade.

Lumian didn't bother selecting the destiny to exchange, letting Fallen Mercury do as it wished.

Boom!

The monster's flames erupted.

The forceful shockwave hurled Lumian and his Fallen Mercury away. Crimson flames ignited his clothes and scorched his facial skin.

Lumian bore the searing pain, twisting his waist midair to alter his trajectory.

As soon as he landed, he sprang to his feet and fled.

However, unable to re-enter the Invisibility state until the flames were extinguished, he remained visible.

Boom!

Despite his serpentine sprint, Lumian was still knocked off his feet by the fireball's aftershock. His back throbbed with numbing pain.

He struggled to his feet, scrambling away from the path and into the ruins where he had been hiding before.

The flaming monster pursued Lumian, who was unable to turn invisible once more.

Chapter 96 - 96 Prey and Hunter

96 Prey and Hunter

The flaming monster pursued relentlessly, hurling crimson fireballs that blasted craters in the earth. Lumian was thrown off balance multiple times.

Flames licked at the charred logs that littered the desolate landscape, casting flickering red light in every direction.

Lumian barely spared a thought for the fire still consuming his clothes. Gritting his teeth against the searing pain, he was sent sprawling by the shockwaves of detonation after detonation. He staggered to his feet and careened wildly towards his destination—veering left, then right, arcing and darting straight ahead.

Mercifully, he didn't have far to go based on his plan. Just as he felt the taste of blood in his mouth and his body threatened to give out, a dilapidated building loomed before him.

Boom!

Lumian contorted his body mid-stride, narrowly avoiding a fireball. The scarlet projectile exploded just ahead, unleashing a hellish maelstrom of flames.

Seizing the moment, Lumian dropped to the ground and rolled beneath the worst of the conflagration. With the momentum, he tumbled into the partially collapsed structure.

The flaming monster halted and hesitated, wary of pursuing its prey into a potential death trap.

It watched as Lumian rolled deeper into the building, summoning a swarm of red Fire Ravens around it.

Their screeches filled the air as they took flight. Half of them dove towards the building's support beams, while the others bore down on Lumian from all sides.

These avian flames were unerring, constantly adjusting their trajectories to match Lumian's movements.

In that instant, the flaming monster could almost see its enemy's charred remains.

Fire Ravens were far more difficult to dodge than mere fireballs!

And then, Lumian disappeared from the monster's view.

He had rolled into a well-preserved basement.

Bang!

Lumian slammed the wooden door shut and leaped aside, using the force of the impact.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The scarlet Fire Ravens slammed into the door.

Boom!

The heavy door disintegrated into flaming splinters.

Rumble!

The remaining Fire Ravens struck their intended targets, bringing down the decaying structure in a torrent of debris.

Stone, wood, and dust engulfed the area, entombing the basement.

Lumian had already taken refuge in a corner, using the accumulated dirt to smother the flames that clung to him.

But he was still badly burned, his internal organs battered by the force of the explosions. Without swift medical attention, he wouldn't last another day.

The flaming monster's attack had been devastating, even more potent

than Ryan sans his Hurricane of Light!

Lumian had intended to use Invisibility to elude the flaming monster, slipping into the basement to perform his enigmatic sacrificial dance, activating the black thorn symbol on his chest to terrify his foe. He'd planned to bide his time for Fallen Mercury to complete the exchange of fate. But the persistent fire had thwarted his Invisibility, nearly costing him his life.

The one consolation was that he had a backup plan in the event he couldn't escape the monster's pursuit, nor could he perform his sacrificial dance in peace.

He'd even considered collapsing the building to bury the basement and buy time, but the flaming monster had done the job for him.

Phew… Exhaling deeply, Lumian sat cross-legged.

He retrieved the bottle of gray amber perfume from Aurore, unscrewed the cap, and placed it before him.

Outside the demolished building, the flaming monster's gaze cut through the swirling dust, searching for any trace of its quarry.

It was certain that the cunning intruder wouldn't have been buried alive so easily.

Given the complexity of the traps he'd laid and his intimate knowledge of the ruins, he must have left himself an escape route!

The flaming monster wasn't particularly intelligent, but its Hunter's instincts led it to circle the collapsed building.

In less than ten seconds, it discovered a hidden cave entrance angling downward.

The opening was concealed by debris from the fallen structure, sheltered from the ensuing collapse. It was difficult to spot and tucked away in a discreet location.

The monster raised its right hand, conjuring a fist-sized white fireball in its palm.

With a sudden lunge, it hurled the fireball down the passageway.

The flames streaked through the air, penetrated the basement, and collided with the far wall.

Boom!

The blast wave didn't affect Lumian, who was deliberately hiding in another corner. It only overturned the bottle of gray amber perfume in front of him and quaked the entire basement.

The gurgle of liquid flowed from the open bottle, its elegant and sweet fragrance intensifying instantly.

Lumian leaned against the wall, eyes closed, lost in Cogitation.

His mind conjured a crimson sun, holding it steady for a few seconds.

Suddenly, a terrifying sound reached Lumian's ears, as if from an infinite distance yet unnervingly close.

Blue veins bulged across his face, hands, and neck, quickly turning red.

Simultaneously, silver-black spots seeped from his skin.

He opened his mouth to scream, but collapsed and curled up before a sound could escape.

Fallen Mercury slipped from Lumian's left palm, but it dared not make a move. It didn't even attempt to approach his exposed face or right hand to create a marionette through contact.

It just quivered there, violently.

Outside the basement, the monster poised to conjure a fireball froze beside the entrance Lumian had excavated.

It couldn't help but shudder.

A few seconds later, it fled, abandoning the hunt.

...

Lumian plunged into a darkness teeming with flickering flames. His mind was overwhelmed with excruciating pain and malevolent thoughts.

In that moment, death seemed preferable. He sensed something deep within him rapidly growing and taking form.

It appeared to be a trauma—composed of all negative personalities and a particular will. Once assembled into human shape, it would utterly supplant the original him.

Amid the unending darkness of despair and pain, Lumian caught a whiff of a scent.

Elegant and sweet.

It was Aurore's fragrance, a familiar aroma.

Aurore… Grande Soeur… Lumian slowly regained his composure, as if hearing the comforting melody once more.

I want to live!

The loop hasn't ended yet!

…

A rush of thoughts flooded back to him. Lumian finally vanquished the pitch-black will and the agony-laced darkness within his heart and opened his eyes.

...

The first thing in his sight was the toppled bottle of gray amber perfume on the ground.

It toppled? Lumian's heart ached as he reached out his right hand. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Initially, he'd only intended to mimic Aurore's use of incense to control his symptoms and rely on the natural perfume as a wake-up call. Unexpectedly, more than half the bottle had spilled.

In the next instant, his body quivered. He saw the charred, bloodstained back of his hand and the silver-black circular spots that had yet to fade.

Without needing a reminder, Lumian could “smell” the unfamiliar, hair-raising scent on himself.

If he crossed paths with Valentine now, he’d be “purified” by his Holy Light Summoning without revealing a thing.

Lumian scooped up the remaining half of the gray amber perfume, tightened the cap, and stowed it away.

He then picked up Fallen Mercury, still trembling violently, and asked in Hermes, “Is the fate exchange over?”

Fallen Mercury swiftly shook left and right, signaling it wasn’t.

Lumian exhaled in relief.

He feared that by the time he awoke, the fate exchange would’ve been completed—the shock would last no more than a minute.

If he couldn’t locate the flaming monster in time, his recent torment would be futile.

Breathe in, breathe out… Lumian adjusted his dreadful condition and mustered his remaining strength before crawling out of the basement through the hole he had dug earlier.

Each motion tugged at various wounds, making him wince in pain.

Upon exiting the basement, Lumian searched for the flaming monster’s tracks and sighed inwardly.

Using Cogitation in such a state and fully activating the thorn symbol on my chest is downright suicidal…

I haven’t done it since becoming a Hunter, barely repressing the symptoms with gray amber’s scent. Had I done it a few times before, my body might have mutated slightly, turning me into a monster…

I can't risk this for a while unless I have a death wish…

He opted for Cogitation to fully activate the black thorn symbol on his chest rather than the sacrificial dance's partial activation, as time was of the essence and he couldn't perform the dance.

With Cogitation, he could frighten off the flaming monster in five or six seconds. The enigmatic sacrificial dance, however, took 30 to 40 seconds—even with his familiarity.

In Lumian's hunting strategy, this was his last resort. If he couldn't evade the flaming monster's pursuit by other means, he'd attempt Cogitation!

Lumian hadn't anticipated that Cogitation would leave him gravely injured from the start and on the brink of losing control, turning into a monster.

Before long, Lumian discovered the flaming monster's tracks and pursued them.

A few minutes later, the prints appeared fresher, so he slowed his pace.

Soon after, Fallen Mercury shuddered on its own, notifying Lumian that the fate exchange was complete.

Without hesitation, Lumian brandished the iron-black axe and charged forward, following the flaming monster's footprints.

In under twenty seconds, he spotted the scorched and smoldering prey.

It cowered in a rock-encircled corner, quaking.

Lumian dashed over, cast aside Fallen Mercury, and seized the axe with both hands, cleaving down with all his might.

With a dull thud, the flaming monster's head and body separated.

Bright red blood spurted out violently, igniting into scarlet flame clusters on the ground.

Lumian, unable to hold on any longer, collapsed to the ground with his axe.

Chapter 97 - 97 Courage

97 Courage

Lumian slumped to the ground, gasping for breath. He could barely muster the strength to move a finger.

Silently, he observed the crimson flames flickering on the ground, their intensity gradually diminishing until they snuffed out.

During this time, Lumian managed to lean forward and grab the Fallen Mercury with his left hand, while his right hand tightly gripped the iron-black axe, ready for any unexpected threats.

His focus was unwavering, and he remained on high alert.

Inwardly, he prayed to the Eternal Blazing Sun and the unknown, great being, hoping They would shield him from harm.

In his current state, even a mundane foe like the skinless monster could easily take him down, let alone the possibility of the flaming creature reviving itself unexpectedly.

As time ticked by, Lumian's spirituality and stamina gradually improved, but his injuries only worsened, leaving him disoriented and unfocused.

Hunters need to be cautious, level-headed, and patient—capable of using their environment to their advantage. Above all, they require courage.

Courage to confront the unexpected, to persevere in the face of crisis, to steel oneself when escape seems impossible, and to find a path out of the jaws of death…

Distracted by these thoughts, Lumian suddenly felt as if the Hunter

potion coursing through him had been fully absorbed.

It was as if a barrier had shattered, and a tiny spark had merged with every fiber of his being.

All traces of Lumian's loss of control vanished, and his condition immediately improved.

Slowly, he rose to his feet and heaved a quiet sigh.

I've actually digested it…

This meant he was ready for the next potion.

Lumian, clutching the pewter-black dirk in his bandaged left hand, scanned his surroundings. Occasionally, he fixated on the flaming monster's remains, patiently awaiting the appearance of the Beyonder characteristics.

Unlike the shotgun monster's swift transformation, Lumian waited for half an hour. He wondered if the flaming monster still lived and whether he should strike it a few more times.

Finally, on the verge of collapsing from his injuries, red sparks burst forth from the monster's body.

Like fireflies, they swarmed around the corpse before gradually coalescing into a scarlet object resembling a heart.

The "heart" pulsed, its surface pocked with countless tiny holes, from which indistinct flames seeped.

Is this the main ingredient for the Pyromaniac potion? Lumian mused, reaching down to pick it up.

A searing pain radiated from his palm straight to his mind, making him instinctively want to fling the "heart" away to escape the agony.

Luckily, Lumian's skin had been numbed by the flaming monster's burns, allowing him to barely tolerate the relatively minor pain.

He tried wrapping the "heart" in a strip of cloth, but it instantly

incinerated the fabric, reducing it to ashes.

After a moment's thought, Lumian set the Beyonder ingredient on the ground, wrapped the Fallen Mercury in the remaining black cloth, and secured it at his waist.

Next, he emptied the contents of the cloth bag containing the lead bullets into his pocket.

He then filled the bag halfway with soil from the area before tossing in the flame-wreathed heart.

But Lumian didn't stop there. He continued shoveling soil into the bag until the "heart" was entirely encased in layers of inflammable earth.

Exhaling, he carried the bag to the edge of the ruins, pondering a newly discovered problem.

I'm only a Sequence 9, and this is the main ingredient for the corresponding Sequence 7 Pyromaniac. I can't just advance to Sequence 7, can I?

This will make me lose control!

I initially thought the flaming monster would yield a Pyromaniac, Provoker, and Hunter Beyonder characteristic, but it's all mixed together…

Uncertain of what to do, Lumian stumbled away.

Miraculously, he didn't encounter a single monster on his way back. In his weakened state, any confrontation would have spelled disaster. His only hope was to rely on his keen observation and sharp senses to detect danger early and avoid it.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Lumian exited the dream ruins and traversed the barren wilderness, arriving back at his semi-subterranean two-story dwelling.

Laboriously, he climbed to the second floor and removed the Fallen Mercury, the cloth bag with the Pyromaniac ingredient, and the iron-

black axe. He placed them on the bedside table or tossed them to the floor before staggering to the full-length mirror embedded in the wardrobe.

In the mirror, Lumian saw his ghostly pale face, marred by flame scars and faint silver-black patches on his skin.

His blue eyes flickered with an illusory silvery hue, entwined with darkness.

This was a sign that he had sustained severe injuries and nearly lost control.

If not for his home-field advantage in the dream ruins or the acquisition of Fallen Mercury and Invisibility, Lumian would have had no chance of defeating the flaming monster.

Munching on jerky and cheese to stave off the intense hunger left by his possession, he collapsed onto the bed.

He desperately needed to return to reality and rest for a while, allowing his body to recover swiftly.

…

Sunlight pierced through the curtains, casting the bedroom in a soft glow that highlighted Aurore's desk, cluttered with reference materials, reading notebooks, and stacks of manuscripts. It also illuminated a wardrobe filled with dresses and an exquisite full-body mirror.

Lumian opened his eyes to meet his sister's light-blue gaze.

Aurore watched him stir, her voice laced with concern. "How was it? Is everything alright?"

She knew that her brother had ventured into the dream ruins to hunt the flaming monster this time.

"I succeeded." Lumian sat up, his head feeling foggy. His skin tingled, and his bones threatened to snap.

But compared to the excruciating pain that had nearly killed him in the dream, this was nothing.

He lowered his gaze to examine his body. Red, swollen patches covered his skin, as if he were suffering from an allergic reaction.

“That’s good…” Aurore sighed with relief. “An hour ago, you twitched all over and kicked me awake.”

Lumian laughed, self-deprecating.

“It was indeed dangerous back then. I almost lost control.”

“I was hesitant to wake you up, but you quickly calmed down and didn’t scare me anymore,” Aurore said, visibly relieved.

…

Lumian’s heart stirred. “And you just kept looking at me?”

“That’s right.” Aurore nodded calmly. “If anything happens, I have to shake you awake and bring you back to reality. You can’t die in your dreams.”

Lumian suddenly felt the pain, struggle, and fear of nearly dying in his dream dissipate, replaced by a warm current surging from the depths of his heart.

He asked, almost without thinking, “You didn’t wake up because I kicked you, did you? You haven’t slept at all, have you?”

Aurore smiled and said, “That was my original plan, but considering how long you’d have to wait for that monster, and how I just finished my night duty, if I didn’t catch up on sleep, I’d definitely be in a daze later. It’d be easy for me to make a mistake and not wake you up in time.

“So, I decided to put my hand on you and take the chance to catch some shut-eye.

“This way, I’d be able to sense any movement and wake up quickly. Heh heh, I was indeed kicked by you!”

As she spoke, she pointed at her right calf, where a visible bruise had formed.

Before Lumian could respond, she asked, “Tell me the details.”

Suppressing his voice, Lumian recounted his ordeal, describing how he set up the trap, ambushed the monster, and how his clothes caught fire. Unable to turn invisible, he had no choice but to flee into the basement and fully activate the black thorn symbol with Cogitation.

Aurore listened intently, her expression occasionally betraying her worry for her brother’s perilous situation. She was the kind of person who easily immersed herself in stories.

...

As the tale drew to a close, Lumian raised a question.

“How do I separate Provoker from the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic?”

He didn’t know where to find the potion formula.

Aurore thought for a moment and said, “I don’t know how to separate them. I’ve only heard that you might need the help of a high-level Beyonder for such a situation.”

“A demigod?” Lumian guessed.

There were probably only three people he knew who had reached Sequence 4: the enigmatic lady, Madame Pualis, and the one lying in the coffin in the tomb.

Aurore nodded.

“I think so. Actually, you don’t have to worry. I suspect the mysterious lady will come to you soon and provide some help. She always appears at critical points in your growth. This time should be no exception. After all, the loop hasn’t been resolved and the secret of the dream ruins remains locked away.”

“Go to Ol’ Tavern to find her?” Lumian frowned.

Their agreement with Ryan and the others was to avoid going out as much as possible.

Aurore tersely acknowledged his words.

“Let’s wait a while. She might visit us directly.”

Aurore sighed and said, “For ordinary Beyonders, the potion formula isn’t a problem, but you’re different. There’s corruption sealed in your body, and you can lose control if there’s the slightest issue. You still need a complete and correct Provoker potion formula.” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Why don’t ordinary Beyonders need potion formulas?” Lumian asked, surprised.

Aurore explained, “It’s not that they don’t need them, but anyone below Sequence 7 can advance just by consuming the main ingredient.”

“Doesn’t that risk losing control?” Lumian asked, astonished.

Aurore acknowledged tersely.

“Years ago, there was a high chance of losing control. But recently, Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 Beyonder characteristics can indeed be consumed directly. However, it’s about 20 to 30% more dangerous than concocting a potion.

“Right, that’s the conclusion reached by our president, Gandalf.”

Why? Just as Lumian was about to ask, a familiar song echoed from outside the house.

The siblings exchanged solemn glances.

Lent had begun, and the Spring Elf entourage had reached them.

Chapter 98 - 98 After the Celebration

98 After the Celebration

A group of young men encircled Ava, singing and dancing as they arrived outside the Lumian residence.

Guillaume-junior of the Berry family strode to the door and slammed at it.

He was a friend of Lumian, Reimund, and Ava. With curly brown hair and prominent freckles, his blue eyes appeared smaller than average, as if perpetually narrowed.

With a creak, Aurore appeared before them.

Her blonde hair tied up, she wore a formal flounce-lined, light-collared dress. Aurore exuded energy, her face radiant—impossible to tell she hadn't slept well the night before.

Ava, donning a laurel crown woven from tree branches and flowers, stepped forward and sang,

"I'm the elf of spring,

"With a sweet face and a joyful ring,

"…

"Come and sing, come and dance,

"For this is the only way,

To obtain a harvest that will stay…"

Aurore listened quietly, took the leaf, and handed Ava a small pottery jar containing animal fat.

“Bumper harvest! Bumper harvest!” The young men cheered.

As the Spring Elf entourage set off for the next location, Guillaume-junior deliberately lagged behind and asked Aurore, “Where’s Lumian? I haven’t seen him in the past two days. Is he not participating in the Lent celebration?”

Aurore laughed and replied, “He’s sick.”

“Sick?” Guillaume-junior was slightly surprised. “He gets sick too?”

In his mind, Lumian was always brimming with energy. At most, he’d suffer minor injuries from a prank gone awry.

“I’ll be worried if he never gets sick,” Aurore replied jokingly. “All humans fall sick.”

Guillaume-junior hurriedly waved at Aurore as the Spring Elf entourage moved further away.

“Tell Lumian I’ll visit him after Lent!”

Aurore nodded slightly, watching Guillaume-junior sprint towards the entourage that had stopped in front of the next building.

“How was it?” Lumian stuck his head out beside his sister.

Aurore thought for a moment and said, “They’re still normal, but I wonder what will happen at the end of the celebration.”

Lumian recalled the bloody scene of Ava’s beheading at the celebration’s end and the strange mood that agitated the young people. They had either gone mad sending off the Spring Elf or succumbed to mental and physical breakdown, collapsing to the ground. No one was spared.

Silently, he glanced at Ava singing in front of the neighbor’s house and Guillaume-junior and company surrounding her. He slowly withdrew his gaze.

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine also arrived on the first floor and looked out through the window.

“We have to be very careful from now on,” Ryan said in a deep voice after the Spring Elf entourage left the area.

Aurore nodded and said, “Yeah.”

Before the celebration ended, they quickly prepared lunch and filled their stomachs.

Clang! Clang! Clang! The classic wall clock on the first floor chimed, signifying noon.

Lumian and the others, having tidied up the dining room, exchanged tense glances.

If the Lent celebration had gone smoothly, it would’ve ended by now.

And if the ritual to send the Spring Elf off was completed, who knew what Cordu would become?

In their semi-subterranean building, Lumian needed to raise his head slightly to see the situation outside the window.

The sky was a brilliant azure, filled with white clouds. The sun shone brightly, and there were no dark clouds, fog, or dim light as he had imagined.

Leah paced around the stove, the small silver bells on her veil and boots tinkling nonstop. It was neither intense nor soothing.

Seeing Aurore looking at her, she explained, “We’re already in danger, and it’s been an extended period of danger, but it’s manageable at the moment.”

Aurore acknowledged and didn’t inquire further.

Ryan, on the other hand, sighed and said, “By the twelfth night, it would be great if it was always at this level.”

Aurore blinked, embarrassed to tell this Dawn Paladin of the

Machinery Hivemind not to jinx it.

Although Lumian's heart was heavy, he still smiled and replied to Ryan,

"There's a proverb in our Dariège region that says, 'Good and bad are all predestined.' Regardless of how worried we are, we can't change what happens next."

What he didn't say was: The only thing they could do was muster up the courage to face it.

In the intermittent conversation that followed, the five of them were on guard against any abnormalities. However, be it the weather or the birds, everything was so normal that it only instilled greater fear in them.

After almost thirty minutes, they found themselves staring at the door simultaneously.

Footsteps drew near.

Soon after, Aurore's doorbell rang, the sound reverberating through the first floor.

Exchanging a glance with his sister, Lumian cautiously approached the door and peered through the peephole.

The man who had rung the doorbell was their neighbor, Louis Bedeau.

"What's going on?" Lumian cracked the door open, smiling.

Louis Bedeau had black hair and blue eyes. He was in his forties and had been injured while harvesting wheat in the fields when he was young. He had only three fingers on his left hand.

Clad in a grayish-blue blazer and dark pants, he said timidly, "I need to borrow your oven. It's Lent. We must bake some fresh bread for the kids."

As he spoke, he lifted the flour bag and nudged the bag of inferior

coal beside him.

...

Lumian hesitated for a moment before turning to Aurore.

Aurore nodded, signaling him to let Louis Bedeau in.

She had already discussed it with Ryan and the others in hushed tones, intending to observe the changes in the villagers who had participated in the Lent celebration up close.

“Just baking bread? I thought you’d make some bacon for your kids.” Lumian stepped aside and teased Louis Bedeau with a grin.

Louis Bedeau replied cautiously, “If we have a bumper harvest this year, there should be plenty of bacon.”

His eyes brimmed with anticipation, as if he was certain of a bountiful harvest.

Once inside, Louis Bedeau greeted Aurore and headed to the oven, busying himself.

The more Lumian and his companions observed, the stranger they found him.

Louis Bedeau didn’t even glance at Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, as if they were invisible!

It was like a person who had already turned into a monster trying their best to pretend to be normal. However, as long as they encountered something that exceeded their original memories, they would display obvious abnormalities or ignore it.

Lumian instantly thought of the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue.

...

Initially, he appeared fine, but recently, all that remained were his daily activities of eating, sleeping, and urging others to pray. He ignored everything else!

Under the watchful eyes of the three foreigners, Louis Bedeau baked his bread mechanically, occasionally conversing with Lumian and Aurore.

It was very normal, yet very abnormal.

After Louis Bedeau left with the baked bread, Aurore looked at Ryan and the others, smiling wryly.

“Everyone who participated in the Lent celebration must have become like this.”

“It’s like being replaced by a monster bit by bit,” Leah exclaimed sincerely.

She no longer forced a smile on her face.

Lumian had already regained his composure and posed a question.

“How can we save someone like this if we want to?”

“The only thing I can think of is purification,” Valentine replied with a sigh. “But if the abnormality is already closely integrated with humans, the final outcome might be purification together.”

At that moment, two more villagers passed by the window.

One of them was a regular customer of Ol’ Tavern and Pierre Guillaume, who had scrounged Ryan’s absinthe in a previous cycle.

He was happily chatting with his companion, seemingly discussing the excitement of the Lent celebration.

As they passed Lumian’s door, they simultaneously turned their heads to look inside the house, their expressions eerily grim.

After an instant, they withdrew their gazes and resumed their conversation, smiles plastered on their faces.

If Lumian and his companions hadn’t been watching the outside whenever someone passed by, they wouldn’t have noticed the fleeting change in their expressions.

The louder the laughter outside, the more suffocated they felt.

Silence took over the conversation.

Eventually, the two villagers left, and Aurore sighed, saying, “This isn’t just being replaced by monsters bit by bit. I suspect that the entire village is filled with monsters wearing human skin, except for us.”

Is this the complete Lent celebration? Lumian couldn’t help but mutter to himself.

Ryan sternly warned, “It’s going to get tougher every day. Everyone, hang in there.”

From noon to night, they kept vigil against mutated villagers attacking the house, but apart from the occasional passerby who gazed inside with a sullen or cold expression, nothing happened.

The situation weighed heavily on Aurore and the others.

Ryan surveyed the room and said gently, “There are still a few days until the twelfth night. Don’t be so tense.

“After dinner, we’ll split into two groups and take turns resting. We must maintain a good mental state.”

With such an experienced Beyonder with a calm demeanor, both Aurore and Lumian felt more at ease.

At midnight, Aurore and Lumian woke Leah and the others, then retreated to their bedroom.

Lumian glanced at the door and lowered his voice.

“That mysterious woman hasn’t appeared. Should I find an opportunity to go out tomorrow and take a look at Ol’ Tavern?” Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

“Everyone in the village might be a monster now. It’ll be very dangerous if you go out.” Aurore disagreed.

She pondered for a moment and said, “Let’s wait a little longer. If the mysterious woman doesn’t appear tomorrow morning, I’ll accompany you to Ol’ Tavern in the afternoon.”

Lumian hesitated for a moment before nodding.

He planned to discuss with his sister tomorrow morning if they should ask Ryan and the others for help. The five of them could act together.

…

In the bedroom filled with a faint gray fog, Lumian opened his eyes.

He sat up and checked his body, realizing that his severe injuries had completely healed.

Just as he was about to marvel at the fact, he suddenly heard the sound of a doorbell ringing.

Someone’s ringing the doorbell? The thought instinctively flashed through Lumian’s mind. He habitually prepared to go down to the first floor to see who was visiting.

He had just taken a step when his entire body froze.

This was the dream ruins!

How could anyone visit?

Chapter 99 - 99 Guest

99 Guest

Instantly, Lumian tensed up.

He spun around and returned to the bed, scooping up Fallen Mercury with his bandaged left hand.

Grabbing his shotgun, he strode to the bedroom window while the doorbell continued to ring. He scrutinized the entrance.

There was no one there!

In that moment, Lumian's heart felt like it was about to seize.

He intended to activate his Spirit Vision for a better look.

Since he would hear the maddening and terrifying sound and show signs of losing control after entering Cogitation for a few seconds in the dream ruins, he couldn't use this ability smoothly. It took him a while to complete the corresponding operation.

However, even with his Spirit Vision activated, he still didn't notice anyone at the door.

Yet, the doorbell rang incessantly.

As his thoughts raced, Lumian seriously considered returning to bed, forcing himself to sleep and escape the dream.

But he felt that even if he returned to reality, he might not be able to evade the subsequent attack, considering the unknown danger that could invade his semi-subterranean two-story building at any moment.

Two scenarios:

If the person ringing the doorbell can enter, going to bed is as good as surrendering.

If they can't enter, I'll be safe as long as I don't open the door myself.

Regardless, I must go downstairs and take a look…

Lumian made up his mind quickly.

He sheathed Fallen Mercury at his waist, clipped his axe, and hoisted his shotgun. He stepped out of the room and cautiously descended the stairs.

Upon reaching the first floor, a figure came into view.

At the six-person dining table sat the enigmatic woman Lumian had been searching for.

She wore a white blouse with a large bow at the collar and loose pearl-gray pants. Her casual attire was deceptively elegant.

She sipped a pale-golden drink, a short black hat beside her.

Lumian relaxed and approached the mysterious woman with brown hair and blue eyes.

He set the shotgun and axe aside, pulled out a chair opposite the dining table, and sat down. He asked, "You can enter here?"

The woman set her glass down and smiled.

"How else do you think those materials were delivered to your room?"

As she spoke, the jingling sound ceased.

Lumian glanced at the door, puzzled.

"Since you're already inside, why were you still ringing the doorbell?"

She smiled and replied, "That's basic courtesy."

Courtesy that can scare people to death? Lumian dared only to mutter inwardly.

He got straight to the point.

“I’ve obtained the Pyromaniac Beyonder ingredient. Uh, it should be Pyromaniac.”

The woman nodded gently.

“I know. That’s why I came to see you.”

“Are you willing to help me separate the Provoker Beyonder characteristics and give me the corresponding potion formula?” Lumian suppressed his sudden joy and asked, “I was planning on finding you at Ol’ Tavern.”

As for the price he would have to pay, he no longer cared.

The lady smiled and said, “With Cordu’s current situation, it’s very dangerous for you to go out, so I came here directly. I can indeed provide the help you want, but it won’t be free this time.”

Lumian noticed that indecipherable emotion in the woman’s eyes again, but the notion that it was no longer free reassured him. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The unknown was even more terrifying.

“What is the price I need to pay?” he asked without hesitation.

She replied calmly, “The separated Pyromaniac and Hunter Beyonder characteristics belong to me.”

That simple? Lumian was surprised.

He didn’t even think of it as a price. After all, he wouldn’t be able to use the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristics for a long time.

She continued, “In addition to the help I originally provided, if there’s any more in the future—if there’s a future for you—you have to do something for me.”

Lumian sensed the inscrutable emotion in her eyes intensify.

He probed, “What if I don’t?”

She laughed.

“Isn’t it common for investments to fail? Didn’t your sister lose some money buying stocks with divination?”

“What do you need me to do?” Lumian asked without hesitation.

She sighed softly.

“Let’s talk about it if you can survive.

“Alright, give me the Beyonder characteristic you obtained.”

Lumian rose and headed for the stairs leading to the second floor.

He barely restrained himself from sprinting up the staircase. When she could no longer see him, he dashed.

…

Soon, Lumian returned to the first floor with the cloth bag containing the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic and approached the dining table.

The woman raised her glass again and sipped the pale-gold liquid.

“What’s this?” Lumian asked casually.

She explained simply, “It’s an aperitif from Trier called Black Poca. It’s brewed from ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves soaked in sweet wine for a long time. It tastes pretty good.”

Having raised the topic merely to build rapport, Lumian didn’t pry further. He opened the cloth bag and extracted the burning heart from the soil.

A scorching sensation seared his palm. Enduring the mild pain, he leaned forward and handed the Beyonder characteristic to the woman across the dining table.

She extended her left palm and let the “heart” hover in midair.

She glanced at Lumian and chuckled.

“When storing Beyonder characteristics in the future, remember to change their environment every once in a while. If such a thing comes into contact with something for too long, it’s very likely to fuse with it and become a mystical item that needs to be sealed.”

Is that so… Lumian asked, “How often do I need to make a change?”

“Normally, it takes two to three days,” the woman said nonchalantly, “but accidents do happen. I recommend switching environments every 24 hours. With proper sealing and preservation, it could last months or even years. Also, if you’ve already mixed Beyonder ingredients into a potion, drink it as soon as possible. Otherwise, the liquid might merge with the bottle.”

...

As she spoke, a sudden flash enveloped her body, and the burning “heart” transformed into countless red fireflies.

The fireflies danced and swirled, coalescing into three distinct objects.

One was a dark red, springy, textured object. Another was a shrunken version of the burning heart, now missing numerous holes. The last was a black stone with a liquid-like surface and a potent odor.

The woman’s right palm caressed the three objects, causing two to vanish into thin air.

All that remained on the dining table was the dark “rock,” about half the size of a fist.

“Is this the Provoker Beyonder characteristic?” Lumian asked eagerly.

The woman produced a post-it note and a silver fountain pen, scribbling down the potion formula, then reminded him, “You still lack mystical knowledge. After killing the monster, you only took the Beyonder characteristic.

“Such Beyonder creatures are rich in spirituality. Many of their parts can be used to make charms, lotions, and ingredients for certain spells and rituals. For example, its blood is a supplementary ingredient for the Pyromaniac potion.

“Although the Pyromaniac potion requires Fire Salamander blood, the monster’s blood will do. It’s essentially the same, and the effects might even be better.”

The more Lumian listened, the more regretful he became.

Although Aurore’s adventure novels included scenes of hunting monsters and harvesting parts, he hadn’t connected this to reality. He believed the flaming monster’s only value was its Beyonder characteristic.

And now, retrieving it was impossible—the blood would have dried by now!

The woman ignored his reaction, tearing off the top note and letting it float toward Lumian.

Lumian grabbed it and read the words eagerly.

“Provoker potion formula:

“Main ingredient: One Provoker Beyonder characteristic;

“Supplementary ingredients: 50 milliliters of distilled liquor, 10 drops of honeysuckle extract, 5 grams of grapevine powder, 10 grams of fern powder;

“Usage: Drink it directly.”

After finishing, Lumian asked, puzzled, “There aren’t any materials rich in spirituality…”

Like the Fire Salamander’s blood.

She smiled and replied, “Different potions have different requirements. Yours mainly relies on symbolic mysticism.

“For example, ferns symbolize being ‘easily influenced by others.’ This aligns with the essence of a Provoker.”

So, a Provoker needs to sway others with their words? Lumian tucked the note away, pondering where he might find the supplementary ingredients.

Distilled liquor was available at home; Aurore used it in certain dishes. Grapevines and ferns were abundant in Darième, though venturing out might be risky. The only item left was honeysuckle—he’d have to ask Aurore if she had any among her spell-casting supplies…

When Lumian looked up again, the woman across from him, along with the black short hat and the Black Poca aperitif, had disappeared.

He hadn’t even noticed when she’d left.

This despite the fact that his Spirit Vision hadn’t been deactivated the entire time.

Phew. Lumian exhaled and headed back to the bedroom, clutching the Provoker Beyonder characteristic and the potion formula, anticipation swelling within him.

He quickly lay down on the bed, intending to return to reality and consult Aurore, hoping to gather the additional ingredients by nightfall.

He didn’t care that his Spirit Vision was still active; it would deactivate on its own once he fell asleep.

…

In the dead of night, Lumian opened his eyes and glanced over at Aurore.

He couldn’t wait to share the news of acquiring the Provoker potion formula with his sister.

Yet, almost simultaneously, he spotted Aurore’s mouth open slightly, a hazy, translucent figure emerging.

It was a bizarre, lizard-like creature!

Lumian's gaze locked in place. As the ethereal lizard surveyed its surroundings, he instinctively shut his eyes.

The "lizard" darted its gaze around before quickly scurrying away from Aurore's mouth and exiting the room.

Lumian reopened his eyes, staring at his sister in bewilderment.

Aurore's face was shrouded in darkness.

Her mouth hung slightly open as she slumbered peacefully.

Lumian observed her, motionless, as if he'd become a statue.

In the thick of night, his heart sank further into despair.

Chapter 100 - 100 Hesitation

100 Hesitation

Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock. The second hand of the wall clock echoed through the dark room.

After what felt like an eternity, Lumian finally shook off his nightmare.

He hastily reached over, gripping Aurore's shoulders and shaking her vigorously.

"Wake up! Wake up!"

!!

He stifled his voice, careful not to alert the three official investigators on night duty.

Aurore's eyes remained tightly shut, her mouth slightly agape. No matter how much Lumian shook her, she didn't respond. She appeared like a living corpse, devoid of a soul.

Lumian's shaking gradually slowed, then ceased altogether.

He gazed at the sleeping Aurore, frozen in place for a long while.

He couldn't comprehend what was happening or when the issue had begun. The fear he felt mirrored the night he'd witnessed his grandfather's death.

From that day on, he'd embarked on his nomadic existence.

Lumian's fists clenched tighter, his body quivering slightly.

Abruptly, he spun around to face the window.

The translucent, ghostly “lizard” had returned to the room.

Lumian leaped off the bed, lunging with his right hand to grab the stunned creature as it caught sight of him awakening.

In the next instant, he jammed the “lizard” into his mouth, snarling with a twisted expression, “You like to worm your way into people’s mouths, huh? Fine! I’ll give you a chance!”

As he crammed the “lizard” into his mouth, he tore at it ferociously, his eyes bloodshot.

The “lizard” appeared too petrified to resist. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Just then, a voice sounded behind Lumian.

“What are you doing?”

It was Aurore’s voice.

Lumian froze and slowly turned to look at the bed.

At some point, Aurore had woken up. Her blond hair disheveled, she sat up with her light-blue eyes filled with confusion and bewilderment.

Subconsciously, Lumian glanced down and realized that the “lizard” he had captured had long vanished.

For a moment, he didn’t know if what he had just seen was a nightmare or reality.

“What’s wrong?” Aurore frowned.

Lumian forced a smile.

“You kicked me off the bed while having a nightmare.”

“Is that so?” Aurore eyed her brother suspiciously, feeling like he was playing a prank.

She thought for a moment and said, “I had a nightmare. I dreamt that

I was grabbed by a huge monster and stuffed into its mouth. I was so frightened that I struggled with all my might and finally woke up."

As Lumian listened, a chill ran through his body, as if he had been submerged in an icy lake that hadn't completely thawed.

"Maybe, probably, I really kicked you…" Aurore was a little embarrassed.

Lumian closed his eyes and smiled.

"I'm just kidding. I woke up because of something else."

He then lowered his voice and said, "That mysterious lady appeared in the dream ruins and helped me separate the Provoker Beyonder characteristic and gave me the correct potion formula."

"So, you woke up in joy and wanted to ask me if I had the corresponding supplementary ingredients?" Aurore deduced.

Lumian said with a smile, "That's right. By the way, do you have honeysuckle extract, grapevine powder, and fern powder?"

His smile was much more natural than before, but there seemed to be a flickering glint in his eyes.

Aurore mulled it over for a moment before responding, "I have both grapevine and fern. One is a ritual ingredient, and the other is a spell medium.

"Honeysuckle flowers. We always have them at home. Don't you know that I soak them in water for drinking?"

As she spoke, she rummaged through the hidden pocket of her long dress.

"That's honeysuckle?" Lumian looked at his busy sister and deliberately smiled. "Why didn't you ask if I was given free help this time?"

Aurore took out a short grapevine and said with a smile, "You grind it into powder yourself!"

She didn't seem to hear Lumian's question.

"Alright." Lumian pretended not to have asked.

He then said to his sister, "The Provoker potion still requires distilled liquor. I'll head to the cellar to retrieve it and strive to advance to Sequence 8 tonight."

"It will take some time to make extracts from honeysuckle flowers," Aurore said with a frown. "However, the supplementary ingredients for Low-Sequence Beyonders potions aren't that strict. You can use the entire honeysuckle flower as a substitute. You can consume them as long as the Beyonder characteristics can eventually dissolve."

She then looked at the open door and asked in a low voice, "Aren't you afraid that Ryan and the others will be suspicious if you go to get distilled liquor in the middle of the night?"

Seeing his sister's reaction, Lumian forced his smile from being too stiff.

"As a regular at Ol' Tavern, waking up in the middle of the night and suddenly wanting to drink is very normal.

"Although alcohol has many disadvantages, it can at least relax my mind to a certain extent."

What he meant was to use the excuse that the Lent celebration had ended and he was under too much stress. He had trouble sleeping and needed hard liquor to relax.

"Sure." Aurore agreed.

Lumian turned around and walked to the door, the smile on his face gradually disappearing.

He clenched his fists tightly from beginning to end.

...

After exiting the door and arriving at the corridor, Lumian saw Ryan standing diagonally opposite him in a brown tweed shirt and pale-

yellow pants. Leah and Valentine were at opposite ends of the corridor.

“Not sleeping anymore?” Ryan raised the kerosene lamp and looked at Lumian.

Lumian grinned.

“I’m heading to the cellar to get some liquor. How about it? Do you want a sip to relax?”

“I don’t need it.” Ryan nodded. “You haven’t experienced anything like this before. You’re tense and under a lot of stress. It’s understandable. Alcohol can indeed help.”

As he spoke, he walked towards the staircase with the flickering kerosene lamp.

“I’ll go with you. You shouldn’t move alone at a time like this.”

“Alright.” Lumian didn’t object.

As the two entered the stairs, Leah took the initiative to approach Aurore’s bedroom and stand guard at the door.

One step, two steps… Lumian and Ryan descended to the shadowy first floor in silence.

As the faint light cast a glow over half the stove, Ryan asked casually, “Did something happen upstairs? I heard some commotion.”

…

Lumian opened his mouth and said with difficulty, “Aurore, something’s wrong with Aurore…”

His intention in suggesting they get alcohol from the cellar wasn’t to advance tonight. The two-story building in the dream ruins also had a cellar and the distilled liquor. His main goal was to avoid Aurore and communicate with Ryan and the others about what had just happened.

However, when the words reached his lips, he almost couldn't bring himself to say them. He felt that the unsaid words were even more choking than the strongest liquor.

Ryan's expression turned serious.

"What's the matter?"

Lumian took a few deep breaths before saying, "Aurore, like the deputy padre, had a lizard that looked like a mini-elf coming out of her mouth."

It was as if all his strength had been drained when he said this.

After seven to eight seconds, he recounted the entire incident. Instead of waking up willingly, he explained it as happening to wake up and seeing it.

Ryan listened quietly and didn't rush him. After he finished, he said gently, "You handled it well. We can't let her know that something's amiss. I'm worried that it will worsen the situation.

"Continue pretending that nothing happened. At dawn, I'll use the excuse that Cordu has been corrupted and that we need to undergo a purification every day to prevent ourselves from being affected. I'll get Valentine to try and exorcize the lizard."

"Alright," Lumian replied weakly.

He felt that the "lizard" had already fused deeply with his sister's soul. It wasn't that easy to exorcize and purify.

Ryan glanced at him and patted his shoulder gently.

"I can understand how you feel. If something similar happened to my family, I wouldn't be able to stay calm.

"But you have to remember that impatience can't solve anything.

"I know Valentine's purification might not be effective, but we have to give it a try to confirm that it won't work. Yes, that abnormality is most likely related to Cordu's loop. As long as we can finally break

the loop, your sister should be able to recover."

That's right… This is equivalent to corruption. As long as I can remove all the corruption when the loop is lifted, Aurore will definitely be fine… Lumian's eyes gradually lit up as he regained his motivation.

Ryan was rather satisfied with his reaction and said gently, "I need to remind you that you have to adapt to your sister's changes in the next few days. It's very likely that she'll be like the deputy padre, gradually losing herself to instincts. She'll act differently, following her memories and strongest emotions without reacting to anything else."

Lumian fell silent for a moment before saying, "I'll adapt…"

His voice became softer and softer until it trailed off.

After getting the distilled liquor from the cellar, the two of them returned to the second floor as if nothing had happened.

Upon entering the bedroom, Lumian smiled again.

He shook the bottle in his hand at Aurore and whispered, "It worked."

Aurore smiled and pointed at the desk.

"The honeysuckle, grapevine, and fern are all there."

Lumian nodded and placed the bottle on the desk.

Then, he lay back on the bed and closed his eyes under the pretext of trying to fall asleep and advance in his dreams as soon as possible.

He couldn't fall asleep no matter what.

He couldn't figure out when his sister had been corrupted and had the lizard enter her body. During this period, the two of them had been together every second. Even if Aurore went to the washroom, Leah would accompany her, and vice versa. How could there be a problem?

If it happened during our sleeping hours, why didn't anything happen to me? Lumian tried his best to recall, hoping to find the source. It would help resolve the abnormality.

Suddenly, he remembered something.

In the previous, previous cycle, Padre Guillaume Bénet had remarked that the Church didn't want to kill all the adults here and harvest a ruin. He said that he had other means even if Aurore really wanted to deal with them.

At that time, he was still an ordinary person.

Lumian initially believed that he was relying on Shepherd Pierre Berry, but with the current situation, he had a guess—a crazy guess: Perhaps from the beginning, most people in the village had been parasitized by those strange lizard-like creatures, including Aurore!

As the twelfth night approached, the corresponding abnormality would become more and more obvious, and some people would show signs earlier.

The reason why he was spared was because he had the bluish-black symbol on him.

Recalling Aurore's lack of commitment in many matters in the second half of the previous, previous cycle, Lumian felt that his guess might be correct.

He couldn't help but grit his teeth.

At this moment, Ryan was patrolling the corridor with a kerosene lamp.

On the wall beside him, the shadow suddenly lengthened.

Almost at the same time, the small silver bells on Leah's veil and boots rang.

She felt her shoulders turn abnormally cold.

Chapter 101 - 101 Different Powers

101 Different Powers

The sound of tinkling bells sent a shiver down Leah's spine. Unable to pinpoint the danger, she instinctively used her Paper Figurine Substitutes.

Her body rapidly shrank and thinned, morphing into a carefully trimmed paper figurine.

The paper figure darkened, turning yellow and brittle as if it had aged a decade in an instant.

Silently, the withered yellow paper disintegrated into countless tiny fragments.

!!

Leah reappeared at the top of the stairs, clutching the kerosene lamp. But in the next moment, she felt the chill on her shoulders.

Her thoughts raced as she raised her right hand and pinched the bridge of her nose.

Activating her Spirit Vision, she glanced at the room across from her and the glass window.

In the dim light of the kerosene lamp, the washroom's glass reflected Leah's upper body.

Transparent, ghostly infants perched on each of her shoulders!

Their faces were round and chubby, their skin a ghastly blue-white. Their expressions twisted in malevolence.

The spectral infants leaned down, pressing their mouths to Leah's neck as if feeding on her essence.

Rather than panic, Leah breathed a sigh of relief.

Identifying the source of the threat was far better than being in the dark!

Now she could assess the situation and make informed decisions.

Just like this!

Leah drew her exquisite silver revolver, aimed at the eerie infant on her left shoulder, and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

A golden bullet, wreathed in illusory flames, burst from the barrel.

The infant wailed as it was flung from Leah's shoulder, consumed by the golden fire.

Bang! Leah fired again, this time at the infant above her other shoulder.

The second ghostly child, ablaze with the same intense fire, cried out as it followed its companion down the corridor.

A woman's figure materialized. Her eyes were a piercing blue, her features delicate; her round face framed by disheveled black hair. She was the padre's mistress, Sybil Berry, sister to Shepherd Pierre Berry.

Her skin was coated in a sickly blue hue, and on both sides of her neck, grotesque growths protruded.

The spectral infants returned to her, latching onto the corresponding growths to feed.

As they nursed, the golden flames that engulfed them gradually dissipated.

But Leah would not stand idly by. She aimed at Sybil Berry and

pulled the trigger.

With a bang, the golden bullet traversed mere meters before striking Sybil squarely in the forehead.

For some reason, Sybil made no attempt to dodge. A bloody hole bore through her skull.

Within the wound, white and red mixed as illusory golden flames devoured them both.

Clang! Sybil fell lifeless to the floor. The ghostly infants, their pale faces contorted in anguish, vanished.

That's it? Leah couldn't believe it.

The silver bells on her veil and boots continued to tinkle, growing more intense by the second.

In the blink of an eye, Leah felt a cold, malevolent force growing within her.

Frantically, she glanced at the washroom and the glass window. Her skin had taken on a bluish hue at some point.

In the next instant, her body reverted to a paper figurine.

The paper figure crumpled into a ball, hitting the floor with a thud.

Leah reappeared in the bathroom, the icy sensation still growing inside her.

Almost simultaneously, a gentle voice whispered in her ear.

"I made a pact with a strange spirit world creature and gained one of its abilities.

"Whoever kills me, I can be reborn within their body and take control.

"You're very beautiful. I like it very much. The padre should like you very much too…"

Without hesitation, Leah bolted from the bathroom, silver revolver and kerosene lamp in hand.

She had to find Valentine.

Exorcism was one of the Sun domain's specialties. They were particularly effective against such threats! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

…

Valentine found himself cornered near the balcony.

The area was choked by pitch-black, thorn-covered vines hanging from the ceiling. Blood-red, putrid-smelling flowers bloomed all around.

Valentine spread his arms, summoning golden flames from thin air to incinerate the monstrous flora.

Just then, a figure materialized in midair.

He wore a white robe adorned with golden threads. His black hair was short, his blue eyes solemn, and his nose slightly hooked. He was Guillaume Bénet, the padre of Cordu.

No longer invisible, he floated in the air and gazed down at Valentine. In ancient Hermes, he bellowed,

"Valentine!"

Dark energy flickered within the padre's robes.

This was an ability Guillaume Bénet had obtained through a contract with a spirit world creature.

...

By invoking the target's true name, he could affect their Soul Body, causing disorientation.

The closer the language was to nature and the spirit world, and the

better the understanding of the target, the stronger the effect.

If his Spirit Body was far superior to the target's, he could even extract their spirit, leaving them disoriented and defenseless.

Valentine's head spun as he heard the padre's shout. He suddenly felt dizzy and couldn't think straight.

However, he quickly regained control and shook off the disorientation.

Ever since entering Cordu, he had never revealed his full name. The padre's ability had limited effect on him.

Guillaume Bénet hadn't expected success either. Before Valentine could completely shake off the dizziness, the padre hurled a human bone he had prepared earlier.

As the bone hit the ground, the airborne padre rapidly recited in Hermes, "Blind, deaf, unwakeable."

It was a curse and an ability Guillaume Bénet had gained through a contract.

He cast bones symbolizing death to render the target like the dead—blind and deaf, with unresponsive eyes.

Valentine wasn't asleep, so the curse couldn't render him unconscious. However, the lingering dizziness intensified, blurring his vision and causing his ears to ring. He struggled to see beyond three meters or hear anything further away.

...

Seizing the opportunity, the padre extended his right palm.

His blue eyes took on a hazy, almost ethereal quality.

Complex mercury symbols, reminiscent of tiny rivers, swirled around Valentine. They formed a grand illusory river shimmering with light.

Countless tributaries branched off downstream. As the main river

surged forward, most were swallowed up, leaving only one.

Guillaume Bénet observed for a few seconds and snatched one of the mercury symbols just before Valentine broke free from the cursed blindness and deafness.

He intended to amplify the corresponding tributary and make Valentine's fate of being paralyzed by the Abyssal Demon Flowers a reality.

…

Ryan barely managed to dodge the shadow's axe as it slashed down towards him. He quickly discarded the kerosene lamp he had been carrying and donned his silver-white armor. In his hand, a broadsword condensed from light appeared.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ryan slashed continuously, forcing the shadow back against the wall. The specks of Sunrise Gleam he released covered the surroundings, exorcizing the shadows in the area.

The pitch-black, pale-white, evil, or terrifying arms that were about to reach out from behind the shadow were pushed away, making it hard for them to grab Ryan's body.

With a clang, the shadow shrank back into the wall and reverted to normal.

It disappeared under the illumination of Sunrise Gleam.

Not far away, a remnant shadow enlarged, and Shepherd Pierre Berry, dressed in a long hooded coat, walked out.

He bent down slightly and charged at Ryan with his axe, accumulating powers in his body with every step. After a few steps, Pierre Berry seemed to have the posture and strength of a giant.

Ryan loomed over his opponent, gripping the Sword of Dawn with both hands as he prepared to strike the enemy charging at him like a rampaging bull.

Clang!

The broadsword and axe clashed, sending a shower of sparks in every direction.

Both Pierre Berry and Ryan recoiled simultaneously. One stumbled back three steps to regain balance, while the other only needed one.

Ryan halted his retreat, one leg stretched back, and seized the moment before Pierre Berry could steady himself. He lunged forward, slashing at his adversary.

Just then, Pierre Berry's mouth gaped open.

His tongue bizarrely morphed into a peculiar chameleon.

The chameleon's head was tucked between its legs, a front foot stuffed into its mouth.

The instant Ryan's gaze fell upon the chameleon, he was wracked by a searing pain in his head, so intense that his attack faltered, failing to land.

Headache curse!

Shepherd Pierre Berry had gained this ability through a pact with an enigmatic Spirit Body that had reveled in studying all manner of curses during its life.

Capitalizing on the opportunity to inflict a debilitating headache on Ryan, Pierre Berry summoned the receding shadow back and unleashed a ferocious assault.

Amid the cacophony of clanging metal, Ryan found himself forced to retreat.

…

Amid the chaos outside, Lumian bolted upright and urgently told Aurore, "Something's not right! We have to regroup with Ryan and the others!"

Ryan had drilled this principle into their heads time and time again: In the face of an attack, they had to strive to stay together. A united team was far more effective than five individuals battling solo!

“Okay!” Aurore leaped out of bed and sprinted for the door, reaching into the concealed pocket of her flowing gown.

As Lumian neared the open doorway, he caught sight of a figure—Deputy Padre Michel Garrigue stood before him, garbed in a white robe adorned with gold thread.

The striking, curly-haired youth’s eyes were eerily vacant as he offered Lumian a smile.

“Do you want to pray?”

With a swift motion, Lumian yanked his axe free and aimed for Michel’s neck.

Michel’s head lolled, but only a trickle of blood escaped.

Glancing at Lumian from the corner of his eye, he inquired with a radiant smile, as if nothing had transpired, “Do you want to pray?”

As Lumian prepared to raise his axe and sever the man’s neck, an overwhelming sense of danger washed over him.

Relying on his Dancer’s uncanny agility, he abruptly spun around and swung the axe behind his back.

In the next second, his gaze froze.

He saw Aurore.

Aurore’s light-blue eyes had inexplicably grown vacant. She hurled a handful of powder, ground from some kind of tree, at Lumian.

Gazing upon his sister’s familiar visage, Lumian’s axe strike decelerated until it came to a halt.

He even forgot to evade.

A crackling noise erupted as a sphere of silver lightning struck Lumian's head.

He fainted.

Darkness swallowed his vision.

Chapter 102 - 102 Transfer

102 Transfer

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Ryan retreated, barely managing to parry Shepherd Pierre Berry's relentless onslaught.

Pierre Berry's eyes were bloodshot, the gentleness gone, replaced by a ferocious rage.

As sinister arms, either pitch-black or ghostly white, reached from the shadows to ensnare Ryan, Pierre Berry swung his axe at Ryan's head.

This time, Ryan didn't parry or retreat. He didn't even raise the Sword of Dawn.

Instead, he twisted his body, allowing the eerie arms to grasp his legs and Pierre Berry's axe to strike his shoulder.

Clang!

Spiderweb-like cracks spread across the silver pauldron, light flaking off and dissipating.

Grimacing in pain, Ryan genuflected, plunging the Sword of Dawn into the floor.

He knew he'd been separated from his allies for too long. He needed to regroup at any cost.

The strength of a team surpassed that of any individual!

In a split second, the light-infused two-handed broadsword detonated.

It shattered into countless light fragments, morphing into a hurricane that barreled towards Pierre Berry.

Panic flickered in Pierre Berry's eyes at the devastating blow.

Ignoring the malevolent arms, he retreated into his own shadow.

A fierce storm of pure light engulfed the area, slicing shadows and evil into shreds.

As an area-of-effect attack, Hurricane of Light inevitably impacted Ryan's surroundings, despite his best efforts to direct it towards his enemy.

Silently, the walls of Lumian's and Aurore's bedrooms crumbled, reduced to tiny fragments in the terrifying storm.

Near the balcony, pitch-black vines hanging from the roof writhed like tortured weeds. Even Padre Guillaume Bénet, suspended in midair, had no choice but to hastily dodge.

Bloodied scratches marred his body as he fled Aurore's house.

Rumble!

Half the roof had been obliterated, the second floor pockmarked with gaping holes. In many places, the stove below was visible.

Leah was also caught in the storm of light, her figure rapidly withering and shrinking, transforming into a paper figurine.

When the tempest subsided, she reappeared in the study, barely intact.

Ryan knew she had Paper Figurine Substitutes, allowing him to unleash such a brutal attack on Pierre Berry in a confined space.

As for Aurore, Lumian, and Valentine, their positions offered some protection from the attack. Ryan had tried to control the storm's direction, with limited success.

After assessing the situation, he decided to use this decisive attack.

Crimson moonlight and faint starlight streamed through the ruined roof. Ryan scanned the area but saw no sign of Aurore or Lumian. Leah, pale-faced, was rushing towards him. Valentine lay unconscious on the balcony, numerous wounds from the Hurricane of Light, but none lethal.

Seeing his battered allies, Ryan stopped searching. He grabbed Leah's shoulder and leaped to the balcony.

With one hand, the Warrior hoisted Valentine and jumped from the Lumian residence.

Relying on his not-yet-shattered Dawn Armor to withstand further ambushes, he raced towards the edge of Cordu Village, fleeing to the nearest mountain pasture.

They had a plan: if they couldn't defend Aurore and Lumian's homes, they'd retreat to the pasture.

There, they could use the terrain to their advantage, escape by leaping off the cliff, and trigger the cycle.

Padre Guillaume Bénet hovered above, unable to match the Dawn Paladin's top speed.

Beneath him, Shepherd Pierre Berry emerged from the shadows at the edge of the house.

His dark robe was shredded, the hood long gone. His face, chest, and legs bore deep gashes, blood oozing relentlessly. It was a chilling sight.

Had he not swapped his shadow with that of a villager at the crucial moment, he'd be dead with his body torn to shreds!

The villager who had served as his pawn was now undoubtedly a mangled heap of flesh and blood.

…

As Ryan obliterated the Abyss Demon Flower with his Hurricane of Light, Valentine's paralysis waned. He regained consciousness before

they left Cordu Village.

“What’s the situation?” he inquired, his voice muffled by the wind.

Ryan, running at full speed, couldn’t elaborate. He replied tersely, “Help Leah first!”

Valentine glanced at Leah, cradled in Ryan’s other arm, and noticed her pallid, ashen face.

Without a moment’s hesitation, he stretched out his hand with great effort and placed his palm on Leah’s shoulder.

“Sun!”

He cried out in ancient Hermes.

Glistening golden droplets materialized out of nowhere, raining down on Leah.

Her expression contorted, and steam rose from her body.

Within seconds, Sybil’s ethereal figure was expelled, her face filled with shock and terror.

She couldn’t fathom how she’d been ejected from Leah’s body.

Immediately after, ghostly golden flames erupted from the void, engulfing the bizarre spirit like a candle, reducing it to liquid droplets.

Sybil shrieked and cursed, but couldn’t evade her fate of being purified.

This time, she failed to reincarnate in Valentine’s body.

“Vile creature!” Valentine muttered under his breath.

...

…

Shepherd Pierre Berry looked up at Guillaume Bénet, who hovered

above, and asked, “Should we chase them?”

Despite his injuries, he refused to surrender.

Guillaume Bénet pondered for a moment and responded, “No need. Our priority lies here.

“They won’t make any moves in the short term. They’ll only observe and assess the situation. That’s enough for us.”

As he finished speaking, he furrowed his brow and whispered, “Sybil’s dead.”

“Can’t she be ‘reborn’?” Pierre Berry asked, surprised.

He wasn’t particularly distraught over his sister’s demise.

Guillaume Bénet couldn’t help but curse, “I warned her not to use Rebirth in front of the three official Beyonders. Rebirth at this level is inherently countered by the power of the Sun pathway, but she didn’t listen.

“Imbecile! What a waste of the Lord’s gift!”

…

... Updated from novelbIn.(c)om

Lumian’s eyes snapped open, taking in the wispy gray fog and the familiar ceiling above.

He had awoken within the dream ruins after losing consciousness.

Gasping for breath, Lumian struggled to sit up straight.

As Aurore’s attack struck him, he had been filled with despair, thinking it was better to just surrender.

She could reclaim the beautiful life she had granted him, along with the five years she had given him.

Phew… Lumian exhaled sharply as two realizations pierced his thoughts.

That wasn't Aurore. She was possessed by a monster!

To give up now would be to abandon her to the creature and snuff out her last hope!

Lumian rose to his feet, his resolve steeling within him.

He glanced toward the window and spotted a bottle of liquor, a honeysuckle flower, some grapevines, and fern powder.

Had that woman sent these materials? Had she witnessed the attack? Why hadn't she… Lumian shook his head, dispelling his intrusive thoughts.

In this dire circumstance, he could only rely on himself and his allies. No matter how powerful others may be, they were useless to him now!

Wasting no more time, Lumian retrieved the instruments he'd used to brew the Hunter potion and poured 50 milliliters of liquor into a beer mug.

He added the honeysuckle flower, grapevine powder, and fern powder, one after the other. Lastly, the repulsive "stone" with its dark, flowing liquid surface.

A sizzling sound accompanied the dissolution of the Provoker Beyonder characteristic, and the honeysuckle flower vanished.

The colorless liquor in the mug turned a deep black, becoming viscous. The mere sight of the potion made Lumian want to hurl it away and stomp it into oblivion.

He steadied himself, using shallow Cogitation to calm his nerves and focus.

Moments later, Lumian snatched up the beer mug without hesitation, gulping down the foul, pungent Provoker potion.

Setting the mug down, he immediately felt his insides grow heavy, as if plummeting.

Drawing on his experience, Lumian sat cross-legged on the floor, eyes closed, bracing for the next transformation.

His breaths became heated, his emotions veering wildly between anger, sorrow, frustration, and exhilaration.

Simultaneously, a voice—infinitely distant yet intimately close—assailed his ears, drilling into his temples like an iron spike.

Familiar, searing pain engulfed Lumian's mind, but he couldn't shake certain thoughts.

I must succeed!

I must unlock the secret of the dream!

I must save Aurore!

I must shatter the loop in Cordu!

Enduring the scorching, tearing sensation and the illusion of losing control, Lumian didn't open his eyes or alter his posture.

He felt like a tiny vessel in a tempest, battered by waves and gales. Powerless, but not yet submerged.

After what felt like an eternity, the pain began to ebb as the bloodthirsty, insane thoughts receded from Lumian's consciousness.

He opened his eyes, knowing he had ascended to a Sequence 8 Provoker.

Chapter 103 - 103 The Padre’s Plan

103 The Padre’s Plan

A dense white fog hung heavy in the sky, swallowing most of the light and casting the dream ruins into a perpetual twilight.

Lumian stood, stretching his limbs and surveying the blood-streaked mountain peak as he assessed his condition.

In comparison to Hunter, the Provoker’s strength, reflexes, speed, and agility had improved, albeit modestly.

Lumian identified three primary changes:

First, his body had grown more robust and his recuperative abilities had seemingly improved.

Second, his spirituality had increased to a certain extent. He could now maintain his possession state for four minutes, up from just three.

Lastly, he had gained a Beyonder power called Provocation.

This ability induced a permanent state change while also requiring active activation to achieve its desired effect.

Lumian’s observation skills had experienced a qualitative transformation, far surpassing those of an ordinary person. He could now effectively discern which words, actions, and situations would most easily trigger his target’s sensitivities and provoke agitation.

When Provocation was employed, it merged insults and humiliation, causing the target to lose their composure.

The more tailored the taunts and humiliation, the more effective the Provocation. However, even a single word like “dogshit” could still incite anger to some degree.

Against an uncommunicative opponent, Provocation allowed Lumian to exude a repugnant aura.

This ability was well-suited to the traps and ambushes Hunters excelled in, but it held little meaning for Lumian in his present state.

He no longer had time for hunting. His sole focus was exploring the “wall” surrounding the blood-stained “peak” and uncovering the secret of the dream ruins.

In contrast, the enhancements to his spirituality and physical resilience pleased him. At the very least, he could now delve further into the dark area that once lulled him to sleep.

With the potion’s boost, Lumian massaged his temples.

This time, activating his Spirit Vision was seamless.

He finally had the capacity to easily invoke his Spirit Vision.

Without hesitation, Lumian changed his clothes and gathered his gear: Fallen Mercury, the iron-black axe, a cloth bag of cheese and biscuits. He slung his shotgun over his back and exited the two-story semi-subterranean building. Amidst the muted gray fog, he traversed the wilderness and entered the ruins.

He followed a familiar path, avoiding areas where monsters might lurk, and proceeded cautiously.

Upon reaching the area where he had encountered the three-faced monster, Lumian danced, partially triggering the black thorn symbol.

With the “amulet,” he navigated increasingly treacherous terrain and repelled several horrifying creatures.

At last, he arrived at the thorny “wall” formed by an array of houses.

After a moment’s consideration, Lumian chose a direction.

He resolved to enter the area that seemed to be shrouded in night, a place that instantly plunged him into a drowsy haze.

His intuition suggested that something significant lay beyond the towering wall of twisted trees. However, the area resembling the onset of night held a greater likelihood of harboring the secret of the dream ruins.

After all, “night,” “slumber,” and “dream” were often related terms.

In due course, Lumian, having performed another ritual dance, found himself in a place noticeably dimmer than its surroundings.

He exhaled slowly and stepped forward with determination.

Almost immediately, Lumian felt as though he had transitioned from a foggy day to a cloudy evening. Shadows enveloped the objects around him.

Clutching Fallen Mercury, he yawned and pressed on. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

I can’t sleep. I can’t sleep! Lumian urged himself forward.

As he proceeded, Lumian remained vigilant, scrutinizing the buildings that formed the city wall. Yet, the secrets of the dream ruins eluded him.

Gold coins and other trinkets held no interest for him.

Delving deeper, he trudged dozens of meters, his willpower alone keeping his eyes open against the overwhelming drowsiness that engulfed his mind.

After a moment’s contemplation, he opted for retreat. He would investigate the area behind the wooden wall and enter this sleep-inducing zone from another angle.

Perhaps that would grant him access to previously unreachable locations.

Lumian pivoted and retraced his steps, but the drowsiness persisted,

growing in intensity with each passing moment.

At last, his resolve crumbled. His eyes slid shut, and he slumped to the ground.

Darkness consumed his vision once more.

…

Lumian was suddenly gripped by a sharp pain in his abdomen, causing him to curl up and open his eyes.

First, he saw a dazzling mural with a curved dome, followed by the stern visage of the padre along with his slightly hooked nose, and Pons Bénet's right fist, which he withdrew with a sinister grin.

I've been captured and brought to the cathedral? Lumian recognized the scene overhead and instinctively scanned his surroundings.

He saw Reimund's father, Pierre Greg, Ava's father, Guillaume Lizier, his neighbor Louis Bedeau, and nearly all the villagers.

The altar had transformed beyond recognition, now adorned with lilacs, tulips, and other symbols of that hidden entity instead of sunflowers.

The Sun Sacred Emblem had vanished, replaced by an unnaturally twisted thorn ring, seemingly oozing black liquid.

Spotting the familiar symbol, Lumian felt a wave of dizziness as heat surged in his chest.

He knew this was a sign that the corruption within him had been stirred but remained trapped within the bluish-black symbol.

The padre and his followers have turned the cathedral into an altar for the hidden entity? Poor St. Sith… Lumian imagined Valentine would go berserk upon seeing this.

Bound tightly, he surveyed his surroundings, relieved to find the stained glass and murals depicting the great Eternal Blazing Sun and St. Sith's preaching unscathed.

It seems the alterations were hastily made… Lumian deduced the cathedral's current state.

The villagers stood eerily silent, like wax figures.

After observing Lumian for a moment, the padre scolded Pons Bénet.

…

"How could you let him sleep? You should have woken him up as soon as you brought him back to the cathedral!"

"Understood," Pons Bénet replied, his gaze unusually deferential, as if the padre were his deity or ruler.

Leaning against a pillar, Lumian glanced up at Guillaume Bénet. "Where's Aurore?"

The padre smiled cryptically. "You'll find out soon enough."

"What about the three foreigners?" Lumian frantically devised an escape plan while trying to maintain the conversation.

Guillaume Bénet gazed through the stained glass, his expression relaxed. "They've escaped. They should be at the nearest alpine pasture by now. But don't expect them to rescue you and Aurore tonight. Knowing the officials, they'll stall and merely observe. They'll only act after confirming the situation. Sometimes, they'd rather do nothing than make a mistake. That's how they wasted a decade of mine."

Lumian conceded the padre's point, but he knew that wasn't why Ryan and the others were waiting.

Without understanding why the evil god's followers had captured him and Aurore, Ryan's group wouldn't take drastic measures, like triggering the loop's reboot by leaving Cordu. They wanted to wait until the twelfth night to uncover the cause of the disturbance here, laying a solid foundation for escaping the predicament in the future.

Lumian's silence caused the padre's grin to widen.

In a matter-of-fact tone, he announced, “I plan to complete the ritual tonight.”

What? Lumian was baffled.

…

In high spirits, Guillaume Bénet patiently elaborated, “I intend to move the April 9th ritual to tonight. The three foreigners won’t have a chance to interfere.”

What? The twelfth night can be moved up? Lumian was shocked, speechless, and inexplicably terrified.

At that moment, Guillaume Bénet turned to Pons Bénet and instructed, “Before taking him to the altar, ensure he stays awake. You may use any method, just don’t kill him.”

Pons Bénet asked eagerly, “What if I kill him?”

“We’ll die together!” The padre glared at his dim-witted brother.

Send me to the altar and start the ritual again? Could the bluish-black symbol on me be useful again? Lumian’s nerves steadied as he listened to the Bénet brothers’ conversation.

The padre redirected his gaze to Lumian and leaned down. “Don’t worry, you’re not the vessel. We have a better choice.”

A better choice? Lumian’s alarm grew as he followed the padre’s gaze to the original altar.

Aurore had appeared there at some point in time, dressed in a plain white robe, her golden hair unadorned and her light-blue eyes vacant.

“Aurore!” Lumian cried out.

Aurore remained statue-like, unresponsive.

The padre smiled and nodded.

“Yes, your sister is the superior vessel. Your role in the ritual is to help us expedite the timeline. We needn’t wait for that exact moment or the shift in the constellations.”

Lumian was terrified and bewildered.

Why can I help bring forward the twelfth night’s ritual?

The padre leaned in once more, a smile of anticipation on his face.

“Because most of the boons we’d prayed for are within you.”

What? How does he know? Lumian’s eyes widened, straining to scrutinize Guillaume Bénet’s face more closely.

Guillaume Bénet leaned in and whispered into Lumian’s ear, “Did you really think you and Pualis were the only ones able to retain memories in the loop?”

Chapter 104 - 104 Resolute Decision

104 Resolute Decision

Upon seeing Lumian's blatant shock, Guillaume Bénet straightened up with satisfaction and said to Pons Bénet, "Keep an eye on him!"

With that, the padre strode towards the altar.

As he left, the villagers around them seemed to come alive, engaging in animated conversations.

"The horoscope is about to change."

"Our good fortune is coming!"

"It won't be long before we're wealthy!"

"When the time comes, I'll drink a bottle of wine every day and eat a pound of meat every meal!"

"I want to find a beautiful woman."

"I'm going to watch a play."

"…"

Lumian's mind was a whirlwind, and he barely noticed when Guillaume Bénet departed.

The padre's words were like a boulder tossed into a placid lake, sending ripples through Lumian's thoughts.

How is that possible?

In the previous cycle, I killed him because he didn't understand what made me special!

Back then, I didn't even know what was so special about myself. It was natural for him not to know… After that battle, he didn't have any conflicts with me in the subsequent cycles until Aurore began acting strangely…

But he didn't seem to know about the loop at all. The cursing he did when I led the rest to catch him in the adulterous act, him being knocked out by Leah after we infiltrated the cathedral, and being spied upon by Aurore using White Paper didn't seem fake at all!

If he was putting on an act, his level of restraint would be bone-chilling…

Moreover, he knows that Madame Pualis retains her memories in the loop and might know something about the abnormalities in the castle. Yet he still had an affair with Madame Pualis at the beginning of each loop, allowing no one to suspect him.

If it were me, I wouldn't even have desires after finding out what Madame Pualis had done, let alone sleep with her!

The more Lumian pondered, the more he found the padre terrifying. This fear was unlike the terror he felt from Madame Pualis.

Questions swarmed his mind:

Why didn't the padre with his memories sacrifice the three sheep from the beginning and obtain the corresponding boon to take full control of Cordu? Why didn't he complete the twelfth night ritual on the first day?

This could have prevented any accidents!

What was he waiting for? The sacrificial ritual only takes place near Lent every time…

Does that ritual have a date and time requirement?

The Lent celebration is an integral part of the twelfth night's ritual.

So, the padre will only have a chance to advance the subsequent ritual after Lent is over?

But he could just control everyone from the beginning and wait for Lent to arrive…

Also, didn't the hidden existence find it odd that they prayed for a boon twice across three cycles? Yes, He might have done something, like helping the padre recover his memories!

No, if their sacrificial ritual had truly been completed, the three sheep wouldn't have entered the loop again. Their spirits and Beyonder characteristics should have gone to the hidden existence.
Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Could it be that, like Reimund, the spirits gathered around the altar and didn't escape the loop?

Who were the padre and the others praying to, and who bestowed their power…

As Lumian considered this, he suddenly felt a sharp pain in his lower body.

He instinctively curled up, but the ropes binding him prevented the motion.

Pons Bénet pulled his foot back from between Lumian's legs, smirking as beads of cold sweat formed on the young man's forehead. Lumian couldn't even make a sound.

He squatted down, raised his right hand, and slapped Lumian.

"Did you enjoy zat? Tell me, did you enjoy it?"

Without waiting for Lumian's response, he swung his arm and slapped the right side of his face, causing his ears to ring. Lumian felt like his head might fly off.

Seeing Lumian being beaten by Pons Bénet, Reimund's father, Pierre Greg, approached and squatted down. He sighed and said, "Bear with it. Just endure it for a while. Our fortunes are about to change. Good

luck is on its way. If you leave now, you'll miss the opportunity!"

Ignoring Lumian's reaction, he repeated the same words, trying to persuade and console him.

Lumian paid no attention to Pierre Greg. He gazed at Pons Bénet without anger, as if he were looking at empty air.

He completely disregarded him, ignoring the pain and humiliation this villain had inflicted upon him.

Only one thought occupied his mind:

The situation is dire!

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine are unlikely to trigger the loop and restart everything prematurely before confirming the padre's intentions. Besides, they just fought; who knows when they'll recover. They probably won't sneak back to the village until tomorrow or the day after.

This way, no one can stop the padre from conducting the ritual in advance tonight…

Slap, slap, slap. Pons Bénet continued slapping Lumian's face and kicking his lower body, intensifying the pain he endured.

Lumian's thoughts were repeatedly interrupted by pain as he stubbornly tried to focus, refusing to waste even a second on Pons Bénet.

This only infuriated Pons Bénet further, causing him to strike even harder.

My specialness has already been discovered and targeted. They won't give me a chance to disrupt the ritual…

What should I do…

What can I do?

Lumian endured the pain and searched for a way to escape his

current predicament.

Pons grew tired from beating him up. He stopped and panted.

“If ze padre hadn’t forbidden me from killing you, I would’ve sliced off your flesh piece by piece, including what’s down below!”

…

Hearing this, Lumian was taken aback as an idea flashed through his mind.

Kill me?

Kill me!

He suddenly raised his head and glared at Pons Bénet, his face contorted into a twisted smile born of pain.

“Is that all you’ve got? Are you using that pathetic little knife of yours to pick lice for me?”

He fully embraced his role as a Sequence 8 Provoker.

…

In the alpine meadow nearest to Cordu.

Ryan, clad in tattered armor, stood guard at the entrance and asked Valentine and Leah, “How do you feel?”

“I’m fine,” Valentine responded immediately.

Leah added, “My spirituality has almost recovered.”

…

Ryan nodded and dissolved the Dawn Armor.

“After I rest and recover a bit, we’ll return to Cordu.”

“Now?” Leah sounded surprised.

They hadn't been gone from Cordu for long.

Ryan exhaled slowly and said, "We need to find out as soon as possible why Guillaume Bénet's group attacked us tonight and not on the twelfth night. Besides, they captured Lumian and Aurore, but they didn't pursue us. Experience tell me that something's off."

Leah nodded slowly. "But we're not in the best shape."

After all, they had just fought a massive battle.

"That's why Guillaume Bénet doesn't expect us to return to Cordu tonight," Ryan explained. "Also, we left that item at Lumian and Aurore's house. We have to retrieve it as soon as possible. We can't let Guillaume Bénet and the others get their hands on it."

Valentine and Leah's expressions turned grave at the mention of that item.

They agreed to Ryan's plan.

…

Pa!

Pons Bénet slapped Lumian's face again, making his nose throb. Two streams of bright red blood flowed down to his mouth, bringing with them a foul and salty taste.

"How about zis?" Pons Bénet asked with a smile.

Lumian studied his expression and actions, realizing that his words hadn't had the desired effect.

He sniffed his blood-filled nose and replied with a smile, "Any other woman could hurt me more than you!"

"Is zat so?" Pons Bénet's expression darkened.

With a slap, he struck Lumian's mouth, sending two of his teeth flying with blood.

Relying on Provoker's insight and his experience at pranking, Lumian acutely sensed that Pons Bénet's reaction was different this time.

Familiar with all sorts of scandals and rumors in Cordu, Lumian vaguely thought of something and grinned.

"You don't seem to have a mistress."

His mouth was swollen from the slap, and two of his teeth were missing. His words came out slightly muffled.

Hearing the word "mistress," Pons Bénet's expression shifted subtly as he kicked Lumian's groin.

Lumian nearly blacked out from the pain. He couldn't speak for a few seconds.

Forcing a smile, he said with a boisterous laugh, "And the padre's mistresses are all over the village. Can't get it up?"

Pons Bénet's expression instantly darkened.

Lumian knew he had guessed right.

He endured the pain, his eyes narrowing.

He hadn't dared use Provocation earlier, fearing that he would be discovered if he used it too often. Now was the time!

Lumian laughed out loud.

"Did the padre sleep with your wife too? Are all your children his?"

Pons Bénet's eyes turned bloodshot.

He suddenly reached out and grabbed Lumian's neck, yelling with all his might, "Why don't you just die!"

Lumian heard a cracking sound from his neck and found it difficult to breathe.

Yet, he wasn't afraid. Instead, the corners of his mouth curled up as he calmly awaited the excruciating pain and inevitable death.

He had done his best to enrage Pons Bénet so that he would kill him.

Once he died, the loop would be triggered, and everything would restart immediately. Everything would return to the beginning, leaving room for recovery!

Not only had Lumian considered provoking Valentine to commit suicide to verify the nature of the loop, but he had also thought of sacrificing his own life in an emergency!

Compared to the current situation, what was there to fear?

He gazed at Pons Bénet, whose expression was vicious, and his purple lips quivered as if to say: “Please, kill me quickly.”

Chapter 105 - 105 That Person

105 That Person

Pons Bénet's grip tightened relentlessly, his eyes bloodshot and bulging.

If it hadn't been for the fact that Lumian couldn't speak or that his vision had started to fade to black, he would have thanked him.

Suddenly, a hand appeared from nowhere, grasping Pons Bénet's hair at the back of his head, trying to forcibly pry him off Lumian.

"What the hell are you doing? Are you trying to kill him? Have you lost your damn mind?"

Pierre Berry growled in a deep voice as he intervened, stopping Pons Bénet.

But Pons Bénet wouldn't listen. His crimson eyes locked onto Lumian, his mind consumed by fury and murderous intent. All he could think of was killing this bastard.

Whack!

Pierre Berry swung his right leg up, striking Pons Bénet's groin with his brand-new leather shoe.

Pons Bénet reflexively let go, clutching his crotch, squeezing his thighs together, and collapsing to the ground.

He whimpered involuntarily, his face contorted in agony, like a rooster being strangled by the neck.

Pierre Berry glanced at him coolly and said, "Once you've recovered, bring Lumian to the altar. The ritual is about to begin."

He shifted his gaze, bending down to assess Lumian's condition.

As Lumian's senses returned and he slowly opened his eyes, he straightened up and nodded.

His darkening vision restored to clarity, the pain in his neck became more apparent. Lumian was disheartened to find that his view was not of the familiar ceiling of his bedroom but of Pierre Berry's bloodied face.

Am I still alive? He wondered subconsciously as he turned his head and spotted Pons Bénet curled up on the ground.

"Pathetic!" Lumian spat contemptuously. "If you can't satisfy women and can't even kill a man, what's the point of living?"

Pons Bénet felt a wave of rage surge through his head. If it weren't for the lingering pain in his groin and Pierre Berry's watchful eye, he would have snapped once more.

…

Lumian and Aurore's house lay in ruins, more than half its roof missing.

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine crept back under the moon and starlight.

Once they confirmed the area was clear, Ryan turned to Leah and said, "Tonight's situation is worse than we thought. Perform divination."

As they traveled from Cordu Village to Lumian's house, they noticed that every house was empty. They had no idea where everyone had gone.

This was a shocking anomaly!

"Alright." Leah nodded.

Before she could take out a pen and paper to write a divination statement, Ryan reminded her, "Be cautious. Choose the direction of the divination carefully. Don't attempt it if it feels too risky."

“Understood.” Leah was well-versed in this area. She knew that Cordu was a place filled with danger and abnormalities. A minor error in the divination direction could lead to severe injuries or loss of control.

After a few moments of contemplation, she entered Aurore’s bedroom, which now lacked a wall along the corridor, and found a manuscript to use as a medium.

As Leah wrote the divination statement, Ryan and Valentine entered Lumian’s room where they had been sleeping.

Ryan’s brownish-yellow suitcase sat beside the desk near the window, concealed by the curtain.

Seeing that the item was still there, Ryan breathed a sigh of relief and said to Valentine, “Make the preparations.”

As he spoke, he pulled the suitcase out, placed it on the ground, and undid the brass-like metal buckle.

Valentine opened his arms slightly, and illusory golden flames emerged from the void, illuminating the room.

With Sunlight, Ryan finally dared to open his suitcase with a grave expression.

Inside, there were no clothes, books, or coins—just a strange, folded scarecrow lying quietly.

The scarecrow’s eyes were covered with thick black cloth strips. Its face, neck, palms, feet, and calves were made of brownish-green straw, but its arms, chest, and thighs were covered in real, slightly pale-white skin.

This was a mystical item that the joint investigation team had acquired from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Riston diocese before their departure.

Teams at their level could request Sealed Artifacts to handle abnormalities.

Ryan closed his eyes, and information about the mystical item before him naturally surfaced in his mind.

“Number: 2

“Name: Tanago Scarecrow.

“Danger Grade: 2. Dangerous. Use with care and moderation. It can only be applied for operations that require three or more people. Security clearance requires a diocesan bishop.

“Security classification: Bishop, Team Captain, or above.

“Description: This scarecrow was first discovered in the Tanago region of Riston Province, near the remnants of a village annihilated by a cult’s worship ritual.

“Two Purifiers, ten police officers, and 76 farmers vanished after passing by the farm where the scarecrow was placed, never to be seen again.

“Research suggests that those who enter a 30-meter radius of the scarecrow and lock eyes with it will lose self-awareness and be drawn towards it uncontrollably. Within moments, they disappear, leaving behind only their possessions and garments.

“At the zenith of sunlight, the scarecrow loses its power; touching it or meeting its gaze has no effect.

“A farmer from a neighboring village claims the scarecrow was once ordinary, indistinguishable from others until the village farmland it protected was decimated.

“With each disappearance, flesh and skin appear on a small portion of the scarecrow.

“Its ultimate transformation remains a mystery, but revival seems a likely outcome.

“The scarecrow already displays signs of life, moving at night and attempting to break free from its containment.

“Sealing Method: Blindfold it with a thick, black cloth and enclose it in a confined, dark space.

“Usage Process: Remove the scarecrow only under sunlight, and unbind the black cloth from its eyes.

“Appendix: 1. Avoid its gaze at all costs. Even under the protection of sunlight, you risk enduring lasting nightmares and mental debilitation.

“2. Limit interaction with the scarecrow to no more than two minutes per session. Excessive use intensifies its determination to escape and resist.

…

“3. Warning: Permanently seal the scarecrow before it acquires enough flesh.”

As Ryan and Valentine investigated the Sealed Artifact’s possible loss or escape, Leah entered a dream divination state.

Whispering the divination incantation to locate Aurore, she sat at her desk, reclined in her chair, closed her eyes, and quickly drifted into slumber.

Guided by her four silver bells, Leah glimpsed Aurore, clad in a simple white robe, in a surreal, distorted world. She recognized an altar, nearby villagers, and the distant stained glass and golden walls of a cathedral…

Leah’s eyes flew open, and she bolted from the room. Breathlessly, she informed Ryan and Valentine, “They’re all at the cathedral! Performing a ritual!”

…

Inside the cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

Pons Bénet carried the disappointed Lumian toward the altar adorned with lilacs and tulips. Pierre Berry, keeping a watchful eye, accompanied them.

Glancing at his sister Aurore, her eyes vacant, Lumian turned to Pierre Berry and sneered.

“You’re nothing but a coward and a piece of trash!”

The shepherd shot him a glance but remained silent, his expression unchanging.

…

Undeterred, Lumian continued, grinning, “Your woman died of illness, yet you did nothing. You just put your faith in a malevolent god. Didn’t she die because the factory owner overworked her and paid her next to nothing? If I were you, I’d have hunted down that boss and hung his whole family from the factory chimney! But you didn’t! You were too scared. Scared you’d die too. Trash, coward!”

As Lumian studied Pierre Berry’s subtle reactions, he slyly added Provocation to his final words.

Pierre Berry’s expression contorted; his gentle gaze slowly morphed into a menacing glare, as if a hidden seal had been broken, unleashing the demon within.

Padre Guillaume Bénet, at the altar, barked sternly, “Control yourself!”

Pierre Berry shuddered and came to his senses.

In retaliation, he ripped a piece of cloth from his ragged attire, crumpled it into a ball, and shoved it into Lumian’s mouth.

F*ck! Lumian struggled fiercely, but to no avail.

He kept cursing and adding Provocation, but time was against him. His mouth was fully gagged by the cloth, and he could no longer speak. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Panic and despair welled up in Lumian’s heart, threatening to overwhelm him.

He desperately reined in his emotions, warding off any thoughts of

surrender.

Carried to the altar, Lumian's mind raced, searching for alternative ways to end his life.

Soon, he was presented before the padre, the massive black thorn symbol separating him from Aurore.

Guillaume Bénet motioned for Pierre Berry to help Lumian to his feet, then scrutinized the young man's face and smiled.

"You're tougher than I thought, but you're still lacking. The world is so hard a man must have two fathers to look after him, yet you have none. No one to teach you the ways of life."

"The world is so hard a man must have two fathers to look after him" was a popular saying in Intis. It referred to both a biological father and a societal father—often known as a godfather.

This was why the people of Intis often acknowledged godfathers and godmothers.

The padre taunted Lumian for being an orphan, with neither a godfather nor a father.

In response, Lumian wished he could retort, mocking the padre about his own child having three, no, four fathers—the padre himself, his godfather, his mother's lover… If the gag hadn't held tight, Lumian would definitely have taunted the padre enough to make him lose his mind, killing him on the spot.

Unfortunately, he couldn't say anything.

"Should we begin the ritual now?" Pierre Berry inquired of Guillaume Bénet.

The padre shook his head.

"Let's wait a bit longer."

"What for?" Pierre Berry asked, puzzled.

The padre offered no answer, but Lumian was already devising a new suicide plan.

Suddenly, inspiration struck.

Enter a deep Cogitation state and submit to the scrutiny of the two entities. Eagerly, he sought the enigmatic and horrifying voice, hoping to provoke his own breakdown and loss of control.

Lumian glanced at Aurore, her face blank and her eyes empty, but otherwise unchanged. He closed his eyes.

First, he envisioned the crimson sun. Once calm, he transformed it into the orb adorned with eyes and a cross.

Silently, Lumian “saw” the faint gray fog once more. He “saw” the chaos of overlapping colors and indescribable, non-existent things.

Yet this time, he didn’t sense the gaze of an entity lurking within the fog or looming high above.

Why is it different? Lumian’s eyes snapped open in surprise.

Just then, a figure entered through the cathedral doors.

Clad in a black robe and a wide hood, the man’s face was obscured by shadows. He stood tall, around 1.8 meters in height.

As the mysterious figure approached the altar, the padre stepped aside deferentially, his demeanor humble and reverent.

Who is that? The one behind the padre? Lumian puzzled, peering closer.

The more he studied the man, the more familiar he seemed, as though Lumian had encountered him before.

Suddenly, it clicked.

This was the figure lurking in the corner of the Warlock’s tomb!

The black-robed man ascended the altar and stood before Lumian.

Leaning forward slightly, he stifled a chuckle.

“Did you realize that Cogitation is useless?”

What? How does he know? Lumian stared at him, shocked and bewildered.

At this proximity, even with the hood concealing his features, Lumian could discern the black-robed man’s face.

He was a young man in his late teens, his limbs long and lean, his hair short and jet-black, his eyes a light blue, and his features sharply chiseled. He was strikingly handsome.

What… Lumian’s gaze locked onto the man.

He knew this face all too well. He saw it every day when he looked in the mirror.

It was himself!

Chapter 106 - 106 The Ritual Begins

106 The Ritual Begins

Lumian noticed that the black-robed man's face was nearly identical to his own, save for a few subtle differences.

The depths of the stranger's light-blue eyes held a faint silver-black hue. It was unclear whether the shadow of the hood affected the man's complexion or if his skin was naturally a shade darker.

"Who are you?!" Lumian blurted out in shock, his words muffled by the cloth in his mouth, leaving only indistinct movements.

The black-robed man smiled without introducing himself, turning and walking towards the padre.

Lumian strained to follow, desperate to learn the man's identity, his purpose, and why he had appeared in the dead Warlock's tomb.

This was crucial to him.

Although the padre's ability to retain memories within the loop was surprising, it wasn't inexplicable. Lumian's theories about the nature of the loop could account for such an anomaly. After all, Madame Pualis was a prime example.

However, the black-robed man's sudden appearance was entirely unexpected. It wasn't his presence that was startling; Lumian had always suspected another individual, apart from the owl and the occupant of the coffin, to be the mastermind behind Cordu's abnormalities.

What truly shocked him was the striking resemblance between the

black-robed man and himself. It suggested the man could be another version of Lumian.

His theories about the loop's nature failed to explain this baffling revelation!

Something's not right! Lumian struggled to lean forward, but the ropes held him fast, causing him to crash onto the altar with a thud.

His nose, which had ceased bleeding, began to flow anew, and the red, swollen wounds grew more prominent.

Undeterred, Lumian pressed on. Unable to use his limbs, he relied on Dancer's incredible flexibility, slithering towards the black-robed man with great difficulty.

His mind raced with thoughts.

I have to find out who this black-robed man is and why he's here!

This must be a manifestation of the loop's essence. Unraveling this secret could provide hope of using the loop to escape the current predicament and ultimately resolve the anomalies plaguing Cordu!

Drip, drip. Blood from Lumian's face stained the ground a vibrant red. His body smeared the crimson hue in all directions as he writhed in his struggle. The scene was chaotic and reeked of blood.

He strained to reach the black-robed man, but couldn't utter a sound. His face, contorted by pain and anxiety, was a horrifying sight.

The black-robed man, bearing an uncanny resemblance to Lumian, glanced down and instructed the padre, Guillaume Bénet, "Begin the ritual."

"Alright," Guillaume Bénet told Pierre Berry at the edge of the altar. "Bring Lumian to the altar."

Pierre Berry strode over, gripped Lumian under his arm, and hoisted him up.

No! Lumian thrashed with all his might, like a fish freshly yanked

from the water.

Pierre Berry nearly lost his grip due to Lumian's "slipperiness."

The gentleness in Pierre's eyes quickly vanished, replaced by a ferocious and brutal glint.

His strength surged as he forcefully restrained Lumian and flung him onto the altar.

Afterward, Pierre Berry glanced at Lumian and chuckled.

"You better hope you die during the ritual rather than live through it. You'll regret it, I promise."

Is this a response to my earlier Provocation? Just as this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he saw Aurore, clad in a simple white robe, approach his side.

She leaned against the altar adorned with lilacs and tulips, her gaze vacant as she stared at her brother.

The cathedral's villagers swarmed forward, forming a semi-circle around the altar.

The padre retrieved two grayish-white candles, positioning them at the corresponding locations of Aurore and Lumian. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Next, he placed a candle beneath his feet, creating a pattern on the altar with two candles above and one below.

After a few moments, the padre ignited the three candles in sequence, from top to bottom and left to right, using his spirituality.

A faint sweetness wafted into Lumian's nostrils, leaving him disoriented. The scene felt inexplicably familiar.

…

Ryan, Leah, and Valentine stealthily approached the side of the Eternal Blazing Sun Cathedral, clutching a brownish-yellow suitcase.

Hidden in the shadows, they peered through the stained glass to see the Eternal Blazing Sun's altar transformed. They spotted Lumian bound on the left and Aurore standing on the right. They saw the padre facing the siblings, a lit grayish-white candle beneath his feet, flanked by the enigmatic black-robed man and Pierre Berry.

Valentine's fists clenched as a golden light flickered in his eyes.

Leah cast a sidelong glance at him, concerned her companion might be consumed by rage.

Fortunately, Valentine was a seasoned Purifier who had completed numerous missions. He understood what needed to be done and what to avoid.

Ryan averted his gaze and lowered his voice. "We'll move closer to the altar, shatter the glass, and launch a surprise attack. Our goal is to grab Lumian and Aurore and be out of the village within a minute.

"If we don't achieve our objective in that time, abort the mission and flee to the river. Trigger the loop proactively."

"Alright," Valentine and Leah murmured in hushed tones, each nodding in agreement.

Ryan added, "Valentine, ready Sunlight. We can't hold back any longer. We have to deploy 2-217 now."

"No problem," Valentine responded as Leah retrieved a box of matches.

She manipulated the silver bell on her veil and boots, sprinting around Cordu's square at breakneck speed while tossing matches at various points.

This marked a predetermined escape route.

Magicians didn't perform unprepared.

Once Leah had completed her task, the trio of official investigators cautiously circled beneath the stained glass to the side of the altar.

Valentine peered inside and told Ryan, “The ritual is about to commence. We must act now.”

Ryan, also observing the cathedral’s interior, furrowed his brow and asked, “Did you notice anything off?”

Leah hastily replayed the scene she had just witnessed in her mind, replying with apprehension, “I can’t hear anything from inside!”

They were a mere three meters from the closest villagers, yet they couldn’t discern any sound emanating from within. The villagers were clearly engaged in animated conversation!

Ryan’s eyes narrowed, and a suspicion instantly took shape in his mind.

…

He stood up and rammed into the stained-glass window before him, disregarding that the cultists inside the cathedral might discover his presence.

Clangs echoed as the delicate glass remained unbroken, but the villagers within the cathedral seemed oblivious to the chaos outside.

As Ryan summoned the Dawn Armor and Sword of Dawn, Leah sprinted in circles outside the window.

This time, not a single deliberately uncontrolled silver bell jingled.

From Leah’s perspective, this implied there was no danger; yet, how could there be no threat emanating from the cathedral?

Thus, she concluded that the correct answer was: The situation was extremely dangerous!

It was so dangerous that the silver bell Sealed Artifacts were utterly disrupted or dared not react!

Bang!

The Sword of Dawn, forged from light, struck a pane of stained glass

but failed to have any impact. It seemed as if the entire cathedral was shrouded by an invisible, terrifying force that barred outsiders from entry.

A brilliant pillar of light, encircled by flames, descended from the sky as Valentine spread his arms. However, it didn't appear inside the cathedral as he had anticipated. Instead, it landed outside the stained glass, causing ripples.

It appeared that the interior and exterior were entirely isolated.

...

Ryan made a quick decision and said to Valentine and Leah, "Let's try the Sealed Artifact. If it doesn't work, we'll leave the village to trigger the loop."

Ryan didn't suggest immediate retreat because he hoped to barge in and save Lumian and Aurore. He suspected that once the ritual truly began, the loop might be affected. In that case, they wouldn't be able to leave Cordu or restart everything there.

Wasting no time, Valentine summoned the illusory golden flames.

With two pops, Ryan opened the suitcase and retrieved the Tanago Scarecrow, its skin already half-covered.

He pressed the Scarecrow's front against the stained glass and untied the thick black cloth.

A pair of human-like eyes appeared on 2-217's face, devoid of emotion and embedded within the brownish-green straw.

The eyes swiveled and locked onto Pons Bénet, standing at the edge of the altar.

The villain froze, then bolted toward the window.

As he ran, his body vanished, leaving his clothes to flutter to the ground and cover his leather shoes.

A piece of skin-covered flesh emerged on the Tanago Scarecrow's

neck, fusing with the stalk below.

“It works!” Ryan and the others exclaimed, elated.

This meant that breaking into the cathedral wasn’t impossible, and the altar’s protection was not impregnable!

…

“The horoscope is about to change!”

“It’s finally happening!”

“…”

Amidst the villagers’ uproar and the surrounding scent of gray amber, cloves, musk, and tulips, Lumian experienced an uncanny sense of déjà vu. Relying on Dancer’s flexibility, he forced his upper body up despite being bound.

The next second, he saw the padre open his mouth and shout in ancient Hermes, “The mighty Circle of Inevitability!”

As soon as the words left his lips, darkness enveloped the cathedral’s interior, and the villagers fell silent.

The orange flames on the three candles were reduced to the size of pepper granules, now tainted silver and black.

Lumian’s mind buzzed as the familiar burning sensation ignited in his chest.

His vision blurred, and the vacant-eyed Aurore, the solemn-looking padre, and the hooded black-robed man appeared before him in layers beneath the dazzling gold dome.

A sharp pain stabbed at his head, as if something was being yanked from the depths of his memory. It felt eerily similar to the scene unfolding before him.

The sense of familiarity and déjà vu surged within Lumian’s heart, dozens or even hundreds of times stronger than before.

Thump, thump!

He could hear his heart pounding.

Chapter 107 - 107 Shattering

107 Shattering

Thump, thump!

Lumian felt his heartbeat pounding, as images were painstakingly dragged from the depths of his memories.

His head threatened to split open. He fought against it, unwilling to continue.

Outside the stained glass, Ryan observed the ritual beginning. He tossed the Tanago Scarecrow to Leah without hesitation, signaling her to use the Sealed Artifact against the padre. He hefted the Sword of Dawn.

Beneath the golden flames, Leah and Valentine moved to another stained glass window, a half-exposed cylindrical wall separating them from Ryan.

They did this to evade the damage from the Hurricane of Light without hindering their movements. With the cathedral's "defensive capability," they believed a barrier between them would suffice. After all, Ryan would do his best to control the attack's direction.

Leah embraced the Tanago Scarecrow from behind, pressing it against the stained glass depicting St. Sith's sermon. She aimed at the altar and Guillaume Bénet, the padre leading the ritual.

On the other side, Ryan gripped the handle with both hands, plunging the Sword of Dawn into the windowsill.

The two-handed broadsword, forged from pure light, shattered and transformed into a whirlwind of razor-sharp fragments and specks of light.

The Hurricane exploded and slammed into the stained glass before him.

With a cracking sound, the entire cathedral trembled. Hairline fractures spider-webbed across the glass surface.

But it held fast.

Seeing this, Ryan summoned the minuscule particles of Sunrise Gleam, forging a massive two-handed axe.

Unable to use Hurricane of Light for now, he switched weapons.

Leah and Valentine, shielded by the protruding wall, dodged the Hurricane of Light's remnants. At that moment, the Tanago Scarecrow's gaze locked onto the priest. Its eyes, set in the brownish-green straw, reflected the white-robed figure with golden threads.

Leah noticed a faint silver light tinged with black materialize around the altar where Guillaume Bénet stood.

With a snap, the Tanago Scarecrow's eyes burst open, weeping blood-red tears.

The padre glanced over before looking away.

As two sheep "willingly" entered the altar, he intoned the incantation with calm fanaticism.

"You are the eternal cycle, the predestined destiny, the cause, the effect, and the process!"

Suddenly, the two deity-representing candles on the altar elongated to the size of a human head.

A howling wind swept through the cathedral, turning the villagers to statues. But silver-black warts emerged from their exposed faces and hands.

The silver-black light enveloping the altar rapidly spread, engulfing the entire cathedral.

The mural-filled dome became transparent. Clouds dispersed, and the crimson moon darkened to the shade of blood.

The stars on the black velvet backdrop flickered into existence, one by one, glowing with the intensity of the sun.

In an instant, night became day. The villagers stirred and murmured dreamily.

“The horoscope has changed…”

“Fortune is here…”

With three thuds, Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, who hadn’t heard but had witnessed the scene, crumpled to the ground. They writhed, wailed, and screamed in agony.

Ryan’s skin turned grayish-blue, Leah’s face appeared to teem with maggots and pulsing tendrils, and Valentine radiated a sun-like glow, from inside to out, from top to bottom.

They were on the brink of losing control.

The Tanago Scarecrow lay cast aside, trembling violently.

Lumian felt his chest burn as the terrifying voice, seemingly originating from an infinite distance and yet right beside him, echoed in his ears.

Invisible steel drills penetrated his skull, stirring his brain. Blood vessels bulged in pain, and silvery-black spots emerged beneath his skin.

An unseen force enveloped him, lifting him from the altar.

The ropes binding him and the cloth gagging him crumbled to dust and dispersed in the air.

Aurore, too, was hoisted by this invisible force, floating above the altar and facing Lumian.

His bloodshot eyes mirrored his sister’s long blonde hair, vacant

light-blue eyes, pristine and emotionless face, and the simple yet odd white robe she wore.

He recoiled, sensing a familiar déjà vu from the depths of his memories. The pain was as intense as the madness.

The surrounding scenes melded together in Lumian's mind:

The padre's solemn and fanatical expression;

The black-robed man advancing toward the altar;

Pierre Berry prostrate on the ground;

The transparent cathedral dome;

The crimson moon and constellations in the sky;

The villagers with stiff expressions, welcoming their fortune;

Aurore, her face contorted with pain…

Lumian's head spun as his body was torn apart by an invisible force, silver-black spots multiplying on his skin.

He was powerless to break free or resist effectively.

"Ah!"

Lumian screamed involuntarily as his chest was gradually pried open, casting a silvery-black light onto Aurore.

Aurore's eyes darted around, hearing the agonized cry.

Her empty gaze mirrored Lumian's swollen blood vessels, his twisted face with silver-black hues beneath the surface.

After a momentary pause, she instinctively reached out and pushed Lumian away from danger.

…

Grande Soeur… Lumian stared, dumbfounded, as Aurore shoved him

out of the altar's reach.

Suddenly, the dreadful sound in his ears vanished, and the invisible restraints on his body disappeared. The burning sensation across his skin subsided.

Yet the pain in his head remained unchanged. Deep-rooted memories were forcibly dredged up.

It was as if someone had used a hook to slowly extract his brain from his skull.

Aurore's light-blue eyes tainted with silver-black, her blank stare, her lifeless face, and her resolute, forceful actions pushing him away flashed in Lumian's mind. It was nearly identical to what he'd witnessed moments ago, but the black-robed man was missing from the background.

This amplified déjà vu led Lumian to instinctively question if something similar had happened before. He screamed in pain once more.

Bam! He plummeted to the ground after leaving the altar.

Ignoring the excruciating pain in his head and his disorientation, Lumian sprang up, prepared to seize Aurore and flee the altar with his sister.

A figure obstructed his path. The black-robed man wearing his face struck him on the right cheek, sending him sprawling to the ground.

Lumian refused to give in. With desperate courage, he rose again and lunged at the black-robed man blocking his way.

Whack!

…

The black-robed man swung his fist, and Lumian instinctively evaded.

He stood stunned for a moment before a twisted smile crept across his face. He snarled, "Why are you so damn weak? As weak as me!"

Lumian dismissed thoughts of the padre and Pierre Berry as he lunged at the black-robed man.

The man sidestepped, raising his right foot to trip Lumian's calf. Lumian didn't evade. With the terrifying flexibility of a dancer, he forced a half-turn and extended his arm to grapple his foe.

Thud! He tumbled to the ground, taking the black-robed man down with him.

The man nimbly raised his right hand, gripping Lumian's throat and delivering a brutal knee to his groin.

Lumian didn't flinch. Bloodshot eyes locked on his opponent, he clawed at the man's eyes with his right hand.

"Ah!"

The black-robed man screamed as Lumian tore out his eyeballs, blood spurting forth. Lumian instinctively curled up, nearly passing out from the agony in his lower body.

Struggling to his feet, he shot the writhing man on the ground a sinister grin.

"Come on! Let's die together! You coward! Coward!"

He lunged once more, encircling the man's neck with his arms.

At that moment, Pierre Berry, at the edge of the altar, staggered to his feet. Brandishing his axe, he sprinted to Lumian's side.

Whack!

His axe descended, only to be halted by a faint gray mist that had materialized. It failed to harm Lumian.

Pierre Berry employed two different abilities, but couldn't penetrate the gray fog's defense.

Guillaume Bénet, the priest, didn't hesitate and began reciting a prayer.

“I implore you,

“I beseech your benediction.

“I plead with you to grant me…”

Before he could finish, the scene transformed.

The constellations in the sky shifted incrementally, deviating from their original positions.

Cordu trembled violently as every house and inch of soil surged toward the cathedral.

Silently, the villagers decomposed into organs. Eyeballs, mouths, noses, hearts, fingers, and flesh…

A scant few reassembled into different people. Some appeared normal, others malformed, some missing parts, and some with extra appendages.

The majority hurtled toward the altar and Aurore.

Cracks spread across Aurore’s body, and she swiftly disintegrated into countless pieces of flesh.

Witnessing this, Lumian spiraled into despair.

Still, he refused to surrender. Seizing the black-robed man’s head, he twisted it violently, snapping his neck under the man’s horrified gaze.

Lumian rose and raced toward his sister.

But an invisible barrier surrounding Aurore obstructed his path.

Rumble!

With a muffled thud, the cathedral began to ascend. Trees, soil, and boulders from outside the village soared, accompanied by houses, furniture, and miscellaneous items.

The organs of most villagers merged with Aurore’s flesh at the altar, contorting and writhing before morphing into a colossal being.

The giant stood four to five meters tall, boasting three heads and six arms. Its entire form was composed of flesh and organ fragments, its body riddled with cracks oozing yellow pus.

The central head of the giant, filled with pain and regret, strained to gaze at Lumian.

Transparent, blood-hued tears trickled from the corners of “his” eyes.

Witnessing this, Lumian’s mind reeled as if cleaved by an axe.

His vision wavered as he “saw” the shattered cathedral, the steadily rising blood-red “peak,” the thorny “city wall” formed by distorted houses, the encircling ruins around the “peak,” and the various monsters forced to flee the area…

What… Lumian’s head throbbed with pain again.

As he watched countless tiny beams of light shoot from the giant and surrounding monsters, landing on his chest, he realized that the scenes buried deep in his memories had been entirely unearthed. They were nearly identical to what he saw now.

This is… Lumian abruptly had a hunch, and his headache worsened.

Suddenly, everything before him turned eerily illusory, with pronounced cracks appearing like broken glass.

This is! Lumian finally recalled something.

Then, he saw the black-robed man transform into a pitch-black, repulsive liquid that soared before him and seeped into his left chest.

“Ah!”

Lumian screamed in agony as his surroundings crumbled.

He snapped his eyes open and found himself lying beneath the blood-red mountain peak. The encroaching darkness, signaling the onset of night, had nearly vanished.

Lumian instinctively sat up, leaning forward. He placed his hands on

the ground and scanned his surroundings.

He saw a twisted, thorny “wall,” a barren landscape devoid of vegetation, and the dream ruins beyond. He spotted Ryan, Leah, and Valentine lying at the edge of a room not far away.

They were sound asleep.

Lumian abruptly bowed his head, raised his hands, grasped his hair, and whispered in anguish, “Is reality a dream, and the dream reality? Is this the present or the past? Aurore. Is Aurore beyond saving?”

“Yes.” A woman’s voice echoed in the ruins.

Lumian looked up, bewildered, and faintly saw the enigmatic woman appear before him.

She approached, wearing the orange dress she’d donned at the beginning.

“That’s why you were so desperate to obtain superpowers in your dream, regardless of the consequences. That’s why you disregarded others’ lives and even your own. You wanted to resolve the loop embodying the concept of a ‘problem’ as quickly as possible. That’s why you couldn’t control your instincts and uttered inappropriate words or performed inappropriate actions on certain occasions…”
Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Lumian gazed at the mysterious woman, dazed, realizing that the indescribable and inexplicable emotion in her eyes had resurfaced.

This time, he could finally decipher it.

It was pity.

Chapter 108 - 108 Report

108 Report

Several days later, an investigation report on Cordu Village was submitted to Intis Intelligence and Homeland Security Committee's Bureau 8, the Machinery Hivemind of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, and the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Inquisition.

Upon receipt, the brass immediately reviewed the report.

Background: Over the past year, numerous disappearances have occurred in the Feynapotter Kingdom's Grabaka Province, near the Dariège region, and in the Lenburg Republic's Upper Hel state. Several Beyonders without official permission have mysteriously vanished, and these incidents seem to be connected to shepherds traveling across the three regions. Among them, those from Cordu Village became our primary focus.

Consequently, after receiving an unusual distress letter, we prioritized the mobilization of elite personnel and dispatched them as a joint investigation team.

The investigators' complete written statements are as follows:

The anomaly in Cordu Village can be categorized into two levels: reality and dreamscape.

Reality:

Cordu was ultimately destroyed by a large-scale but unsuccessful evil god sacrificial ritual. Only a small number of villagers survived.

Most villagers were utilized as nutrients for the failed creation of an evil god. The remaining individuals were reassembled in peculiar

ways and transformed into various monsters.

The evil god sacrificial ritual altered the landscape. The river dried up and changed course. The village square and cathedral were elevated nearly 40 meters by a small-scale orogeny, forming a blood-colored pillar.

The failed evil god creation was located atop the pillar. However, when we discovered it, it had already been destroyed, potentially by self-destruction or interference from other factions.

Cordu's houses also underwent reassembly. Some formed a twisted, thorny city wall around the blood-colored pillar, while others were arranged in circular patterns…

In these severely damaged buildings, we found only a few coins and the most common livre bleu. We did not find any written information or anything that could clearly identify Cordu. The reason remains unknown.

Only the house of Lumian Lee—the target—contained books, newspapers, magazines, and other items that clearly identified it.

Within the ruins of Cordu, there are two abnormal areas surrounding the blood-colored pillar. One can induce a deep slumber, leading to a dreamscape, while the other is teeming with life, filled with flowers and trees, and features a self-rocking crib.

Our assumption regarding the latter area is that it is closely related to Madame Pualis of Cordu. (For a detailed explanation, refer to the Dreamscape section.)

At the other edge of the blood-colored pillar, we unearthed four relatively well-preserved corpses. The location likely corresponds to the original cathedral cemetery.

The first corpse was a woman, no more than twenty years old, who had been strangled to death.

The second corpse was a young man, also no more than twenty years old, who had drowned.

The third corpse was surrounded by coffin fragments. Female, over 60 years old, and died of mechanical asphyxiation. Based on other evidence, we speculate that she was suffocated with a pillow.

The fourth corpse was male and had not decomposed. His tongue had been severed while he was alive, and there were visible ligature marks on his neck.

Relevant speculations about the aforementioned corpses can be found in the Dreamscape section.

…

Upon entering the ruins of Cordu, we were likely affected by the power emanating from Lumian Lee's body. Our memories of the date became disordered, and the thought of leaving ceased to occur to us.

One by one, we fell asleep. While in the dream state, our bodies maintained a weak level of activity, eliminating the need for food replenishment for several days. Had we remained in this state for another half a month, it is uncertain whether we would have awoken from hunger or perished within the dream.

The entire ruin is locked in a loop capable of reverting to its original state at any moment. The trigger point is most likely tied to Lumian Lee's self-awareness and the restrictions he imposes. The former refers to the inevitable restart if Lumian Lee's subconscious anticipates it, while the latter stems from his desire to prevent anyone from disrupting Cordu's current state and the development of the dream. Any relevant event would immediately trigger a restart.

…

We inquired with villagers from surrounding areas, but they reported no abnormalities concerning Cordu.

Through their responses and previously gathered information, we confirmed three points:

First, there was never a legend of a deceased Warlock in Cordu (this refers to a story told by Lumian Lee in the dreamscape: Once, a Warlock lived in Cordu. After his death, an owl perched on his bed

head for a time before flying away. The Warlock's corpse grew heavy, requiring nine bulls to transport it);

Second, no elves suspected of being in the form of lizards have appeared in the Dariège area.

Third, Lent is traditional folklore and had no issues originally.

…

Dreamscape:

The dreamscape originated from Lumian Lee and is so realistic that we couldn't discern that we were dreaming.

We consulted psychologists and dream experts and synthesized their opinions to form a hypothesis about this dream.

It is an amalgamation of Lumian Lee's personal experiences, all the novels he has read, and his assumptions and conjectures based on previous events. The dream exhibits obvious coincidences and characteristics of wish fulfillment at certain critical junctures.

Within this dreamscape, not all the situations we encountered were real, nor were they entirely fabricated.

Disorganized facts, the minutiae of daily interactions, and the illusory scenes that left a profound impact on Lumian Lee were reassembled in a chaotic and symbolic manner, presenting themselves to us.

This is both a characteristic of the dreamscape and a manifestation of Lumian Lee's subconscious avoidance or fear of certain issues.

Moving forward, we will provide a detailed account of every aspect of our experience:

…

We ought to have realized that we were in a dream earlier on. The most evident clue was that we did not recall needing to change our clothes until Lumian Lee reminded us that our garments were severely damaged.

Though this is quite unusual, humans tend not to think critically within dreams.

It has been confirmed that we did not send telegrams. The corresponding responses may have originated from Lumian Lee's subconscious and the knowledge he possesses.

By combining the events in the dream with the situation in reality, we have arrived at the following conjectures:

Our consciousness and knowledge, to some extent, enriched the dream, and we may have inadvertently exposed some of our secrets to Lumian Lee. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

There are at least two distinct evil god faiths in Cordu. One represents a power akin to Earth Mother's, embodied by Administrator Béost's wife, Madame Pualis. The other is the one followed by Guillaume Bénet, the former padre, and the majority of the villagers. The latter faith ultimately led to Cordu's destruction.

During the Lent celebration, the Spring Elf's beheading and send-off symbolized driving the force representing Madame Pualis out of Cordu. There may have been a violent conflict between the two factions. Simultaneously, the decapitation of Ava Lizier, the personification of the Spring Elf, symbolized that this girl had discovered something amiss in reality. When she attempted to escape or inform others, she was clandestinely strangled to death by Guillaume Bénet's group.

Reimund Greg was thrown into the river. The appearance of his Spirit Body beneath the cathedral symbolizes that, like Ava, he was deemed a snitch and subsequently drowned.

Jean Maury discovered that his wife, Sybil, had an affair with the former padre. In a fit of rage, he became mute. This symbolized that as a devout follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun, his tongue was cut off when he tried to inform others about the village's abnormalities. His subsequent disappearance implied that he had been murdered.

Naroka's death shares the same potent symbolism as Ava, Reimund,

and Jean. First, she must have covertly followed Madame Pualis, intending to allow her deceased husband's spirit to return home through the aid of the soul messenger. Thus, her post-death behavior was to enter Paramita. Second, it is highly likely that she was killed by her youngest son, Arnault André, likely because she had discovered the issue with Guillaume Bénet's group and wanted to inform Madame Pualis.

Based on our search of the ruins, the Lent celebration, and Madame Pualis's claim that she could depart at a specific moment, it is implied that she, her husband Béost, butler Louis Lund, and lady's maid Cathy left Cordu before the ritual on the twelfth night. They remain alive, and their whereabouts are unknown.

This is reflected in the dream by the lady's refusal to assist at critical moments.

…

However, considering the circumstances in the peculiar area teeming with vitality, we suspect that Madame Pualis left something behind before her departure and indirectly participated in the ritual on the twelfth night.

The black-robed man in the Warlock's tomb likely symbolizes Lumian Lee's mutated persona due to his corruption. However, for some reason, Lumian Lee did not appear to be deeply corrupted, enabling him to easily triumph during the skirmish, given his increased courage…

The bizarre lizard-like creature found in the mouths of Aurore Lee, Michel Garrigue, and others might symbolize their corruption and mutation, eventually transforming them into an alternate version of themselves.

…

Questions:

1. How is Lumian Lee aware of the abilities of Guillaume Bénet, Pierre Berry, and others? If he had secretly observed them in reality,

it would be understandable if he remained undetected once or twice. There must be an inherent reason why he could obtain so much information without facing consequences.

2. Why did the villagers and Aurore Lee behave indistinguishably from real people, making it challenging for us to recognize that we were in a dream until Lumian Lee believed that something abnormal should have occurred to them?

3. What does Paramita symbolize?

4. What do Madame Pualis's numerous children in the castle and the crib with an invisible object represent?

5. Why did Lumian Lee use lizard-like elves to portray the villagers' corruption?

6. What do Lumian Lee and Aurore Lee's attempts to escape Cordu and enter Paramita signify?

...

7. Why did the ritual on the twelfth night fail?

8. How can Lumian Lee enable us to enter his dream? He evidently lacks the ability to do so.

9. Why did he suddenly acquire normal Beyonder powers?

10. How did he survive and cause the ruins of Cordu to enter a loop?

11. Aurore Lee's abnormalities occurred at entirely different times during the two cycles. What does this indicate?

12. What does the legend of the deceased Warlock symbolize?

13. What does the Warlock's corpse in the coffin in the underground tomb represent?

14. What does the owl symbolize?

15. What does the change in the horoscope signify?

16. What is the origin of the matter?

…

Conclusions and Recommendations:

This is a quintessential disaster resulting from the worship of an evil god. Currently, six known survivors exist:

Lumian Lee, former padre Guillaume Bénet, Pualis de Roquefort, Béost, Louis Lund, and Cathy.

The latter five are adherents of evil gods. We must locate and eliminate them as soon as possible.

Directly killing Lumian Lee is not advised. Until his issues are understood and resolved, his death might trigger an even more severe anomaly. The optimal solution is to capture and securely contain him.

Reporters: Ryan Vitia of Machinery Hivemind; Major Leah Bellot of Bureau 8; and Purifier Valentine de Lacourt of the Inquisition.

Chapter 109 - 109 Minute Hope

109 Minute Hope

Days earlier, beneath the crimson “peak,” adjacent to the warped “city wall.”

Lumian knelt on the ground, gazing up at the enigmatic woman as she approached.

Her words echoed in his ears, only to gradually grow muffled.

Lumian’s hands pressed against the ground, clenching the soil as if attempting to crush it into liquid.

!!

As the mysterious woman halted about a meter away, he scrambled to his feet, anxiety gripping his voice, “Didn’t you say there’s still hope? Didn’t you claim Aurore and the others could be saved if I broke out of the loop myself?”

His voice grew hoarser with each word.

The enigmatic woman remained silent, her eyes filled with pity as she gazed at him.

Lumian hesitated before asking, hope lacing his words, “There’s still hope, right?

“That’s not just a fleeting dream. During my discussion with Aurore, she spoke of things I had never heard of—like how the description of an honorific name can hint at two separate entities!”

His eyes locked onto the woman, fear and hope battling as he scrutinized her every move.

At last, she nodded.

“There is indeed hope.”

Lumian’s eyes brightened, waiting for her to elaborate.

In a gentle voice, the woman explained, “In truth, Aurore has already died, but mystically, she’s not entirely gone.

“Do you recall the soft, faint sounds you hear from within your body each time you perform the Summoning Dance? Do you remember the light fragments from Aurore and the others that flew into your chest on the twelfth night ritual?”

“Are those their Spirit Bodies, their voices?” Lumian interrupted, eagerness filling his voice.

The woman responded, a mix of calm and pity, “They can only be considered soul fragments.

“At the end of the twelfth night, you became a conduit for the hidden entity to unleash its horrifying power. The surrounding believers, including the soul fragments of the sacrifice, were absorbed by you. Guillaume Bénet, who led the ritual, was the sole exception.

“Later, those soul fragments and the potent corruptive power were sealed in the left side of your chest by my lord.

“That’s why, as you became increasingly ‘awake’ in your dreams and sensed the date and loop more clearly, Aurore and the other villagers seem more and more lifelike. They even displayed a degree of self-awareness and cognition.

“To truly awaken from the dream and restrain the looping power consuming the ruins, you had to rely on yourself. You had to find the courage to confront the pain, face the truth, and chase after the elusive hope.

“If I were to resolve it, there’s only one option: to completely annihilate you and the ruins of Cordu. Otherwise, the corruption within you will seep out uncontrollably, and Aurore and the others will truly perish in the realm of mysticism.”

As the mysterious woman mentioned the twelfth-night ritual, Lumian couldn't help but remember.

A sharp pain stabbed his head, and only a few images surfaced.

Aurore, with vacant eyes, shoved him away from the altar.

Beams of light burst from Aurore and the villagers, spiraling into the vortex on his chest.

Guillaume Bénet, the padre, revealed a shocked expression as he fled the altar.

Beyond that, Lumian couldn't recall anything else. Only the events within the dream were clear, as if some force prevented him from remembering the rest.

His face contorted, his body trembling.

"I-I can't remember much…"

The woman nodded.

"That's normal. Firstly, it's a subconscious self-protection to prevent an overload of painful memories and intense scenes from causing you to collapse and lose control. Secondly, there are things you haven't witnessed and don't know the truth about. I don't know either.

"Yes, I'll need you to do something in Trier eventually. There are one, no, two exceptional psychologists I know there. I can arrange an appointment for you and see who's available to treat you. They can help you remember more and reconstruct the events in Cordu as much as possible."

Lumian's emotions roiled as he listened, but all he could muster was a soft, "Thank you…"

Fists clenched, he asked anxiously, "Then what can I do to bring Aurore and the others back?"

The woman sighed, admitting, "I don't know either."

Seeing Lumian's eyes darken, she added, "But you have to believe that true miracles exist in this world.

"And the great existence I mentioned earlier is synonymous with Miracle."

Despair and hope swelled in Lumian's heart.

Though he knew the mysterious woman before him was likely offering comfort and hope, he couldn't help but say, "You said that once I unlocked the secret of the dream, you'd tell me the honorific name of that great existence."

Her expression grew solemn, her tone serious.

"I'll tell you now. Remember it well.

"His honorific name is: The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

As she spoke, Lumian felt his consciousness slipping, as if he could see a thin gray fog and a looming castle above it.

A gaze weighed upon him.

Simultaneously, the entire village of Cordu shuddered as the thin fog engulfing the area receded rapidly.

By the time Lumian regained clarity, sunlight had already filtered through the sky, casting golden specks upon the crimson mountain peak and desolate earth.

Lumian recalled the three lines of the honorific name and his conversation with Aurore in his dream.

He winced, a bitter smile forming as he said, "I thought there'd be a description of the past, present, and future."

The enigmatic woman in the orange dress tersely acknowledged his remark.

“There should be another one in the future, but if I use a description other than the three lines to pray to Him now, I can’t guarantee the response will be from Him.

“You should know that such a situation is very dangerous.”

Silent for a few seconds, Lumian then asked, a glint of hope in his eyes, “If I work diligently for you, can I eventually summon that great being to resurrect Aurore?”

“That’s one way,” the woman said softly. “You can also explore other methods. I won’t stop you. I’m merely reminding you that many resurrection techniques have grave flaws.”

…

Lumian nodded, signaling his understanding.

He didn’t dare to inquire, yet couldn’t help but ask, “Is there a significant chance of resurrection?”

The enigmatic woman glanced at him and sighed.

“It’s very, very slim, but I know you’ll still pursue it.”

Lumian pressed his lips together, remaining silent.

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to assure her he’d do everything in his power to find a way to bring Aurore back, but he feared that speaking would reveal the sorrow surging within his heart.

After a few seconds, he asked in a raspy voice, “What do you need me to do in Trier?”

“Join a covert organization and help me gather some intel,” the woman replied simply. “I’ll tell you how to contact them once you’re in Trier.”

She added, “Besides uncovering the truth from your memories, you can also look into the ‘survivors’ of this catastrophe.”

“Survivors?” Lumian’s eyes narrowed.

The woman nodded.

…

“Besides you, there are five others: Madame Pualis, Béost, Louis Lund, Cathy, who left Cordu before the twelfth night, and Guillaume Bénet, who was protected by the ritual as its host. They escaped before this place was completely destroyed.”

“The padre is still alive?” Lumian’s lips curled up.

The enigmatic lady locked eyes with him and said, “If my divination is accurate, they should be hiding somewhere in Trier.”

“Very good.” Lumian smiled, wiping the corners of his eyes.

The woman then looked at Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, who slept near the room’s edge on the thorny city wall, and asked Lumian, “What do you plan to do with them?

“If they leave alive, you’ll undoubtedly be hunted by Bureau 8, Machinery Hivemind, and the Inquisition.

“From now on, you can only hide. You’ll never live openly under the sun. You’ll be forever accompanied by darkness, filth, and danger.”

Lumian glanced at Ryan and the others, chuckling hoarsely.

“Will killing them bring Aurore back?”

The woman shook her head.

“No.”

Lumian scoffed, bowing his head with his eyes closed.

Soon, he looked up and asked, “What’s the name of the organization I’m about to join? How should I contact you once I’m in Trier?”

The woman sighed faintly.

“I’ll tell you when the time comes.

“I’ll give you my messenger’s summoning method and the corresponding medium later. Contact me through that.”

Lumian fell quiet for a moment before posing another question. “Did I possess the power to trap Cordu in a loop?”

“Strictly speaking, you didn’t. At least not before receiving the Circle Inhabitant boon,” the woman explained casually. “This place is corrupted by that hidden being everywhere, and the power level sealed in your left chest is quite high. Therefore, when your emotions fluctuate and you’re in a subconscious state, you can mobilize the corresponding specialness to reset this place.” She paused, adding, “However, you’ve always been physically in a loop.

“The corruption sealed within your body allows you to reset your form at 6 a.m. every day and return to 6 a.m. on the twelfth night. Only changes brought about by Beyonder characteristics and boons are retained.”

Is this the real reason why I recover every time I wake up from injuries in the ruins? No wonder I didn’t starve to death… Lumian immediately understood.

He glanced at his body, a self-deprecating smile forming.

“It’ll always be that day…”

That nightmarish day.

Without waiting for the woman’s response, he looked up and asked, “How should I address you?”

She smiled, beginning to reply, “You can call me…”

Before she could finish, cards suddenly danced in the air.

Each card bore a unique pattern, fluttering towards Lumian.

Instinctively, Lumian extended his right hand, attempting to catch some of the cards.

At that moment, most of the cards vanished, leaving just one.

The card gently settled in Lumian's palm, face-up. It depicted a figure extending their scepter into the sky and pointing at the ground with their left hand.

Tarot card—Magician!

Lumian glanced up in shock, realizing the enigmatic woman had disappeared.

Should I call her Madam Magician? Lumian subconsciously flipped the tarot card in his hand, revealing rows of minute Intis script:

"The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, an upper world creature that is friendly to humans, a messenger that belongs solely to Magician."

Lumian studied the words for a moment before tucking the tarot card away.

He glanced at Ryan and the others, then turned around and staggered away from the area.

As he walked, Lumian couldn't help but look back at the blood-stained mountain peak and the twisted, thorny city wall.

The Cordu in his memory had already morphed into this. It bore no resemblance to what it once was, but Lumian still tried his best to observe and search, hoping to overlap the scene in his mind with reality.

He wanted to take another look at the giant atop the mountain, but he knew that it would cause him grave harm.

Unwittingly, Lumian slowly circled the blood-stained mountain peak and thorny city wall, his gaze constantly scanning the distorted and chaotic objects.

He knew what he was looking for, and he knew he would never find it.

Just like that, Lumian arrived at the spot where the wooden wall had blocked him.

Most of the area had collapsed, revealing the garden behind it.

The garden was lush and vibrant, a stark contrast to the blood-stained “peak,” the warped “city wall,” and the ruins on the other side.

In the center was a brown wooden crib, reminiscent of the one Lumian had seen in Madame Pualis’s castle.

He subconsciously leaned over and realized that there was a small human-shaped indentation on the slightly aged white cotton swaddling cloth in the crib. It was as if a baby had once lain here, but its whereabouts were now unknown.

What does this mean? Just as this thought crossed Lumian’s mind, he felt the sunlight shining down from the sky grow much brighter.

He instinctively looked up and saw golden flames completely engulfing the mountaintop.

The three-headed, six-armed giant loomed in the inferno, seemingly melting.

Lumian stared blankly for a few seconds before suddenly raising his hands to shield his face.

The “sunlight” was too intense.

…

In the semi-subterranean two-story building at the edge of the ruins.

Lumian trudged to his sister’s bedroom with the 237 verl d’or and 46 coppet he had collected. He grabbed a brown suitcase filled with clothes and memorabilia and pushed open the door. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

He was here to say goodbye.

As soon as he stepped in and saw the desk with the manuscripts, his head throbbed as an image surfaced.

Aurore's eyes darted around, no longer vacant. She looked at Lumian, who had been pushed away, and said with difficulty,

"My notebook…"

Grande Soeur's witchcraft notebook? Is there important information in it? Lumian pressed his forehead, walked to the desk, and opened the drawer below.

Familiar dark notebooks greeted his eyes.

He suddenly remembered that Aurore had taught him a great deal of mysticism knowledge before Cordu was destroyed.

…

In Dariège, at the steam locomotive station.

The ticket agent eyed Lumian and asked, "Where are your identification documents?"

"I forgot," replied Lumian, clad in a linen shirt, a dark jacket, and a round-rimmed black hat, as he held a brown suitcase.

He then turned and walked away from the window.

A short man in a half-top hat and black suit approached Lumian, whispering, "Do you want to take the courier carriage? It's headed for Bigorre."

"Does it require identification?" Lumian inquired.

The short man chuckled, responding, "No need. Our business is about to be crushed by the steam locomotive. Why would we need identification documents?

"So, are you taking it or not? This is the last remnant of romance from the classical era!"

Lumian gave a slight nod and asked, "How much?"

The short man's enthusiasm flared.

“20 verl d’or to Bigorre, takes about a day. There are five stops in between. Each stop allows for a rest, changing carriage drivers and horses. Two of the stops also provide free food.”

Without further questions, Lumian followed the short man to a deserted street nearby.

A large carriage drawn by four horses was parked at the roadside.

Upon boarding, Lumian discovered the interior was rather spacious. Like the public carriage, it had two rows separated by an aisle, as well as space for larger luggage.

He found a seat by the window, placed his suitcase down, and pulled out a book with a dark red cover.

As the horses neighed outside, Lumian flipped through the book, illuminated by sunlight streaming through the window.

Beside him sat a man in his thirties with a well-groomed mustache, brown hair, blue eyes, and smart attire.

He glanced at the book in Lumian’s hand, asking with interest, “Eternal Love? Aurore Lee’s book? The one featuring the female lead named Kingsley and the male lead named Ciel?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded.

The mustached man became chatty.

“This book is Aurore Lee’s earliest work. The writing was quite amateurish, particularly the dialogue between characters. It doesn’t sound like something people would say in real life at all. It’s so emotional, it’s uncomfortable.”

“Indeed.” Lumian nodded again.

He bowed his head and flipped to the last few pages of the book, his gaze resting on the relevant passage.

“On her deathbed, Kingsley clutched Ciel’s outstretched hand and gazed at his anguished expression. She forced a smile and said with

difficulty, ‘Stupid, live well.’”

(End of Part 1—Nightmare)

Chapter 110 - 110 Foreigner

110 Foreigner

For you are dust, and to dust you shall return—From the Bible, Genesis 3:

The imposing grayish-white city wall, rising to a height of three meters, loomed before Lumian, stretching as far as the eye could see.

A multitude of private carriages, four-seaters, open tops, tandems, and cargo carriers queued, awaiting entry through the city gate.

Blue-uniformed tax collectors and white-shirted, black-vested police officers inspected each carriage methodically. Occasionally, they would demand identification or order pedestrians to open their suitcases.

!!

Lumian, clutching his brown suitcase, scanned the scene, casting furtive glances as he sought a way to bypass the checkpoint.

Before long, a man who had observed his behavior approached.

“What’s the matter, friend? You look a bit uneasy.” The man was somewhat shorter than Lumian but twice as broad. His cheeks were plump, causing his blue eyes to appear minuscule. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

As he neared, Lumian caught a whiff of sweat mingled with cheap cologne, prompting him to wrinkle his nose in distaste.

Lumian gestured toward the gates, puzzled, and inquired, “What’s all this for? Are they searching for criminals? Why screen those entering Trier and not the ones leaving?”

The disheveled, blond-haired man in a billowy blue shirt appraised Lumian.

“My friend, are you from some small city or village?”

Upon seeing Lumian nod, the man sighed and explained, “They’re collecting taxes! Tariffs!”

“Tariffs for entering Trier?” Lumian asked.

The man nodded.

“Exactly. This city wall encircles Trier. There are 54 gates, each manned by tax collectors and police. They also apprehend wanted criminals.”

“Are all goods taxed?” Lumian inquired, curiosity piqued.

The man touched his blue canvas shirt and replied, “Almost everything; only grains and flour are exempt.

“Once upon a time they were, but after the war a few years back, the price of bread in Trier skyrocketed, inciting riots and protests. Eventually, the government abolished tariffs on all food.

“Ah, if only drinkers were as bold! Liquor, wine, and champagne are taxed the most. Many people venture to the suburbs on weekends to drink tax-free alcohol at small taverns. They call it ‘town-hopping.’”

“Interesting…” Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

The man glanced around and lowered his voice.

“If you want to avoid the tariffs, I can help you into the city. All you have to do is pay me a small fee.”

“You mean bribe them?” Lumian gestured with his chin at the tax collector and police near the city gate.

The man snorted.

“Their greed is greater than an elephant’s appetite. I’ll show you a

path into the city without checkpoints."

"But isn't Trier completely surrounded by walls?" Lumian didn't conceal his bafflement.

The man grinned.

"You'll see soon enough." Then he teased, "Noble sir, do you require my assistance?"

Lumian considered for a moment before asking, "How much will it cost?"

"Three verl d'or," the man replied with a congenial smile. "If you agree, we can depart immediately. You can pay once we're inside the city."

"Deal." Lumian adjusted his dark wide-brimmed hat, picked up his brown suitcase, and followed the rotund man away from the city gate.

Fifteen minutes later, they arrived at a hill blanketed in vegetation and soil, with grayish-white stones peeking through.

Scaffolding, decaying pillowwood, and numerous pits were scattered about. It appeared to be an abandoned mine.

The rotund man guided Lumian through heaps of jumbled rocks to the entrance of a mine.

"Is this the shortcut?" Lumian asked cautiously.

The portly man in the blue shirt chuckled.

"You really don't know much about Trier.

"Ever heard the saying that Underground Trier is even larger than the Trier above ground?!"

"No." Lumian shook his head.

The man elucidated, "Trier used to be much smaller. It was

surrounded by quarries that supplied stone for building the city. As the population swelled, the city had to expand outward, enveloping these quarries. As a result, the ground became riddled with holes and mine tunnels.

“Add to that the portion of Trier that sank underground in the Fourth Epoch, plus the sewers, subways, and gas pipes installed by the government—aren’t these more extensive than what’s on the surface?”

Lumian’s eyes widened in understanding.

“Are you taking me into the city through Underground Trier?”

“Yes.” The man turned, stooped, and entered the mine. He casually inquired, “What should I call you?”

“Ciel.” Lumian brushed back the golden hair at his temples. “And you?”

“Just call me Ramayes.” The burly man rummaged through a pile of stones in the mine’s corner and unearthed an iron-black lantern.

Clearly made of metal, the rusted lantern was cylindrical, with the upper section slightly narrower than the lower. A black rubber lining encircled its base.

At the junction of the narrow and wide cylinders, a polished trumpet-shaped metal piece was embedded, though a few rust spots remained.

Ramayes produced a matchbox, fiddled with it briefly, and an orange flame tinged with blue erupted from the metal trumpet, illuminating the mine’s depths.

“What’s this?” Lumian asked, puzzled.

Holding the iron-black lamp, Ramayes ventured underground, chattering.

“Carbide lamp.

“Invented by the Cave Association. Many miners use it. I don’t know

why it glows, but I just need to put some rocks and water in, attach them top and bottom, and when needed, press here and ignite the mouth with flames."

Carbide and water react to form acetylene, which burns and emits light? Lumian recalled the chemistry he'd studied a few months prior.

...

He remained silent for a time as he followed Ramayes underground along a disused mine tunnel. Then he inquired, "The Cave Association?"

"Trier Cave Association. Formed by a group of spelunking enthusiasts. Nowadays, they seem to be involved with the mines." Ramayes turned to Lumian, walking beside him, and asked with a grin, "Why didn't you just take the steam locomotive into Trier? The train station checkpoints aren't that strict. They just do spot checks."

Lumian reminisced and replied, "I wanted to experience the last vestiges of romance from the classical era."

"A courier carriage?" Ramayes chortled. "That's far pricier than a steam locomotive. Your accent gives you away as from the Reem or Riston region. The journey from the south to Trier runs about 120 verl d'or, doesn't it? And it takes four and a half days! On a steam locomotive, you'd pay less than 50 verl d'or for a third-class seat and arrive in under 20 hours. So, the last bit of romance from the classical era, you say? Sounds more like a con job for folks like you. You must've shelled out a pretty penny, huh?"

Lumian responded candidly, "A fair amount. I've only got 267 verl d'or left."

Ramayes glanced at him once more and averted his eyes.

What a waste…

Clutching the carbide lamp, he traversed an archway and veered into another passage bathed in the orange-yellow glow cast by the lamp's flame.

Lumian glanced up and noticed rocks nestled in the darkness overhead, adorned with moss that wept droplets of water.

The path underfoot was pockmarked with holes, and stone pillars flanked both sides, supporting the cave's ceiling.

Stones and various objects were heaped between the pillars, creating a "street" wide enough for six or seven people to walk abreast.

...

Under the carbide lamp's illumination, a steel nameplate affixed to a stone pillar came into view. Inscribed on it in Intis: "Rue à Droite."

"There's a street name down here?" Lumian queried, puzzled.

Gripping the carbide lamp, Ramayes chuckled and replied, "Didn't I tell you? This is Underground Trier.

"In fact, it was constructed decades ago during city renovations. The brass deemed the underground too chaotic, a veritable labyrinth. Rioters, murderers, smugglers, and cultists all found refuge here, and something had to be done. Additionally, numerous houses had crumbled and sunk due to the underground quarries. Reinforcement was necessary. So, City Hall spent nearly a decade repairing pillars, constructing foundations, and connecting the previously isolated quarries, subterranean ruins, catacombs, and sewers.

"To prevent workers from getting lost, the underground streets were named to correspond with those above during the renovations. Roads, squares, and alleys were recreated down here, and nameplates were hung, marking the streets. If future repairs were needed, the names could just be referenced."

"In other words," Lumian gestured overhead with his free hand. "The real Rue à Droite is just above us?"

"Yes." Ramayes pressed on. "This is Underground Trier. There's an anti-smuggling wall up ahead. Quarry police often patrol the area, but don't fret. I'll guide you through a small tunnel. Heh, the brass, with their phony collars and lies, believe they can manage Underground Trier like they do above ground, but they're only aware

of half the entrances and modified routes…”

As he spoke, he led Lumian to a dead end and located a narrow crevice to crawl through. Lumian trailed closely.

Two or three minutes later, they emerged from the small tunnel. Before them stood a “wall” composed of stone pillars and a “street” wedged between.

Just then, a burly figure appeared beside the stone pillar, holding a carbide lamp, and addressed Ramayes, “Is this our customer?”

Ramayes spun around and grinned at Lumian.

“Foreigner, I’ve changed my mind. The price is 265 verl d’or. Wasn’t I generous to leave you enough for bread and a hotel tonight?”

“What if I refuse?” Lumian’s face displayed a mix of fear and defiance.

Ramayes’s chubby face quivered with laughter.

“What do you think will happen? Didn’t your mother warn you not to trust strangers too easily when you’re away from home?”

He and the burly man closed in on Lumian from opposite directions.

Lumian smiled, set down the suitcase, and advanced towards Ramayes and his accomplice.

In the flickering firelight, over ten seconds swiftly ticked by, and the carbide lamp ended up in Lumian’s possession.

Lumian crouched beside the trembling Ramayes, his face battered and swollen, and pulled all the banknotes from his wallet. In the dim orange and blue light, he counted them with grave intent.

Gently patting Ramayes’s right cheek with the wad of cash, Lumian grinned.

“Now there’s only 319 verl d’or left.”

With that, he pocketed the banknotes and strolled toward a path that appeared to lead up to the surface.

A nameplate dangled from a stone pillar, inscribed with two lines of Intisian script: “Rue du Pot de Chambre, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.”

Someone had scratched out ‘Rue du Pot de Chambre’ with a stone and scrawled a new name beside it: “Rue Anarchie.”

Chapter 111 - 111 Messenger

111 Messenger

Clutching the carbide lamp, Lumian climbed the stone steps.

Soon, light appeared ahead, accompanied by a cacophony of noise. Emerging from the silent underground, it felt as if the entire world had sprung to life.

Lumian quickened his pace, twisting the valve on the carbide lamp with his right hand, stopping the water droplets from dripping into the carbide pile below. As the acetylene gas burned out, the flames in the metal mouth gradually faded.

Just then, he caught a glimpse of the scene outside.

Tall and low buildings appeared to have solidified at the moment of collapse, either tilted or on the verge of tumbling down, but standing stubbornly.

Pedestrians wore old or tattered clothing, and arguments and curses filled the air, the noise never subsiding.

At the underground exit, Lumian spotted a five-story building called the Auberge du Coq Doré.

The top two floors of the brownish building seemed like later additions, contrasting with the Roselle-era pillar walls, arches, large windows, and patterns on the lower floors. It looked so simplistic it could’ve been transplanted from Cordu.

Lugging his suitcase and carbide lamp, Lumian navigated through children scavenging for orange peels and quarreling adults until he reached the entrance of the Auberge du Coq Doré.

He glanced at the hotel floor, littered with yellow phlegm, shredded paper, spilled ketchup, and alcohol stains. Occasionally, a horde of bedbugs would congregate on the ceiling and walls.

Had his hands been free, Lumian would have applauded the scene.

Cordu's Ol' Tavern was much cleaner than this!

He found a route devoid of filth and headed to the front desk at a moderate pace.

A plump, middle-aged woman sat there, her grayish-white dress stained with oil and her brown hair tied in a simple bun.

She looked up at Lumian with her blue eyes, unfazed by the disdain and resistance on his face.

"This is the best and cheapest inn on Rue Anarchie, in the market area. But the owner's a miser who can't bear to hire cleaning ladies. He only gets freelancers to clean it once a week."

"Does he skimp on your salary too?" Lumian asked, feigning naivete.

This set the woman off.

"Do you want a room or not?"

"Yes." Lumian quickly clarified his intent, looking frightened. "I'd like to know the price."

The woman calmed down.

"It depends on the room. The top two floors are 3 verl d'or a week, and the bottom two are 5 verl d'or. If that's too much, you can knock on doors and ask who's willing to share their bed or rent out floor space for 1 to 1.5 verl d'or a week."

"Give me a room on the lower two floors." Lumian reasoned it'd be easier to escape, whether by jumping from a window or taking the stairs.

The plump woman sized him up.

“Pay 15 verl d’or upfront for the whole month, and it’s yours.”

“Why the discount?” Lumian feigned the ignorance of a country bumpkin new to the city.

The woman sneered.

“Many people have no choice but to move or leave Trier after a week or two. This place is both heaven and hell.”

Lumian pulled out three light-blue 5 verl d’or notes and handed them over.

The currency was all in 5-verl d’or denominations, featuring the bust of Intis Republic’s first president, Levanx, along with laboring farmers and herders on the front, and the Hornacis mountain range on the back.

Upon receiving the full month’s rent, the plump woman’s expression visibly relaxed. She produced two brass keys strung together and tossed them to Lumian.

“Room 207 on the second floor. There’s a small diner downstairs and a tavern in the basement. You’ll find sulfur in the room’s table drawer to help chase away those damn bugs. My name’s Fels. If you need anything, just come to me.”

“Thank you, Madame Fels.” Lumian took the keys, grabbed his suitcase and carbide lamp, and headed upstairs to the second floor.

As he ascended, he noticed newspapers and cheap pink paper plastered on the walls, though some had already peeled away, exposing the cracks they were meant to hide and an abundance of bedbugs.

The second floor contained eight rooms and two washrooms. Each room was cramped, with a bed to the right. A table nestled between the bed’s edge and the wall sat beneath the window, a rickety chair positioned in front of it.

There was no other furniture, but rows of bedbugs crawled across the ceiling.

Having grown accustomed to Aurore's cleanliness, Lumian set down his suitcase and carbide lamp, opened the drawer, and took out some sulfur. He lit it with a match, and as the pungent smell filled the room, the bedbugs fled.

Within seconds, Lumian detected the sulfuric scent from the room next door.

Almost simultaneously, some of the bedbugs returned, seeking refuge.

He quickly understood the situation: he had smoked the bedbugs into the adjacent room, and the tenant had used sulfur to chase them back.

Amused, Lumian bent down, opened his suitcase, and took out pen and paper.

Amidst the potent sulfur smell, he sat at the wooden table and began writing. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"Honorable Madam Magician,

"I've arrived in Trier as agreed. Please advise on my next steps, which organization to join, and how to contact them…

"Are the two psychologists available soon? When can I receive treatment?

"Do you have any new leads on Guillaume Bénet and Madame Pualis…"

After penning the letter, Lumian retrieved an orange candle from his sister's room.

Lighting it with his spirituality, the scent of citrus and lavender enveloped the air.

Instinctively, he closed his eyes, his expression calming.

After standing quietly for a minute or two, Lumian used the ritual silver dagger to sanctify the candle and create a wall of spirituality. He then dripped essential oil on the flame.

With the preparations complete, he placed the Magician card on the altar, a medium for summoning a messenger to pinpoint the incantation.

Lumian stepped back, observing the misty orange fire, and muttered in ancient Hermes, “I!”

An invisible wind swirled within the spiritual wall, dimming the room.

Switching to Hermes, he continued, “I summon in my name: The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, an upper world creature that is friendly to humans, a messenger that belongs solely to Magician.”

...

As the wind howled, the candle flame turned deep blue, casting a sinister, cold atmosphere.

Lumian focused on the candle, awaiting Madam Magician’s messenger.

After a few seconds of silence, the letter on the altar floated into the air. Surprised, Lumian glanced up to find a “doll” the size of a man’s forearm perched atop the carved window.

With long blond hair, light-blue eyes, pale-white skin, and an exquisite pale-gold dress, the “doll” bore strikingly realistic yet bizarre features.

In the next second, the letter landed in the “doll’s” smooth, shiny hand that lacked any skin-like texture.

“Are you Madam Magician’s messenger?” Lumian asked.

The “doll” slowly lowered its head, Lumian’s figure reflecting in its unfocused, light-blue eyes.

Its voice, ethereal and angry, replied, “Choose a cleaner environment next time!”

With that, the “doll” vanished along with the letter.

Lumian was stunned for a moment before murmuring, “Didn’t Aurore say the altar just needed to be clean and tidy?”

As he glanced around, he noticed numerous bedbug corpses on the floor.

…

The room was now insect-free.

This is better than sulfur… Lumian stroked his chin and ended the summoning ritual.

Lumian habitually cleaned the room before squatting beside his suitcase to retrieve his toiletries.

Aurore’s dark-colored witchcraft notebooks lay undisturbed at the bottom.

During his journey to Trier, Lumian had already skimmed through them without finding anything suspicious. Aurore wasn’t one for recording her personal thoughts or daily minutiae; her witchcraft notebook was purely dedicated to mystical knowledge, filled with incantations, symbols, and principles for selecting ingredients.

Likely due to Aurore’s penchant for keeping detailed accounts, most spells included information about when and where they were obtained, their cost, or the items exchanged for them.

Lumian realized the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society likely had numerous interest groups. Aurore frequently attended ‘Academy’ gatherings, where many spells were traded among members. She also participated in exchanges with other groups, occasionally acquiring mystical knowledge and spells from events like April Fool’s Day.

Finding nothing amiss in the notebooks, Lumian resolved to continue his investigation after consulting the psychologists and locating Padre and Madame Pualis.

He knew his sister wouldn’t have mentioned the notebook without

reason at that critical juncture. There must have been an important message she wished to convey.

Gazing at the dark-covered notebooks, Lumian determined to study his sister's recorded knowledge in reverse order, starting that night.

Although using spells in combat was nearly impossible for a Hunter, understanding them could help him identify any issues with the corresponding mystical knowledge or detect abnormalities.

With his belongings packed, Lumian's stomach growled in hunger.

He stood up and glanced at the window. The dimming light of dusk allowed him to vaguely see his reflection in the glass.

His hair, now dyed blond and grown out, barely disguised his features. Dressed in a white shirt, black vest, and dark suit, his cold, indifferent expression made him appear years older. Even Guillaume Bénet would find him only vaguely familiar.

Lumian patted his face, coaxing a smile, before opening the door and stepping out.

Chapter 112 - 112 Charlie

112 Charlie

In the dimly-lit cellar of the Auberge du Coq Doré, a cozy bar had just enough space for 20 to 30 patrons.

The moment Lumian stepped in, he saw a man leap onto a small round table, beer in hand, and address the handful of customers around him,

“Ladies and gentlemen, lend me your ears! I experienced something unbelievable two days ago!”

By the scant light from the steam lamps on the wall, Lumian discerned that the man was quite young, around 22 or 23 years old. He had short, light-brown hair and a clean-shaven face, which was flushed, likely from the alcohol.

!!

Wearing a flaxen-colored shirt, black trousers, and leather slip-ons, the man stood just over 1.7 meters tall. However, his unusually short limbs made him appear closer to 1.6 meters.

Waving his stubby arms and slurring his words, he continued, “How incredible was it? I’ll tell you, it’s changed my entire perspective on faith. As a believer in the God of Steam and Machinery, I’m now ready to convert to the Eternal Blazing Sun!

“Listen up, isn’t that astonishing?

“Can you imagine how famished I was after five days? I’d lost my job and been fired by that good-for-nothing manager. I couldn’t find work even after exhausting my savings.

“For five days, I starved, barely able to leave my bed. I was on the verge of death. Do you know how that feels? Oh, may God bless you and never let you find out.

“In that moment, I couldn’t bear the thought of dying like this. I came to Trier to make my fortune, and I had to do something. That’s when I noticed the portrait of Saint Vièvе on the wall.

“Yes, with great effort, I managed to get up, kneel before Her, and pray for Her help. I was still a believer in the God of Steam and Machinery then, but what wouldn’t a starving man do? Besides, it couldn’t hurt, right?

“Five minutes after I finished praying, an old friend dropped by and saw my dire state. He didn’t have much himself, but he reminded me that I’d rented a kerosene lamp for use at night. The deposit was 35 coppets—a whole seven licks!

“God, I’d completely forgotten. With my friend’s help, I returned the lamp and used the refund to buy bread and half a liter of cheap booze. The bread was cold and damp, like it’d been doused in putty. The alcohol was a bit off and weak, but it was the most delicious meal I’ve ever had. Ladies and gentlemen, I was reborn!

“I found a new job today, and tomorrow, during my break, I’ll light a candle at the nearest Saint Vièvе Cathedral!”

Saint Vièvе was a female angel mentioned in the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Bible. She was one of the city’s guardian angels in Trier. The other two were prominent figures from the God of Steam and Machinery Church and the annals of Intis.

Lumian observed the young man’s blue eyes sparkling with enthusiasm as he ambled towards the bar.

The bartender, who was polishing a glass with a cloth, glanced at the orator on the round table and chuckled.

“Charlie never could keep quiet. Always talking.”

In his mid-thirties, the bartender sported a thin, dark brown beard circling his mouth, and his hair of the same color was tied back in an

artistically casual ponytail.

Lumian took a seat at the bar and asked with a grin, “Is he telling the truth?”

“Who knows?” The bartender shrugged. “You must’ve heard the proverb: It’s better to trust a snake than a Reemian. Charlie is from Reem.”

Reem and Riston Provinces both hailed from the south. Their accents were similar, but they were mountainous provinces more akin to Lenburg.

Lumian mused aloud,”I don’t think that’s the whole proverb. I feel like there’s more to it.”

The bartender’s azure eyes sparkled with amusement as he replied, “You’re right. That proverb is longer than you’d think.

“Trust a Loenese over a Reemian. Trust a snake over a Reemian, but never trust the Islanders.”

The islands referred to the Fog Sea archipelago west of Intis. This was one of the Republic’s overseas colonies. The Islanders often played the roles of thugs and con artists in Trier.

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire further, the bartender cast a mocking glance at Charlie, still droning on, and whispered, “If he really experienced that, he certainly doesn’t know that the portrait of Saint Vièvе isn’t in his room.”

“Then whose is it?” Lumian asked, amused.

The bartender struggled to suppress his laughter.

“Charlie lives in Room 504. The previous tenant frequented the Quartier de la Princesse Rouge’s Rue de la Muraille. The image in the room was of one of Trier’s most famous prostitutes a few years back, Susanna Matisse.

“Just think. Charlie believes he’s praying to an angel for help, but he’s actually praying to a prostitute. He even feels lucky to have

escaped hunger and landed a new job. How ironic!"

"Indeed," Lumian concurred.

It was a scene beyond his wildest imagination. Reality was sometimes stranger than fiction.

He then added, "As long as it works."

The bartender didn't pursue the topic further and inquired, "What can I get you?"

"A glass of fennel absinthe." Lumian tapped the bar counter with his finger, signaling he was deep in thought. "What kind of food do you have here?"

"How about DuVar broth? Three licks for a ladle," the bartender suggested.

Three licks equaled 15 coppets—0.15 verl d'or.

Lumian appeared intrigued.

"What's DuVar broth?"

The bartender casually explained, "A restaurant owner, DuVar, invented it. He simmered meat, sauerkraut, and turnips together to create a hearty broth. Finally, he added cheese and bread crumbs. Just one serving can fill your stomach, and it tastes pretty good. As a result, DuVar is now wealthy and has relocated to Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra."

Lumian was currently in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, also known as the market district, situated on the south bank of the Srenzo River, home to numerous slums. Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra was on the north bank of the Srenzo River, near Avenue du Boulevard, one of the Republic's core areas.

Trier's city walls encompassed a total of 20 quartiers.

"Sounds good." Lumian nodded with a smile. "I'll have one."

Though he could restore his physical state by 6 a.m. and not worry about hunger, eating was one of the few things that made him feel alive.

The bartender nodded and asked, “Little Mummy or Somersault?”

“What?” Lumian didn’t hide his confusion.

Unfazed, the bartender calmly explained, “That’s common slang in Trier bars, cafés, and beer houses. Little Mummy means a small shot of fennel absinthe. Somersault is a double shot. Red Tomato has pomegranate juice added, and with mint, it’s called Parrot. There are plenty more like that. Friend, you still have much to learn in Trier.”

“Little Mummy it is.” Lumian sensed the bartender’s subtle disdain for foreigners, but he didn’t mind.

“Seven licks,” the bartender announced as he flipped open a small goblet.

This was pricier than the absinthe at Cordu’s Ol’ Tavern, but it was typical in places subject to city taxes. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Soon, a glass of pale green absinthe, glowing hypnotically, appeared before Lumian.

He picked it up and sipped. The faint, lingering bitterness of the refreshing taste spread and burrowed into his brain.

As Lumian waited for the waitress to bring DuVar’s broth, he noticed glass jars, hoses, valves, gears, and other items piled beside the bar counter.

…

“What’s this?” He glanced inquisitively at the bartender.

As the bartender wiped a glass, he casually replied, “Left by a previous tenant. He’s a believer in the God of Steam and Machinery. He always thinks he has a knack for mechanics and has accumulated many similar items.”

“Where is he now?” Lumian asked, playing along even though he knew the answer wouldn’t be pleasant.

The bartender paused for a couple of seconds before answering, “He went to the factory, and word is he got distracted while working and was pulled into the machinery. Half of him was crushed.”

Lumian didn’t pry further. He turned to examine the half-assembled parts and fell into deep thought.

A few seconds later, he left the bar stool and squatted beside the counter, tinkering with the pile.

The bartender glanced at him but didn’t interfere. He only notified Lumian when DuVar’s broth arrived from the kitchen.

After busying himself for a while, Lumian returned to the bar stool and sampled the hearty broth with a spoon.

The rich aroma of meat, the taste of cheese, the tangy sauerkraut, and the sweetness of the turnip melded to create an unforgettable flavor. The bread crumbs soaked in juice were the crowning gem of the dish.

Lumian didn’t expect that a soup costing three licks would include several pieces of meat. It could genuinely fill an adult’s stomach.

Once the plate was empty, Lumian pulled out a handkerchief and wiped his mouth. He squatted back beside the half-assembled parts and resumed his work.

…

Ten minutes later, he placed a machine on the bar counter.

Above the machine was a glass jar, and beneath it were intricate components connected to two rubber hoses.

Lumian then asked for a glass of clear water and poured in the remaining fennel absinthe, tinting the colorless liquid a pale green.

Finally, he inserted one of the rubber hoses into the cup.

The fashionable bartender, his hair tied back in a ponytail, watched intently and asked, puzzled, “What’s this?”

“My invention,” Lumian declared, tracing a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest. “I’m also a believer in the God of Steam and Machinery, with a few impressive achievements in the mechanical field.”

He then extended his black-gloved left hand and gestured toward the machine.

“This is a groundbreaking machine. Its effects are beyond your wildest dreams!”

“What can it do?” Charlie, suspected of having prayed to a prostitute, approached the bar counter with a beer bottle and a curious expression.

Lumian explained, both solemn and excited, “It’s called the Idiot Instrument. It tests a person’s stupidity and intelligence.”

“Really?” Charlie and the bartender looked skeptical.

Lumian detailed his idea, “It’s easy to use. Blow into the tube until the liquid in the cup rises into the glass jar and forms bubbles.

“By observing these bubbles, we can determine the corresponding stupidity or intelligence index.”

Intrigued, Charlie said after observing Lumian, “Fascinating. Just as I’d expect from a believer in the God of Steam and Machinery.”

He picked up the exposed rubber hose and blew into it.

The light green liquid in the cup flowed through the interconnected gears, valves, and other components, rising into the glass jar above and forming a small bubble.

“What does it say?” Charlie asked, eager for the result.

Lumian’s mouth curved into a sly smile.

“My friend, the principles of this machine are quite simple. When you believe me enough to actually produce a bubble with it, that’s when you prove you’re a ‘dumb idiot.’”

Charlie’s expression froze, his eyes burning with anger.

The bartender beside him laughed.

“Excellent prank!” he exclaimed, genuinely impressed.

Lumian grinned at Charlie, waiting for the explosion.

After a few tense seconds, Charlie swallowed his anger and turned to the patrons who had been listening to his story.

“Ladies and gentlemen, behold what I’ve discovered: a groundbreaking machine! It can test your intelligence index!”

Chapter 113 - 113 Tenants

113 Tenants

“You’re such an interesting person!”

A drunk Charlie slung his arm around Lumian’s shoulder as they stumbled out of the raucous bar.

Inside, nearly 20 people sang, gambled, and yelled, releasing pent-up emotions.

At moments like these, they didn’t seem like paupers on meager wages but rather kings and queens.

“I thought you’d play Billy B with them.” Lumian draped his arm over Charlie’s back and grinned as they headed for the stairs leading upstairs.

Billy B was a popular gambling game in Trier, one Lumian had just recently learned.

Unlike Trieriens’ favorite Fighting Evil, Billy B only required a piece of paper. Depending on the number of players, the dealer drew a grid of squares, ranging from 9 to 64. Each square was assigned a number, allowing participants to place their bets. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

The dealer then determined a lucky number by drawing lots, tossing coins, or throwing dice. The winner took the entire pot.

If no one won, the money went to the dealer.

The patrons of the Auberge du Coq Doré’s underground bar were either locals or impoverished folks from nearby. Their wallets were thin, so they mainly wagered alcohol instead of cash. For instance, a

game of Billy B might only reward the winner with a glass of booze bought by everyone's pooled money.

Charlie released a long burp.

"I haven't gotten my salary for this week. Can't be too indulgent!"

He turned to Lumian, excitement in his voice, "Did you know? I'm now an apprentice attendant at H?tel du Cygne Blanc, the one on Rue Neuve in Quartier des Thermes.

"What does that mean? It means I get to wear a white shirt, red vest, and black suit. I'll tie an elegant bow and earn 65 verl d'or a month! When I become a full attendant, I hear that during peak season, I can make 7 verl d'or a day just in tips!

"When I strike it rich, I'll open my own motel—no, a hotel. When the time comes, I'll hire you as an attendant foreman. That jerk just walks around in his tailcoat, nitpicking, and earns 150 verl d'or a month!"

Apprentice attendants earn slightly more than manual laborers… Lumian reeked of alcohol, but his eyes remained clear. He nodded almost imperceptibly.

He recalled reading a newspaper in his study earlier in the year, boasting that Trier's laborers earned about 700 verl d'or annually.

At the time, Lumian didn't have a clear concept of that figure. He didn't know if it was too much or too little. As a vagrant, he'd only worried about how much food he could get each day and whether kind people might offer him a few licks. The income of Cordu villagers was mainly in goods, so he understood specific prices and the value of various banknotes, but he lacked a broader understanding.

Of course, this was also because Aurore's income was very high, so he hardly fretted about family finances.

As far as Lumian knew, Aurore's fame brought her a significant income through book sales and contracts. Last year's royalties had neared 130,000 verl d'or.

However, Aurore spent as much as she earned. Spells, materials, and arcane knowledge accounted for most of her expenses. She might also be supporting struggling members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society or donating to government- or church-run charities.

Yet what puzzled Lumian was the absence of a deposit slip at home when he left Cordu.

He knew all too well that Aurore was a saver. Spending big was only possible because she had stashed away plenty of cash at Suchit Bank and other institutions.

For a moment, Lumian suspected that Guillaume Bénet's crew had snatched it while he and his sister were being used as sacrifices or vessels.

As Lumian and Charlie made their way to the second floor, arms slung around each other's shoulders, a mournful cry pierced the air.

"You bastard!"

Bang! A door slammed, muffling the wail and leaving only echoes in the hallway.

A figure in a crisp black tailcoat approached the stairs from the far end of the hall.

He was a young man, roughly Charlie's age. His brownish-yellow hair was styled in a 30-70 parting, and his dark brown eyes were devoid of expression. His thin lips were pressed tightly together.

Quite handsome, he held a black top hat in his hand, looking more like he belonged at a high-society soirée than the Auberge du Coq Doré.

Following the man's cries was a woman's voice, heavy with pain and despair.

As Charlie watched the man vanish down the stairs, his flushed face contorted.

"What a bastard!"

“You know him?” Lumian was still rather ‘concerned’ about his neighbors. After all, he might be staying here for a while. The more he knew about his surroundings, the safer he’d be.

Charlie scoffed, “That’s Laurent, Mrs. Lakazan’s son from Room 201.

“Mrs. Lakazan slaves away, mending socks and crafting all sorts for 16 hours a day just to support that bastard. He always dresses nicely and spends her money at fancy cafés, claiming he’s mingling with high society to find opportunities to make it big!

“Heh, he thinks he’s so talented…”

Before Charlie could finish, another heated argument erupted between a man and a woman nearby.

They hurled insults at each other.

“Third floor’s a couple who eloped. They’re like this every day when they’re almost broke.” Charlie clicked his tongue and grinned. “My friend, you’ll have to get used to it. This is the market district, Rue Anarchie, the Auberge du Coq Doré. We’ve got the seriously ill, the bankrupt, swindling peddlers, foreigners who never leave the inn and only drink downstairs, broke street girls, lunatics who wake up in a frenzy, jobless stonemasons, veterans, miserly old men, and wanted criminals…

“They should all thank Monsieur Ive for being so lenient. As long as they don’t default on rent, he’s pretty forgiving.”

“Monsieur Ive… The innkeeper? The miser Madame Fels mentioned?” Lumian inquired.

Charlie grinned and replied, “That’s him, a kind but stingy fellow. He even provides everyone with free sulfur!

“Burp, I haven’t seen Monsieur Ive in a few days. I’m really worried he’ll try to save a few coppets by visiting some random woman on Rue Anarchie and catch some nasty disease instead of patronizing Rue de la Muraille or Quartier de la Princesse Rouge…”

As he spoke, Charlie waved his hand.

“Ciel, burp. I’m off to bed. I’ve got to leave at six tomorrow morning and get to the hotel by seven.

“Burp, if you can’t find a job, let me know. I’ll introduce you to a handyman at our hotel. You can earn 50 verl d’or a month. Stick around long enough, and you might make 75. Plus, there’s free food. We even get a liter of wine every night!”

“Alright.” Lumian smiled as he watched Charlie climb the stairs.

At the same time, he muttered to himself, Simple provocation isn’t doing much for the potion’s digestion…

He had assembled the Idiot Instrument in the bar to rile everyone up. The result was successful, but it didn’t further the potion’s digestion.

During his journey from Dariège to Trier, Lumian frequently provoked others. Sometimes he felt the potion digest, but most times, he gained nothing.

If he couldn’t find a better way to act, he suspected it would take at least a year to fully digest the Provoker potion.

Heading back to Room 207, Lumian heard a bout of coughing from upstairs. He heard a woman berating her lover, calling him “lazy” and “trash.” Gunshots rang out, followed by the sound of a group chasing someone outside.

This was life at the Auberge du Coq Doré and on Rue Anarchie.

…

Charlie had said that even the police wouldn’t dare walk here alone at night. They needed a partner to bolster their courage.

Taking out the brass key, Lumian opened the door and stepped back into his room.

The bedbugs seemed to have sensed something and stayed away.

Lumian sniffed the sulfur and glanced up. A letter lay silently on the wooden table beside the window.

He took a few steps forward and picked up the folded piece of paper.

Madam Magician's reply? Lumian mused, unfolding the letter and reading it under the crimson moonlight streaming through the window.

"I'm glad you arrived in Trier without issue. This shows you've mastered the basic technique of evading capture and regained your experience navigating the dark underbelly of society.

"At 3:30 p.m. this Sunday, a psychologist will treat you at Booth D in Mason Café, located in Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

"For the next few days, your mission is to venture near the catacombs in Quartier de l'Observatoire and locate a man named Osta Trul. He often masquerades as a warlock to con tourists and locals alike.

"By any means necessary, earn Osta Trul's trust and reveal your powers when the time is right."

Quartier du Jardin Botanique and Quartier de l'Observatoire were west of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, adjacent to one another. The former lay further south, while the latter was closer to the north, right by the Srenzo River.

...

Lumian read Madam Magician's reply over and over, committing the relevant locations, times, and names to memory. Then he struck a match and burned the Intisian-scripted paper.

Having done all this, he headed to the nearest washroom to freshen up. Afterward, he took out Fallen Mercury, wrapped in black cloth, removed his coat, and lay on the bed.

The bedbug-infested ceiling met his gaze, and the faint sounds of coughing, crying, and arguing filled the room.

Soon after, the eloped couple announced their reconciliation through a passionate and vigorous exercise, accompanied by uninhibited moans.

Outside on the street, a few coarse voices sang vulgar songs, punctuated by gunshots, followed by curses, the clashing of poles, and the sound of sharp weapons piercing flesh.

Compared to Cordu, the nights here were far from quiet.

Chapter 114 - 114 Life Experience

114 Life Experience

At the break of dawn in early May, the sky remained cloaked in darkness. The setting crimson moon and the scattered stars cast a faint glow, thinning the darkness just enough to reveal nearby silhouettes.

Lumian awoke early and freshened up. He donned his formal attire from the previous day and a wide-brimmed top hat. He tried his best to smile at his reflection in the glass window that served as a mirror.

As he descended the stairs, hurried footsteps echoed from above.

Soon, Charlie came into view.

He was still dressed in a linen shirt, black trousers, and strapless leather shoes. His flushed complexion had turned a shade paler, and his small blue eyes betrayed unmistakable fatigue.

“Good morning, Ciel,” Charlie greeted Lumian with enthusiasm.

He seemed quite pumped.

“Shouldn’t you have left long ago?” Lumian asked, smiling.

He had only awoken to freshen up when he heard the cathedral clock chime six o’clock. Charlie should have departed by then.

Charlie lowered his head, adjusting his clothes as he muttered, “I drank too much last night and had a wonderful dream. I didn’t want to wake up…”

As they conversed, the pair reached the ground floor. They traversed

the dingy, dimly lit hall towards the door reflecting starlight. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

An elderly couple, grizzled and slightly stooped, opened the door. In their sixties, they were both short, the man barely 1.65 meters tall and the woman even shorter. Their dark jackets and yellowish cloth dresses were tattered and oil-stained.

“Who are they?” Lumian had expected Madame Fels or the miserly motel owner, Monsieur Ive, to be in charge of opening the door in the morning.

Charlie didn’t slow down, casually explaining, “Monsieur Ruhr and Madame Michel, they’re the swindlers I mentioned yesterday. They scam tourists into buying things.

“They rise early every day, and Madame Fels has them open the inn’s door. In return, she turns a blind eye to the mess and stench they create in their room.

“Can you believe it? They haven’t changed their clothes since I moved in. It’s been seven months. Seven months!”

No wonder it’s so filthy… Lumian could recall his own grimy days as a vagabond, but Aurore’s penchant for cleanliness still made him frown.

Charlie strode quickly out of Auberge du Coq Doré, puzzledly asking, “Ciel, why are you up so early too?”

As they stepped onto the street, a bustling scene unfolded before them.

Countless workers, clerks, and laborers hurried along in their gray, blue, black, and brown clothes, occasionally stopping to purchase food from street vendors.

Some women carrying wooden baskets moved more leisurely. They meandered between various vendors, comparing prices and quality.

The peddlers lined both sides of Rue Anarchie, occupying half the street and leaving just enough room for a carriage to pass.

They bellowed loudly, vying for customers' attention.

"Whiskey Sour, Apple Whiskey Sour. Two licks a liter!"

"Freshwater fish from Bondi's fish pond!"

"Fresh cod and herring, come and take a look!"

"Onion bread, one lick, just one lick!"

"Salted meat, delicious salted meat!"

"Soap and wigs imported from Loen!"

"Buy the kids a bottle of refreshing soda!"

"Hot sauce, soybean paste, scallions, water celery!"

"…"

Absorbing the sounds and energy of Rue Anarchie, Lumian turned to Charlie and smiled.

"I just arrived in Trier and couldn't sleep. I thought I'd walk around and see if I could find a suitable job."

As a Hunter, it was essential for him to familiarize himself with the area he frequented and understand its intricacies.

It would be too late to adapt if something were to happen.

Charlie nodded knowingly.

He said with enthusiasm, "You could try your luck at Rue des Blouses Blanches. It's between Le Marché du Gentleman and the steam locomotive station.

"Many motel, hotel, and restaurant managers like to chat at the café there. They use the opportunity to hire dishwashers, floor cleaners, washroom attendants, and apprentice attendants.

"If you have money on you, remember to buy the café waiters a drink. They'll introduce you to the right person and give you a shot

at a better job."

Without waiting for Lumian's reply, Charlie shared his wisdom.

"You must pay attention to your appearance. Do as I do."

As he spoke, he raised his hands and slapped his face, mimicking an actual slap, but with less force.

Soon, Charlie's pallid complexion regained its "rosiness."

"Look, look." He pointed at himself smugly and said, "Don't I appear more energetic? Those managers don't want to hire someone who looks particularly destitute and sickly. They think it'll bring trouble. They're either unwilling to give you a decent job or will slash your salary. If you do this before entering the café like me, it'll make you seem like someone who has a place to sleep and breakfast to eat. But doing it too early won't work, as this 'rosiness' will gradually fade."

This clever job-hunting technique was new to Lumian, a former vagabond. He found it fascinating.

He smiled and nodded.

"I still have enough money to rent a place and fill my stomach. I don't need to do this for now, but who knows if I'll need it in the future?"

He deliberately didn't conceal the fact that he still had a fair amount of verl d'or.

What if a generous soul was willing to "donate" another sum?

Charlie expressed his understanding and took out 5 coppet worth of copper coins to buy onion bread from a nearby vendor.

Lumian felt a pang of familiarity.

During his time on the streets, if he could acquire money, his first choice was onion bread.

It was cheap, and the aroma of onions lingered, creating the illusion

of having just eaten a satisfying meal.

...

Lumian also purchased onion bread for breakfast. Alongside Charlie, they navigated through the numerous vendors and exited Rue Anarchie.

“I love the mornings here!” Charlie glanced back and sighed with his signature zeal. “Those gangsters who deserve to rot in hell can’t get up this early. They can’t destroy this captivating vitality.”

He then waved at Lumian.

“I’ve got to take the subway. Otherwise, I’ll be late today. That damned foreman will surely dock my pay!”

After saying goodbye to Charlie, Lumian wandered around Rue Anarchie, exploring the area like a curious tourist.

Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman was situated on the south bank of the Srenzo River, in the southeast corner of Trier, officially known as “Quartier 13.” Trier boasted various quarters named by numbers, each with its own historical and characteristic monikers. Even officials sometimes used these colloquial names.

The district earned its name from Le Marché du Gentleman. Proximity to the Srenzo River allowed for a Suhit steam locomotive station, which catered to travelers from southern Intis.

Encircled by the market and the steam locomotive station, many of its streets were notoriously dangerous and teeming with impoverished inhabitants. It was one of Trier’s slums.

To the north of the market district, on the south bank of the Srenzo River, lay Quartier 5, the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative or Quartier Universitaire. Trier Normal College, Trier Higher Mining College, and Intis Academy of Fine Arts were all located here.

To the northeast of the city, on the north bank of the Srenzo River, stood Quartier 12, known as the Noel Quartier. It housed the Veterans’ Home, Wounded Soldiers’ Hospital, and several large

medical facilities.

To the northwest of the market district was Quartier 6—Quartier de l'Observatoire—where Lumian planned to visit later. It contained the primary entrance to the catacombs.

...

To the southwest of the market district was Quartier 14, known as Quartier du Jardin Botanique. On Sunday, Lumian was scheduled for treatment with a psychologist at the Mason café there. This area was also called Quartier du Sans-Culottes due to the large factories located south of the botanical garden.

And so, Lumian spent nearly the entire morning traversing the streets of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

As noon approached, Lumian returned to the vicinity of Suhit's train station, intending to find a spot for lunch before heading to the catacombs in search of the phony warlock, Osta Trul.

Walking along, Lumian spotted the couple—Ruhr and Michel—who also resided at Auberge du Coq Doré.

They were hawking parcels of items wrapped in paper bags to groups that appeared to be foreigners.

As Lumian drew near, the gray-haired, ragged, and wrinkled Ruhr leaned towards him and lowered his voice. "Do you want photos of a street ma?tresse d'atelier?"

"What's a street ma?tresse d'atelier?" Lumian didn't conceal his confusion or his revulsion at Ruer's stench.

Ruhr waved the thin paper bag in his hand and whispered, "In Trier, beautiful girls who model for painters are called 'ma?tresse d'atelier.'

"With the advent of cameras and photographers, they also began taking photo subjects. As you might imagine, some of these photos were sold to painters as reference material, while others…"

Ruhr flashed a sly grin and shook the paper bag in his hand again.

“Four licks per bag, with two photos inside!

“Others sell them for over 10 licks!”

Lumian laughed.

“Monsieur Ruhr, Madame Michel, is this the souvenir you peddle to tourists?”

Hearing Lumian address them by name, Ruhr and Michel’s expressions shifted dramatically.

They spun around, trying to escape, but Lumian was quicker and clamped down on Ruhr’s shoulder.

Michel, who had weaved her way through the crowd, noticed her husband couldn’t keep pace and returned, her face etched with bitterness.

“I also live at Auberge du Coq Doré. My name is Ciel,” Lumian introduced himself.

Finally realizing how Lumian knew them, the couple breathed a sigh of relief and looked at him pleadingly. “What’s the matter, Monsieur Ciel?”

“What kind of photos are you selling?” Lumian inquired curiously.

Ruhr responded timidly, “Scenic photos of the Srenzo River, as well as images of Trier’s castles and palaces.”

“No one is causing trouble for you?” Lumian asked, grinning.

Ruhr swallowed and said, “The people who buy them don’t dare to open them on the spot or confront us later. They feel guilty.”

“Besides, no police will bother you if you sell landscape photos.” Lumian nodded. “Does anyone really sell street ma?tresse d’atelier?”

“Yes,” Ruhr confirmed. “Last month, the police arrested a group of photographers and art dealers. They said they confiscated over 10,000 photos. If only they could give them to us. Who knows how

much we could sell them for!”

Madame Michel, also sporting a wrinkled face and hunched figure, mumbled, “There was a model staying at our inn previously, but she hasn’t been around lately. Perhaps she became the mistress of some painter, or maybe she was captured to be a street ma?tresse d’atelier…”

Auberge du Coq Doré has quite a variety of guests… Lumian asked with interest, “How much can you earn in a week by tricking foreigners into buying photos?”

“We sell them very cheaply. About 10 verl d’or,” Ruhr replied, his gaze slightly evasive.

From the looks of it, it’s more than 10 verl d’or, but not much more. I’ll count it as 12 verl d’or, which is 1,200 coppet or 240 licks… 60 fools fall for it every week? Lumian surveyed the square and expressed his disdain for the average intelligence of the people there.

As for Ruhr and Michel, they took a significant risk to deceive others; yet, they only earned about 50 verl d’or a month, far less than the apprentice attendants or even laborers.

Observing their slightly hunched backs, slender frames, and wrinkled faces, Lumian understood that it wasn’t that they didn’t want to do more legitimate work for better pay, but rather that they couldn’t handle those jobs.

With a wave of his hand, he left Suhit’s steam locomotive station and headed northwest towards Quartier de l’Observatoire.

Chapter 115 - 115 Legend

Chapter 115 Legend

The catacombs' main entrance was tucked away in Place du Purgatoire, close to the Intisian observatory. The structure enclosing the entrance was supported by grand pillars, crowned by a dome adorned with intricate stone carvings, reminiscent of a miniature memorial hall or the base of an immense mausoleum.

As Lumian approached, he noted a crowd of 20 to 30 people already assembled near the stairs leading down. Their attire varied, but most were dressed formally, both men and women alike.

A man in his thirties, sporting a blue vest, yellow pants, and a thick beard, stood before the crowd. His brown curls framed upturned eyes, and he held an unlit iron-black carbide lamp.

Addressing the gathered group, he announced loudly, "I'm Kendall, one of the catacombs' administrators. I'll be guiding you through the ossuary today.

"Does everyone have a white candle? If not, please let me know immediately."

Tourists? Lumian's eyes swept over the stone staircase behind Kendall.

It plunged down into impenetrable darkness, its end hidden from view.

Beside Kendall stood a massive wooden door, half of it emblazoned with the Sun Sacred Emblem in gold, while the other half was adorned with an intricate triangle filled with symbols of steam, levers, gears, and more.

Upon receiving confirmation, Kendall ignited his carbide lamp and led the group into the depths below. The tourists trailed behind him, some bearing lanterns.

Lumian followed, keeping a four to five-meter distance. Clutching the carbide lamp he had obtained from Ramayes, he descended the staircase at a steady pace.

Thanks to his Beyonder-enhanced hearing, Lumian easily heard Kendall's informative spiel at the front.

"After 138 steps, you'll find yourselves 26 meters below Trier's streets, surrounded by the remains of nearly 50 generations of Trieriens.

"That's a conservative estimate. In truth, the history of some of these ossuaries can be traced back to the previous epoch…

"Forty-seven years ago, there was no more space for the dead in Cimetière des Innocents or Cimetière des Prêtres. White bones lay scattered, and the stench drove nearby residents to protest daily, demanding the relocation of the cemetery…

"Ultimately, City Hall opted to go underground. They repurposed graves from the Fourth Epoch and adjacent underground quarries, creating a vast tomb… Today, you'll be visiting but a mere fraction of it…"

Kendall's voice echoed through the silent, never-ending staircase, imbuing the atmosphere with an eerie sense of foreboding.

As Lumian continued downward, a path lined with stone pillars and walls came into view. This passage, unlike other subterranean areas, was well-maintained and frequently repaired. It was smooth, wide, and unnervingly sinister. An icy breeze occasionally swept through the corridor. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Gas lamps were strategically placed along the path, casting a dim, yellowish light that allowed shadows to mingle with the illumination, stretching into the darkness.

Kendall, clad in his blue vest, warned the visitors once more, "Stay

close and don’t wander off!

“There are countless underground areas we know little about. If you get lost, it’ll be nearly impossible to find you.

“Do not stray from the path once inside the tomb. There are passages that lead to deeper, more sinister chambers. The Fourth Epoch’s malevolent spirits lurk within that darkness. Praise the Sun and the Light. By adhering to the routes endorsed by the padres, we can avoid all perils.”

Some visitors outstretched their arms in praise of the Sun, while others traced a triangle over their chests.

After trailing Kendall and the others for nearly 200 meters, Lumian caught sight of the subterranean tomb.

Before him lay a natural boulder cave, modified over time. Its walls were adorned with intricate reliefs of skulls, skeletal arms, sunflowers, and steam symbols.

Above the entrance, two Intisian inscriptions commanded: “Halt!

“The Death Empire lies ahead!”

Kendall, the catacomb administrator, turned to address the visitors once more, “Extinguish your lanterns and light the white candles. Everyone must do this!

“If you’d rather not enter the catacomb, feel free to explore this area, but don’t stray too far. It’s all too easy to lose your bearings, and that would be a problem.

“Should you find yourself separated from the group inside the catacomb, don’t panic. Locate a road sign. If there isn’t one, look above and follow the black line drawn on the tomb’s ceiling. It will guide you back to the main entrance…’ Soon, the lanterns were snuffed out, replaced by the flickering glow of orange candlelight.

The visitors hoisted their white candles and trailed Kendall into the catacombs. Lumian observed from a distance, watching as the yellowish flames merged into a stream that meandered into the

darkness.

He refrained from entering. Grasping his carbide lamp, he circled the tomb's entrance, intent on locating the phony warlock, Osta Trul.

A few minutes later, Lumian discovered a small bonfire.

Beside a pillar, damp moss clung to the stone wall above.

A man was seated on a rock behind the fire, garbed in a hooded black robe. His high-bridged nose and dark brown eyes were framed by a flaxen beard that obscured his chin. He stared intently at the dancing flames.

Lumian approached and inquired, "Are you Osta Trul?"

The hooded man raised his gaze to meet Lumian's and replied in a deliberately subdued, magnetic voice, "Lost soul, why have you sought me out?"

Flames and shadows danced across Osta Trul's face, obscuring his age. He appeared to be somewhere between just below 30 and 40. Lumian spoke earnestly, "I've heard whispers about you. They say you're a mystical Warlock who can help me resolve my dilemma." Osta Trul responded in a low, magnetic tone, "Witchcraft is taboo. Witchcraft is a curse. I won't render aid without cause."

"What must I do?" Lumian pressed, anxiety evident in his voice.

Osta replied softly, "The essence of witchcraft lies in equivalent exchange. Reveal the nature of the help you seek first."

Equivalent exchange. Have you been reading too many novels? Lumian suppressed the urge to ridicule and antagonize him, instead adopting a pained expression. "I've lost everyone I cared for. I feel forsaken by the world. Sleep eludes me each night. I want to forget these burdens and begin anew."

Osta Trul scrutinized Lumian's countenance, finding no trace of deception. He nodded slightly. "I, too, have suffered great losses. It's a curse borne of witchcraft. I can empathize with your sentiments and thoughts. Yet forgetting pain is no simple task."

“Very well…” Lumian exhaled a long sigh and turned to depart.

Osta hastily called out, “Wait. Just because it’s difficult doesn’t mean it’s impossible.”

“Really?” Lumian whipped his head back, excitement flooding his features.

Osta nodded subtly and continued, “Have you ever heard of the Samaritan Women’s Spring?”

“No.” Lumian shook his head. Osta glanced at the burning bonfire and explained simply, “In one of the ossuaries within the catacombs, there’s a murky spring known as the Samaritan Women’s Spring, or the Fountain of Oblivion. Drink from it, and all your pain will be erased from memory. “Of course, it’s a fabrication. The spring is merely a puddle left by a construction error during the catacombs’ creation. The administrators spun it into legend.” As Lumian’s eyes sparkled with hope, Osta Trul carried on, “However, as a Warlock, I can reveal that deep within this subterranean realm lies a genuine Samaritan Women’s Spring, hidden in a tomb believed to be a relic of the Fourth Epoch.

“Many corpses there chant: ‘Drink the blissful waters of forgetfulness and be purged of primordial pain.’”‘ “I can help you recover it, but the principle of equivalent exchange must be honored. It will cost you 100 verl d’or.”

100 verl d’or? Isn’t your asking price a bit too low? How can anyone believe that procuring a legendary item as perilous as this could be genuine without demanding a few thousand verl d’or? Lumian had been listening closely, but the absurdly undervalued service left him amused.

How could such priceless spring water be worth no more than an apprentice attendant’s two months’ wages?

He had read about the legend of the Samaritan Women’s Spring in Psychic. Aurore had murmured a word he didn’t understand. Its pronunciation likely resembled ‘Granny Meng.’ Psychic also asserted that the Samaritan Women’s Spring was a legend fabricated by the

catacomb administrators, but they were convinced the tale had its origins. The Fountain of Oblivion might genuinely exist somewhere on the Northern Continent. Lumian's eyes widened as he hastened to Osta's side. Clasping his shoulder, he exclaimed, "Really?"

Osta brushed his hand away and nodded composedly.

"This is a Warlock's vow."

"Alright, alright!" Lumian responded, thrilled.

"But I didn't bring that much money. I'll head back now and return here to find you tomorrow?"

...

Osta nodded approvingly.

"No problem."

Lumian expressed his gratitude profusely, seized the carbide lamp, and departed with excitement.

Once out of Osta's view, Lumian's smile vanished. He raised his right palm and sniffed the faint fragrance. Before reaching the Quartier de l'Observatoire, he had deliberately sprayed an inferior cologne on his right hand and touched Osta's body.

Back on the surface, Lumian took cover behind a pillar, concealed himself, and waited patiently.

The sky gradually darkened. As twilight descended, he detected the faint and familiar scent of cologne.

Lumian didn't rush to pursue Osta. After a trailed while, he emerged from his hiding spot and the lingering fragrance, maintaining a distance so great he was nearly invisible. Carriages whizzed past him, and extravagant mechanical contraptions appeared sporadically.

Chapter 116 - 116 City of Fashion

Chapter 116 City of Fashion

In the morning, while “shopping” at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Lumian noticed that Trier’s citizens dressed rather casually, or perhaps boldly. This was evident in the women wearing short sleeves that bared their forearms or garments with cut-out shoulders that displayed their collarbones. On the other hand, there was no shortage of peculiar attire.

In the Dariège region, a warlock like Osta, donning a black robe and hood, resembled an ancient legend. It was impossible for him to walk the streets openly without being stopped by the police. In Trier, however, passersby paid him no mind.

Such appearances were all too common. People dressed in a variety of antiquated garments.

Osta Trul was undoubtedly more cautious. Periodically, he would glance over his shoulder to spot anyone suspicious, but Lumian maintained such a great distance that neither of them were within the other’s line of sight. Lumian trailed Osta from one street to the next, following the faint scent of the inferior cologne.

As gas lamps illuminated the surroundings, Osta turned into a street sheltered by glass domes and steel frames.

This place was brightly lit and lined with upscale shops. Smooth marble paved the ground, and the area bustled with pedestrians -a stark contrast to the ramshackle alleys of Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

This is the arcade Aurore mentioned? Lumian observed Osta pausing

in front of a store to admire the window display. He too slowed down, scanning the area.

He quickly spotted people engaging in “unusual” behavior.

Dressed in formal attire, both men and women walked turtles of varying sizes.

The turtles inched forward, and their owners, holding a rope, trailed leisurely behind.

Upon seeing a man dressed in a black formal suit and silk top hat walking a turtle, Lumian couldn’t help but inquire, “My friend, what are you doing?”

The man turned his head, revealing a powdered face.

He responded with a smile, “Foreigner, I’m simply taking a stroll, walking my turtle.”

“Why a turtle?” Lumian didn’t conceal his puzzlement.

The impeccably groomed gentleman appeared pleased to share his fashion philosophy. He grinned and explained, “Most Trieriens enjoy walking around leisurely, but they fail to grasp the essence of leisure and elegance. They always walk briskly and seem rushed.

“A true stroll is slower than a turtle. Thus, we walk turtles and let them lead to emphasize our leisurely pace.

“It’s a gauge to measure walking speed and a device to quantify elegance.”

Lumian had to concede that Trieriens consistently expanded his perspective as a country bumpkin from Cordu.

Aurore couldn’t have even written a story about walking a turtle!

“A true Trierien!” Lumian applauded, his tone dripping with sarcasm.

Regrettably, the gentleman failed to grasp his underlying message. He smiled modestly and continued to follow the turtle at a leisurely

pace.

Before long, Osta reached the other end of the arcade.

Lumian waited for a moment before cautiously following.

After exiting the arcade, Osta positioned himself by the nearby public carriage stop.

Within minutes, a massive carriage, drawn by two horses, arrived.

The carriage was divided into two levels. The yellow-painted exterior bore words like “Line 7” written in Intisian. The driver donned a short green coat and a wide-brimmed hat to fend off the rain.

As the carriage came to a stop, a conductor sporting a small hat, striped shirt, and unattractive pants appeared at the open door, scrutinizing each passenger boarding the carriage as if they were criminals.

Osta was the third person to climb aboard. He chose a window seat, observing the passersby and the men and women taking their seats.

Lumian watched from a distance without approaching.

It was only when the Line 7 carriage had pulled away that he quickened his pace, practically jogging to catch up.

Given the relatively slow speed of public transportation and the rule of stopping at every station, Lumian wasn’t concerned about being left behind.

As he ran, some pedestrians eyed him curiously, while a few even jogged alongside, seemingly believing this to be the latest trend.

Is there something wrong with your brains? Lumian didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. After three stops, he saw Osta Trul disembark from the public carriage. This area was already part of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. Osta crossed two streets and turned onto Rue des Blouses Blanches, which Charlie had mentioned. He entered an old beige apartment building numbered 20.

Lumian halted in front of a street-side newspaper stand, picked up a paper, and casually flipped through it.

Simultaneously, he observed the entrance to the apartment building from the corner of his eye. “It’s 11 coppets for one,” the newsstand owner reminded Lumian when he noticed that he was only reading and not buying.

Lumian was holding a copy of Le Petit Trierien, and without minding, he took out two 5-coppet and one 1-coppet coins and tossed them onto the other newspapers.

The newsstand owner fell silent. Lumian continued reading the newspaper.

“City Hall discussing new price plans with the water supply company…

“Valéry slams consumerism as a fetish…

“Greatest project in human history seeks collaboration…”

The final advertisement caught Lumian’s attention as he reminded him of something: It reeked of a prankster or a swindler’s ploy! As Lumian kept an eye on the apartment, he read the corresponding content with growing interest.

“The future of humanity lies in the stars. The history of mankind was forged by the brave to explore.

“In this era of rapid technological progress, we lack civilization pioneers, visionaries with exceptional insight and foresight, and adventurers with courage. “Last time, we were trapped in the Berserk Sea.

This time, we’re trapped within the atmosphere. However, human civilization and technology will undoubtedly overcome all obstacles and dangers to forge a true future. “We seek to collaborate with all dreamers to construct a space bridge that will enable us to walk from the surface to the crimson moon. “Point of Contact: Bulle Patil. “Contact Method: 9th Rue Saint-Martin, 5th floor, Quartier 2.”

The more Lumian read, the more amused he became. He found himself in deep contemplation.

As Cordu's Prankster King and one influenced by Aurore's eccentric ideas, he had never conceived such an outrageous, ludicrous, and absurd notion. Yet, these individuals had brazenly advertised it, as though certain they could fool a crowd.

Am I still underestimating the average human IQ? Lumian stroked his chin with his gloved left hand.

At that moment, he saw a group of people approaching the old apartment at 20 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

The leader was a distinguished-looking gentleman in a silk top hat and black suit. He had a chiseled profile, a mahogany-colored pipe in his mouth, and a diamond ring on his left hand that sparkled under the light. The burly men surrounding the gentleman appeared menacing. They wore either canvas shirts or dark jackets, giving off a gang-like vibe.

After they vanished into the apartment's entrance, Lumian walked over with the newspaper.

At the base of the stairs, he detected several colognes simultaneously. One was faint and familiar—the inferior cologne he had applied to Osta. The other was more aromatic, sweet, and slightly cloying. Musk cologne? From the man with the pipe? Lumian followed the scent all the way up to the apartment's fifth floor.

There, he saw Osta Trul. The imposter dressed as a warlock found himself encircled by the same group of individuals. The gentleman with the diamond ring tapped his forehead with his mahogany-colored pipe, smiling politely. "Don't think you can shake us off just because you've moved. Until you repay all the debt, I'll follow you endlessly, like a shadow." Osta stammered fearfully, "I'll have money soon. I can return a portion to you tomorrow!"

"Very good," the 'gentleman' nodded with a smile.

He then turned the pipe and jabbed Osta's face with the still-

smoldering end.

...

Osta recoiled in pain but dared not make a sound.

The ‘gentleman’ withdrew his pipe and said gently, yet firmly, “This is a little interest. If you don’t pay me back tomorrow, I’ll take one of your fingers.”

With that, he placed his hand on his chest and bowed politely.

“See you tomorrow, my friend.” At the staircase, Lumian pursed his lips and muttered to himself, Are people and dogs learning from Gehrman now?

As Fors Wall’s “The Adventurer” series gained popularity, Gehrman Sparrow impersonators cropped up across the Northern and Southern Continents. Phrases like “this is basic courtesy” and “a bestowment or a curse” spread far and wide.

As the group approached, Lumian lowered his head and stepped aside, acting like an ordinary tenant encountering gangsters.

Chaotic footsteps echoed as they descended floor by floor, soon giving way to silence. Lumian glanced in Osta Trul’s direction, noting that he had already retreated to his room and closed the wooden door.

After some contemplation, Lumian flexed his gloved left hand and adjusted his hat. He walked out of the staircase and approached Osta’s door.

Bang! Bang! Bang! He raised his hand and knocked on the door.

After a moment, Osta opened the door, his face a mix of shock and fear. He stammered shakily, “I really can’t get that money until tomorrow…”

Before he could finish, Lumian’s figure came sharply into focus in his eyes.

…

Lumian spread his arms and asked with a beaming smile, “Surprised?”

“You, you, you…” Osta backed away as if he’d seen a ghost.

Lumian followed him into the room and smiled at Osta Trul.

“I truly wish to forget the pain of the past, but I’m also a cautious person. I’m afraid of being swindled and, worse, being mocked as a fool.”

Chapter 117 - 117 Remuneration

Chapter 117 Remuneration

Osta forced a smile.

“I’m not lying. There really is a Samaritan Women’s Spring!”

“Is that so?” Lumian approached Osta with a grin and said, “When the time comes, take a sip first. If it’s useful, you’ll forget that I haven’t paid you. If it’s useless, why should I pay you?”

For a moment, Osta was at a loss for words. He could only smile and nod.

“Trust me, trust me…”

Suddenly, he looked past Lumian, his eyes widening in terror.

Lumian ‘instinctively’ turned to look at the door, but there was no one there.

Seizing the opportunity, Osta ducked and made a break for the open door.

Thud!

Osta tripped over Lumian’s right foot, which had swiftly extended, and crashed to the ground. His nose bridge turned blue, and his gaunt face swelled.

Lumian slowly closed the door, pulled up a chair, and sat down. He looked down at Osta, who was feigning death on the floor, and said, “Don’t tell me you have high spiritual perception and ‘saw’ a bizarre creature behind me. Did you rush to the door to help me deal with

it?”

Osta was dumbstruck for a moment before rising to his feet and nodding repeatedly.

“That’s right, that’s right!”

Lumian smiled and glanced at the rectangular wooden table against the wall.

Silver dagger, white candles, a few small bottles filled with different liquids or empty, two imitation goatskins, and a paper box emitting the fragrance of plants were strewn across it.

He has a certain amount of mysticism knowledge… Lumian shifted his gaze back to the uneasy Osta and asked, “Who was that guy with the pipe just now?”

“Baron Brignais!” Osta replied hastily. “He’s the leader of the Savoie Mob in the market district.”

Savoie was the name of an inland province in the Intis Republic, bordering the provinces of Haut-Hornacis and Bas-Hornacis. It was rich in mineral resources and had a valiant folk culture.

“A baron? There are still barons?” Lumian asked, amused.

Ever since Emperor Roselle’s death and the establishment of the Republic, aristocratic titles had vanished from daily life.

Osta said fearfully, “That’s a nickname he gave himself. Perhaps his ancestors held such an aristocratic title.”

Lumian leaned back in his chair and asked casually, “Why did he come to you? Do you owe them money?”

Seeing Lumian’s harmless demeanor, as though he was chatting with a friend, Osta relaxed a little despite his fear.

He said bitterly, “In order to b-buy an item, borrowed 3,000 verl d’or from a loan shark. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Later, that man sold the debt to Brignais.

I “I paid back at least 3,000 verl d’or, but he told me there was still 2,000 in interest!”

“If you drag on for another two or three months, you won’t owe 2,000, but 4,000.” Lumian watched Osta’s expression crumble, the air of mystery gone.

He then lowered his voice and said in a beguiling tone, “If I were you, I’d find a way to draw Brignais and his crew into a quarry pit. Then, I’d bring down the stone layer above, burying them for eternity.

“No creditors, no debts.”

The more Osta listened, the more panic-stricken he became. He stared at Lumian as if he were a demon.

He had a suspicion that Lumian had already plotted such a scheme, but with Osta Trul as the intended target, not Brignais!

“That’s murder! A crime!” Osta exclaimed in terror.

“Keep it down. You wouldn’t want to lose your voice permanently, would you?” Lumian warned him with a smile. “So you do realize that’s a crime? Did anyone ever tell you that fraud is a crime too?”

Osta was at a loss for words.

Lumian stood up and dusted off his gloves.

“I’m just kidding. I was testing your character.”

“What?” Osta was baffled.

Lumian wouldn’t reveal that his true motive was to establish an ice-cold, ruthless persona in Osta’s mind. It would come in handy during future “negotiations.”

Forced trust was still trust! “Congratulations on passing my test. This proves you’re not completely without scruples.” Lumian grinned and

spread his arms.

He quickly steered the conversation back on course.

“What did you borrow so much money for?”

He glanced around, adding, “Doesn’t seem like there’s anything valuable here…”

Osta instinctively wanted to spout a lie but remembered Lumian’s warning.

He trembled and said, “Do… do you know about potions?”

“You’re really a Beyonder?” Lumian chuckled.

Seeing that Lumian knew about Beyonders and potions, Osta breathed a sigh of relief. He was glad he hadn’t lied.

Any fabricated story would be riddled with holes in front of a true Beyonder, easily exposed. If caught, Osta might end up “sleeping forever” in some Underground Trier hideout tonight.

Taking two deep breaths, Osta continued, “A few months ago, I borrowed 3,000 verl d’or from a loan shark to purchase the main ingredient for a potion. Combined with the 4,000 verl d’or I’d saved, I successfully transformed from an ordinary person into a Beyonder.”

“Which Sequence do you belong to? You can’t even handle a few thugs?” Lumian asked with feigned suspicion.

Osta looked defeated.

“I’m a Sequence 9 Secrets Suppliant.”

“It doesn’t sound weak.” Lumian could only gauge by the potion’s name.

Osta lamented in frustration, “I thought Secrets Suppliants were powerful too. The seller even claimed it would allow me to see the world’s truth.

“In the end, aside from heightened spiritual perception, all I got was some impractical sacrificial knowledge and ritual magic. I can occasionally sense the presence of mysterious entities, scaring myself witless, but I can’t even defeat a thug!”

…

“The ritual magic should come in handy,” Lumian remarked knowingly. Osta looked close to tears.

“I’m well-versed in mysticism. I’m a follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun. How can I pray to an unknown entity? That’s too risky! “Sigh, there are some honorific names in the potion’s knowledge, but they’re all concealed entities. Just hearing them is terrifying. I wouldn’t dare invoke depravity, true kin, or the gaze of fate!”

He glanced at Lumian and feigned determination.

“But I’ve considered it. If Baron Brignais and his goons corner me again, I’ll pray to the hidden existence and gain strength!” He was ostensibly talking about Baron Brignais, but his true intent was to caution Lumian against forcing him into a corner. Lumian studied Osta’s uneasy face and agreed, “That’s a wise decision. Baron Brignais and his crew underestimate a Beyonder. If I were in their shoes, I wouldn’t give you the chance to reach a dead end.”

He then smiled at Osta. “You’d be dead before that happens.” Osta opened his mouth but closed it again, his expression more pained than crying.

Lumian walked over to the wooden table and toyed with the empty bottles. “You’ve moved several times, but Baron Brignais keeps finding you. I suspect he or the Savoie Mob have Beyonders on their side.” Osta gasped in shock.

Lumian picked up the silver dagger from the table, twirling it as he said to Osta, “I can offer you 100 verl d’or as a reward.”

“Huh?” Osta was baffled once more. He realized he couldn’t keep up with Lumian’s thought process.

“You, you still want the spring water from the Samaritan Women’s

Spring?" he ventured. Lumian grinned and replied, "Tell me, does it really exist?"

Eyeing Lumian's amused gaze, Osta hesitated for a moment before admitting, "I'm not sure." Lumian nodded in satisfaction.

"What I want is for you to take me to the gathering you mentioned, the one where you bought the potion's main ingredient. The reward is 100 verl d'or."

...

Lumian made this request partly because Madam Magician's mission might be connected to the gathering involving Beyonder materials, and partly because he needed a similar event to acquire weapons, materials, Sealed Artifacts, and arcane knowledge.

Osta swallowed hard.

"I-I can try, but I'll need the gathering organizer's approval."

"No problem." Lumian took out a gold coin and beckoned Osta over. "This Louis d'or is your reward for asking. I'll give you the remaining 80 verl d'or when I can attend the gathering." Osta hadn't anticipated that his beating would turn into a job offer. He was momentarily dumbstruck.

After a few seconds, he cautiously approached the wooden table and took the 20 verl Louis d'or. He told Lumian, "I'm not sure when I'll get an answer, but no later than next Wednesday. I spend the day near the catacombs and sleep here at night. You can find me anytime."

Lumian nodded, smiling as he raised the silver dagger in his hand and plunged it into Osta's shoulder.

Blood spurted out, and Osta staggered back in terror. He leaned against the wall and cried out anxiously, "Don't kill me! I'm not lying!" Lumian picked up a glass bottle from the wooden table and approached Osta with a smile.

"Don't worry. If I wanted you dead, I would've done it by now.

“This is called a blood oath. I’m very wary of deception and betrayal.”

As Lumian spoke, he held the empty glass bottle to Osta’s wound, allowing the blood to trickle in. During this process, he smiled at Osta and said, “You have a strong grasp of mysticism. You should know what blood means in the hands of others. Don’t lie to me.”

“Curse…” For a moment, Osta couldn’t decide whether to rejoice that he hadn’t been killed on the spot or despair that his blood now belonged to a man more dangerous than Baron Brignais. Lumian said nothing more. He tightened the bottle cap, tore a strip of cloth from the room, and tossed it to Osta.

“Bandage your wound yourself.”

He wasn’t familiar with any Beyonder curses, but he could test if expired blood could activate Fallen Mercury’s fate-exchanging ability. Even if it didn’t work, all he needed to do was convince Osta that he knew how to cast curses. Lumian glanced at Osta, who was desperately trying to staunch the bleeding, and casually asked, “What’s your plan for dealing with Baron Brignais?”

“With this Louis d’or and some money I’ve saved, I should be able to appease them for a week,” Osta said with a bitter smile. “They won’t get a single coppet if they push their debtors to death.”

Chapter 118 - 118 Summoning

Chapter 118 Summoning

Lumian nodded, asking, “You mentioned that your spiritual perception is quite advanced?”

Osta briefly fell into a trance before a lingering fear spread across his face.

He took a moment to compose himself, then said, “That seems to be a trait of the Secrets Suppliant. I can sense hidden creatures lurking in the dark depths, and I can also feel the real world wrapped in a thick veil. Beyond that veil, emotionless eyes watch us…”

As he finished, Osta panted heavily. Lumian patiently waited for the impostor warlock to catch his breath. Nearly a minute later, Osta exhaled, saying, “In the market district and Quartier de l’Observatoire, it’s fine, but in Underground Trier, I can often sense the end of certain paths. In places I can’t see, some creature beckons me to come closer.

“I wonder what would happen to me if I truly stepped into that darkness.

A fine mystical sensor indeed… Lumian silently mocked his Hunter’s Spirit Vision while also feeling that a Secrets Suppliant wasn’t as useless as Osta claimed.

Osta continued, “Sometimes, when I see tourists entering the catacombs with white candles, I get these delusions. I think it’s a ritual that forms a magical bond with some hidden entity, protecting the tourists from being devoured by the darkness or spirited away by the dead.”

Lumian was taken aback, inwardly sighing.

In terms of mysticism, a Secrets Suppliant is quite potent… It's just that they're not skilled in combat…

From Osta's account, Lumian suspected that carrying a lit white candle into the catacombs was indeed a ritual that allowed visitors to evade the hidden perils there.

The tomb administrators likely knew this, but in pursuit of profit, they not only kept silent but also encouraged higher-ups to promote the catacombs as a tourist attraction.

Lumian remembered his sister Aurore's frequent lament: "Money changes people."

I wonder, at a lower level, which one can bring about a person's change more effectively: potions, boons, or money… Lumian muttered silently with a teasing attitude.

He then asked Osta, "Have you sensed any danger lurking in the market district's darkness?"

Osta's face shifted as he replied in a grave tone, "I dare not approach the burned-out house in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman."

At the edge of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, near Rue des Blouses Blanches, stood a scorched, uninhabited house. The district's Members of Parliament had long demanded its demolition and conversion into a commercial building, but for some reason, the proposal never reached City Hall's agenda. Even after a decade, the six-story eyesore still stood.

I didn't feel anything when I passed by this morning… Lumian turned and headed for the door.

"I'll visit you again. I hope you won't disappoint me."

Osta, his shoulder wound now bandaged, flashed an ingratiating smile.

"Rest assured, I'll provide you with an answer."

After leaving Osta's room, Lumian suddenly quickened his pace. In a

blink, he crouched in the shadows of the stairs leading to the rooftop, silently eyeing the tightly shut wooden door.

Nearly half an hour later, having confirmed that nothing was amiss, he slowly descended the stairs with Le Petit Trierien.

It was then that he finally heard his stomach growl.

Gazing at the makeshift barricade of rocks, logs, mud slabs, and assorted items with a narrow opening as a passage, Lumian spotted a nearby bakery and spent three licks to buy half a kilogram of croissants.

He also sampled Trier's distinctive fruit juice soda.

The effervescent liquid swirled as the currant syrup dispersed like clouds within it. The concoction set him back 13 coppet.

If he returned the soda bottle, he could reclaim 3 coppet.

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

Before Lumian could enter the basement bar, the noise and chaos reached his ears.

Just past nine o'clock, nearly twenty people packed the intimate space. They either sat at the bar or huddled around a few small round tables, their attention riveted on the bartender. The stylish, ponytailed bartender explained the contraption on the bar to an unfamiliar male patron.

"This is called the Idiot Instrument. It tests your intelligence.

"Care to give it a shot?"

The man in the dark jacket seemed intrigued and asked, "How do I try?"

The bartender gestured at the exposed rubber tube with a solemn expression.

"Blow here until bubbles form in the glass jar above.

“Your ability to produce bubbles and their size determine the final test results.”

Without hesitation, the man picked up the rubber hose and blew into it.

As light-green bubbles emerged from the glass jar atop the machine, everyone in the bar leaped to their feet, applauding wildly and exclaiming, “Welcome, idiot!” The man looked bewildered for a moment before grasping the joke. His face flushed crimson.

He shot a fierce glare at the bartender and the rowdy patrons before stifling his anger and muttering, “Interesting. This prank is really something. I’ll bring a few friends to try it tomorrow.”

Is this what friends are for? Lumian sneered inwardly. He pulled a barstool over and sat down, telling the bartender, “Give me the usual a glass of fennel absinthe.”

The bartender grinned. “This one’s on me.

Your machine’s fantastic. Word of its mystical powers has spread, and people have come specifically to check it out. My business has doubled since then.

“By the way, I’m Pavard Neeson, the owner of this bar and an amateur painter. What should I call you?”

“Ciel,” Lumian replied, his smile unwavering.

He noticed the difference between Trieriens and the villagers of Cordu.

In Cordu, anyone who fell victim to such a prank would seek revenge. But Trieriens enjoyed finding new “victims” and watching them get caught, easing their own embarrassment.

“You’ve got a keen brain. You’re better at pranks than many Trieriens.” To the native bartender, Pavard Neeson, this compliment was high praise.

He slid a slender glass filled with a light green, hallucinogenic liquid

toward Lumian. Taking a sip of the absinthe, Lumian savored the faint bitterness that stirred his senses and made him feel alive.

He closed his eyes, soaking in the sensation before asking, “I have a few friends who arrived in Trier before me, but I don’t have their contact information. Is there a way to find them?”

Pavard Neeson wiped a glass.

“If you’re wealthy, advertise with the Journal de Trier. If you’re not, hire a bounty hunter or information broker to see if they’ll take the job. If you’re broke, go back to your room and sleep. Maybe one day, you’ll bump into your friends on the street.”

“Any recommendations? A reliable bounty hunter or information broker?” Lumian wasn’t short on cash for now and might receive a ‘donation’ from a generous benefactor at any moment, but advertising in newspapers was beyond his means. It’d cost at least 3,000 verl d’or. Smaller publications might be cheaper, but they were ineffective.

Moreover, he couldn’t risk alarming Guillaume Bénet and Madame Pualis if they read the papers. Pavard nodded, saying, “Anthony Reid lives in Room 5 on the hotel’s third floor. You can pay him a visit tomorrow. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“He’s a retired military man turned information broker. Highly trustworthy.” Lumian took note of the room number and name. He lifted the absinthe, swirling it gently before raising his glass to honor the bartender.

…

Upon returning to Room 207, Lumian didn’t waste any time resting.

He drew the tattered curtains and performed the Summoning Dance in the cramped space. His goal was to see what strange creatures he could attract in Auberge du Coq Doré and Rue Anarchie, preparing for potential future attacks, pursuits, or ambushes.

wasn’t According to Osta, aside from the burned-out building, there were no particularly dangerous locations in the market district.

Moreover, it was quite a distance from Rue Anarchie, making it unlikely for it to be affected by a Sequence 9 equivalent-Dancer. After all, this the ruins of Cordu Village, where the power of inevitability was pervasive. Disregarding the more dangerous ones and those that Dancers couldn't attract, Lumian believed that even if the strange creatures that appeared later were stronger than him, it would be nearly impossible for them to force themselves on him. The bluish-black symbol representing the great existence and the black thorn pattern from inevitability would be enough to deter them from acting recklessly. In a dance that alternated between madness and distortion, Lumian's spirituality merged with the stirred power of nature, stealthily spreading in all directions.

Before long, he sensed watchful eyes upon him. Several translucent, blurry figures floated around the room.

Some resembled humans, seemingly residual obsessions lingering after death. Others were grotesque, appearing like bottles or stacked meatballs, possibly originating from the corresponding spirit world.

Lumian didn't recognize any of them and couldn't determine their traits or abilities.

At that moment, a figure emerged from the tattered curtains.

Slightly translucent, it was a woman with long turquoise hair interwoven with green leaves that enveloped its body and concealed vital areas. The rest of its fair, smooth skin was exposed, setting one's heart racing and imagination ablaze.

With emerald-green eyes, red lips, and an exquisite, alluring face, a single glance at Lumian stirred an inexplicable excitement within him.

...

Chapter 119 - 119 Strange Creature

Chapter 119 Strange Creature

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt his hair stand on end as a chill ran down his spine. He experienced a strong sense of impending danger.

Subconsciously, he pulled out Fallen Mercury from his waist, ready to rip off the black cloth wrapped around it at a moment's notice.

The translucent figure with turquoise hair and leafy coverings floated in midair, scrutinizing Lumian in the room. Its emerald-green eyes shifted between a misty and smiling expression, reminiscent of a deep vortex enticing the human soul to sink into it.

On one hand, Lumian experienced a familiar yet foreign urge that swept through his mind, disrupting most of his thoughts. On the other hand, he couldn't help but feel fear, akin to a flying insect encountering a spider spinning its web.

He slowed down his dance, prepared to stop at any moment.

The translucent female figure displayed an eager expression, but it instinctively sensed that something was amiss and hesitated to approach Lumian.

Sometimes it leaned forward, sometimes it retreated into the curtains, but ultimately, it did nothing.

After Lumian finished his Summoning Dance, he heard a faint sound in his ears. It was so close it seemed like it was right next door, causing the strange creatures lingering in the room to vanish one by one.

The last to leave was the female figure with turquoise hair and leafy coverings. It appeared both reluctant and perplexed.

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief and closed his eyes, quietly listening to the indistinct voices within him.

He couldn't make out a single word but yearned to hear each one clearly.

After a moment, Lumian opened his eyes and gazed at the window obscured by the tattered curtain. He muttered to himself, What was that?

His intuition told him that the translucent female figure was far more powerful than the other summoned strange creatures. It wasn't something Beyonders at his level could handle.

If not for the corruption sealed within his body and the bluish-black pattern on his chest deterring spiritual creatures from subconsciously approaching him even without activation, Lumian suspected something might have happened to him.

This piqued his curiosity.

How do other Dancers survive?

He had only dared to perform the Summoning Dance after confirming the area wasn't too dangerous, yet something nearly happened. How could other Dancers avoid such risks?

Is it because I obtained my boon through theft and lack some mystical knowledge, or is it because other Dancers can only attract strange creatures similar to themselves? Additionally, the Summoning Dance comes from a hidden existence, so there shouldn't be any problems under normal circumstances? Lumian pondered for a moment. The more he thought about it, the more he felt he was the anomaly.

He believed that the corruption in his body was on an extremely high level. Even sealed, it could occasionally attract strange and perilous entities.

Thankfully, the corruption also provides protection… Lumian exhaled, stowed away Fallen Mercury, and lit the iron-black carbide lamp. He sat at the wooden table and flipped through Aurore's notebook.

Reading the mysticism notebook from back to front was excruciating. Lacking the corresponding knowledge, he would occasionally feel illiterate. He had no choice but to take out Aurore's earliest notebook and memorize the corresponding symbols' symbolism and mystical meaning.

However, Lumian couldn't sit down and learn bit by bit from front to back. He believed that if Aurore's witchcraft notebook truly concealed crucial information, it would definitely be in the content from the past year or two when abnormalities gradually appeared in Cordu Village and the shepherds began their "hunt."

After nearly two hours of struggling with the knowledge known as Lightning, Lumian admitted defeat and decided to continue the next night.

He washed up briefly and lay on the bed.

Recalling the strange creature he had just summoned, Lumian placed Fallen Mercury beside the pillow, feeling apprehensive.

Before leaving Cordu, he had inspected the wicked pewter-black dirk and confirmed that the fate it had exchanged from the flaming monster was "pain from immolation." The darkness gradually deepened, but Rue Anarchie never experienced a moment of peace. Singing, shouting, cursing, fighting, chasing, coughing, crying, and exercising filled the air, composing a nocturnal symphony. Lumian had grown accustomed to the noise, which even made him feel alive. Unknowingly, he drifted off to sleep.

At 6 a.m., the distant cathedral chimed, reminiscent of Cordu.

Lumian woke up punctually but was reluctant to open his eyes.

After a few minutes, he sat up and fastened Fallen Mercury to his waist.

His dreams had been chaotic throughout the night, but nothing out of the ordinary occurred. “Am I overthinking it?” Lumian muttered.

He opened the door and walked into the nearest washroom. Using the morning light streaming through the window, he examined himself in the mirror.

Compared to the same moment the day before, he hadn’t changed at all.

The color and length of his hair were external factors and wouldn’t reset with his physical condition.

Lumian bent down and brushed his teeth.

As he rinsed his mouth, he caught sight of Charlie entering from the corner of his eye. “Don’t you live on the fifth floor?” Lumian spat out the liquid and turned to ask Charlie. Charlie had changed into a yellowed white shirt with the cuffs rolled up to his elbows. He yawned and said, “Can you believe it? Those guys are already up before six. The washroom on the fifth floor is packed!” He then grinned.

“I still like this washroom on the second floor the most. Do you know why? It’s clean! “Although that bastard Laurent has very high eyebrows and doesn’t know how to help his mother at all, he has his strengths. He loves cleanliness. As long as he’s in the apartment, he cleans the room every day and takes care of the washroom too. Haha, could it be that he can’t use the toilet if it’s dirty?” So he’s the one cleaning… Lumian was surprised.

His impression of the young man named Laurent had been that he was cold, haughty, and impeccably dressed. He clearly thought highly of himself and seemed oblivious to his mother’s plight. He didn’t strike Lumian as someone who’d clean a bathroom. Previously, Lumian had assumed that the other tenants on the second floor had grown fed up with the landlord’s penny-pinching ways and had taken it upon themselves to clean their shared spaces. Noticing Charlie’s haggard face, as though he’d been up all night, Lumian grinned and asked, you hit up Rue de la Muraille last night?”

“Did Rue de la Muraille was Trier’s infamous red-light district. “How can I afford to go to Rue de la Muraille? Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

But I’ll definitely go there one of these days!” Charlie clenched his teeth and continued, “I got back to the hotel at 10 p.m. last night. Then I went to the underground bar and drank with the guys till midnight. In the wee hours, I even had a… shall we say, quite a vivid dream. Ciel, our names sound the same, but they’re spelled differently. Can you imagine how ecstatic I was in that dream? And when I woke up, how crushed and how… uh, uh…”

“Empty?” Lumian supplied the adjective.

“Yes, yes, yes!” Charlie walked to the toilet and unfastened his belt.

His already narrow eyes crinkled with satisfaction.

Lumian pinched his nose and scoffed. “You had a wet dream?”

Charlie shivered, shook his right hand, and laughed.

“It was the most lifelike dream I’ve ever had.

The woman in it was far more beautiful than any on Rue de la Muraille. She was so tender and passionate. I never wanted to wake up.”

“Well, clearly you couldn’t hold out for too long. Waking up was a mercy,” Lumian jested. Charlie didn’t bother to argue, and instead said earnestly, “I’m planning to head to Rue du Rossignol on Sundays after I get paid and when I’m off work. There are a few dance halls there with some affordable pussies. A coworker told me that I only need 52 coppet to treat myself. “But right now, I’ve lost interest.” Suddenly, Charlie’s excitement surged. Lowering his voice, he confided in Lumian, “You know what? A wealthy guest at the hotel has been treating me really well, asking me to deliver food and help tidy up the room.”

“A man?” Lumian inquired with a hint of mischief. Charlie hurriedly shook his head. “No, it’s a lady. I think she’s taken a liking to me. I’m torn. If she makes a proposal, should I compromise my principles?

You know these sorts of things are pretty common in Trier. If my ticket to my first big payday, I could soon own my own hotel."

she's "I figured you wouldn't hesitate." Though they'd only known each other for two days, Lumian was convinced that Charlie's moral compass was quite flexible.

Charlie sighed, visibly troubled, and admitted, "She's in her fifties."

Lumian let out a long "oh" and his expression conveyed his thoughts.

Bidding Charlie goodbye, Lumian returned to his room to change into a jacket, pants, and other attire suited for Rue Anarchie. He spent 6 coppet on a scallion pancake and 1 lick on half a liter of Apple Whiskey Sour. Settling into a corner of the street, he leisurely ate his breakfast.

Shadows from the buildings on either side cloaked him as he relished the flavors of onions and flour, observing the hawkers, women shopping for groceries, hustling workers, children scavenging for trash, and a barricade in a nearby alley.

It was 9 a.m. when Lumian finally rose, dusted himself off, and returned to Auberge du Coq Doré. He climbed to the third floor and knocked on Room 5's door. The information broker, Anthony Reid, resided here.

...

After a sequence of knocks, a composed male voice with a West Midseashire Coast accent "Please come in." Lumian turned the handle and pushed the door replied, open. The first thing that hit him was a faintly acrid, minty odor, likely meant to repel insects.

Then, he saw a man in his forties seated by the bed.

The man wore a military-green shirt, matching pants, and laceless leather boots. His hair was cropped to a fine buzz cut.

He didn't possess the tidy, efficient air of a veteran. His light yellow hairline had receded considerably, leaving a vast expanse of forehead. His face had grown plump, his beard meticulously shaven.

His skin was slightly oily and his nose pores clogged. He appeared somewhat guileless and unsophisticated. As Anthony Reid turned to face Lumian, his dark brown eyes mirrored Lumian's figure. For some reason, Lumian suddenly felt a twinge of unease.

Chapter 120 - 120 Lunatic's Ravings

Chapter 120 Lunatic's Ravings

Anthony Reid regarded Lumian coolly and inquired, "What's the problem?"

"I heard from Pavard that you're a reliable information broker." Lumian quickly disclosed his source to avoid wasting time on mutual probing.

With his plump face, Anthony Reid nodded knowingly and gestured towards a chair at the center of the room.

"What information do you need? Or rather, what information would you like me to uncover?"

Lumian felt a twinge of unease as he faced Anthony Reid, who exuded an air of honesty and dependability. He took a seat and stated succinctly, "I'm searching for two individuals."

"Names, appearances, and distinguishing features." Anthony Reid shot a glance at Lumian's left hip.

Lumian reflected for a moment before answering, "One is Guillaume Bénet, formerly a padre of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. The other is Pualis de Roquefort. Over a month ago, she arrived in Trier with her husband, Béost, their butler Louis Lund, and her lady's maid, Cathy.

"I don't have any pictures of them. All I can tell you is that Guillaume Bénet has short black hair and blue eyes. He possesses a solemn demeanor and strong ambitions. His most notable feature is his aquiline nose. Pualis has long, brown hair and bright brown eyes. Her

eyebrows are lighter and thinner, and she exudes an elegant yet alluring aura…"

Anthony Reid listened intently before rising from his chair. He crossed the room to a wooden table near the window, opened a drawer, and retrieved a stack of white paper and a sharpened pencil.

In no time, he sketched two portraits.

"See if these resemble them." Anthony Reid handed the sketches to Lumian.

Lumian inspected the drawings and was struck by their vivid, lifelike quality. Aside from the absence of color, they were nearly indistinguishable from photographs.

He looked up at Anthony Reid in astonishment, remarking, "Uncanny. How can you reproduce their likeness so accurately based on my brief description?"

He had assumed Anthony Reid would draft several sketches for him to review before finalizing the portraits.

Anthony Reid cracked a rare smile.

"I recreated the images from the official wanted posters.

"The authorities are searching for them as well."

No wonder… Suddenly, it all made sense to Lumian.

Both Padre Guillaume Bénet and Madame Pualis were devotees of evil gods who had been granted boons. Once Ryan and his companions reported the situation, it was bound to attract the necessary attention!

With this realization, Lumian's disquiet grew.

I must be wanted too… Did Anthony Reid see my portrait? Does he recognize me? Trying to maintain his composure, Lumian queried the information broker, "I'm not surprised. I want to know the value of their bounties."

“Guillaume Bénet has a bounty of 20,000 verl d’or. Each piece of information is worth 500 verl d’or. The same goes for Pualis,” Anthony Reid replied nonchalantly.

Lumian smirked. “If you uncover any useful information, you can cash in on the bounty twice.”

He was implying that Anthony could claim one share from the authorities and another from him.

Anthony nodded in agreement.

“I’ll take your assignment. 500 verl d’or, with 100 upfront.

“These are my terms. If you can’t accept them, find another information broker or bounty hunter.”

Lumian knew there was no room for negotiation. He could only nod slightly and concede, “No problem.” Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Just as he was about to hand over the money, a gunshot suddenly erupted from outside the window.

Anthony Reid’s entire body shuddered as if confronted with his mortal nemesis. He instinctively ducked beneath the wooden table for cover.

Lumian was taken aback.

Wasn’t this reaction a bit extreme? Wasn’t this typical of life in Rue Anarchie?

Gunshots, brawls, and large-scale skirmishes were commonplace here. Those who lived in this area should have adapted by now, only needing to steer clear of the windows to avoid stray bullets.

Before long, the commotion died down. Anthony Reid took a few seconds to regain his composure before emerging from under the table.

He offered Lumian a sheepish grin and explained, “I apologize. A few years back during the war, I suffered from post-traumatic stress on

the battlefield and had no choice but to retire and return to Trier."

Then why choose to live in Rue Anarchie, where gunfire was a regular occurrence? Lumian didn't press further. He had no interest in Anthony Reid's psychological issues. He withdrew a 50-verl d'or note and gently traced his finger over the image of Levanx, the bustling commercial streets, and the silhouettes of passing merchants.

Feeling the remaining texture, Lumian handed the grayish-blue banknote, two Louis d'or, and two five-verl coins engraved with the Sunbird to Anthony Reid.

His wallet felt a third lighter, and he couldn't shake the sense of money slipping through his fingers.

As he examined the Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman behind the banknotes, Anthony Reid bent his finger and flicked the surface to verify its authenticity under the sunlight. Satisfied, he pocketed the money and inquired, "Do you want to check in with me periodically for updates, or should I have an address? If I come across any information, I can drop it off at your place."

"I'm in room 207." Lumian knew he couldn't conceal his stay at the Auberge du Coq Doré from Anthony Reid, so he provided his room number.

Upon leaving Room 305, Lumian's expression grew increasingly solemn as he muttered to himself, I need to be extra cautious in the coming days to prevent Anthony Reid from betraying me… Perhaps I should find an opportunity to demonstrate my strength in front of him, convincing him that I won't let any transgressions go unpunished.

As Lumian mulled over his thoughts, he made his way towards the stairs. Suddenly, he heard someone exclaiming, laughing, and sobbing, "I'm dying, I'm dying!"

Lumian glanced in the direction of the voice and spotted a man squatting by the door of Room 310.

The man wore a filthy linen shirt and yellow pants. His unkempt

black hair cascaded down to his shoulders.

At that moment, he clutched his head with both hands and stared at the ground, repeatedly muttering, “I’m dying, I’m dying!”

His voice oscillated between fear and insanity.

The occasionally lucid madman that Charlie mentioned? Lumian sized him up for a few seconds, leaned in, and asked curiously, “Why do you think you’re about to die? Do you have a terminal illness?”

Without raising his head, the man continued to yell, “I’m dying, I’m dying!” Lumian smirked and strode past him into Room 310, its wooden door flung wide open.

The room’s layout mirrored his own in 207. It was relatively tidy, save for the inevitable bugs that couldn’t be evicted.

Lumian’s gaze swept over the kerosene lamp, a multitude of books, fountain pens, suitcases, and other belongings. The madman stood up and declared in a daze, “This is my territory.”

“I know,” Lumian replied with a grin. “But if you’re about to die and you don’t have any children or relatives, why not use your inheritance to help poor neighbors like us?”

He observed that the madman was only in his late twenties. His bushy, black beard had been left unshaven for who knows how long, causing his blue eyes to appear as if they were buried deep within a forest.

The madman stared blankly for a few moments before clutching his hair and screaming in anguish, “They’re all dead. They’re all dead! I saw the Montsouris ghost. They’re all dead. I’m about to die too!”

The Montsouris ghost? Lumian finally heard something distinct from the madman.

…

He had deliberately provoked the other man to see if he could elicit a different reaction. The positive feedback made him feel as if he were

making progress with digesting the potion.

One of the acting principles of a Provoker is that provocation is only a means and not an end? Lumian studied the madman thoughtfully and inquired, “Why would the Montsouris ghost cause them to die and push you to death’s door?”

The madman lowered his head and mumbled, “Anyone who sees the Montsouris ghost will die. Their family will die too. They’ll die within a year!”

Is this the madman’s delusion, or did something like this actually happen? If so, was it a curse? Lumian prodded, “Where did you encounter the Montsouris ghost?”

“Underground, underground! It’s beneath the market district!” The madman crouched down again, his back pressed against the wall as he hugged his trembling body. The underworld beneath the market district? Couldn’t he just report it to the two Churches and have them send people to eradicate the unclean beings? Lumian mused silently. Seeing that the madman had reverted to his “I’m dying, I’m dying” state, he abandoned his pursuit of the matter, exited Room 310, and descended the stairs.

Tomorrow was Sunday. Lumian planned to visit the Mason café in Quartier du Jardin Botanique at noon to familiarize himself with the area. In the afternoon, he’d head to the underground cemetery to see if Osta had received a “reply” from the gathering’s organizer.

The alleys around Rue Anarchie were cluttered with obstacles made of rocks, wood, branches, and assorted debris. Even on the main road, one could stumble upon them from time to time. However, there was already a path wide enough for two carriages to pass through. These were called street barricades, and they could be found in many districts. Some bore the marks of smoke and fire, while others still had remnants of dried blood. They were a unique feature of Trier, contrasting starkly with the pedestrian streets of the arcade.

Lumian stepped over a low point at the edge of emerged from the dim alley, and a barricade, entered the street.

He then made his way towards the public carriage sign, intending to take such transportation to Quartier du Jardin Botanique. As he walked, Lumian spotted numerous vagrants lying in corners, basking in the sun and picking at lice. All were filthy, gaunt, and devoid of energy. This brought back memories of his own days as a vagrant.

Unlike the Loen Kingdom, which prohibited vagrants from sleeping on streets and in parks, the Intis Republic had no such rules in place.

...

However, they were forbidden from entering fee-paying establishments or private venues. They often mocked Loen for its lack of culture.

Lost in thought, Lumian's eyes narrowed.

He sensed someone was tailing him!

Chapter 121 - 121 Salle de Bal Brise

Chapter 121 Salle de Bal Brise

Lumian didn't swivel or hesitate, striding confidently toward the public carriage sign. He scanned the area nonchalantly, his eyes settling on the glass window of a nearby café.

Him in a dark jacket was reflected there, and not far from him, another figure in a canvas jacket and a cap.

Lumian averted his eyes, abruptly quickening his pace as if trying to catch the departing double-decker carriage.

As expected, he felt the man in the blue cap break into a jog.

The public carriage glided away silently, turning down the street. Lumian knew he couldn't catch up and halted abruptly.

Using the shop windows lining the street, Lumian caught sight of the cap-wearing man stumbling to a stop. Seizing the moment, he spun around and surveyed the dance hall opposite.

As Lumian passed the public horse stop sign, he gave an almost imperceptible nod.

Continuing on, he ducked into a shadowy alley blocked by a barricade.

The man in the cap pursued him, vaulting the ramshackle barricade with ease, but Lumian had disappeared.

His quarry seemed to have evaporated into thin air.

Just as the cap-wearing man prepared to give chase, Lumian sprang

from his hiding place in the corner, like a predator pouncing on its prey. He seized the man's shoulders and yanked him backward, driving his knee into his back.

Crack!

Lumian's knee connected with the man's waist, contorting his face in pain and buckling his knees.

He collapsed to the ground with a thud, stirring up a cloud of dust.

Lumian crouched and gripped the back of the stalker's head. In a gravelly voice, he demanded, "Who got you to follow me?"

"I'm not! I'm just taking a shortcut!" the man in the cap protested anxiously.

Lumian chuckled, grabbed his head, and slammed it into the ground.

The man in the cap howled in pain, his forehead bruised, swollen, and bloody.

"Who sent you to follow me?" Lumian pressed.

The man in the cap felt indignant.

"I'm not following you! I don't even know you!"

"Alright." Lumian released his grip.

In an instant, he struck the stalker behind the ear.

The man in the cap crumpled, unconscious.

Lumian hoisted him up and thoughtfully lowered his hat to cover his tightly shut eyes.

Then, as if aiding a drunken friend, he strode out of the alley and rounded the corner. There stood an entrance to the underworld.

Lumian had "waited" for the stalker in the alley knowing he could slip underground if needed, and the setting was suitably "quiet."

When the man in the cap came to, his vision was swallowed by darkness. Only a faint light in the distance weakly revealed his surroundings. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Clang! Clang! Clang! Clang! The sound pierced his ears, approaching and receding through layers of obstacles.

As a native of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, he was no stranger to such a scene. He suspected he'd been taken underground. A steam subway passed through the "street" next door, providing the faint light.

Lumian sat in the shadows, eyeing the man in the cap. He grinned and said, "You have two choices now. Either tell me who sent you to follow me, or I'll take you deeper underground and bury you there. You should know that many people go missing in Trier every day. You won't be the only one."

Seeing the stalker's silence, Lumian knew his mental defenses were wavering. He added, "As for me, I'll navigate these underground streets and move to another district."

Realizing Lumian had an escape plan and was ready to silence him forever, the man in the cap's fear overwhelmed him. He blurted, "I-it's Baron Brignais!"

Baron Brignais? The boss of the Savoie Mob and a creditor of Osta Trul? Why is he tracking me? I met him at the apartment on Rue des Blouses Blanches last night and didn't even speak to him… Lumian was baffled and at a loss. This convinced him the man in the lying. If he wanted to fabricate a story, he cap wasn't wouldn't have chosen a mastermind that Lumian couldn't fathom.

Lumian frowned, asking, "Why is he following me?"

"I don't know," the man in the cap replied, trembling. "He just wants me to follow you and see where you'll go."

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, "Where is Baron Brignais now?"

"If there's nothing else, he's usually at the Salle de Bal Brise on

Avenue du Marché." The man in the cap strained to read Lumian's expression, but the light was too dim. Salle de Bal Brise? Lumian recalled the landmark buildings in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman from his recent recon.

Avenue du Marché was the main road connecting Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman to the Suhit steam locomotive station, stretching two kilometers. Salle de Bal Brise was near the market district, its unique statue at the entrance unforgettable. Lumian's lips curled into a smile as he told the stalker, "Take me there. I want to talk to Baron Brignais."

The man in the cap sighed in relief, feeling as if his life had been spared.

Who would hold the upper hand or be "accidentally" killed at Salle de Bal Brise was no longer his concern.

Salle de Bal Brise occupied the bottom two floors of a khaki-colored building. The second floor housed a café, while the first was a bustling dance hall-though it had just opened and few customers were present. A white, spherical statue composed of countless skulls greeted visitors at the entrance. Inscribed in Intis were the words: "They sleep here, waiting for the arrival of happiness and hope[1]."

Lumian surveyed the scene and trailed his 'guide' around the statue to the dance hall entrance.

Two burly men in white shirts and black coats stood guard. They simultaneously rested their right hands on their waists and questioned the man in the cap, "Maxime, who is he?"

"H-he's here to see Baron Brignais," Maxime stammered.

Under the guards' suspicious scrutiny, Lumian replied coolly, "It's up to Baron Brignais to decide if he wants to see me or not, not you. Do you want to bear his wrath?" After a moment's hesitation, one of the guards turned and entered the dance hall.

As they waited, Lumian casually asked Maxime, "What's up with the statue and the inscription? They don't match the dance hall at all."

Of course, it was cool. Maxime nervously glanced at the grinning Lumian and explained, “This was originally an moved annex to the cathedral. Later, the bones were to the catacombs, leaving the area empty. Then, this building was constructed. “Although those bones were purified or just ashes, the Savoie Mob found it too creepy after buying this place. We had no choice but to commission a statue symbolizing death and an inscription representing the dead to appease any lingering bones that might remain underground and unexcavated.” Lumian found the idea of people dancing here amusing, considering it could disturb the skeletons below, essentially dancing on their heads.

Just then, the guard returned and informed Lumian, “Baron Brignais will meet you at the café on the second floor.”

“Alright.” Lumian held his head high and strutted into the Salle de Bal Brise.

First, he noticed the dance floor encircled by railings and the half-height wooden stage up ahead for singers. Then, his attention was drawn to the haphazard seating and the various perfumes and cosmetics wafting through the air.

Maxime hesitated before following Lumian. He felt compelled to report the situation to the baron, lest he end up missing in the underworld.

Upon reaching the second floor, Lumian recognized the gentleman he had encountered the night before.

In his thirties, the man sported a black, thin-tweed formal suit. His brown hair appeared naturally curly, and his brown eyes held a confident smile. His features were sharply defined. Baron Brignais set down his coffee and grasped the mahogany pipe with his diamond-adorned palm.

...

“What would you like to drink?” He was surprisingly polite and generous.

Eyeing the four thugs with their hands on their waists, Lumian addressed Baron Brignais, “Why did you send someone to follow me?”

last Baron Brignais smiled and admitted candidly, “I saw you at Rue des Blouses Blanches night and again near Rue Anarchie today. The more I observed you, the more familiar you seemed, so I had Maxime follow you to confirm your intentions in the market district.

“You were searching for Osta last night too, weren’t you?”

“He tried to scam me out of my money,” Lumian replied before inquiring, “Why do I seem familiar to you?”

Baron Brignais took a puff from his pipe and grinned.

“To experienced individuals like us, your actions can hardly be considered a disguise.

“Once we grow suspicious and connect the dots, we’ll naturally recognize you—Lumian Lee, a wanted criminal with a 3,000 verl d’or bounty.”

My bounty is only 3,000 verl d’or? Lumian’s initial reaction was confusion.

As the source of Cordu’s time loop, how could his official bounty be lower than that of the padre and Madame Pualis?

“However, merely providing information about you is worth 500 verl d’or,” Baron Brignais added with a smile. “Young man, you need a book called Men’s Aesthetics. Don’t be embarrassed. In Trier, it’s quite normal for men to wear makeup. It’ll help you conceal your true identity.”

…

This “gentleman” had also applied eyeliner and powder.

Lumian smirked.

“Are you planning to capture me for the bounty?”

[1] This quote is from an inscription on the entrance of the Salle de Bal Brise in Paris during the Victorian era. I made some modifications to the original inscription. The ballroom was indeed built on the site of an old cemetery, and even used the stones left behind after the cemetery was relocated. It's like dancing on graves. The previous mention of walking turtles also refers to events that really happened during that time.

Chapter 122 - 122 Each With Their Own Plans

Chapter 122 Each With Their Own Plans

Baron Brignais didn't immediately respond to Lumian's question. Setting down his mahogany-colored pipe, he calmly took a sip of coffee.

After a moment, he smiled and said, "I'm not an official. I have no obligation to help them capture wanted criminals.

"Turning over anyone who's wanted would cost my Savoie Mob a great deal of valuable talent.

"More importantly, your bounty isn't impressive. It's far from tempting me. However, if you cause any trouble in the market district, I won't hesitate to tie you up and hand you over to the police for a considerable bounty."

The unspoken message from Baron Brignais was clear: There were many wanted criminals in the Savoie Mob. As long as you behaved, he could turn a blind eye.

Lumian understood. "You had someone tail me to confirm my intentions?"

Baron Brignais nodded approvingly.

"I'm glad you comprehend."

Lumian scanned the faces of the thugs, then calmly stated, "You've seen my wanted poster, so you've seen the others.

"My sole purpose in Trier is to find them."

“Excellent.” Baron Brignais recognized that Lumian had no intention of crossing the Savoie Mob.

He gestured to the chair opposite the booth.

“Care for a cup of coffee?”

“No need.” Lumian declined the offer. “I just want to locate those people as soon as possible.”

He spread his arms wide and proclaimed, “Praise the Sun for allowing us to live in the light!”

With that, Lumian turned and strode toward the stairs, unconcerned about the hidden guns of the thugs.

Once his footsteps vanished down the staircase, Baron Brignais turned to the reserved Maxime and said gently, “Tell me exactly how you were discovered and coerced by him. Spare no detail.”

With the mahogany-colored pipe back in his mouth, Baron Brignais leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes.

Trembling, Maxime recounted his ordeal from start to finish.

After hearing the account, one of the thugs asked indignantly, “Baron, why didn’t you teach that punk a lesson? Why let him walk away so easily?”

Baron Brignais tapped the mahogany pipe on the table twice and inquired with a smile, “Teach him a lesson? Do you know his Sequence, his abilities, or his weapons?”

“I don’t,” the thug admitted.

Baron Brignais rose, gripping the mahogany-colored pipe and smashing it against the thug’s head.

Blood flowed from the gash in the thug’s forehead, but he didn’t dare to cry out or dodge. He stood there, terror etched on his face.

Baron Brignais withdrew the pipe and regarded him coldly.

“You dare challenge him without knowing anything? Go ahead, take my place. Let’s see how long you’ll survive!”

Ignoring the thug’s response, Baron Brignais smiled again.

As he wiped his pipe with a folded white handkerchief from his chest pocket, he casually remarked, “Didn’t you notice something off about Lumian Lee’s wanted poster?

“The difference between the bounties for capturing him and providing information is too small. One is a mere 3,000 verl d’or, the other 500. “What does that mean? It means the authorities don’t want us handling Lumian Lee directly. They want us to provide intel so they can act themselves.

“Two possible reasons come to mind. First, Lumian Lee is incredibly dangerous. Allowing bounty hunters to pursue him would cause widespread casualties and unnecessary losses. Second, he possesses something valuable that officials don’t want to end up in the hands of the bounty hunters.

“If I had just taught Lumian Lee a lesson, the second scenario would’ve been fine. But if it’s the first possibility, what do you think our chances of survival are?”

The thug nodded repeatedly, not daring to argue.

Baron Brignais sat back down, picked up his coffee cup, and continued, “Moreover, based on how he dealt with Maxime and his audacity to approach me directly, I can tell that he’s ruthless, decisive, and utterly confident in his abilities. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“I wager that if I had threatened him, demanding his total submission, he would have attacked without hesitation. He’s the type who won’t hesitate to kill.

“Heh, this is both his strength and his weakness. Unaware of my capabilities or the number of traps laid here, he still dares to confront me with the intention of killing me to ensure my silence. Sooner or later, he’ll pay the price.”

Baron Brignais sipped his coffee and closed his eyes.

“Let’s wait and see if we should offer him assistance and protection. This ruthless country boy with a warrant on his head could prove to be a very useful weapon.’ Outside the Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian glanced back at the white spherical statue made of skulls and headed toward the nearest public carriage station.

On his way here, he had already devised a plan to deal with them, but ultimately didn’t execute it.

He had expected that if Baron Brignais threatened him with the wanted poster or showed any hostility, he would feign fear and reveal that he was wanted for stealing a powerful Beyonder weapon from Cordu’s ruins.

He’d offer to hand it over in exchange for protection.

If Baron Brignais was strong and confident, and allowed Lumian to approach with the weapon, Lumian would launch a fake assassination attempt, a ruse to actually hand over the Fallen Mercury to the other party.

In that case, the unsuspecting Baron Brignais would become the evil dirk’s puppet due to his gloveless hand. Having interacted with and occasionally “communicated” with Fallen Mercury for some time, Lumian had earned a degree of control over it. As long as it didn’t conflict with its instinct to find a knife wielder, it would follow Lumian’s orders, even when in someone else’s hands.

Eventually, Baron Brignais would abandon his animosity and become an ally. After a few days, when no one suspected Lumian, the baron would mysteriously vanish into the depths of Underground Trier with a handful of his subordinates who knew about the matter, never to be seen again.

If Baron Brignais didn’t allow Lumian to approach with Fallen Mercury and instead sent one of his thugs to retrieve the pewter-black dirk, Lumian’s strategy would be to first transform the thug into the wielder. Then, he would use cunning to hide the abnormality

and give Fallen Mercury the corresponding instructions.

In the future, if he made the puppet attack Baron Brignais, the baron would inherit the fate of being the wielder. After completing this task, Lumian would escape if possible or surrender and wait for the fate exchange to finish. Even if the puppet died due to exhaustion, as long as Fallen Mercury wasn't severely damaged, the fate exchange wouldn't stop.

As for the torture he might endure after surrendering, Lumian didn't mind. As long as he wasn't dead, he would fully recover by six the next morning. Regarding the possibility of Baron Brignais becoming a wielder and turning into a zombie with evident signs of decay, Lumian had a solution.

Baron Brignais himself had mentioned that men wearing makeup in Trier was common, and he was likely an avid reader of Men's Aesthetics.

Cologne could mask the stench of decay, and cosmetics could conceal rotting skin! Truth be told, Lumian had struggled with whether to act in the café on the second floor of the Salle de Bal Brise. Ultimately, he decided against it because Baron Brignais had shown a degree of kindness to a wanted criminal like him.

Such kindness from a villain often meant they wanted to exploit him.

If Baron Brignais truly wants to use me, he'll definitely help me conceal my identity and inform me of any unusual movements from bounty hunters in advance… As Lumian thought, he smiled.

This was a good thing!

As for the risk of ending up in a dangerous situation due to being used, Lumian already had a plan.

By then, he should be well-acquainted with Baron Brignais. Familiarity made striking easier! Lumian had only one option when being used for dangerous and unthinkable tasks: kill Baron Brignais.

…

Phew… Lumian exhaled and considered how to better disguise himself.

Initially, he had been confident in his disguise. As long as he didn't "reveal" his connection to the padre and Madame Pualis like he had with Anthony Reid, he wouldn't be recognized. However, the incident with Baron Brignais made him realize that he had underestimated other Beyonders.

If there were Hunters adept at tracking, there might be other Sequences even better at recognizing people.

Baron Brignais or one of his subordinates must possess similar abilities… Lumian nodded imperceptibly.

This was confirmed by the fact that Osta had relocated several times.

With this realization, Lumian halted at the stop sign and boarded a brown double-decker carriage. He paid 30 coppets to secure a spot inside the carriage. Had he chosen a seat on the roof, it would have cost him only 15 coppets. The carriage gradually moved toward Quartier de l'Observatoire.

Lumian gazed out the window, taking in the sight of hurried passersby dressed in various attire.

He observed ringing bicycles, rental carriages from different companies, and humanoid machines composed of gears, valves, pipes, and levers. The metal backpack on its back spewed white steam, propelling it forward step by step.

"Praise the Sun!"

The blazing sun beat down on the pedestrians, their arms outstretched in the street. Clang! Clang! Clang! The nearby cathedral bell chimed. It was noon.

…

Chapter 123 - 123 Organizer

Chapter 123 Organizer

Lumian initially planned to scope out Mason Café before noon to ensure he'd know where to escape after his treatment the following day. However, the incident with Baron Brignais had significantly delayed him. He had no choice but to find Osta Trier first and visit the Quartier du Jardin Botanique later in the afternoon.

Osta was in his usual spot, by the entrance to the catacombs, a bonfire flickering against a stone pillar.

The sound of footsteps approaching caught Osta's attention, and he looked up from under his black hooded robe.

Expecting to make a quick buck, he instead froze in place.

Quickly recovering, he stood up and forced a smile. Before Lumian could speak, Osta preempted him, saying, "I contacted the organizer this morning, told him I have a friend who's into mysticism and wants to attend the gathering. He hasn't replied yet."

Lumian nodded, not questioning how Osta had reached out to the organizer. He walked over to the bonfire, found a rock, and sat down. Casually, he asked, "You've duped plenty of people, but you're always in the same spot. Aren't you scared they'll track you down?"

Osta laughed and replied, "Most of the time, it's not really deception. As a true Beyonder and Secrets Suppliant, using my spirituality to perform divination for them isn't a scam.

"My predictions are far more accurate than most in the mysticism club!

"Sometimes, different folks need different strokes. If I'm ever

exposed, I can always talk my way out."

"How?" Lumian inquired with a smile.

Osta coughed.

"The key is to not be too clear or absolute from the start. That way, you can accuse them of misunderstanding your intentions."

Lumian's smile deepened.

"When it came to the Samaritan Women's Spring, you agreed too easily and made your promise too definite."

Osta's expression fell.

"Yeah, I was cornered by Baron Brignais. I just wanted the money right away.

"The right approach would've been to say I had a solution, but it was difficult to achieve. After you begged me repeatedly, I'd reluctantly accept your cash, warning I couldn't guarantee success…"

Evidently, Osta had pondered his mistakes the previous night, considering how to avoid risks if he had to start over. He grew more animated as he spoke, only stopping when he noticed Lumian's subtle grin.

How could he openly tell this dangerous man how to swindle him? Osta awkwardly smiled and said, "But I doubt this would've fooled you either. You're the most cautious person I've ever met."

Lumian smiled and shook his head. "You really picked the wrong pathway."

Osta didn't dare to carry on. Instead, he asked, "I thought about it last night. I never mentioned gatherings when we talked. I just said I bought the potion's main ingredient. How'd you know it was a mysticism gathering?"

Lumian chuckled.

“It was just a gut feeling.”

Internally, he criticized, Aren’t there only two possibilities? Either a one-on-one deal or a gathering. There was at least a 50% chance of guessing right! It was just a casual comment.

No harm done if I was wrong!

Osta stared at Lumian, increasingly fearful.

It was becoming harder to guess this dangerous man’s Sequence. He appeared skilled in combat, possessed strong spirituality, and had an intuition bordering on precognition.

Lumian savored the warmth of the bonfire and offhandedly asked, “How did you get involved with the mysticism gathering?”

Osta’s face took on a nostalgic expression.

“Everyone comes to Trier with hope. Painters dream of having their works chosen by the World’s Artists Exhibition, but most fail. Every year, some succumb to madness or suicide. “Poor authors living in cheap apartments hope to replicate the success of best-sellers like Aurore and Meniere, but they end up selling their stories to small newspapers. They’re forced to bear scathing reviews like ‘trite,’ ‘mediocre,’ and ‘cliché.’ Many of them have even stooped to writing smut for underground booksellers, risking arrest by detectives.

“Over a decade ago, I came to Trier from Cécilis Province, eager to make a fortune. I lived in a leaky attic, climbed scaffolding, worked in factories, smuggled illegal books, and sold soda. I made some money, but with each passing year, I realized I’d never be rich. Owning a home and enjoying leisurely mornings before work were impossible dreams.

“Eventually, I discovered mysticism magazines like Psychic and Mysteries. Perhaps I still fantasized about gaining superpowers overnight and changing my fate, so I started attending gatherings with fellow enthusiasts. Those magazines would publish the relevant information.

“Earlier this year, a friend from the group asked if I wanted to join a

gathering with real Beyonder powers. I couldn't refuse. You know the rest."

Lumian listened without interrupting Osta's account.

When Osta finished, Lumian asked, "Is that friend the gathering's organizer?"

"No," Osta shook his head. "The organizer goes by 'Mr. K.' He always wears a massive hood, practically covering his entire face."

"Mr. K…" Lumian committed the codename to memory and pondered for a moment. "What abilities has he shown?"

Osta shook his head again.

"I've never seen any. But after becoming a Secrets Suppliant, I sensed I was facing shadows and deep darkness when meeting him. I think he's very powerful." He seems powerful. I wonder who's stronger—him, the padre, or Madame Pualis… Lumian mused before asking curiously, "Did you sense anything special around me?"

Osta hesitated before admitting, "No, but your dangerous aura frightens me more than even Baron Brignais.' Lumian glanced at his left chest and smiled.

"That's good."

Osta was taken aback, not understanding Lumian's meaning.

Lumian changed the subject. "Have you heard of the Montsouris ghost?"

"Of course." As a con artist posing as a warlock, Osta knew many stories about Underground Trier. "Legend has it that an evil spirit lurks in this dark, vast underground. It always travels alone, never seeming to reach its destination. Those who encounter the ghost either die instantly or suffer mysterious deaths along with their families within the year.

"Those who've claimed to see the Montsouris ghost went mad and died within a year. I've heard both Church factions sent experts to

search for the spirit, but they found nothing." It sounds plausible… Lumian didn't inquire further. Standing, he told Osta, "I'll catch up with you tomorrow night or the following morning."

"Alright." Though Osta didn't believe Lumian would harm him now, he couldn't help but sigh with relief at the departure of the dangerous man.

No ordinary human could feel at ease around a tiger!

On his way back to the surface, Lumian carried the carbide lamp and passed by the entrance to the catacombs. Once again, he saw the arch adorned with white bones, sunflowers, and steam symbols.

Looking at the words "Stop! The Death Empire lies ahead!" Lumian cautiously approached the natural doorway separating the inner and outer chambers.

Suddenly, a figure emerged from behind the stone arch and bellowed, "Halt!" The figure donned a blue vest and yellow pants. He was an elderly man with gray hair and wrinkled skin.

His light-yellow eyes, slightly clouded, locked onto Lumian.

"Can't I go in?" Lumian feigned the innocence of a foreigner. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

The old man scrutinized him. "You need to purchase a ticket upstairs and bring a white candle with you."

"I have a friend buried inside. Do I need to buy a ticket to pay my respects?" Lumian fabricated a friend on the spot.

…

The old man eyed him suspiciously, "Don't tell me you're one of those Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative college students? Those troublemakers always concoct lies to sneak into the tomb. They sing, dance, and feast in the ossuary! Fine, go in. Just remember to bring lit white candles like them. That's my only demand!"

Lumian once worried that if he attended university, he'd be too

different from his classmates. Now, it seemed his concerns were unfounded.

Those students were even wilder than he was! “Alright,” Lumian feigned disappointment. “I’ll bring a white candle next time.”

The old man nodded, relieved. Lumian turned and followed the restored path to the stairs leading to the surface. Over a hundred meters away, he suddenly spotted a black shadow from the corner of his eye.

The shadow hunched slightly, shuffling behind a row of stone pillars on the left. Lumian glanced over and noticed its intangibility, as if it were almost illusory.

Instinctively, he raised the carbide lamp, casting a bluish-yellow glow. The shadow disappeared, as though it had never existed.

Lumian quickly scanned the surroundings but found nothing.

Is it an illusion or an underground ghost? As Lumian pondered, he suddenly wondered: Could it be the Montsouris ghost? Did I encounter the Montsouris ghost?

His pupils widened, and his expression grew unusually grave.

Moments later, Lumian erupted into laughter, nearly doubling over. He laughed until tears threatened to spill from his eyes. “Haha, come on, come at me! I want to see how you’ll kill my entire family and how you’ll cause my mysterious death!”

...

Chapter 124 - 124 Method of Self-Protection

Chapter 124 Method of Self-Protection

As planned, Lumian circled the vicinity of Mason Café in Quartier du Jardin Botanique before making his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré on Rue Anarchie. He headed straight for the third floor and arrived at Room 310, where the lunatic resided.

Bang! Bang! Bang! He hammered on the door.

“I’m dying! I’m dying!” The wailing from inside grew frantic.

“I’m f*cking dying too!” Lumian spat, his face expressionless.

Startled by his response, the lunatic fell silent and offered no reply.

Lumian didn’t knock again. He produced a small wire he carried with him, inserted it into the keyhole, and fidgeted with it.

With a click, the grimy brown wooden door swung open.

Inside, Lumian found the madman, clad in a linen shirt and yellow pants, kneeling with his thick black beard nearly covering his eyes.

Lumian entered and casually closed the door. He crouched before the lunatic and lowered his voice.

“I’ve encountered the Montsouris ghost too.” The lunatic visibly trembled, his fear-filled blue eyes showing the faintest glimmer of lucidity.

After a few seconds, he caught his breath and asked in a deep voice, “Are you sure it was the Montsouris ghost?”

He's in that state of intermittent lucidity Charlie mentioned? Lumian smirked and replied, "I don't know. That's why I'm asking you to confirm it.

"What did the Montsouris ghost you saw look like?"

With a shiver, the lunatic described, "A black shadow, like a lonely old man. Its back was slightly hunched, and it moved very slowly.

"After I spotted it, it vanished into the darkness. I didn't realize it was the Montsouris ghost until my parents, my wife, and my children started dying one after another…"

It's eerily similar to my experience… Lumian frowned, suspecting that he had indeed encountered the Montsouris ghost.

He contemplated for a moment.

"How did your family die? Were you attacked?"

The lunatic hastily shook his head.

"I-I often felt something watching me from the shadows. But I didn't face anything else. Otherwise, I wouldn't have made it this far.

"My child became gravely ill and died in the hospital. We had just cleansed and interred him in the catacombs when my wife-my wife, snapped and hanged herself in our room.

"That's when I recalled the legend of the Montsouris ghost. I took my parents to the cathedral and asked the padre there to protect us.

"The Church took it very seriously and assigned three clergymen to stay at my home. Nothing happened during that time. I thought the nightmare was over.

"But after the New Year, the clergymen left. Soon after, my father strangled my mother and ended his own life with a table knife. I can't remember much after that. Sometimes, I wake up and realize that I moved here at some point…"

The lunatic's blue eyes revealed unmasked anguish. Lumian felt like a

tightly wound spring, ready to snap at any moment.

“They said the Montsouris ghost would kill anyone who encountered it back then. But this lasted until the New Year.” Lumian keenly noticed the lunatic’s account differed from the legend.

The lunatic shook his head.

“I don’t know why it happened. I thought the nightmare was over. Otherwise, the three clergymen wouldn’t have left…”

A curse with no time limit until all targets are dead? Lumian formed a new hypothesis about the Montsouris ghost legend.

He stood up and told the lunatic, “I might have encountered the Montsouris ghost too. Let’s see which one of us lasts longer. If I figure out how to break this curse, you can pay me to help you.”

“A way, a solution…” The corners of the lunatic’s mouth twitched as he echoed Lumian’s words, caught between tears and laughter.

He raised his hands and clutched his hair.

“I’m dying, I’m dying!”

Lumian intended to ask the lunatic’s name, something to inscribe when he was laid to rest in the cemetery or catacombs, but he shook his head, opened the door, and left Room 310 instead.

Back in Room 207, Lumian sat on the bed, mulling over how to break the curse brought by the Montsouris ghost.

Although theoretically, the curse might not take effect until year’s end, leaving no urgency for now, Lumian couldn’t rely on the Montsouris ghost’s apparent delay. Moreover, he had no immediate family, so he stood a high chance of being the curse’s first victim. It could happen in the latter half of the year, next week, or even tonight.

Come to think of it, that man might still be alive. If the Montsouris ghost could help me kill him, I’d owe it a debt of gratitude… Lumian’s thoughts raced, and he suddenly laughed at himself.

In the dream, he had lied to Ryan and the others, claiming he'd forgotten his original name. He simply wanted to avoid mentioning or remembering it.

When he was young, his family had been well-off, but the man he called father turned out to be a philanderer and later a gambling addict.

His mother died from grief-induced illness, and his grandfather went bankrupt. They lived together in the slums until his grandfather's death a few years later.

Thus, after being adopted by Aurore, Lumian had willingly asked to take her last name and change his own.

Lumian didn't know if the man who had only provided genetic material was dead or alive. If he was dead, it was a blessing. If not, he hoped the Montsouris ghost would step up its game. As for himself, Lumian dared not assume the Montsouris ghost wouldn't harm him just because he harbored the taint of an evil god and the mark of a great existence.

As long as it didn't possess him, the ghost could do anything! According to Madam Magician, Lumian was convinced that many Beyonders and monsters could easily kill him, but they would have to face the ensuing corruption as a consequence. I'm not certain if this is a curse or not… But I can't just sit here waiting for death. I have to take action… Aurore used to say that the best skill for the weak or underage is 'finding their parents'… With this in mind, Lumian's eyes brightened. He stood up and walked to the table to find a pen and paper.

He planned to update Madam Magician on the mission's progress. Simultaneously, he would mention his encounter with the Montsouris ghost, questioning if he had been cursed and how to address the issue.

Though the woman with the Magician code name wasn't his parent, she was undoubtedly his superior in the current circumstances. It was logical to seek assistance from his superior when in trouble!

Lumian pondered for a moment before writing: “Esteemed Madam Magician, “I have followed your instructions and gained Osta Trul’s trust. I’ve also requested his introduction to Mr. K’s mysticism gathering… “On my return from the catacombs, I regrettably encountered the legendary Montsouris ghost. Of course, I cannot be certain. “The specific legend is as such… “I seek to know if I have been cursed by the Montsouris ghost or if another influence is at play. How should I proceed?” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in). (com)

Towards the end, Lumian intentionally added the code name “Seven of Wands” to remind the recipient not to overlook his status as an external member of their enigmatic organization.

Lumian deduced this from the lady’s use of the tarot cards’ Magician code name and his Seven of Wands.

He suspected Madam Magician might belong to a clandestine organization symbolized by tarot cards and devoted to a powerful entity. The Major Arcana were official members, possessing formidable abilities. The Minor each Arcana served as peripheral members who undertook various missions.

After folding the letter, Lumian meticulously cleaned the room. He crushed a few bedbugs that had crept in from next door and disposed of them in the bathroom trash can. Once done, he lit the candle and conjured a spiritual barrier to summon Madam Magician’s messenger in his name.

Before long, the candle flame transformed into a deep blue hue.

This time, an arm-height, doll-like messenger in a light-gold dress materialized atop the flames, floating there.

Its unfocused, light-blue eyes scanned the surroundings before gently nodding. “Much better than last time.”

The voice was otherworldly and ghostly, far from human-like.

…

“Truth be told, I’m not fond of those bedbugs either,” Lumian chimed

in.

The doll messenger smiled. “Right? No creature appreciates those pests!”

Lumian sensed a shared sentiment, as if both sides despised the same thing. With that, the doll messenger extended a pale-white palm, devoid of any skin texture, and the letter floated up.

Lumian watched the “doll” seize the letter and vanish like a bursting bubble. He sighed with admiration and thought, Having a messenger is so convenient… After concluding the ritual and tidying up the wooden table, Lumian returned to the bed, awaiting the messenger’s response. As time passed, the night outside deepened.

Songs echoed from the underground bar, but Lumian received no reply from Madam Magician. This made him furrow his brow. Does Madam Magician have other matters to handle and no time to read my letter?

I can’t keep waiting. I must devise other ways to protect myself…

Neither Hunter nor Provoker grant me the power to combat curses—if it is indeed a curse…

Dancer doesn’t either. Unless I genuinely pray to that concealed entity after the sacrificial dance. But how would that differ from suicide?

Ah, if I can’t pray to that hidden being, I can seek out that great existence!

I bear His seal upon me. I even obtained His permission when I claimed the boon. I’m not afraid to beseech Him again!

…

Yes, I can entreat Him to help me lift this curse.

Lumian acted swiftly, setting up the altar. Since Madam Magician hadn’t specifically outlined the ingredients for the great existence’s domain, Lumian believed that whatever he employed wouldn’t

impact the final outcome, as long as it didn't invoke other deities.

He arranged orange candles made of citrus and lavender. Two symbolized the deity, and one represented himself.

After completing the preparations, Lumian stepped back and examined the three yellowish candles. He recited in Hermes, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…"

Chapter 125 - 125 Struggle

Chapter 125 Struggle

As Lumian intoned the three lines of the honorific name, a faint gray fog materialized around him, radiating an unnerving aura.

The orange candle flame adopted a bluish tinge, casting a sinister, deep glow over the entire altar. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

In that instant, Lumian's thoughts seemed to decelerate. He felt an itching beneath his flesh, as if something was on the verge of burrowing out.

A distant, inscrutable gaze from an unfathomable height appeared once more. Collecting himself, Lumian resumed his prayer. Adhering to Madam Magician's instructions and incorporating sacrificial knowledge from Aurore's witchcraft notebook, he recited in Hermes, "I implore you. I beseech you to lift this curse from me…"

In all honesty, Lumian yearned to request the great existence's protection for a year, shielding him from all harm. But that was clearly unattainable. He had not yet mastered the necessary Hermes phrases to counter the threat of the Montsouris ghost. Thus, he could only allude to the curse plaguing him.

As the ritual culminated, Lumian began to draw upon the power of the herbs on the altar.

In the following moment, his vision blurred, as if a seraph with twelve pairs of luminous wings materialized before him.

Descending from above, the seraph extended its arms, enveloping Lumian in an embrace.

The wings of light closed around him, enfolding him layer by layer.

Lumian shook off his stupor and noticed the bluish candle flame had reverted to its original orange hue at some unknown point.

Recalling the surreal encounter, it felt like a dream. He couldn't help but murmur to himself, Did I just see an angel? Did that great existence send one of His angels to protect me and lift this curse?

Until today, Lumian had only heard of angels in the sermons of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. He never anticipated experiencing an angelic embrace firsthand.

According to Madam Magician, this was at least a high-level Sequence 2 entity. Even if only a fraction of its power had been projected from afar, it was still angelic in nature… Lumian felt an even deeper reverence for the enigmatic organization that employed tarot cards as their moniker and the great existence that had sealed the corruption within him.

Simultaneously, he breathed a sigh of relief.

If the Montsouris ghost had truly inflicted a curse, it should no longer be an issue. How could a ghost that dared not confront the protection granted by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's clergy and was confined to wandering beneath Trier compare to an angel?

Nevertheless, trepidation still gripped Lumian's heart. He had prayed for the curse to be lifted. What if the Montsouris ghost employed a different method of killing than a curse?

He waited until midnight, but Magician's response never came.

Unable to risk sleep, he lay on the bed, shutting his eyes just to rest.

Staying awake all night posed no challenge for him. At six in the morning, his body and mind would simultaneously reset.

This was both a curse and a blessing.

It wasn't until the latter half of the night that the cacophony of Rue Anarchie died down. Lumian discerned the faint chirping of insects in

the distance and an even more remote whistle.

Abruptly, his body felt leaden, and breathing grew labored. It was as if someone had swaddled him in a blanket and weighed him down.

This isn't good! Lumian tried to rise, but he could only move his arms.

His eyes wouldn't even open!

His arms felt restrained, barely able to lift a few centimeters off the bed.

In the next moment, Lumian's body turned frigid, and his nose felt damp. It was as if he had been stuffed into a sack and hurled into the depths of a river.

His breathing faltered, his chest tightened with pain, and his thoughts decelerated.

Lumian's desperate attempts at resistance flashed through his mind-entering Cogitation and activating the black thorn symbol on his chest.

He dismissed the idea in an instant.

Firstly, he would likely lose control. Secondly, the Montsouris ghost bore no connection to the covert entity known as Inevitability. It might not be deterred by the black thorn symbol. Unless left with no alternative and teetering on the brink of death, Lumian wouldn't gamble his life on this seemingly futile method.

His lips and nose turned icy, as though an invisible hand was pressing them down. Paired with the sensation of drowning, Lumian found breathing impossible. His lungs were on the verge of bursting.

Words like Hunter, Provoker, Dancer, corruption, seal, and Fallen Mercury flickered through Lumian's mind, each forming fleeting thoughts before dissipating.

Fallen Mercury… Fallen Mercury! At last, Lumian had a revelation. He strained to shift his gloved left palm to the side.

He had already positioned the evil dirk in the most accessible location to handle potential emergencies.

A few seconds later, Lumian, gasping for air with his mouth agape, made contact with the hilt of Fallen Mercury and hoisted the pewter-black dirk.

Fallen Mercury was no longer shrouded in black cloth. The intricate patterns on its surface overlapped, inducing vertigo.

With every ounce of his strength, Lumian hoisted his shoulder, bent his arm, and plunged Fallen Mercury above his body.

There was nothing there. Not even a scratch, let alone blood!

Without hesitation, Lumian gritted his teeth and angled his arm toward his body. With a sickening pop, he drove Fallen Mercury into his left waist.

Crimson blood oozed out, staining the blade of Fallen Mercury. The phantom mercury droplet symbolizing the fate of immolation penetrated Lumian's body.

The pain shocked Lumian's oxygen-starved mind to consciousness. His vision blurred as the enigmatic river, composed of innumerable mercury symbols, emerged. This represented his own fate.

Ignoring the need for precision, Lumian cast his gaze downstream of the illusory river, toward a current on the verge of engulfing the other tributaries.

He then infused his spirituality into Fallen Mercury, allowing it to agitate the complex mercury symbol birthed from the river's entanglement.

In the next moment, Lumian saw himself lying on the bed, his face a purplish hue, teetering on the brink of death. The mercury symbols abruptly constricted, solidifying into a droplet that seeped into Fallen Mercury's blade. Almost instantaneously, Lumian felt his entire body relax. The sensations of drowning and suffocation vanished. Simultaneously, pain enveloped him, and he couldn't help but emit a soft groan. Flames erupted from his body, searing his flesh inch by

inch.

He had utilized the pain of being incinerated stored in Fallen Mercury to trade for his fate of being assaulted by a Montsouris ghost. He had successfully escaped a state where he couldn't even struggle, and the attack didn't come again! Fallen Mercury could stab others or Lumian himself, replacing an unwanted fate!

He was ignited, reliving the agony of battling the flaming beast.

Braced for the onslaught, Lumian rolled beneath the bed.

Thumping against the floor, he rolled back and forth to smother the flames engulfing him. After a while, it was unclear whether Lumian's strategy had worked, if the fire brought on by the fate exchange had run its course, or if it was a combination of both, but he was no longer consumed by the scarlet inferno. However, his clothes were in shreds, and his body was marred with charred wounds. His nose teetered on the edge of detachment, and his singed hair emitted a burnt odor. For an ordinary person or most Low-Sequence Beyonders, this was an injury beyond resuscitation-death was the only outcome.

Lumian strained to keep his eyes open and focused, fighting the urge to pass out. As time ticked away, he sensed his life rapidly ebbing.

He clung to consciousness, gasping for air. After an indeterminate period, Lumian finally heard the eerily beautiful chime of a bell.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The bell struck six in the morning, Trier time, its peal echoing through Rue Anarchie and beyond. Dawn's first light crept over the horizon.

Lumian snapped to attention, his pain abruptly gone.

His body and mind had completely reset! Phew… Lumian exhaled in relief and stood. He looked down at the tattered remnants of his once crisp linen shirt and dark pants. His skin had returned to normal.

…

Already in a financial bind, he couldn't help but sigh.

He needed new clothes-a fresh expense! Still, he'd managed to survive the Montsouris ghost's initial attack. This was likely a first in the annals of its dark legend.

From the looks of it, it's not a curse… Lumian changed into fresh clothes and stepped into the washroom to splash cold tap water on his face. Gazing into the mirror, he noticed that some of his hair had shortened, and the golden dye had faded in places.

These external changes couldn't be reset. After washing up, Lumian returned to Room 207 and was startled to find another letter awaiting him.

The folded piece of paper lay innocuously on the wooden table.

Lumian muttered under his breath, Isn't it too early for a reply? You didn't sleep again last night. Did you just get home?

With a shake of his head, Lumian picked up the Magician's response and unfolded it. The handwriting was messy, but he could just make out that it belonged to a woman. "Excellent work. Engage more with Mr. K and exhibit your wild, fanatical side until he converts you and extends an invitation to his organization.

"The Montsouris ghost is not a curse. There are three solutions for your current predicament: "First, die before it. Use the corruption within you to destroy it and avenge the fallen. "Second, trade your fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost with your dirk. Haven't you ever considered using that blade on yourself? "Third, take refuge in a particular cathedral of a certain Church and never leave its sanctuary."

Chapter 126 - 126 Finding Prey

Chapter 126 Finding Prey

Lumian quickly scanned Madam Magician's message, committing the essential points to memory.

It was evident that the first and third solutions to the Montsouris ghost dilemma were jokes. The only viable option was the second: using Fallen Mercury to swap his fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost.

In all honesty, Lumian hadn't considered stabbing himself with Fallen Mercury to proactively change his destiny. Only when he was cornered by the Montsouris ghost, teetering on the brink of death, did this desperate strategy surface in his mind.

Time was of the essence, and Lumian had to act fast. He'd only managed to exchange his fate of being attacked by the Montsouris ghost, not completely avoiding one. He'd narrowly escaped the first crisis but still lingered in death's shadow.

Given the choice, Lumian would have still opted to exchange the fate of being attacked by the Montsouris ghost instead of just encountering one. The attack had already occurred, and he couldn't be sure it would cease with a mere fate swap. He needed the most reliable plan to save himself.

In simpler terms, what if the Montsouris ghost killed him and realized it had never met him and targeted the wrong person?

I need to find someone to trade the fate stored in Fallen Mercury for a better one. Then, I'll prepare thoroughly, and when I'm ready, I'll stab myself to complete the exchange. I'll seal the Montsouris ghost encounter inside Fallen Mercury… Lumian combined his experience with Madam Magician's advice and quickly devised a way to escape

his predicament.

When the time came, Fallen Mercury, also known as the Cursed Blade, would cause whoever was stabbed to suffer the fate of their entire family dying, including themselves.

The drawback was the time it would take for the effect to occur.

Lumian drew Fallen Mercury from his waist, eyeing the blade wrapped in black cloth. He felt the Beyonder weapon's potential more acutely than ever.

He seriously contemplated finding experts to repair Fallen Mercury. Otherwise, the enchanted dirk would only last until year's end.

Maybe Mr. K's Beyonder Gathering could provide the resources he needed.

My suspicion is correct. Madam Magician's intention for me to meet Osta Trul is to use him to attend Mr. K's Gathering and join the secret organization behind it… Lumian donned a wide-brimmed hat and a black shirt resembling formal attire before leaving Room 207 and descending the stairs.

As a Hunter, he needed to start his search for prey.

Upon exiting Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian spotted Charlie sitting on the three-story staircase leading to the street. Pale-faced, he gazed at the sky, melancholic, with a lit cigarette in his right hand.

"What's wrong?" Lumian asked, casually sitting beside Charlie.

Charlie didn't look back. He inhaled from his cigarette and sighed.

"I feel like I've lost my soul. It's gone."

He wore a white shirt, red vest, and a black suit jacket draped over his left arm—a hotel uniform.

Lumian grinned and got to the point.

"Did you sleep with that older woman?"

Charlie turned to Lumian and emphasized, “Please call her Madame. She’s only in her fifties.”

He took another drag and exhaled a smoke ring.

“Did you know? She gave me a diamond necklace worth at least 1,500 verl d’or. I couldn’t resist. She was so dazzling and seductive that she went straight to my heart.”

“It,” Lumian corrected.

Charlie smiled sheepishly. nove(l)bi(n.)com

“Madame Alice is captivating too. It’s quite a feat to maintain her elegance at her age. She mentioned she’ll stay in Trier for six months and can offer me 500 verl d’or a month…’ As he spoke, Charlie’s voice grew somber, and his eyes took on a melancholic hue.

Just as Lumian thought Charlie would sigh over his lost soul, a long exhale escaped him.

“Why can she only stay for half a year…’ Lumian patted Charlie’s shoulder, saying earnestly, “Take care of yourself.”

Charlie’s eyelids twitched.

“There’s a need for moderation. Madame Alice is far too enthusiastic. I was so exhausted last night that I didn’t even have that beautiful dream.”

Lumian chuckled and said, “You openly mentioned obtaining a diamond necklace worth 1,500 verl d’or. In Rue Anarchie, that’s enough wealth to make many people go mad.

Aren’t you afraid I’ll steal it?” Charlie laughed.

“I had to share it with someone, or I’d feel awful.

“I’ve noticed you don’t seem short on money. You’re even quite generous. You wouldn’t commit a crime for a mere 1,000 to 2,000 verl d’or.” Lumian grinned, retorting, “Is there a chance I’m pretending not to lack money to lure someone like you into lowering

your guard?”

Charlie’s expression froze as the dying cigarette nearly burned his fingers. Lumian changed the subject, asking casually, “Is there anyone you despise so much that you think they deserve to die?”

Charlie snuffed out his cigarette on the stone steps, puzzled, “Why do you ask?”

He intended to pocket the extinguished cigarette butt but decided against it, tossing it aside instead.

A nearby vagrant darted over, grabbing the warm cigarette and taking a few drags. Without waiting for Lumian’s response, Charlie continued, “The person I despise most is our head attendant. You’ve no idea how detestable he is. Haha, I’ve never thought of wanting him dead, but I just wish I could hood his face and beat him up one day.

“I don’t think many people truly deserve to die. One is Baron Brignais, the market district’s Savoie Mob leader. He colludes with loan sharks, driving many to bankruptcy. A friend of mine jumped off a building in desperation. But what did that accomplish? His son vanished mysteriously, and his daughter was forced into the Salle de Bal Brise. Although she’s supposed to only sing, in reality, well…”

“That’s right. If he had the courage to kill himself, why didn’t he think of a way to kill Baron Brignais and the others?” Lumian nodded slightly. Charlie stared at Lumian, taken aback.

“Your thoughts are a little extreme.”

He added, “The second person deserving death is Margot, leader of the Poison Spur Mob. He manipulates people into swindling women new to Trier. After bleeding them dry, he forces them into prostitution. That’s how Miss Ethans in Room 8 on the fourth floor ended up in the motel. Most of the money she earns is taken by Margot. She’s tried to escape several times, but she’s been beaten within an inch of her life before she could leave Rue Anarchie.”

Market district has quite a few mobs. No wonder it’s chaotic at

night… Lumian glanced at Charlie, saying, “It sounds like you sympathize with Miss Ethans.”

Charlie puffed out his chest. “True Intis gentlemen empathize with ladies in tragic situations and offer help when appropriate.’ Lumian tersely acknowledged. “Do you know where Margot lives?”

“I don’t know.” Charlie shook his head. “But he frequents the motel in the evenings, extorting money from Miss Ethans. If you hear a woman crying, shouting, and cursing on the fourth floor, that’s Margot and his thugs.”

Lumian nodded pensively and inquired, “Who else do you think deserves to die?” Charlie considered for a moment, replying with a contorted expression, “Monette, that Islander. He swindled me out of 10 verl d’or! “Can you imagine? I’d been unemployed for some time and hadn’t found a new job yet.

That was my last bit of savings. I nearly starved to death because of him!”

“Where does he live?” Lumian asked nonchalantly.

“He was staying at the motel initially. But after know scamming me, he moved out. I don’t where he went.” Charlie’s anger flared as he spoke. “I was waiting for him to hook me up with a job…”

Once he’d calmed down, Charlie eyed Lumian quizzically, “Why’s your hair different?”

There were strands of varying lengths, gold mingled with black.

“Don’t you think it’s rather stylish?” Lumian asked earnestly. Charlie snorted, his expression dubious. His experience with the Idiot Instrument made him instinctively question Lumian’s intentions in such matters.

After a few moments, Charlie glanced at the street vendors and waved his hand.

…

“I’ve got to head to the hotel. I’ll see you tonight.”

Lumian stayed put on the stone steps outside the hotel, waving at Charlie’s retreating figure.

That afternoon, Lumian took a public carriage to Quartier du Jardin Botanique. After walking over 300 meters, he reached Mason Café.

The café occupied the ground floor of a beige four-story building near the botanical garden. Green plants twined around the building’s exterior. The ground-floor shops were set back nearly a meter, with pillars supporting an outer walkway for pedestrians.

Mason’s Café boasted dark green walls and large windows. Sunlight streamed through the glass, illuminating the tables and chairs outside.

Lumian, dressed in a dark suit and wide-brimmed hat, entered the café. The first thing he noticed were the intricate plant sculptures on the wall, interspersed with Intisian sentences: “Who holds supreme power in the country? The president or parliament?

[1] Adapted from the opening chapter of “Histoire Insolite des Cafés Parisiens” which was used in an early 21st-century bibliography. The original text was too lengthy, so it has been condensed.

Chapter 127 - 127 Café

Chapter 127 Café

Lumian couldn't help but smile when he saw the "slogan" on the wall.

It reminded him of something Aurore had once said: "In Trier, the café holds a unique status. It's the birthplace of riots, the sanctuary of conspiracies, and the wellspring of scandals." Throughout Intisian history, innumerable riots had been sparked in cafés, and countless literary works and political struggles had brewed within them.

Unlike the neighboring Loen Kingdom, Intis had its own private clubs, but they were fairly exclusive or high-end, with limited access. Be they former nobles, current members of parliament, high-ranking government officials, financiers, bankers, industrialists, renowned authors, newspaper editors, military generals, or university professors, everyone enjoyed frequenting different cafés to engage in spirited conversations, presenting a more approachable side to the public. After all, the Republic's political slogan and image were built upon "freedom, equality, and fraternity."

Naturally, the cafés frequented by various social strata were vastly different, often distinguished by location, price, and style. So, when Lumian heard from Charlie that Laurent had used his mother, Mrs. Lakazan, to seek opportunities in upscale cafés, he wasn't surprised or puzzled. Many people did this, often becoming archetypes for novelists, but only a few succeeded.

At the same time, banquets and salons were all the rage in Trier. If any high society member didn't host a salon once a month, others would assume something had befallen their family or that a financial crisis had jeopardized their political future.

Aurore, who clearly adored this metropolis, stayed away partly

because artists like authors, poets, painters, and sculptors seemed like tamed butterflies, fluttering about the salons of various politicians, financiers, and officials. It appeared that only by gaining their approval could the value of their work be realized.

The amalgamation of salons and cafés supplanted most club functions.

In this system, taverns, beer houses, dance halls, and cafés shared similarities, but the latter held far greater significance, leaning more towards the upper classes.

Upon seeing a customer enter, a female attendant in a grayish-white dress greeted him with a smile.

“Do you have a favorite seat, or are you meeting a friend?”

Lumian nodded.

“Cabin D.”

The female attendant led him to a secluded corner.

Beside a window, he could see a lush, tree-filled botanical garden.

“What can I get you to drink?” The female attendant presented a brown-covered wine list.

Lumian opened it, momentarily taken aback by the dazzling array of choices.

Fermo Coffee, Highlander Coffee, Reem Espresso…

Sibe Black Tea, Marquis Black Tea, West Balam Black Tea…

Fruit Slushy, Frangipani Cocktail, Ambergris Lemonade, Venus Sacred Oil…

Summer Wine, Kirsch, Rose Dew, Walnut Spirit, Orange & Lemon Wine, Cherry Spirit…

Absinthe, Fennel Absinthe, Gin, Bitter Cura?ao, Apple Brandy, Grape

Dregs Brandy…

Sweetwine: Perfect Love, Barbarian Cream, Little Rose, West Pyro…

Considering he had a psychologist's appointment later, neither alcohol nor coffee seemed fitting. Lumian thought for a moment and said, "Ambergris lemonade."

"Four licks," the female attendant inquired.

"Do you need cake, bread, or other food?"

"Not for now. I'll decide when my friend arrives." Lumian surveyed the surroundings of Mason's Café and noted the absence of customers at this time.

The lunch crowd had cleared out by 2:30 p.m., leaving more than an hour before teatime.

Soon, the female attendant returned with a tray, placing a glass filled with a colorless liquid and a few lemons on the table. Lumian eyed the empty seat across from him, picked up his cup, and took a sip.

A sweet, elegant fragrance filled his nostrils, and the refreshing sour taste invigorated him.

As the minutes passed, Lumian noticed the wall clock nearing 3:30 p.m. He couldn't help but glance at the café entrance.

Green plants adorned the area, but no customers entered.

Just as Lumian looked away in disappointment, a soft female voice sounded from the booth behind him.

"I'm already here. Good afternoon, Mr. Lumian Lee."

Lumian assumed the woman didn't want a face-to-face conversation, so he didn't turn around. He lowered his voice and asked politely, "Good afternoon. How should I address you? Can you hear my soft voice?"

"No problem," the gentle female voice replied. "You can call me

Susie."

"Hello, Madame Susie." For some reason, Lumian felt relatively calm facing this psychologist. His usual habit of inward commentary dissipated.

A familiar uneasiness washed over him a second later.

"What's wrong?" Susie, seated behind him, inquired gently.

Lumian pondered for two seconds and didn't conceal his feelings.

"I'm a little uneasy. It's an odd yet familiar sensation.

"Yes, I must have experienced something similar when I met an information broker yesterday." Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Susie spoke rapidly, apologetically, "Sorry, I'm used to reading your thoughts. That might be causing your discomfort.

"Your body is infused with intense corruption and is in a delicate balance. The slightest disturbance triggers a reaction. In other words, you're highly sensitive to hidden and invisible influences, surpassing Beyonders of the same Sequence or higher."

"Is that so…" Lumian wasn't angry. In his view, a psychologist needed to read thoughts for effective treatment. Rely on words alone?

He then furrowed his brow. "Was Anthony Reid also reading my thoughts back then? I'm referring to the information broker."

"I know." Susie understood. "Where did Anthony Reid come from? What did he do before becoming an information broker?"

"He had a West Midseashire Coast accent, a retired soldier," Lumian recounted. After a brief silence, Susie said, "If he's truly from West Midseashire Coast, it's indeed possible he's a Beyonder of the Spectator pathway."

The Spectator pathway… Lumian had read about it in Aurore's Warlock notebook, but she only knew that its corresponding Sequence 9 was called the Spectator. They possessed remarkable

observational abilities, deciphering true thoughts from subtle expressions and body language.

So a Sequence above the Spectator pathway is a Psychologist… As this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he heard Susie correct him.

"It's Psychiatrist."

"That sounds more reassuring." Lumian smiled. "What Sequence is Anthony Reid?" After learning the other's pathway, he felt Anthony Reid should have recognized him and sensed his anxiety, concern, and attempts at intimidation.

"According to your description, he's at least a Sequence 8," Susie concluded.

Lumian smirked. "If he's really a Psychiatrist, that's interesting. He didn't even treat the aftereffects of his battlefield trauma."

"It's not unusual. When a Psychiatrist suffers severe psychological trauma, it's incredibly difficult for them to recover alone. They often need the help of another Psychiatrist, and treating a Psychiatrist is far riskier than usual.

…

One misstep can result in the infection of the patient's mental illness," Susie explained succinctly.

As the conversation shifted and the atmosphere lightened, Lumian gradually relaxed, no longer feeling uneasy or anxious.

He took the initiative to say, "Shall we begin the treatment?"

"Talking is part of the treatment." Susie's gentle voice hinted at a smile.

Realizing that the first stage of the treatment was simply conversation, Lumian eased further. He leaned back against the booth partition and asked, puzzled, "I know it was a dream, but there are many details I can't comprehend.

“Since it’s my dream, how can I know the various abilities of the three official investigators? Why am I so familiar with the unique abilities of the padre, the shepherd, and company?”

Susie’s tone was warm as she replied, “The three official investigators were forcibly drawn into your dream. It’s as if their subconscious came close to yours, in a semi-open state.

“They would actively participate in the dream, revealing all sorts of information they know. Even if they only think about it, your subconscious can sense it.” In other words, with Ryan, Leah, and Valentine’s involvement, certain parts of the dream are created through “interaction?” Their responses are a collective creation of my subconscious and theirs, adhering to unspoken rules? Lumian considered this as he pondered previously unresolved questions.

Susie’s voice remained steady as she continued, “You must have some suspicions about why you know the abilities of the evil god’s followers, right? But you’re just unwilling to confront them?”

At this, Lumian’s eyelids twitched involuntarily.

“Based on the information Madam Magician provided, most of Guillaume Bénet and Pierre Berry’s abilities stem from the evil god’s Sequence, Contractee. So, it’s impossible to predict their abilities beforehand. It depends on which creature they’ve signed a contract with,”

…

Susie gently analyzed. “In other words, we can rule out the possibility that your subconscious obtained corresponding knowledge from the seal’s corruption. Without a knowledge base, you couldn’t imagine those abilities nothing. They’re not imaginary.” The woman’s tone suddenly turned grave.

from “Clearly, at some point before Cordu was destroyed, you saw Guillaume Bénet, Pierre the others use their abilities. Moreover, you were neither harmed nor Berry, and traumatized. Otherwise, it would have manifested in the dream.

“From the dream’s analysis, what truly left a scar on you was Pualis and company’s actions. “How do you think you witnessed those evil god followers using their powers?” Susie’s words were like sharp arrows piercing Lumian’s memories, making the sturdy barrier waver.

Lumian’s face twisted slightly. Amidst excruciating pain, he saw images surface from the depths of his memories.

It was the third floor of the administrator’s castle.

The walls were adorned with pale, translucent faces, but the fighters were no longer Ryan, Leah, and Valentine. Instead, it was Guillaume Bénet, Pierre Berry, and Sybil Berry!

Chapter 128 - 128 In the Dream

Chapter 128 In the Dream

Blood-red flowers bloomed on the pitch-black vines hanging from the ceiling, sealing off the third floor of the castle.

Guillaume Bénet, Pierre Berry, and Sybil Berry fought off the 'midwife' and her accomplices as they charged towards the tower.

A series of fragmented scenes flashed through Lumian's mind.

In a tower filled with bird-clawed infants, the invisible Guillaume Bénet touched the midwife's shoulder with the help of Shepherd Pierre Berry. The midwife exploded as if a bomb had been planted inside her.

Though Sybil Berry had been killed by the lady's maid, she was reborn in the other woman's body and took control of it.

Floating in the air, Louis Lund gave birth to a child in the room.

Unfazed, Louis Lund teamed up with Administrator Béost to subdue Shepherd Pierre Berry.

In the wilderness leading deep into the mountains, the padre, Guillaume Bénet, was surrounded by countless undead in linen garments…

Lumian's face contorted in pain. These memories felt like a sharp weapon piercing his soul. Extracting them would do more harm, making him instinctively resist recalling them further.

Eventually, the scenes faded, and Lumian panted heavily.

"How was it? Did you find anything?" Susie's voice was gentle, as if inquiring about today's breakfast.

Lumian pondered and replied, “I remember the battle between the padre and Madame Pualis’s subordinates. The scene was chaotic and fragmented…

“Sometimes, I feel like I’m watching in person, and at times from afar via certain means…”

This left him deeply puzzled about his position and role in these events.

At times, he seemed to be part of the two groups, embroiled in the conflict. Other times, he appeared to be a mere bystander, unconnected to either side.

Susie asked, leading him on, “Besides that, is there anything else you don’t understand about the situation in your memory?”

Lumian said as he recalled, “I don’t think I saw Madame Pualis… She only appeared when the padre was surrounded by a horde of undead in the wilderness…

“The padre and his allies seemed drained after dealing with Louis Lund, Cathy, Béost, the midwife, and Madame Pualis’s subordinates. If Madame Pualis had joined, I don’t think they could have won…

“Why did Madame Pualis willingly give up and leave Cordu without stopping the padre and his allies…”

“Not willingly, but forcibly sent away,” Susie corrected him. “The ritual in your dream to send the Spring Elf away should be about sending Pualis away. The Spring Elf symbolizes a bountiful harvest, the end of a harsh winter, and the budding of new life. It’s very similar to the abilities displayed by Pualis’s group.”

“That’s even stranger…” Lumian’s voice grew pained as he clenched his fists, feeling unable to remember any more.

Susie said gently, “If you don’t want to recall, don’t. Recovering all your memories isn’t something that can be achieved in one session of therapy. Take your time. There’s no rush.”

Phew… Lumian slowly exhaled a sigh of relief, his body relaxing.

After he had calmed down for nearly a minute, Susie said, “You can sleep and see if you can find more answers in your dreams.”

At first, the Psychiatrist’s voice was gentle in Lumian’s ears, but then it became increasingly ethereal, as if it had receded and entered another world.

His eyelids grew heavier and heavier until they finally closed.

Lumian’s eyes snapped open to the familiar ceiling above him.

He bolted upright, taking in the reclining chair, the wooden table by the window, the small bookshelf, and the wardrobe with its full-length mirror.

This was his bedroom, his home in Cordu.

For a few seconds, Lumian stared blankly before leaping out of bed and sprinting from the room.

He flung open Aurore’s bedroom door and found the desk littered with manuscripts, papers, fountain pens, ink bottles, and other items, just as he remembered. He noticed the chair with the pillow was empty.

His gaze shifted to the vacant bed before slowly retracting.

Quietly, he closed the door and moved to the next room. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

No familiar figure awaited him in the study either.

Lumian raced downstairs.

He dashed through Cordu Village, arriving at the entrance of the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral.

Not a single villager crossed his path. Every house was eerily silent.

Gazing up at the onion-like dome, Lumian strode into the cathedral.

The altar had been altered, adorned with tulips, lilacs, and other

flowers. A black thorn symbol was etched into it, seemingly with liquid flowing on its surface.

Still, nobody was here.

Lumian searched the padre's room before heading to the basement.

Piles of bones and sheepskin lay around, just as in his previous dream, but the altar in the middle remained untouched.

He examined it cautiously but felt no burning sensation in his chest.

Realizing this was a dream, the power representing the past, present, and future seemed to have vanished.

Having gained nothing, Lumian stood by the underground altar, deep in thought. He then dashed up the stairs, out the side door, and into the nearby cemetery. Guided by the memories of his previous dream, he quickly located the tomb where the owl had flown in. Crouching down, he pushed open the stone slab sealing the entrance. Without hesitation, Lumian descended the stairs, traversed the passageway, and found the black coffin in the shadowy tomb.

No owl was present, nor was there another Lumian. Only the faint light seeping in from outside illuminated the scene.

In a daze, Lumian turned his attention to the black coffin.

The lid had already slid to the side, revealing its contents.

Hesitating for a moment, Lumian recalled Aurore nearly losing control in his dream when she spied on the dead Warlock's corpse in the coffin.

Two or three seconds later, his expressionless steps carried him forward, approaching the black coffin. He cast his gaze inside.

A corpse quickly appeared before his eyes.

With golden hair cascading down its sides and eyes tightly shut, the corpse's pale-white face was adorned with a light blue dress.

It was Aurore!

Aurore lay in the coffin of the dead Warlock!

…

Lumian's pupils dilated, his face contorting with horror.

The scene before him fractured, crumbling inch by inch.

Lumian's eyes snapped open, his expression a mix of bewilderment and dread.

"What did you see?" Susie's voice echoed in his ears.

Lumian replied in a distant tone, "I saw Aurore lying in the coffin of the deceased Warlock… "How can this be…"

Susie reassured him, "This is more symbolic.

"Consider this: there's no real Warlock legend, and in the dream, the story you subconsciously created transformed your and Aurore's home into the Warlock's former residence. Aurore knows nothing about this or the legend. "Her loss of control was because she wanted to see the Warlock's corpse in the coffin clearly."

"So, the Warlock who died in the legend represents Aurore. What does the owl symbolize? What does the entire story signify?"

Questions flooded Lumian's mind, each like a sharp blade tearing at his head. Lumian instinctively raised his hands to clutch his head.

"You might need to recover more memories before you can analyze it. Moreover, sometimes, multiple layers of symbolism exist in a mixed state," Susie said gently. "That's enough for today's treatment. Your subconscious is already resisting. Continuing may backfire and harm your mental state.

Would you like the second treatment in two weeks or a month?" Lumian didn't hesitate.

…

“Two weeks from now.” Susie paused for a few seconds before adding, “Lastly, I must remind you that you have a strong tendency for self-destruction.”

“Self-destruction…” Lumian repeated the words, his expression unchanged. Susie’s voice carried warmth again. “I understand why this happened, and I don’t want to forcibly eliminate it. Unless you’re willing to let me erase all memories at the root of the problem, every treatment will only alleviate, not eradicate it.

“I just want to remind you that Aurore loves living and life.

“She has many unfulfilled wishes. She wants to see you attend university. She wants to travel to Trier as an ordinary person for a while. She wants to find clues about her home. She wants to resolve her issues with her parents. She wants to savor all of Trier’s delicacies, every concert, and experience every art exhibition.

attend “She’s one step away from complete death. If she’s conscious, I don’t think she’d give up. She’s like someone who’s fallen into an abyss, clinging to the cliff edge with one hand. If even you give up, no one will pull her up again.” Lumian’s expression shifted, but he couldn’t show any defined emotions.

It seemed he had forgotten how to smile or cry.

Susie didn’t pressure him to respond. She sighed softly and said, “Many times, suppressing pain and despair isn’t helpful. Humans need to vent and relieve stress. “Alright, that’s it for today. We’ll meet again for the second treatment, same time in two weeks.”

Lumian closed his eyes.

“Thank you, Madame Susie.”

Susie didn’t reply, as if she had already left.

After more than ten seconds, Lumian slowly exhaled and opened his eyes.

He instinctively glanced outside Mason’s Café and saw a golden retriever with a small brown bag vanishing around the corner.

A female figure appeared to be beside the dog.

Lumian lingered for another ten minutes before finishing the remaining ambergris lemonade. He stepped out of Mason's Café and made his way to the nearest public carriage stop.

A green double-decker carriage pulled up, inviting passengers to board.

Lumian paid 30 coppets and found a window seat, his gaze distant.

"Read all about it! Only 11 coppets each!" A child in old clothes approached the window, hoisting a stack of newspapers in his hand. Self-destruct… live… self-destruct… live… Lumian's mind replayed the psychiatrist's words. He felt like a walking corpse, oblivious to the newsboy.

Suddenly, he noticed the newspaper's title— Novel Weekly.

That's right, it's Sunday… Lumian snapped back to reality. He handed the child two 5-coppet copper coins and one 1-coppet copper coin, opened the window, and grabbed a copy of Novel Weekly.

Unfolding the newspaper, Lumian began to read, illuminated by the bright sunlight streaming through the window.

As the carriage slowly rolled forward, a message caught Lumian's eye: "Obituary: "Our eternal friend, the renowned bestselling author, Aurore Lee, has been confirmed by our editorial team to have passed away in an accident in April…"

Lumian's gaze froze, his hands trembling.

Abruptly, he lowered his head, raised the newspaper, and shielded his face with it. A wet mark materialized on the newspaper's surface in the afternoon sun.

More and more wet marks emerged, merging into one splatter.

Chapter 129 - 129 Neighbor

Chapter 129 Neighbor

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian tossed the wrinkled newspaper onto the table and slumped onto the bed.

After a few moments, he collapsed onto the mattress. Exhaustion coursed through his veins, making it nearly impossible to resist the urge to sleep.

He reset his body and mental state each day, but never his mind.

Too tired to bother undressing, he kicked off his leather shoes and closed his eyes.

Lumian slept deeply, dreamless.

The acrid scent of sulfur roused him from his sleep. The sun was still setting outside the window.

Lumian turned his head to gaze at the glass window, tinged with a golden-red hue, and whispered sarcastically, “Could it be that I’ve slept for a day and a night?”

It was clearly impossible; he always woke up automatically at 6 a.m.

Though the obituary had helped vent the sorrow in his heart, Lumian still felt somewhat despondent.

He knew that grief wouldn’t simply vanish, and pain would inevitably resurface. He had to maintain a stable mental state and face his emotions without spiraling into self-destruction.

As for extreme, mad, and self-destructive tendencies, he accepted that

these were inevitable, as long as they weren't severe.

I have to undergo psychiatric treatment regularly in the future. Otherwise, I'll completely lose my mind before I complete my revenge and find a way to revive Aurore. Lumian sighed and got out of bed.

He picked up the wrinkled Novel Weekly again and studied the obituary on the front page, seeking to reawaken the familiar pain in his heart.

Then, Lumian noticed an issue.

This paper was from last week.

The paperboy had sold him an outdated newspaper!

Impossible. It's impossible for a paperboy to keep a newspaper copy that can't be sold… Lumian furrowed his brow, finding this odd coincidence inexplicable.

He carefully recalled something that Psychiatrist Susie had said: "Many times, suppressing pain and despair isn't helpful. Humans need to vent and relieve stress…"

Suddenly, Lumian understood.

This was part of his psychiatric treatment!

Madame Susie had first identified my unstable mental state and strong self-destructive tendencies. Then, she used the hope of reviving Aurore as an initial counsel. Finally, while I wallowed in my pain, she arranged for the paperboy to deliver a week-old obituary. She shattered my defenses with cold, hard facts, allowing me to release the pain and despair I had buried deep inside… Lumian mused silently.

Realizing this, he was grateful for encountering a highly skilled and professional psychiatrist. Without her, escaping his mental quagmire would have been nearly impossible.

As Lumian's gaze drifted, he noticed a few bedbugs scurrying into his

room.

His keen sense of smell told him the sulfur in the neighboring room had been lit to repel the bedbugs, but the vermin mostly fled elsewhere.

Lumian chuckled at the thought of him and his neighbor inadvertently "attacking" each other by driving the bedbugs into each other's rooms. He slipped on his leather shoes and strode out of Room 207, heading for Room 206.

On the second floor of Auberge du Coq Doré, nestled in an alley behind Rue Anarchie, a washroom connected rooms 201 to 204. Opposite Room 204 was another washroom, with rooms 205 to 208 on the other side. A sizable balcony graced both sides of the corridor, so the third, fourth, and fifth floors each held ten rooms and two washrooms.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Lumian rapped his knuckles on Room 206's door.

"Who is it?" A slightly flustered voice called from inside.

"I'm from Room 207 next door," Lumian replied, grinning. "I want to get to know my neighbor."

Moments later, the door creaked open, revealing a lanky young man before Lumian.

Barely 1.7 meters tall, the man wore a faded linen shirt and black suspenders. Oversized black-framed glasses perched on his nose, and his unkempt, greasy brown hair looked as if it hadn't been washed for days. His dark-brown eyes betrayed his wariness.

"What can I do for you?" the man inquired.

Flashing a smile, Lumian extended his right hand.

"I'll be staying here for a while, so I figured I should get to know my neighbors. What's your name?"

The young man hesitated before reaching out and shaking Lumian's

hand.

“Gabriel, and yours?”

“Ciel.” Lumian glanced into Room 206, feigning curiosity. “Why are you burning sulfur now? It’s already evening-time to head out for food.”

Gabriel adjusted his glasses and offered a wry smile.

“I’m a playwright, and I’m planning to write all night.”

“An author?” Lumian raised his hand to his chin, abandoning his plan to play a prank on his neighbor to break the ice. Gabriel clarified, “Playwright, actually. I specialize in writing plays for various theaters.”

“Sounds impressive,” Lumian praised sincerely. “I admire people who can write stories. My idol is an author.”

Gabriel, flattered by the praise and Lumian’s genuine expression, scratched his messy brown hair and sighed.

“This line of work isn’t as glamorous as it seems. I poured my heart into my last script, which I think rivals the classics, but no theater manager will give it a chance.

“So I take on requests from tabloids, churning out trite stories to pay rent and avoid starvation. Right now, I’m rushing to finish one of those manuscripts. The editors just want steamy scenes with the female characters -that’s what their readers crave…” Perhaps it was because he had triggered a scar in his heart, Gabriel was driven by an urge to share his struggles.

Lumian listened intently before responding with sincerity, “I’ve read many authors’ biographies and interviews. Most of them experienced hardship, living in cheap hotels or cramped attics. I believe you’ll find someone who appreciates your work and helps you become a renowned playwright.’ Gabriel removed his glasses and rubbed his face. “You’re only the second person to encourage me. Everyone else mocks my dreams, accusing me of being out of touch with reality.” If it weren’t for the fact that you share a profession similar to Aurore’s,

I would've mocked you too. And my mockery would be worse than theirs… Lumian thought, before asking curiously, "Who was the first person to encourage you?"

"Miss Séraphine, from Room 309," Gabriel replied, glancing at the ceiling. "She's a figure model. I haven't seen her in a few days. She might've moved out."

The same figure model Ruhr and his wife mentioned? Lumian nodded and extended an invitation.

"How about a drink at the bar?"

Gabriel was sorely tempted but ultimately declined.

"Another time. I have to submit my manuscript tomorrow."

"Alright." Lumian waved and returned to his room.

Peering out the window at the bustling Rue Anarchie, Lumian resolved to find a restaurant and indulge in Trier's culinary delights.

Just then, a shrill female voice echoed from upstairs: "You bastard! You pig!

…

"Your mother spawned you with a devil…"

The cursing halted abruptly, as if silenced by force. Lumian's heart raced as he flung open the window.

"If you're so fond of women, why not go to your mother?

This time, Lumian pinpointed the voice to the fourth floor.

Miss Ethans, the one forced into prostitution?

He recalled Charlie's description. That also meant Margot-the leader of the Poison Spur Mob-had arrived with his henchmen to collect their dues. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

In the Intis Republic, there were two types of prostitutes: the

registered ones in places like Rue de la Muraille and Rue de Breda, and the unregistered, illegal ones. The latter, who neither paid taxes nor could do their business without the authorities stepping in, outnumbered the former by ten or even twenty times.

After some contemplation, Lumian donned a dark suit and positioned himself between Rooms 202 and 203. A staircase led to the next floor.

He retrieved the cheap cologne he'd purchased from Bigorre, intending to pour it on the wooden steps for Margot and his henchmen to tread upon as they passed.

Unsure when the Montsouris ghost's next attack would strike, Lumian was desperate to find his prey and complete the fate exchange. a brief moment, he abandoned the idea of directly pouring the cologne, opting instead for a more discreet approach to avoid detection by After any Beyonder powers.

Lumian loosened the lid and feigned a clumsy slip of his hand, failing to grip the thick glass bottle securely.

...

With a clang, the cologne bottle hit the bottom step, and some liquid seeped out, the pungent fragrance filling the air.

Lumian crouched down, feigning frustration, picked up the bottle, and screwed the lid back on.

He smeared the spilled cologne with his palm, rubbing it against his body to not waste it.

Soon, most of the liquid had evaporated, and the night breeze pouring into the balcony swept away the lingering scent. Only then did Lumian retreat to Room 207. He concealed himself by leaning against the door frame while keeping an eye on the stairwell.

After more than ten minutes, footsteps sounded from above.

By now, the cologne in the corridor had significantly dissipated.

A thin man led four others down the stairs.

With closely cropped yellow hair, single-lidded blue eyes, a prominent nose bridge, thin lips, and faint scars on his face, the man suspected to be Margot wore a red shirt and a dark leather vest. His hands were tucked into his milky-white pants as he descended step by step.

A bulge on his left waist hinted at a hidden weapon, and his feet were clad in strapless leather boots.

Suddenly, the man frowned and deftly leaped over the two steps and a section of the second-floor corridor tainted with cologne. The three male thugs trailing him failed to detect anything unusual and trampled the remaining traces of the scent. Lumian's heart pounded at the sight. Is Margot acutely sensitive to smells, with a strong aversion to being contaminated by peculiar odors?

Chapter 130 - 130 Tracking

Chapter 130 Tracking

Lumian recognized Margot's actions all too well.

He would have done the same!

Then, he remembered Aurore mentioning that Beyonders from the Hunter pathway were relatively common in the Intis Republic. Lumian suspected that Margot might also be a Beyonder from the Hunter pathway, but he couldn't determine his Sequence.

A mob boss wouldn't have a high Sequence unless necessary… If Margot is truly a Hunter pathway Beyonder, he shouldn't surpass Sequence 7. Furthermore, the likelihood of him being a Pyromaniac is slim. Leah and Valentine, only at Sequence 7, are already considered elite investigators. Could they be inferior to a high-ranking thug who patrols the territory, abducts women, and bullies prostitutes? Lumian pondered silently as he stepped back and averted his gaze.

Although it seemed improbable that Margot had reached or even exceeded Sequence 7, Lumian dared not be careless.

What if his Sequence title was something like 'Scoundrel' which required him to act like one?

What if the Poison Spur Mob was more complex than it appeared, merely an extension of a secret organization or underground cult with ample resources, deliberately avoiding ostentation to evade official scrutiny?

The odds were slim, but lacking information and relevant mystical knowledge, Lumian had to remain vigilant. He couldn't eliminate the possibilities or gauge their likelihood.

In the second-floor corridor, the man suspected to be Margot—clad in a red shirt and black vest with his hands in his pockets- turned to his three subordinates.

Frowning slightly, he seemed puzzled and mildly displeased by their unnecessary contact with the cologne.

He glanced at the ground and sniffed.

The cologne wasn't confined to the stairwell; it brazenly led to Room 207. Moreover, the bottom step bore fresh marks of being struck by a light, small object.

In an instant, the man presumed to be Margot reconstructed the scene in his mind based on the environmental clues: The tenant in Room 207 might have visited the washroom or a neighbor. On their way back, they intended to apply cologne but dropped the bottle on the stairs. Then, they spread the cologne on their body, leaving only faint traces.

This was consistent with the mindset of Auberge du Coq Doré's tenants. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The man thought to be Margot dismissed his suspicions and instructed his three subordinates, "Remember to change your shoes when you return to Salle de Gristmill."

"Alright, Boss," the trio replied almost in unison.

It wasn't surprising; they were frequently asked to do something similar.

Salle de Gristmill… From Room 207, Lumian overheard their conversation and grew increasingly certain that the man suspected to be a Hunter pathway Beyonder was Margot. After chatting with Charlie that morning, he strolled around Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman district, conversing with vendors and bar patrons. He learned that Salle de Gristmill at 3 Rue Anarchie was one of the Poison Spur Mob's strongholds.

Only when Margot and his crew reached the bottom did Lumian don his wide-brimmed hat and leisurely exit the room. He trailed the

lingering scent of cologne, venturing deeper into the street.

Seven or eight minutes later, he arrived at Salle de Gristmill. The faint odor of cheap cologne confirmed that Margot and his subordinates had returned.

Salle de Gristmill lacked the grand statue and inscriptions of Salle de Bal Brise. It merely occupied a section of the street and featured a golden-hued lobby.

Gas lamps encased by glass covers and black crossed bars on four stone pillars illuminating the entrance hall dispelled the evening's darkness.

At that moment, the dance hall buzzed with activity. Lumian heard singing, raucous laughter, and the strumming of instruments before stepping inside.

The layout resembled Salle de Bal Brise, with a dance floor in the center surrounded by small round tables and chairs. A low wooden platform at the front held a sultry woman.

Clad in a provocative short white top, her bra's row of bows was clearly visible. A black mole adorned her lips, and her brownish-yellow hair was swept up in a bun. Her makeup emphasized her large, deep-set blue eyes, creating a seductive, decadent allure.

Softly crooning, she occasionally kicked her right leg. Her cream-colored, fluffy knee-length skirt enticed patrons to try peeking beneath it.

"The consulting physician has an alluring air, "He'll first prepare by pushing up his sleeves with care, "It takes me back to my initial romance, "But this fine medic, he stands apart with just a glance, "He locates the sweet spot with such finesse and speed, "Discerning, my love, his touch is skilled indeed."

Amid the suggestive and captivating performance, Lumian approached the bar counter and asked the bartender, "What's there to eat?"

The bartender smiled and inquired, "How about Rouen Meatloaf? Or

do you prefer standard fare like sausages, bread, and smoked meat?" Lumian, already aware of the Trieriens' fondness for meatloaf, nodded. "Then, two servings of Rouen Meatloaf."

"And a glass of apple punch? It can counteract the richness of the meatloaf." The bartender sensed a generous customer when Lumian didn't inquire about the price and suggested a slightly pricier drink.

Punch was a fruit juice cocktail. Lumian smiled. "Sure."

With nearly 200 verl d'or remaining, Lumian didn't need to be overly frugal with his food and drink. In any case, scrimping wouldn't be enough to cover the outstanding payment for information broker Anthony Reid.

"3 licks for each Rouen Meatloaf and 12 licks for the apple punch," the bartender quickly quoted the price.

Lumian nodded and pulled out a verl d'or silver coin, adorned with a small angel relief and a diffused line on the surface, tossing it to the bartender.

After pocketing the two 5 coppet bronze coins in change, he waited patiently.

By then, the female singer on stage had finished her performance, and the band played a slightly intense drumbeat.

Customers flocked to the dance floor, swaying to the rhythm, releasing the day's pressure, fatigue, and pain.

A man sitting nearby grinned at his companion and said, "I love this atmosphere so much. I wonder who invented this kind of gyrating dance. It's far more appealing than the old quadrille! Can you imagine? I'd often have a partner in my arms, only to wait ages for my turn to dance. My enthusiasm would've cooled by then."

The quadrille, or square dancing, involved four men and women forming a square and dancing to a violinist's performance before circling each other. Another man chuckled and said, "I still prefer the Can-can and Striptease." The Can-can, popular in Quartier de la Princesse Rouge, featured high kicks and landing splits as signature

moves. When women lined up in short skirts and stockings, kicking high, cheers and thrown coins often followed.

Of course, it was a technically demanding dance. A skilled dancer needed to kick their leg as high as their nose or close to their ears. Lumian absorbed the surrounding sounds, occasionally glancing at the stairs where the cheap cologne scent vanished. Soon, two thick meatloaves and a dreamy, transparent alcoholic beverage with a red top and floating ice cubes arrived.

Lumian sipped the apple punch, refreshed by the sweetness, faint tartness, and smoothness of the alcohol. The ice's coldness invigorated him.

He then bit into the Rouen Meatloaf, unable to resist the blend of unfermented dough's sweetness, minced meat's flavor, oil's aroma, and spices' kick.

After devouring a whole meatloaf, he sipped the apple punch to cleanse his palate. Post-dinner, Lumian clutched his drink, listening to the girl's singing and watching the dance floor crowd.

The feverish atmosphere seemed to affect him as he occasionally swayed to the rhythm at the dimly lit bar counter.

Each time, Lumian would steal a glance at the stairs, monitoring Margot and his subordinates' movements. It was midnight when Margot-clad in a red shirt, leather vest, and sporting short, vertical, light-yellow hair-descended the stairs with three thugs and exited Salle de Gristmill.

Aware that the other party might be a Hunter pathway Beyonder, Lumian didn't follow immediately. He was prepared to lose them since the gang's leather shoes, once soaked in cheap cologne, had been changed. Relying on his sense of smell to track them from a distance was no longer an option. Still, he harbored some hope. He'd noticed that most dance hall customers were too engrossed and frenzied, occasionally spilling alcohol on the floor, creating wet spots from the stairs to the exit.

Swaying to the rhythm, Lumian observed from the corner of his eye

that Margot consistently avoided the damp ground. This further solidified his belief that Margot was a Hunter pathway Beyonder.

As for Margot's three subordinates, despite their attempts to dodge the wet areas, their limited observation skills and the dim gas wall lamp lighting led to their feet or heels inevitably getting wet.

For those frequenting bars and dance halls, it was unavoidable. Margot had grown numb to it, not considering it an issue or giving it much thought.

Almost a minute after they left, Lumian rose from the bar counter and stepped out of Salle de Gristmill.

With few pedestrians on the streets, only the occasional drunkard's singing and cursing broke the silence. Ruined gas street lamps cast moonlight providing the main illumination.

a feeble light, with the sky's crimson The four gas wall lamps at the dance hall entrance allowed Lumian to spot numerous Some had long since faded, wet footprints. while others were fresh.

Three sets of footprints appeared in close proximity and consistently at the same time. Upon closer inspection, Lumian discovered a faint, difficult-to-notice set of footprints without any wet stains leading the way. Lumian chuckled, whispering to himself, "Constantly hanging out with fools and vermin will only bring you harm."

...

Chapter 131 - 131 Night Fight

Chapter 131 Night Fight

Under the crimson moon's glow, a gas street lamp illuminated the area from a distance. Lumian identified the footprints and followed them at a measured pace.

Before long, the wet spots dried up entirely, ceasing to provide clues. However, Lumian had memorized the size, sole patterns, and gait characteristics of the four sets of footprints, ensuring he wouldn't confuse them with others.

Even so, tracking them proved challenging. Unlike the ruins of Cordu Village, thousands of people traversed Rue Anarchie and its surroundings daily, leaving countless overlapping footprints that obscured and destroyed each other, making it difficult to pinpoint a target.

Compounding the challenge, vendors littered the streets with trash, and the terrible environment created other distractions. At times, Lumian felt like he was searching for a drop of water in the ocean.

Fortunately, it was midnight, and few pedestrians were out. Most were alcoholics, whose distinct smell and staggered footprints Lumian could dismiss at a glance.

Additionally, Margot and his crew hadn't been gone long, so many traces remained undamaged. Lumian barely managed to keep up.

Occasionally, due to the environment or Margot's caution, the footprints would abruptly vanish. But Lumian remained undeterred. He composed himself, searching forward, left, and right over considerable distances for new traces. Through trial and error, he eventually found the footprints he sought.

Thus, Lumian tracked them to Rue du Rossignol in the market district, stopping in front of a five-story apartment building far from several cheap dance halls.

Margot and his subordinates' footprints led inside.

Upon careful examination, Lumian confirmed that the three thugs had eventually left and walked in different directions.

In other words, Margot was the only one remaining in an apartment room.

He doesn't need his subordinates' protection, confident in his own strength… Lumian silently mused, growing more certain that his target was a Beyonder.

He surveyed the pitch-black corridor, considering how a Hunter might handle corresponding traces before returning to their actual residence. He suspected that even with a carbide lamp and meticulous searching, locating Margot would be near-impossible, and he might even fall into a prearranged trap.

After some contemplation, Lumian formulated a preliminary plan. He averted his gaze and headed to the adjacent street.

Before long, he encountered a staggering drunk man in his twenties who could barely walk.

As the man reached a malfunctioning gas street lamp and began to vomit, Lumian lowered his hat and approached. In a hushed tone, he said, "I want to buy your shirt for 1.5 verl d'or." The drunkard's initial reaction was to question whether he was so intoxicated that he was hallucinating.

He wore a gray-blue tweed shirt he'd purchased from a cheap clothing store in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman for only 1 verl d'or. Now, someone wanted to spend 1.5 verl d'or, or 30 licks, on this old garment he'd worn for two years!

Am I crazy, or is this guy crazy? The drunkard strained to look up at his counterpart, but the dim light only revealed a shadowy figure in the darkness.

The next moment, two cold coins appeared in his hand.

Instinctively, the drunkard weighed the coins and felt the patterns etched into the metal.

He belched and asked, “Why do you want to buy it?”

“If you’re unwilling, I’ll find someone else.” Lumian feigned taking back the silver coins.

Without further questioning, the drunkard grumbled and slowly removed his coat, emptying the pockets.

As Lumian departed with the clothes, the drunkard looked up with difficulty and waved his hand.

“Haha, lunatic. Lunatic who gives money…

Blargh…”

By the time Lumian returned to the apartment block on Rue du Rossignol, he had changed into a dark-blue cap, a gray-blue tweed coat, faded pants, and a pair of worn, dirty leather shoes.

In addition to items he would use later, he had spent a total of 12 verl d’or.

Lumian glanced at the unlit apartment and suddenly found himself bewildered.

Why do I have to target a Beyonder like Margot?

His three subordinates were hardly innocent, and they were clearly weak. They didn’t know how to cover their tracks, so dealing with them shouldn’t be much harder than killing a chicken…

The fate of being attacked by the Montsouris ghost wouldn’t discriminate!

Why was I fixated on hunting Margot?

I wasn’t like this before. When necessary, I could be ruthless, and I

could keep things simple. I wouldn't burden myself unnecessarily…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian's lips curled into a faint smile. He realized he had 'instinctively' chosen more dangerous prey because it appeared more challenging, making him feel more at ease and carefree.

Lumian gazed at his left chest concealed beneath his clothes, suspecting this change resulted from the corruption within his body. After a few seconds of silence, he suppressed a soft chuckle. "From the looks of it, I'm a little crazy…" He didn't plan on changing his target; it was as if he could already smell the stench of blood. This was both a blessing and a curse. With his cap pulled low, Lumian carried a pile of items and circled to the rear of the target apartment.

He arranged the fatty meat, flammable sofa stuffing, and other items against the wall, creating a fireproof barrier around them.

Next, Lumian struck a match and tossed it onto the pile. The sparks rapidly spread across the most combustible materials, quickly growing and consuming everything around them. Black smoke billowed.

As the dense smoke enveloped the area, Lumian shouted, "Fire! Fire!"

He then raced back to the front of the apartment and retreated into the shadows of a nearby corner.

His plan was simple: since he didn't know which room Margot occupied or what traps he had set, he'd force Margot to reveal himself! If Margot were a Pyromaniac, he'd certainly sense that the flames and smoke below couldn't cause a real inferno. His reaction would differ greatly, allowing Lumian to determine Margot's Sequence and decide whether to proceed or abort the plan.

and With the rising smoke, flickering flames, Lumian's cries, the apartment's tenants and those from neighboring buildings rushed down the stairs to the street.

As the fire wasn't large and the smoke hadn't penetrated the apartment, no one risked jumping out.

Remaining silent, Lumian focused intently on the apartment entrance while others ‘replaced’ him to shout and search for the fire’s origin.

Seconds later, a figure leaped from a second-floor window, landing with ease. It was Margot-dressed in a red shirt and long milky-white pants! Relying on his Beyonder abilities and living on a lower floor, Margot hadn’t taken the stairs like the other tenants. Instead, he jumped out the window.

Upon landing, he glanced back at the apartment, realizing the fire wasn’t serious at all. There had been no need for him to jump out, making him appear panicked and foolish.

In that instant, Margot spotted a figure wearing a peaked cap and gray-blue shirt emerge from a corner.

The figure, head lowered, pointed at Margot and laughed. “Look, this guy is such an idiot!” Margot’s emotions erupted with a fury.

His eyes tinted red as he lunged at the man mocking him.

He was fast, but the figure was faster. He had already turned and darted into the nearest alley.

All Margot wanted was to teach the guy a lesson and chase him down.

The pair raced into the dark, deserted alley, one tailing the other.

Tap! Tap! Tap! The figure sprinted to a barricade and vaulted over it with a push from his right hand.

Upon landing, he saw the figure stop and turn around.

…

The moment he landed, he saw the figure stop and turn around.

Under the crimson moonlight, Margot saw the face beneath the dark-blue cap. It was swathed in layers of white bandages, revealing only nostrils, eyes, and ears. The figure’s left hand was similarly wrapped, gripping a sinister-looking, pewter-black dirk. Margot’s pupils

widened, and his heart skipped a beat.

He instantly realized he had fallen prey to some kind of Provocation.

Suppressing his unease, Margot drew the black revolver from his waist.

He aimed at Lumian and activated Provocation.

“With that knife? Idiot, this is the age of the gun!”

Bang! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Margot pulled the trigger, sending a bullet straight for Lumian’s head.

Lumian suddenly arched backward, as if forming a bridge.

Then, he snapped horizontally, dodging Margot’s second bullet. Next, Lumian straightened like a coiled spring and hurled Fallen Mercury at Margot as if it were a flying dagger. Anticipating that his enemy had a Provocation-like ability and possibly poisoned the weapon, Margot dared not confront it head-on. He hastily twisted his body, allowing the pewter-black dirk to sail past him and embed into a crack in the barricade.

As he evaded the attack, Margot saw Lumian pounce on him like a tiger.

…

Only then did he notice that Lumian’s ears were stuffed with thick wads of paper, rendering him almost immune to Margot’s Provocation!

The best understanding of a Hunter always came from another Hunter!

This revelation infuriated Margot once more, as if he had been silently ‘Provoked’ by his opponent’s prowess. Bam! Lumian clenched his right fist and struck Margot’s temples with a sharp crack.

Margot blocked it with his left arm. Simultaneously, he raised his

right hand and aimed the revolver at Lumian's head. Let's see how you dodge at this close range!

In an instant, Lumian leaned forward as if to headbutt Margot's chest and grabbed his right wrist with his left hand.

Meanwhile, his right leg swung up with incredible flexibility.

Not at the back of his head, but at Fallen lodged in a crack in the barricade Mercury, beside him!

The sinister, pewter-black dirk soared into the air, propelled by Lumian's kick, and flew straight toward Margot.

Chapter 132 - 132 Black Scorpion

Chapter 132 Black Scorpion

Crash!

Margot barely managed to dodge the deadly dirk hurtling towards him, but in doing so, he failed to move his revolver in sync with Lumian's rapid motion. The bullet struck the opposite wall, sending stone fragments flying. With a metallic clink, Fallen Mercury zipped past Margot again and landed not far away on the ground.

Lumian straightened up and swiftly stomped his right foot onto the enemy's instep to stop him from raising his knee and slamming it into his abdomen.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian was nearly plastered to his opponent. He either slashed or slammed with both hands, or braced and blocked with his elbows. His feet delivered low kicks or stomps, and his knees jerked forward or bounced around. Margot was too preoccupied fending off these attacks to aim and fire.

The thug felt as if he were caught in a relentless storm of his opponent's blows. Moreover, Lumian stayed close, employing close-quarters combat techniques to prevent him from retreating and using his gun.

For Margot, such a fighting style was both foreign and dangerous.

Crash!

Margot's elbow smashed into the wall, causing the house to shudder.

Whack!

Margot's right wrist was twisted, and the black revolver slipped from his grasp, clattering to the ground.

Wham! Wham! Wham! Lumian unleashed a barrage of hands, elbows, knees, and feet, forcing the enemy to retreat repeatedly.

Towards the end, Margot could only block instinctively, his thoughts unable to keep pace with Lumian's swift movements.

However, he sensed that he had already deciphered the pattern of his opponent's attacks and anticipated the sequences that would follow. He could defend against all onslaughts with his muscle memory alone. In just a moment, he would launch a counterattack!

Instinctively, Margot raised his right foot to block the incoming low kick.

But he met nothing.

Lumian's left foot extended diagonally, defying the limits of human flexibility. He hooked the pewter-black dirk that lay silently beside him.

He had attacked Margot to force him to draw near to Fallen Mercury.

The pewter-black dirk dirk soared up and stabbed Margot's thigh.

Margot found himself pinned down by Lumian while balancing precariously on one foot. He had little recourse but to retract his right foot and twist his body slightly to evade.

Fallen Mercury grazed his thigh and tore through his milky-white pants, leaving a shallow trail of blood.

Wham! Wham! Wham! Lumian went on the offensive once more with the close-quarters combat techniques Aurore had taught him, overwhelming Margot until he had no time to tend to his leg injuries.

Luckily, the wound was superficial and bled only slightly.

Crash!

Margot's back collided with the wall.

Throughout the entire encounter, he hadn't even had a chance to speak. The other party still had his ears plugged, unafraid of any provocation.

Margot's blood boiled, but it only served to fuel his determination. He planned to trade his injuries for an advantage and escape his current predicament.

At that moment, his raised arms met nothing.

He watched in confusion and shock as the strange man with the white bandages on his face voluntarily retreated and created distance. Then, the mysterious man turned and sprinted away. As he ran, he flicked the pewter-black dirk up with his toes and snatched it in his left hand.

Momentarily stunned, Margot was about to give chase when footsteps echoed from the alley.

Hearing the gunshots, two patrolling police officers had rushed over with black semi-automatic revolvers, alerted by nearby residents who had "come downstairs" due to the fire.

"What happened? What's your Poison Spur Mob up to again?" one of the policemen demanded with a frown, recognizing Margot's face. Margot shot a disdainful glance at the two officers in white shirts, black vests, and black uniform coats, and replied, "I was attacked. Officers, you're too late!"

Although he said this, he was secretly relieved the police hadn't arrived later and had scared the mysterious man away. Otherwise, he might have been hunted down.

After all, the strange man was likely a Sequence 8 Provoker. Moreover, his combat techniques were clearly superior to Margot's, and his cunning allowed him to gain the upper hand.

The policeman's face darkened.

"Then follow me back to give a statement. We'll help you find the

assailant. Also, is this your gun?”

He pointed at the revolver that had fallen to the ground.

Margot sneered. “Rely on you to find him? Haha, that’s the funniest joke I’ve heard this year! That gun belongs to the assailant. Take it away.”

With that, he briefly examined his wound to ensure he wasn’t poisoned.

Then, he sauntered out of the alley ahead of the two police officers.

The officer who had first spoken wore an ugly expression. He tried to draw his gun, but his partner held his hand down.

Returning to Rue du Rossignol, Margot’s face hardened. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

His first instinct was to hurry home and rely on the traps he had set up to guard against a second wave of attacks.

But a few seconds later, Margot dismissed the idea, feeling it wasn’t sufficient.

He decided to go to the house of the Poison Spur Mob’s boss, ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger, and inform him of the attack. He would stay there for the night.

That was the safest place for Margot. Margot bandaged the wound on his right leg and sprinted from Rue du Rossignol to Avenue du Marché, making his way to the Suhit steam locomotive, and finally arriving at Unit 126, a three-story building with a small garden in the back.

Before long, he encountered Roger, the Black Scorpion, in the study.

A middle-aged man with firmly set black hair, Roger’s slightly plump face was framed by cold, deep blue eyes.

Dressed in aqua-blue silk pajamas, Roger regarded Margot with a blank expression. “You were attacked?”

“Yes.” Margot recounted the events that had transpired.

Roger’s blue eyes suddenly darkened, as if connected to a bottomless abyss or an eternally burning hell.

After a moment, he nodded.

“There are no signs of you being cursed. But you have to be careful. Your blood is on that knife.”

As Roger spoke, he approached Margot.

“I’ll help you eliminate any hidden dangers first.”

…

Margot breathed a sigh of relief. “Thank you, Boss.”

He followed Roger out of the study and down the stairs into the basement.

Upon flipping the switch and illuminating the gas wall lamp, Roger pointed at the statue in the center and instructed, “Open it and crawl inside.”

The statue depicted a woman with gentle facial features, the folds of her long dress rendered vividly and lifelike.

Margot strode to the statue, pulled open the concealed door at its abdomen, and climbed in.

As the hidden door closed, an eerie silence filled the basement. ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger gazed at the statue and intoned a word in ancient Hermes.

“New life!”

Ghostly, indistinct black flames erupted from the statue’s surface, flowing like water and burning silently. After thirty seconds, Roger said to Margot, “You can come out now.”

This ritual was a method for eliminating the hidden dangers of a

curse. By entering the female statue's abdomen and reemerging, it symbolized a "rebirth." Coupled with the corresponding Beyonder powers, it could sever any connection with the item that had fallen into the enemy's hands.

"Wait for me in the study. I'll search for clues about the assailant," Roger instructed after ensuring Margot was unharmed.

Margot nodded and hastened out of the basement to the study. He pulled up a chair and settled into it.

...

As time ticked by, Margot suddenly felt his body becoming unbearably heavy, as if submerged in icy water.

His breathing grew labored.

Margot's pupils dilated, but he saw nothing.

He fought with all his strength, as if restrained by invisible ropes. He could barely move his arms, fingers, and feet.

Thud!

Margot finally collapsed to the floor, but the strange sensation persisted. His face turned an unnatural purple, and his mouth hung open. His thoughts grew increasingly murky. Why… With this question in mind, Margot succumbed to the encroaching darkness.

At the basement door, Roger emerged with a grave expression.

He has potent anti-divination abilities…

This matter isn't simple…

Roger the Black Scorpion contemplated as he returned to the study.

In the next second, his gaze froze. He discovered Margot sprawled on the ground, his face purple and his lower body soaked. He was no longer breathing.

After the Poison Spur Mob leader conducted a ritual to eliminate any lingering dangers of a curse, he mysteriously perished in the safest location of the Poison Spur Mob—right before Roger the Black Scorpion.

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207. Lumian, now in fresh attire, nodded with satisfaction.

Fallen Mercury informed him through its vibrations that the fate exchange had been completed.

This meant Margot would instantly be assaulted by the Montsouris ghost. Completing a fate exchange after stabbing someone took time-anywhere between five and thirty minutes, depending on the desired fate, the individual's strength, and their subconscious resistance. If Lumian was the target and he eagerly opened his mind and body, the fate exchange could be achieved swiftly—within seconds or even less than twenty. Gazing at the pewter-black dirk in his hand, Lumian smirked.

"When I have time, I'll teach you Morse code. Otherwise, every time we communicate, I have to constantly narrow down options based on your feedback. It's far too tedious."

Fallen Mercury's quivering blade stilled, as if stunned.

Lumian, triumphant after a successful hunt, was in high spirits. He teased with a smile, "Do you wonder why you should learn, even as a blade? Ambition is crucial. The same goes for being a blade. Do you want to remain like this forever?"

Then, he inquired, "What fate did you exchange this time?"

Lumian extended his spiritual sense to the pewter-black, patterned dirk.

With Fallen Mercury's assistance, he gradually deciphered the destiny droplets stored within the weapon.

It represented Margot's fate of receiving stacks of cash from his various underlings. "You have a knack for choosing fates." Lumian had been occupied with fighting and had delegated the fate exchange

to Fallen Mercury.

He had merely informed it beforehand that he needed money.

After commending Fallen Mercury, Lumian grew pensive. How will this fate manifest after the exchange?

Chapter 133 - 133 Suffering

Chapter 133 Suffering

Lumian couldn't make sense of it, but he didn't dwell on it either. He rolled up his sleeves, baring his right arm, and sliced it with the Fallen Mercury blade. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

A brief moment of numbness was followed by a familiar pain, but he didn't flinch. He watched as blood oozed out and stained the silver-black blade crimson.

Almost instantaneously, a mercury illusory river, composed of intricate symbols, materialized before Lumian's eyes. The destiny droplets stored in the evil dirk seeped from its tip and flowed into the shallow wound.

Lumian concentrated, straining to discern the fate he sought to exchange.

He "saw" himself receiving treatment, "saw" himself falling asleep after releasing his emotions, and "saw" himself searching for Osta Trul…

Scenes flashed across Lumian's mind as if he had witnessed them firsthand.

Soon after, he located the fate of venturing outside the catacombs and encountering the Montsouris ghost from several days prior.

He swiftly raised the tip of Fallen Mercury and thrust it towards the complex symbols that appeared to be formed by the mercury river.

That fate proved heavy, and Lumian failed to stir it on his first attempt.

As the illusory river slowly faded, the scene in his mind became increasingly hazy. He hurriedly channeled most of his spirituality into the blade of Fallen Mercury.

At last, with a second stir, the fate of meeting the Montsouris ghost broke free from the illusory, mercury-hued river and shrank into a minuscule droplet, resembling a bead of mercury from a shattered thermometer.

The illusory droplet rapidly merged with the pewter-black dirk.

Only then did Lumian exhale a sigh of relief. He knew he had evaded the Montsouris ghost, and Fallen Mercury could now be deemed a Cursed Blade.

Once he treated the wound, an odd intuition suddenly struck him.

Guided by this intuition, Lumian exited Auberge du Coq Doré again, weaving between raucous drunks and a heated brawl. He returned to Rue du Rossignol and halted outside the alley where he had assaulted Margot.

Furrowing his brow, he cautiously entered and flipped over the barricade.

In the next moment, Lumian's gaze instinctively fell upon the shadow in the corner.

Something lay quietly in the realm of darkness.

Sensing its significance, Lumian hurried over, crouched down, and picked up the object with his gloved left hand.

It was a bulging brown leather wallet.

Margot dropped it? The money his underlings plundered and handed over to him? Lumian roughly grasped how the fate exchange had transpired.

Although he couldn't recall whether Margot had dropped the wallet during their fierce battle or if it had 'fallen' afterwards, it didn't prevent Lumian from claiming the money.

He extracted the thick wad of cash and emptied the gold, silver, and copper coins from the change purse. Then, he tossed the wallet aside and left the alley.

Back in Auberge du Coq Doré Room 207, Lumian lit the carbide lamp and meticulously counted his newfound fortune.

In total, he had acquired 1,265 verl d'or and 15 coppet. Most were banknotes worth 10 verl d'or or less. There was only one 200 verl d'or note, one 100 verl d'or note, and two 50 verl d'or notes. A few Louis d'or were included as well.

Lumian stared at the money for a few seconds before sighing deeply.

Even ten donations from 'benevolent souls' can't compare to taking down a gang leader…

Naturally, not all of the money belonged to Margot. He was merely holding onto it for the Poison Spur Mob.

Lumian grabbed a stack of small bills amounting to 200 verl d'or and left Room 207, climbing the stairs.

In under a minute, he reached the fourth floor and came to a stop in front of Room 8.

He recalled that Margot had visited Auberge du Coq Doré in the evening to collect most of the money from an unlicensed prostitute named Ethans.

At the time, one of Margot's underlings must have been in charge, but the money eventually ended up in Margot's possession. Without knocking, Lumian crouched down and slid the stack of banknotes through the gap beneath the door.

He quickly straightened up, turned towards the stairs, and vanished into the shadowy corridor.

Lumian slept until six o'clock when the cathedral bell chimed.

He had slept soundly the night before, feeling as if the Provoker potion had been somewhat digested.

In the morning, I'll look for Osta Trul and see if Mr. K has replied. I'll also buy some better clothes and cosmetics from Quartier de l'Observatoire… In the afternoon, I'll visit the cheap clothing store at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman… Lumian wasn't eager to rise. He lay there, quietly contemplating the day's plans. Having escaped the threat of the Montsouris ghost, he placed disguising himself back on his to-do list.

After lingering in bed for a while, he ambled to the washroom to freshen up. Then, he went downstairs and purchased half a liter of apple cider and a loaf of bread with pork sausages from the vendors.

Having sated his hunger, he headed to the nearest cathedral square and found an empty corner to practice the combat techniques Aurore had taught him.

Lumian returned to Auberge du Coq Doré at 9:30 a.m., intending to rest for an hour before seeking out Osta Trul.

Upon entering the motel lobby, he spotted three maids cleaning various filthy areas under Madame Fels's supervision.

The motel owner hires cleaners every Monday… Lumian averted his gaze and walked towards the staircase.

At that moment, footsteps echoed from above.

Within ten seconds, Charlie appeared before Lumian, clad in a linen shirt, dark pants, and strapless leather shoes.

"You didn't go to the hotel?" Lumian asked, puzzled.

Charlie yawned and replied excitedly, "Don't you know? I'm off today. We can take one day off a week and choose whichever day we want."

Lumian chuckled. "Does this day off result in a reduction in your 'monthly salary' from Madame Alice?"

Charlie grinned sheepishly. "She has her own social engagements.

As they conversed, a foul odor drifted in from the door. The short,

disheveled, gray-haired Ruhr and Michel entered the hotel.

“You didn’t go to the steam locomotive station?” Charlie greeted them warmly.

Ruhr approached them first, then maintained a respectful distance.

“The market district is a bit chaotic today. We plan to rest for a day.”

“What happened?” Lumian inquired “curiously.”

Ruhr instinctively lowered his voice. “Margot of the Poison Spur Mob is dead. Many gangsters are searching for someone. Other gangs might clash with them at any moment. There are also many police officers present.

“Margot’s dead?” Charlie blurted out, astonished.

…

He had just thought the guy deserved to die yesterday, and now he was dead? Ruhr nodded gravely.

“I’ve heard several people mention it. Sigh, we can’t earn any money today.” His wife, Madame Michel, consoled him, “If we don’t go out, we don’t have to eat lunch. We can save some money.” Before Lumian could inquire about the situation outside, Charlie, snapping out of his daze, spun around and dashed upstairs.

Lumian’s eyes flickered as he trailed behind.

Thud, thud, thud. Charlie rapidly ascended to the fourth floor and sprinted to Room 8. Taking a deep breath, he slammed the wooden door.

“Who is it?” A slightly hoarse female voice emerged from within.

Charlie announced his name loudly.

“Didn’t I say I’m off the clock in the morning? back in the afternoon. Remember, 10 verl Co d’or. No discount this time!” the female voice responded impatiently, opening the door. This was Lumian’s first

encounter with the woman named Ethans. Her flaxen hair tumbled to her shoulders, her similarly-colored eyes wary and her face etched with apprehension. She appeared to be twenty-three or twenty-four years old, with average looks that could only be described as delicate. Her face and clothes were clean, and her red dress exposed a generous expanse of fair skin on her chest. Charlie excitedly informed Ethans, “Did you know? Margot is dead! He’s really dead!”

“…” Ethans stared, dumbfounded. After several seconds, her slightly hoarse voice turned sharp. “Is that devil truly dead?”

“It’s true.” Charlie nodded without hesitation.

“You can finally escape that devil! You can finally live like a normal person!” Ethans glanced around, dazed, taking in Lumian’s expressionless eyes and Charlie’s animated countenance.

“He’s dead? He’s dead?” She murmured, thinking of the money that had mysteriously appeared in her room.

…

As she started to believe Margot was indeed dead, her vision blurred.

Tears poured down her cheeks. She couldn’t help but squat down and bury her face in her arms.

Her sobbing intensified, becoming more uncontrollable.

At that moment, footsteps echoed from the staircase.

Lumian turned his head and saw a young man in a white shirt, coat, and black jacket approaching.

Behind him were Margot’s three thugs. The lad’s brown hair was slightly curly, and his face bore prominent creases. He strode up to the weeping Ethans, crouched down, and grinned.

“I’m Wilson from the Poison Spur Mob. From today onwards, I’ll take care of you on Margot’s behalf.”

Charlie’s excited expression froze. Ethans’s cries halted abruptly.

Slowly raising her tear-streaked face, she saw Wilson's smile and the shadow his body cast.

The shadow was so dense that it couldn't be dispelled. Lumian observed quietly, his head imperceptibly raised.

On the way to the first floor, Charlie, who had been silent for a long time, couldn't help but ask, "Is there really no end to the suffering of the poor?"

"I like something Aurore Lee wrote," Lumian replied, his face expressionless. "Sometimes, we're not the ones at fault, but the world."

As soon as he finished speaking, three people stomped up from the first floor. They were police officers in black uniforms, black vests, white shirts, and strapless leather boots.

The 1.85-meter-tall officer leading the group glanced at Charlie and Lumian and suddenly stopped in his tracks.

Pressing down on the gun at his waist, he asked in a deep voice, "Charlie Collent?" Charlie was stunned.

"It's me, Officer. What's the matter?"

The officer gestured at his colleagues and took out steel handcuffs.

As his two colleagues encircled Charlie, he said with a serious expression, "You're suspected of murder. We're arresting you."

"Murder?" Charlie's face displayed shock, fear, and confusion.

Lumian raised his eyebrows in surprise.

As the officer handcuffed Charlie with his colleague's assistance, he informed him, "Madame Alice is dead!"

Chapter 134 - 134 Courtesan

Chapter 134 Courtesan

“What?” Charlie’s disbelief was palpable.

Lumian shared his surprise, casting a sympathetic glance at Charlie.

He was convinced that Charlie had no reason to kill Madame Alice. After all, while she lived, Charlie stood to gain 500 verl d’or a month for the next six months. According to various publications, this sum was nearly equivalent to the monthly salary of a doctor, lawyer, mid-level civil servant, senior high school teacher, senior engineer, or deputy police lieutenant. For someone who had nearly starved to death and could only find work as an apprentice attendant, it was a small fortune.

As his two colleagues headed upstairs, the officer who had handcuffed Charlie tersely explained, “Madame Alice was discovered dead in her room at the H?tel du Cygne Blanc this morning. Multiple witnesses confirm you spent the night there and didn’t leave until close to midnight.”

Charlie’s fear and confusion mounted.

“How is this possible? How did she die…”

Muttering to himself, he suddenly turned to the officer, anxiety etched on his face, and insisted, “She was alive when I left! I swear by Saint Vième!”

The officer’s deep voice responded, “The preliminary autopsy report places Madame Alice’s time of death between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. last night. Besides you and her, no one else’s presence was detected.”

Could the other presence not be human? Lumian mused silently,

considering the Montsouris ghost.

If it weren't for his lack of an adequate disguise and his desire to avoid the detectives' scrutiny, he would have voiced his thoughts.

"Impossible! This can't be happening!" Charlie's eyes widened, his voice raised in protest.

A police officer, who had slipped away earlier, descended from the fourth floor, a glittering diamond necklace held in his white-gloved left hand.

"Found this!" he informed the lead officer.

The officer nodded without further explanation to Charlie. He stared at him solemnly, declaring, "Charlie Collent, you're under arrest for murder. You have the right to remain silent; anything you say can and will be used against you in court."

"I didn't do it! Do you hear me? I didn't!" Charlie screamed, struggling futilely.

Despite his protestations, he was led out of Auberge du Coq Doré by the two police officers.

By then, several tenants had been drawn by the commotion to the staircase, where they watched the scene unfold.

Among them was Gabriel, who appeared to have just completed an all-night writing session on his manuscript.

"Do you think Charlie did it?" Lumian asked the playwright, deep in thought as he stared down the now-empty corridor.

Gabriel had emerged earlier and had a rough understanding of Charlie's predicament.

He shook his head, replying, "I don't think Charlie is guilty. He's not a saint, but he's not evil either."

"Why do you say that?" Lumian inquired, turning to him.

Gabriel adjusted his black-framed glasses.

“Charlie was swindled out of his money and nearly starved, yet he never considered stealing from us.

“That means he either has principles and a moral compass, or he’s terrified of the law. In either case, it’s enough to prove he wouldn’t murder that lady.”

Lumian nodded, then chuckled.

“People can be impulsive and change.”

With that, he climbed the stairs to the fifth floor.

This was the top floor of Auberge du Coq Doré. Large sections of the ceiling overhead showed signs of water damage, as if heavy rain would cause it to leak.

Lumian approached Room 504, Charlie’s room, and extracted a small wire he carried with him to unlock the wooden door.

Inside, Charlie’s suitcase, bed, and wooden table had been rifled through by the two police officers earlier. Items were strewn about, but they were few and far between.

Lumian recalled that during a conversation with Charlie at the basement bar, he had mentioned pawning his only formal suit and many other belongings while unemployed. He still couldn’t afford to retrieve them.

As he entered, his gaze shifted, and Lumian suddenly spotted a portrait.

Taped to the wall opposite the bed, it depicted a woman in a green dress.

The woman appeared to be in her late twenties, with auburn hair, jade-green eyes, and lustrous red lips. She possessed an exquisite beauty, radiating elegance.

Lumian was taken aback. The woman in the painting seemed eerily

familiar.

He realized it must be Susanna Matisse, the infamous prostitute Charlie had confused for Saint Viève.

Yet he had never met this woman before, so there was no reason for him to find her familiar.

After some thought, Lumian suddenly remembered something.

During his Summoning Dance in Room 207, he had attracted a translucent figure that was clearly more powerful than the other entities.

The figure, too, was female and bore a striking resemblance to Susanna Matisse in the portrait. However, one had turquoise hair, the other auburn; one's hair was long enough to cover her naked body, while the other's was merely long enough to form a bun.

Moreover, the figure was even more alluring, seemingly capable of stirring hidden desires within anyone. Susanna Matisse's portrait didn't provoke such feelings in Lumian. A consequence of misguided prayers? Lumian silently nodded in agreement.

In the past, he wouldn't have questioned Charlie's actions. If it meant avoiding starvation, Lumian would have prayed sincerely to a prostitute, let alone Trier's guardian angel.

But now, through Aurore's grimoire, Lumian had gained a basic understanding of the entry-level Sequences of the twenty-two divine paths, sacrificial taboos, and associated mystical knowledge. He knew that careless praying could be perilous.

After searching for a while, he left Room 504, grabbed the carbide lamp, and hailed a public carriage on Avenue du Marché, heading toward Quartier de l'Observatoire.

As he ventured into the underground toward the area where Osta Trul typically lurked, Lumian periodically scrutinized the shadows behind the stone pillars.

He laughed at himself, thinking, I won't run into the Montsouris

ghost again, will I? If that were the case, he would need to consider whether the Montsouris ghost had a particular connection to something he possessed, or if corruption had indirectly altered his "horoscope," resulting in exceptionally bad luck. Fortunately, Lumian's concerns proved unfounded. He found Osta Trul sitting beneath a stone pillar, a bonfire crackling nearby.

The hooded, black-robed figure glanced at Lumian and offered a genuine smile. "Mr. K has granted you permission to attend our biweekly mysticism gathering at nine o'clock on Wednesday night."

Osta's gaze bore a distinct sincerity, as if to say payment was due.

At 9 p.m. the day after tomorrow… Lumian nodded with a smile.

"Where's the gathering?"

"Meet me at my place an hour beforehand. I'll take you there," Osta replied without hesitation. Lumian tersely acknowledged.

"I'll pay you the rest then." Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

"Alright." Though Osta seemed slightly disappointed, he acquiesced.

…

Lumian inquired, "What should I be cautious of at the gathering?"

"Cover your face and hide your identity," Osta advised from experience. "You don't want other attendees exposing you if they're caught by the authorities, do you? Aside from Mr. K, no one should know everything." Lumian grinned, retorting, "You've already seen my face and know my identity. Should I consider burying you in some corner of Underground Trier after the first gathering?" Osta involuntarily shuddered and forced a smile.

"You're quite the joker. But I don't actually know who you are, where you live, or what you do. Besides, it's unlikely that you've shown me your true self."

Taking pleasure in unnerving the other party, Lumian found a rock and sat down. Basking in the warmth of the bonfire, he casually

asked, “Have you ever heard of Suzanne Matisse?”

“I have,” Osta replied, his excitement evident. “For a time, she was the woman of my dreams. I bought numerous posters and postcards featuring her image. A few years ago, she was Trier’s most famous prostitute, the kind who attended high society banquets. She was linked to countless scandals involving members of parliament, high-ranking officials, and the wealthy. Rumor has it that she made hundreds of thousands of verl d’or annually, but she’s been out of the limelight for the past two or three years. Nana has since taken her place as Trier’s renowned courtesan. Sigh, she might have become someone’s permanent mistress.” Hundreds of thousands of verl d’or? Lumian was taken aback.

“A high-level courtesan earns more than most best-selling authors?”

“Isn’t that normal?” Osta wore a peculiar expression. “A high-level courtesan can sleep with members of parliament, bankers, and high-ranking officials, but a best-selling author can’t[1].”

Amused and self-deprecating, Lumian remarked, “That’s true. Poet Boller once said there is no difference between a poet and prostitute. The former sells the product of his imagination, the latter her body.”

“I prefer bodies,” Osta admitted candidly. Lumian inquired again, “Have you heard of the legend of a female ghost? She has turquoise hair, long enough to wrap around her body. Her features are exquisite, capable of enchanting most men and arousing their desires.”

“No.” Osta shook his head. With a wistful expression, he added, “If such a female ghost truly exists, I’d love to encounter her just once.”

Lumian stood up and chuckled. “Then brace yourself for sudden death after doing it dozens of times a night.”

...

“…” Osta’s expression froze.

3 p.m., 27 Avenue du Marché, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman Police Headquarters. Lumian, having spent nearly 300 verl d’or on

three sets of differently graded clothes, affordable cosmetics, and other disguise props, entered the unusually noisy hall. Some people were being brought in, others were fortunate enough to leave, while still others argued loudly, caused a scene, and cursed-some slammed tables and kicked stools…

Lumian, his blond hair neatly combed back, black-framed glasses perched on the bridge of his nose, and a mustache adorning his lips, appeared with overly fair cheeks. Dressed in a black formal suit and carrying a brown briefcase, he approached a male constable overseeing reception.

He stopped before the man, lifted his head slightly, and confidently announced, “I’m Charlie Collent’s pro bono lawyer. I’d like to see my client.”

[1] I remember Baudelaire mentioning it, but I couldn’t find the source for the time being. It could be someone else.

Chapter 135 - 135 Confirming the Situation

135 Confirming the Situation

The constable set down his newspaper and sized up Lumian, visibly unnerved by his unabashed confidence. He gestured to the notebook and fountain pen before him, saying, “Show me your lawyer’s license and register your name and purpose of visit.”

A license? Seriously? Lumian, the phony attorney, felt a surge of panic.

Hadn’t he read in countless novels and newspapers that simply identifying oneself as a lawyer was enough to gain access to a client?

As Lumian reached for the black fountain pen, his mind raced, formulating a plan.

He suddenly noticed that the constable across from him had shifted his attention to the recently discarded copy of Youth of Trier, fixated on the annual Trier cycling race.

He doesn’t seem to care about the lawyer’s license… An idea flashed through Lumian’s mind. Mimicking Aurore’s penmanship, he scrawled his ‘name’: “Guillaume Pierre, pro bono lawyer. Meeting client, Charlie Collent.”

After jotting it down, Lumian stood and nonchalantly glanced around.

Feigning delight, he raised his arm and exclaimed, “My little cabbage, long time no see!”

Confused faces turned in his direction. Lumian spun back to the

registering constable and murmured, “I spotted a friend.”

The unspoken message: he’d present his lawyer’s license later.

Without waiting for a reply, Lumian strode to a corner of the hall.

The constable gave the register a cursory glance before returning his gaze to Youth of Trier.

Once in the corner, Lumian stole a peek at the preoccupied constable, then turned to the baffled onlookers with an apologetic grin.

“I’m sorry, I mistook you for someone else.”

Clutching his briefcase, he approached the police officer he had “chosen” earlier, who was now coming from the registration office.

Lumian lifted his chin and demanded haughtily, “I want to see my client, Charlie Collent.”

In the Intis Republic, attorneys held a far higher social status than ordinary constables.

The officer glanced back at the registration office, saw no cause for concern, and nodded.

“I’ll contact the person in charge of that case for you.”

Fifteen minutes later, Lumian found himself face-to-face with Charlie in a secured room, two officers standing guard at the door.

“Who are you?” Charlie asked, sinking into a chair across the table, his eyes filled with confusion.

His once-rosy cheeks were now pallid, fear etched into every line of his face.

He had heard of pro bono lawyers while chatting with other hotel staff and knew they were provided by government agencies or philanthropic organizations for destitute suspects. He never expected one to arrive just half a day after his arrest.

Lumian grinned, removed his black-framed glasses, winked with his right eye, and spoke in his natural voice, “Don’t you recognize me? I’m your pro bono lawyer.”

Charlie stared, dumbstruck. After a few seconds of careful scrutiny, a spark of recognition lit up his face.

But before he could speak, Lumian slipped his glasses back on and said, “Quiet. Listen to me.”

“Alright, alright.” Charlie snapped to attention.

Lumian’s smile vanished, replaced by a grave expression.

“I need to know the full details of what happened. That’s the only way I can clear your name.”

“Really?” Charlie asked, desperation in his voice, like a drowning man grasping at a lifeline.

Feigning his professionalism, Lumian questioned, “What time did you stay in the room with Mrs. Alice until?”

Charlie rubbed his face, struggling to recall through the haze of confusion and pain, “Madame Alice ordered room service. I entered her room before 8 p.m. and stayed until she was tired. I only left at midnight. At that time, she had just laid down and was still awake. She was still alive!”

From 8 p.m. to midnight? Every day? That 500 verl d’or isn’t easy to earn… Lumian mused, then adopted a lawyerly tone, “You have to be honest with me. Hiding anything will only hurt you in the end.”

“I’m not lying. That’s really the truth!” Lumian’s words, actions, posture, and tone had convinced Charlie that he was truly his defense attorney.

After verifying a few more details, Lumian inquired, “After you gained Madame Alice’s favor, did anyone express jealousy?”

“Many. Apprentices and official attendants alike, they were all jealous of me…” Charlie remembered.

They discussed the topic for a while before Lumian produced a photo, handing it to Charlie.

“See if you recognize this person.”

Charlie gasped, “Isn’t this Saint Viève?”

Why was she dressed so provocatively, her chest exposed?

“I’ve confirmed that the portrait in your room isn’t Saint Viève. It belongs to the famous courtesan, Susanna Mattise.” Lumian tactfully replaced ‘prostitute’ with ‘courtesan’ to prevent Charlie from becoming overly upset.

“Huh?” Charlie’s face contorted with confusion.

I prayed to a courtesan, not an angel?

But why did my luck change for the better?

No, if it had truly improved, I wouldn’t have been arrested…

Lumian produced another photo. It still depicted Susanna Mattise, but he had already altered the courtesan’s hair color and made a few “edits.”

“Take a look at this and tell me if you recognize this person.”

Charlie scrutinized the image for a few seconds before his expression morphed into one of shock.

“Wh— She! How can this be?”

“So you do know her?” Lumian smirked.

Charlie looked up, his voice hollow, “S-she is… She’s the woman from my beautiful dreams. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Didn’t I tell you? I had these amazing dreams for a few days. I dreamed of making love to her. She was so passionate and gentle…

“H-how did you know I dreamed of her? I didn’t tell anyone! Why do you have a photo of her?”

Charlie's gaze, now fixed on Lumian, had completely changed.

Is this really the southern kid I know?

Aside from his talent for pranks and good looks, there was nothing extraordinary about him!

Lumian's lips curled into a smile as he gazed back at Charlie.

"Take a closer look at who's in the photo."

Charlie stared blankly at the image of the green-haired woman.

As he examined it, his expression morphed into sheer terror. He recoiled involuntarily, making the chair creak.

"No, that's impossible! Susanna, Susanna, she's that prostitute!" Charlie shouted, unable to suppress his emotions.

This revelation left him feeling as if he had encountered a malevolent spirit.

After praying to a portrait of a prostitute, he had not only escaped hunger and found a new job but had also dreamed of her and slept with her!

Wasn't this akin to encountering a ghost?

Lumian nodded approvingly.

"Congratulations. At least you're not blind."

He had intended to help Charlie and divulge information as a prank to frighten him, but the two matters were unrelated.

The door to the interview room creaked open. A constable standing guard outside inquired warily, "What happened? Why are you shouting?"

"I helped him recall some key details," Lumian explained calmly.

Charlie snapped out of his stupor.

“Yes, I remember something very important.”

And indeed, it was!

The policeman didn’t press further and shut the door again.

Seeing this, Charlie leaned forward, gripping the edge of the table, and asked anxiously, “Did I encounter an evil female spirit?”

“It might not be a vengeful or evil spirit,” Lumian said, watching Charlie’s expression soften slightly before adding, “It might be even more troublesome than that.”

At those words, Charlie’s face turned ashen.

After a brief pause, he asked apprehensively, “You… you mean Madame Alice was killed by that evil spirit?”

“I’m not sure yet.” Lumian stood up. “I need to examine Madame Alice’s corpse.”

“You even know how to investigate a corpse to determine the true cause of death?” Charlie found his neighbor increasingly enigmatic.

Lumian smiled but offered no answer.

As Charlie’s defense attorney, Lumian had the right to inspect the corpse under police supervision, and he could even enlist the assistance of an independent pathologist. So, after signing two documents under the name Guillaume Pierre, Lumian was escorted to the basement of the market district’s police headquarters and into the morgue where the body was kept.

The officer leading him slid open the cabinet, unzipped the body bag, and pointed to the female corpse.

“This is Madame Alice.”

In life, Alice had preserved her appearance quite well, with only faint wrinkles at the corners of her eyes and mouth. Her thick brown eyebrows framed her face, her cheeks sagged slightly, and her skin had taken on a deathly pallor.

Lumian glanced casually at the body and said to the officer, “I’m good.”

He wasn’t a pathologist who had come to conduct a genuine examination; his objective was merely to pinpoint the approximate location of Madame Alice’s remains.

After exiting the morgue, Lumian turned to the accompanying officer and asked, “Where’s the nearest restroom?”

“Take a right at the end of the corridor,” replied the officer, despite his growing impatience.

Lumian hastened his steps and entered the basement restroom.

Once inside, he locked the wooden door and performed the Summoning Dance in the cramped space.

Amidst the frenzied, contorted dance, a chilling wind swept through the restroom. Vague figures materialized one by one, their pale or bluish-white faces staring at Lumian with empty eyes.

These were the lingering obsessions of the departed.

Lumian had never witnessed such a spectacular sight before. For a moment, he felt as if he were surrounded by ghostly specters.

He steadied himself and continued the second half of the dance while searching for Madame Alice.

Soon, he spotted the fierce-looking lady with the thick brown eyebrows.

Lumian unsheathed the ritual silver dagger and inflicted a wound, commanding Madame Alice to attach herself to him.

Madame Alice consumed the drop of blood and entered Lumian’s body.

Immediately, Lumian felt a shiver race down his spine, and his chest grew heavy.

His breath came in labored gasps.

Without hesitation, Lumian amplified Madame Alice's obsession, foregoing any selection of her characteristics or abilities.

Almost instantaneously, Lumian's vision dimmed, and he saw Madame Alice lying on the bed, her mouth and nose smothered by a down pillow. However, there was no one pressing down on the pillow in her line of sight!

Chapter 136 - 136 Initial Summoning Attempt

136 Initial Summoning Attempt

Lumian, consumed by Madame Alice's fixation, found breathing increasingly difficult. His body ached more intensely, as if he had once again encountered the Montsouris ghost and teetered on the brink of death.

This was a true death experience.

Concerned he might lose control, Lumian chose not to push further. He ordered Madame Alice's lingering spirit to vacate his body.

Gasping for air, he wiped the cold sweat from his brow before reverting to his slightly arrogant novice lawyer persona.

Accompanied by the police officer, he headed back to the interview room.

Charlie sprang to his feet, leaning forward with his hand braced against the table. His face was a mix of anxiety and anticipation.

Without waiting for a question, Lumian seemed to hear Charlie ask, "What's the result?"

Lumian nodded and made a calming motion. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

His gesture implied that the autopsy findings aligned with his expectations.

Relief washed over Charlie's face instantly. It was as though he'd expended all his energy in that moment. He slumped back into his

chair, physically drained.

In front of the two constables at the door, Lumian declared firmly, “Don’t worry about anything else. I’ve got it covered.

“You only need to do one thing. During the next questioning, recount the entire story to these gentlemen without omitting a single detail, no matter how absurd or implausible it may seem.

“Of course, stick to what happened up until your arrest. There’s no need to delve into our conversation.”

Since a lawyer-client dialogue might involve courtroom tactics others had no right to know, the two officers at the door didn’t find Lumian’s last statement odd. After all, Charlie Collent was an unfortunate kid facing a serious criminal case for the first time and requiring a lawyer. He likely didn’t know the rules and needed explicit guidance.

Charlie grasped Lumian’s message: Don’t reveal to the police that I discovered the issue with the portrait!

“Alright.” Charlie wasn’t as angry, terrified, or flustered as when he was first arrested and brought to the station, but he wasn’t as chatty as usual either.

After departing the market district’s police headquarters, Lumian circled twice before finding an alley blocked by a barricade. He changed his clothes, removed his glasses, and altered his makeup style.

Now that I have enough money, I can set up a safe house and a place to switch disguises based on Aurore’s novels. Lumian recalled his sister’s writing, piecing together the method for handling such matters.

He also fully intended to purchase a copy of Men’s Aesthetics.

Mastering makeup without guidance was impossible. He’d mainly relied on his hairstyle, glasses, and attire to conceal his identity.

En route to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian contemplated how to

extricate Charlie from his dire situation.

Who exactly is Susanna Matisse, or rather, the bizarre creature she morphed into? Why did she murder Madame Alice?

Why did she help Charlie in the past and engage in the act with him in the dream?

The prospect of writing to Madam Magician unsettled Lumian.

Judging by the speed of her previous response and its content, he sensed her indirectness: “Don’t bother me unless it’s important!”

If Lumian faced an issue involving Susanna Matisse, writing to inquire would be acceptable. However, this predicament only concerned his neighbor.

It was highly likely that the enigmatic, potent woman who detested complications wouldn’t respond.

And this could impact her attitude towards Lumian.

If I’m not asking Madam Magician, why not inquire at Mr. K’s mysticism gathering? If the attendees are Beyonders at Osta Trul’s level, they might not have the answer… As Lumian mulled it over, he ascended the stairs and entered his room.

His gaze fell on the suitcase containing Aurore’s grimoires, and he experienced a sudden revelation.

Why should I investigate Susanna Matisse and deal with her personally?

My sole objective is to rescue Charlie!

Even if I can uncover Susanna Matisse’s vulnerability and vanquish her, can I coerce a peculiar creature like her to turn herself in at the police station?

If she dares to go, the police won’t dare to entertain her. Given her displayed characteristics, wouldn’t she indulge in an orgy on the spot?

Lumian rapidly discerned the distinction between goals and means.

There was no need for such effort to exonerate Charlie and secure his release from police headquarters!

He simply had to inform Bureau 8, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, and the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery that Charlie's case involved Beyonder elements and prompt them to intervene in the investigation!

Even a low-level Beyonder with no intelligence network or mystical powers could detect something amiss with Susanna Matisse. There's no reason why official investigators couldn't uncover the invisible force behind Madame Alice's demise. Eventually, they would not only verify Charlie's innocence but also help him escape Susanna Matisse's grasp and resolve the issue with the strange creature entirely. Lumian had a clear conjecture about the subsequent events after the lunatic upstairs had sought refuge in the cathedral upon encountering the Montsouris ghost.

He had urged Charlie to divulge everything at the market district's police headquarters to attract the attention of official Beyonders.

Nevertheless, he felt compelled to act. He couldn't rely solely on ordinary police officers.

What if they deemed Charlie's story a fabrication intended to mock their intelligence and resorted to violence to coerce a confession on the spot?

Lumian's gaze swept over the crumpled newspaper on the wooden table, recalling how he or his sister had snipped out the livre bleu's words and pieced them together to compose a letter seeking assistance from the authorities.

Transform Charlie's experience into a letter and 'deliver' it to a nearby cathedral? Lumian nodded, deciding to execute the plan.

Armed with the plea for help and Charlie's confession, it should pique the interest of official Beyonders.

As he was about to search for appropriate phrases in Novel Weekly,

Lumian suddenly frowned.

Could the officials link a similar request for help to Cordu? Would they associate me, a wanted criminal, with Charlie?

Lumian didn't know if Ryan and his associates had fully reported their findings to official Beyonders nationwide, but he was unwilling to take that risk.

Imitate Aurore's handwriting?

Unlike a lawyer's signature that doesn't raise suspicion, Ryan and his team suggested that the letter would likely undergo various checks, including divination…

Disguise myself and have someone else write it for me? As his thoughts raced, Lumian suddenly had an idea. I can summon a spirit world creature to write it for me!

If the officials detect any issues, they won't be able to make the spirit world creature identify me since they don't know the summoning incantation!

The more Lumian considered it, the more he believed it was a solid plan. He pulled out a chair, sat down, and began devising the summoning incantation.

The first sentence was undoubtedly, "Spirit wandering in the void."

After some thought, Lumian penned the second sentence.

"The friendly creature that can be subordinated."

Summoned spirit world creatures had to be under Lumian's command to assist him in writing letters. Friendliness provided essential protection for the summoner.

As for the third sentence, Lumian didn't have lofty expectations. He merely needed to incorporate the two aspects of being weak and proficient in Intisian.

After several moments of mental permutation, the third sentence

materialized on paper:

“Weakling proficient in Intisian.”

Phew… After writing, Lumian exhaled.

He then leafed through Aurore’s grimoire and translated the few unmastered words into Hermes.

Immediately after, he set up the altar and commenced the summoning.

Soon, he completed the ritual and observed the candle flame turning a dark green hue and expanding to the size of a human head.

A hazy, translucent figure materialized, its head resembling an ox’s and the rest, a dog’s.

“Help me write a letter,” Lumian said in Hermes as he gazed at the spirit world creature.

The bewildered ox-headed dog didn’t respond.

“I order you to help me write a letter,” Lumian emphasized in Hermes.

The ox-headed dog appeared dumbstruck, as though it didn’t comprehend.

Lumian made several more attempts, but the ox-headed dog remained unresponsive.

Having no other choice, he terminated the summoning early to preserve his spirituality.

He started pondering the issue.

I can’t communicate with that guy…

Amenable to subordination doesn’t mean it can be communicated with…

With this realization, Lumian modified the second summoning

incantation to “A friendly creature that can be communicated with.”

Being able to communicate meant being able to make requests!

This time, a colossal “snail” emerged from the dark green flames.

“Hello.” Lumian attempted to greet it in Intisian.

The snail emitted an ethereal voice.

“Hello, what’s the matter?”

It also spoke Intisian.

“Can you help me write a letter?” Lumian was overjoyed.

The “snail” replied in a troubled tone, “But I don’t have any hands.”

“…” Lumian had no choice but to end the summoning.

After some consideration, he changed the phrase “weakling proficient in Intisian” to “weakling who can write Intisian.”

“Can write” covered both the knowledge and necessary physical requirements.

Before long, Lumian completed his third summoning.

He saw a transparent creature resembling a rabbit.

“Can you help me write a letter?” Lumian asked with intense anticipation.

The “rabbit” nodded, picked up the pen on the table, and wrote an Intisian word on the paper.

“A letter.”

“…” Lumian’s lips twitched.

This creature didn’t seem too bright.

With resolve, Lumian grabbed a pen and paper and scribbled a plea

for help, including Susanna Mattise's portrait, details about the wet dream, Madame Alice's death, and Charlie's arrest.

Then, he said to the "rabbit," "Copy it!"

The "rabbit" took the fountain pen and diligently transcribed it.

Soon, it finished its task.

Lumian examined it and nodded in satisfaction.

In the next second, his smile froze.

Not only had the dimwit copied the entire contents of the letter, but it had also replicated his handwriting.

In other words, it was in Lumian's script!

Lumian took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. He pointed at Novel Weekly and said, "Copy in that font."

The "rabbit" nodded slowly and rewrote without complaint.

A few minutes later, Lumian received a seemingly printed plea for help.

Chapter 137 - 137 Hooha

137 Hooha

Lumian examined the letter with gloved hands and breathed a sigh of relief.

No issues this time!

Completing three consecutive spirit world creature summoning rituals had left him feeling drained.

After a moment's consideration, Lumian asked the rabbit-like spirit world creature, "Can you do me another favor?"

The "rabbit" thought seriously for a few seconds before giving a slow nod. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Lumian unzipped his grayish-blue work uniform.

"Then follow me first."

The ethereal and transparent "rabbit" leaped from midair to Lumian's side, assuming the role of a loyal companion.

Lumian sighed quietly and said, "What I mean is, you can hide inside my clothes to avoid detection by any Beyonder with heightened spiritual perception."

The "rabbit" wore a blank expression as it hopped into Lumian's clothes and curled up.

Since it had no true mass or weight, his clothes could be zipped up quickly without leaving a trace.

After stowing the letter in the same pocket, Lumian dissolved the spiritual barrier, removed his gloves, and exited Room 207.

He meandered toward Avenue du Marché, nearing the Suhit steam locomotive station.

It was just past five o'clock, and many people were still at work. The street was neither crowded nor deserted. Groups of passersby headed for the public carriage station sign or searched for the subway entrance. They carried their luggage and walked on foot to nearby streets in search of temporary accommodations for the night.

Lumian patted his right pocket and pointed at the postbox several dozen meters away. Lowering his voice, he said, "See that green metal cylinder?"

He felt a vibration in his pocket. The "rabbit" had responded in kind.

Lumian exhaled in relief and instructed, "Place the letter beside you in that metal cylinder."

Having said that, Lumian massaged his temples and activated his Spirit Vision.

He watched the "rabbit" emerge, enveloping the plea for help. It maneuvered through the crowd and reached the green metal cylinder.

Just as Lumian thought the "rabbit" would deposit the letter in the postbox and successfully complete the mission, the creature entered the postbox with the letter.

Moments later, it exited the postbox and flew back to Lumian, leaving the letter inside.

Lumian closed his eyes and consoled himself, I suppose it's considered tossed in…

He then left Avenue du Marché with the "rabbit" and located a vacant alley. In Hermes language, he informed the "rabbit" that the summoning was over.

After the "rabbit" returned to the spirit world, Lumian finally felt at ease.

He resolved to stop aiding Charlie. The rest would hinge on how the official Beyonders handled the situation.

If it weren't for the fact that this matter is intriguing enough, I wouldn't have bothered to help him. Do I have to battle that enigmatic creature, Susanna Mattise, who's clearly formidable, on his behalf? Lumian mused silently.

He chuckled.

In Cordu, if those crude fellows understood the traits Susanna Mattise exhibited, they would undoubtedly ask slyly whether he wanted to fight her in bed or in the hayloft.

Of course, Lumian could be just as coarse when dealing with them.

On his way back to Rue Anarchie, he discovered a meat patty shop and purchased Red Snapper Hot Beef Meatloaf for dinner.

Paired with the soda sold by street vendors, Lumian navigated the crowd as he ate, occasionally evading hands that covertly reached for his wallet.

Compared to Rouen Meatloaf, Red Snapper Hot Beef Meatloaf was less greasy. The fish was refreshing and delicate, the beef savory and crispy, the dough's subtle sweetness had a bite, and the aroma of spices and fat ignited Lumian's taste buds one by one with a rich texture.

After eating and drinking his fill, he clutched the glass bottle that still contained a third of the pale-red liquid and sighed appreciatively.

No wonder the Trieriens love meatloaves…

When I get the chance, I'll visit Rue Richelieu in the library district and try the first restaurant that created Red Snapper Hot Beef Meatloaf…

Based on the newspapers and magazines he had perused before, he could recite several famous meatloaves off the top of his head.

Degan Meatloaf, Périgueux Meatloaf, Tudenan Cashew Pie, Minced

Meat Pie…

Sipping the pomegranate-flavored soda, Lumian turned onto Rue Anarchie.

What met his gaze was a chaotic tableau. The suspected gangsters brandished either axes or clubs, squaring off in the street.

Pedestrians steered clear, and the vendors retreated from Rue Anarchie one by one. The residents of the houses on both sides slammed their windows shut.

Lumian didn't venture further. He backtracked a few steps and found a wall pillar to conceal himself behind as he observed the unfolding scene with interest.

He suspected that his assassination of the Poison Spur Mob's Margot had aroused the suspicions of several gangs in the market district, ultimately escalating into a standoff.

After waiting nearly 15 minutes, Lumian still didn't witness the mobsters erupt into full-scale combat.

His anticipation for the confrontation left him disappointed. He cursed under his breath, "Are you guys going to do this or not? You're blocking the street without fighting. Do you think you have too much time on your hands?"

With that in mind, Lumian glanced at the five-story grayish-white building beside him.

He seriously contemplated finding a room and hurling the empty soda bottle between the two factions, tricking them into believing the opposing mob leader had signaled the start of the battle.

That way, Lumian would have a spectacle to enjoy.

Just as he was about to put his plan into action, a large contingent of police officers in black uniforms appeared at both ends of Rue Anarchie.

Leading them were officers on tall brown or black horses,

brandishing shields and clubs. They advanced towards the mobsters, step by step,

exuding an immense pressure that caused many of the gangsters to waver.

When the mounted police charged, the mobsters gathered on Rue Anarchie dispersed. Some fled, while others were beaten to the ground.

Lumian couldn't help but want to applaud. His thirst for excitement was thoroughly quenched.

He had only read about such scenes in novels and news articles, the latter of which often glossed over the gritty details!

In no time, Rue Anarchie returned to its usual cacophony.

Lumian finished his last sip of pomegranate soda and sauntered back to Auberge du Coq Doré, entering Room 207.

Sitting by the bed, he replayed the entire process of writing and posting the letter in his mind to ensure he hadn't overlooked any details that could expose him to the official Beyonders.

After a while, Lumian sighed softly.

"If only I had a messenger. It wouldn't have been so troublesome."

Unfortunately, obtaining a messenger wasn't easy. Even his sister Aurore didn't have one.

To date, Lumian knew of only two people who possessed a messenger.

One was Madam Magician, and the other was the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's vice president, Hela, whom Aurore had mentioned.

Hela… Lumian's expression gradually darkened.

If the Aurore in his dream indeed bore some influence from her soul

fragment, it was apparent that Aurore trusted the vice president a great deal. Her first move upon encountering a problem was to summon the other party's messenger for assistance.

I wonder if Hela knows Aurore's true identity, or if she discovered through that… that obituary that Aurore has… has already passed on… Lumian muttered to himself.

As he pondered, an idea struck him.

It was actually possible for him to summon Hela's messenger!

The summoning incantation comprised only three sentences. Lumian was certain the last phrase was "a messenger that belongs to Hela." The first two sentences followed a fixed format and requirements. As long as he attempted a few more combinations, he'd find the correct sequence!

Moreover, under such circumstances, Lumian wouldn't face any danger even if the initial combinations were incorrect. This was because the description of a messenger belonging to Hela eliminated other possibilities.

In other words, he'd either fail to summon it or successfully summon Hela's messenger.

Should I write a letter to Hela and inform her of what happened to Aurore? Lumian found himself momentarily stumped.

Considering that his sister had mentioned "my notebook" when she pushed him away, and that much of the mystical knowledge in her notebook originated from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian quickly made up his mind. If he could establish a connection with this organization, it would aid him in uncovering the crucial information hidden within the Warlock notebook.

He resolved to summon Hela's messenger right away!

Although he still harbored doubts about the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's vice president, he didn't believe he possessed any value she coveted. Besides, Aurore had trusted Hela while she was alive.

Lumian walked to the wooden table, sat down, and began writing.

“Honorable Madam Hela,

“I apologize for writing you this letter. I am Muggle’s younger brother. I regret to inform you that she encountered misfortune and has passed away.

“This involves a catastrophe brought about by worshiping an evil god. Only a few people and I escaped.

“I’m not sure if this matter interests you, so I won’t elaborate. I don’t wish to waste your time.

“What I want to know is, did Muggle mention anything suspicious to you in the past year?

“…”

After staring at the letter for a few seconds, Lumian slowly exhaled and folded the paper.

He then cleaned the room, set up the altar again, and attempted the first combination.

“The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be subordinated, a messenger that belongs solely to Hela.”

After reciting the incantation, Lumian gazed at the dark-green candle flame and patiently awaited the messenger’s arrival.

Time ticked by, but nothing happened on the altar.

Undeterred, Lumian spoke again, “I! I summon in my name:

“The spirit wandering above the world;

“The friendly creature that can be subordinated;

“A messenger that belongs solely to Hela…”

The dark green candle flame suddenly flickered and grew larger.

At that moment, not only did the area above remain unlit, but it also grew darker.

In the darkness, a shape quickly materialized.

It was a human-like skull, seemingly forged from pure silver. It emitted a gentle light that dispelled the encroaching darkness.

Pale-white flames burned in the skull's eye sockets, instilling a sense of danger in Lumian.

After staring at Lumian for a few seconds, the pure silver skull opened its mouth and bit down on the airborne letter.

Then, it retreated back into the reassembled darkness.

Chapter 138 - 138 Letter

138 Letter Updated from novelbIn.(c)om

Lumian completed the ritual on his second attempt. He cleared the wooden table and opened Aurore's grimoire. Under the glow of the carbide lamp, he thumbed through the relevant sections.

In under fifteen minutes, he sensed something. He looked up and fixed his gaze on a spot near the window.

A folded letter lay there, undisturbed.

That fast? Lumian, surprised, reached out and took the letter.

Hela's response, vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, had arrived sooner than expected.

!!

Lumian unfolded the letter and skimmed the elegantly written words.

"I'm sorry to hear that. Ever since Muggle missed last month's gathering, I've had a bad feeling.

"There are too many dangers in this world. Sometimes, we can't avoid them just because we want to unless we can control everyone around us.

"If you wish, you can tell me about Muggle's misfortune. You don't have to go into great detail. Just tell me the general situation…

"From the fact that you can summon my messenger, you should have stepped onto the Beyonder path. I'm not sure if your sister told you that this means you'll always be accompanied by danger and madness, but I have to remind you that restraint and caution are our best friends.

“In the future, if you have any questions about mysticism, you can ask me by writing to me. Although I’m not one of those with vast knowledge, I can answer many questions.

“I’ve only met Muggle twice in the past year, mainly discussing various matters in the Beyonder domain. What left a deep impression on me was that she mentioned that a friend of hers was affected by a strange dream, hoping to find a solution. If necessary, she wanted to hire a real psychiatrist to treat him…”

Lumian silently read Hela’s reply, his face twisting with emotion.

Aurore had been searching for a solution to his bizarre dream!

Lumian composed himself and contemplated his response.

Suddenly, he froze.

His brows furrowed as he muttered, “Aurore told Hela about hiring a real psychiatrist…

“Considering Madame Susie’s description, a true psychiatrist must refer to a specific Sequence of the Spectator pathway…

“Only Beyonders skilled in this domain can prevent me from dreaming of the world shrouded in gray fog…”

The issue wasn’t with the situation. The problem was:

Aurore’s grimoire only had Sequence 9 Spectator recorded for the pathway!

Yet, she clearly knew about Psychiatrist!

Lumian quickly recalled the two conversations in his dream.

First, Aurore had said she wanted to find a genuine Hypnotist for him.

Second, Aurore had mentioned that she knew Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 of all pathways and had a certain understanding of them.

Psychiatrist is often associated with hypnosis. Hypnotist is most likely a Sequence of the Spectator pathway as well, perhaps even superior to Psychiatrist…

Aurore's grimoire doesn't have records of the corresponding Sequence 8 or Sequence 7 of the Spectator pathway… Lumian's expression became grave, intermingled with a twisted thrill.

After so many days, he had finally discovered a discrepancy in Aurore's grimoire!

Previously, he had his suspicions but wasn't certain if there was any hidden anomaly. After all, Aurore in his dream was a figure formed from his memories and impressions under the influence of the soul fragment. Everything she said might not be accurate or complete. It was normal for her not to mention any exceptions explicitly.

Now, Hela's response indirectly confirmed that Aurore truly knew about one or more Sequences within the Spectator pathway and possessed a certain grasp of their related abilities.

Why hadn't Aurore recorded this knowledge in her grimoire? What was the secret behind this inconsistency? Lumian pulled out a blank sheet of paper, his emotions a blend of grief and anticipation.

In under a minute, he wrote, "Honorable Madam Hela,

"The truth is…

"My memory of the actual events is fragmented due to the calamity.

"If you could assist me in locating Guillaume Bénet, Pualis de Roquefort, and others, I would be deeply grateful. Their appearances and attributes can be found on the authorities' wanted posters.

"Lastly, I'm curious about the real psychiatrist Muggle intended to hire."

In his letter, Lumian briefly touched upon Cordu. He made no mention of the dream, the loop, or his rescue. He only speculated that Padre Guillaume Bénet, under someone's guidance, had worshipped an evil god and banished Madame Pualis, who followed

another sinister deity. Bénet then attempted a ritual with the entire village as a sacrifice. At the crucial moment, Muggle, selected as a vessel, pushed Lumian away, an essential sacrifice, causing the ritual's failure and Cordu's destruction. Finally, the official Beyonders, who had been called for aid, cleaned up the mess.

Lumian reassembled the altar, summoned the silver skull, and handed it the letter.

In less than fifteen minutes, he received a second reply from Hela.

Rather than comparing response speeds between Madam Magician and Madame Hela, Lumian eagerly read the letter's contents.

"I can sense your sorrow and understand your desire to uncover the truth and exact vengeance upon the perpetrator.

"As Muggle's friend, I'll aid you to the best of my ability, including but not limited to locating those individuals.

"I can also offer you a fresh lead on this matter. To my knowledge, Muggle's parents and other family members may still be alive in this world. She had distanced herself from them for some reason and didn't dare return to Trier. I'm unsure if they're in any danger or if they've come into contact with the evil god's followers.

"I don't know which Psychiatrist Muggle sought. Our organization has numerous genuine Psychiatrists, and many gatherings Muggle and I attended don't overlap. I'll assist you by inquiring with members who have interacted with her to see if you can obtain the answer you seek…

"Until this investigation is complete, I'll help conceal the fact that Muggle is deceased…

"If you relocate in the future, remember to summon my messenger again to prevent me from losing contact with you after obtaining pertinent information…"

After reading, Lumian fell silent for a long while before exhaling slowly.

Initially, he'd imagined Madame Hela would invite him to join the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, taking Aurore's place. In doing so, he could more effectively investigate the Psychiatrist Aurore sought to hire. However, it seemed the organization was highly cautious about recruiting new members. They might even need to meet specific criteria to be considered candidates. For instance, Aurore had mentioned that none of them could return to their hometowns.

Maybe Madame Hela is observing and testing me… Lumian reassured himself and resumed studying Aurore's grimoire.

As for Aurore's original family, he was at a loss for where to begin.

…

Wednesday, 7:50 p.m., 20 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian rapped on Osta Trul's door, dressed in a grayish-blue worker's uniform and a dark-blue, almost black cap.

Osta, clad in black robes and a hood, opened the wooden door and glanced around. He grinned and remarked, "You're more punctual than I anticipated."

"I honor my promises better than you might think." Lumian strode into the room and handed Osta banknotes and coins worth 80 verl d'or.

Osta accepted it, counting twice with an even broader smile.

As he guided Lumian downstairs, he rambled, "The market district's been somewhat chaotic lately. Baron Brignais didn't even come to me for money."

"A gang leader died," Lumian commented nonchalantly.

Realizing the connection, Osta said regretfully, "Why couldn't Baron Brignais have died?"

"Even if Baron Brignais were dead, there'd still be Baron Guillaume and Baron Pierre. As long as the Savoie Mob exists, you'd have to

repay the loan you owe," Lumian taunted.

Osta's expression soured.

Before long, he and Lumian boarded a public carriage. They each paid 30 coppet and found seats.

In about an hour, the carriage arrived at Avenue du Boulevard on the Srenzo River's north bank, Quartier 8, from the Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman on the river's south bank.

This was the heart of the entire Intis Republic. The presidential Pavilion of Pleasure, the Grand Palace where Emperor Roselle once resided, and various newspaper headquarters were all here, encircled by upscale residences.

Lumian had previously read in newspapers that the average rent in this district was 4,000 verl d'or annually, roughly 74 verl d'or weekly. The priciest ones could even reach tens of thousands.

Noticing the empty carriage, Lumian lowered his voice and inquired of Osta, "Is Mr. K hosting a gathering on Avenue du Boulevard?"

Osta smirked and replied, "Always. Psychic and Arcane have their headquarters on Avenue du Boulevard as well."

You guys sure know how to hide… Lumian gazed at the broad, flat avenue outside the window, the orderly Intis parasol trees lining the street, and the elegant, light-colored buildings behind them.

Just before 8:50 p.m., Osta led Lumian into the six-story beige luxury house at 19 Rue Scheer.

"This is Psychic magazine's headquarters, but they only occupy the top three floors." Osta didn't ascend the stairs but turned right into a corridor on the ground floor.

Only then did he inform Lumian, "Mr. K wants to see you beforehand."

"Alright." Lumian dipped his head and adjusted his hat, seemingly preoccupied with something.

Osta produced an iron-colored mask and grinned.

“It’s time to disguise yourself. You can’t let everyone see your true appearance.”

In the next instant, Lumian looked up.

His face was shrouded in layers of white bandages, leaving only his eyes, nostrils, and ears exposed.

Upon seeing this, Osta’s heart nearly skipped a beat.

Chapter 139 - 139 Mr. K

139 Mr. K

Within moments, Osta, who had been on the verge of a complaint, managed to force a smile and said, “You’re quite the menacing sight like this.”

“It’s a classic look in literature,” Lumian replied with a deliberately smug tone.

Osta said nothing, opting instead to don his iron mask, concealing his expression.

Taking a few steps forward, he halted and rapped on the door to the right.

Two long pauses, one short pause, and one long pause… Lumian watched Osta Trul’s actions with the keen eye of a Hunter.

!!

Within seconds, the dark-red wooden door creaked open.

The first thing Lumian saw was a plush, pale-yellow carpet, followed by classical-styled tables, chairs, sofas, and display shelves.

A figure stood in the shadows cast by gas wall lamps near the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Like Osta Trul, he wore the black robe of an ancient warlock, complete with a large hood. Lumian couldn’t help but think, Can you even see the person standing in front of you clearly when you’re dressed like this?

“Mr. K, Ciel has arrived,” Osta announced respectfully to the nearly six-foot-tall figure as he stepped inside. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Lumian followed closely.

With a clang, the door shut behind him.

Mr. K turned to face Lumian. “Why do you want to attend our gathering?”

His voice was low and gravelly.

“For potion formulas, Beyonder characteristics, mystical items, and mysticism knowledge. It’s not like it’s for love or faith, right?” Lumian replied with intentional cynicism.

He then chuckled.

“I know that’s not what you want to hear, but it doesn’t matter. I don’t mind telling you about me.”

Lumian’s voice deepened.

“In a catastrophe brought on by Beyonder powers, I lost my entire family.

“Not only did it cause me immense pain, but it made me realize that those so-called orthodox gods can’t save us!

“From that day on, I sought Beyonder power and a way to forget all pain. I wanted to become powerful enough. I wanted those who brought me misfortune to experience the same torture.”

The hooded Mr. K seemed to stare at Lumian without interruption. As for Osta Trul, he was visibly shocked. Ciel’s words revealed raw, unmasked pain. His desire for the Samaritan Women’s Spring was genuine!

Once Lumian finished speaking, Mr. K nodded and said, “There are two rules for participating in our gathering:

“Second, don’t attempt to follow other participants.”

Only these two? Lumian hadn’t expected so few constraints.

He didn't need to think hard to spot several loopholes immediately.

Not attacking directly? Does that mean I can use Provoke to incite the other party to death?

Just because I don't attempt to follow doesn't mean I can't do anything else to the target…

Is selling fake ingredients, fake formulas, fake Beyonder characteristics, and fake mystical items also allowed?

Lumian suppressed his urge to retort and nodded.

"No problem."

As he responded, he felt Mr. K's gaze on him, scrutinizing every inch of his flesh and skin.

It made him feel like he was in the sights of a venomous snake.

After a few seconds, Mr. K continued, "If you prefer not to disclose what you have and what you're after, you can write down your desired transaction in advance, and my attendant will copy it onto a portable blackboard for all participants to see. If you don't think it matters, you can make your request on the spot.

"Likewise, at the gathering, you can complete transactions through my attendant or directly with the other party.

"Remember, transactions carry risks. I can't guarantee the authenticity of all items, materials, or information. Of course, you can opt to pay me to notarize them, effectively reducing the risk."

A Notary's power? Lumian recalled Aurore's grimoire.

This was Sequence 6 of the Sun pathway, and most Beyonders in this pathway belonged to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

Given this, Lumian suspected Mr. K might not be a Notary, but rather possess a related mystical item.

Lumian quickly collected himself and asked Mr. K, "May I write down

my requirements now?”

Mr. K nodded and gestured towards a desk on the right side of the room.

“Write them there. My attendant will collect them.”

Lumian approached the brown desk, adorned with Psychic, Lotus, Arcane, and other magazines. He unfolded a fragrant letter and picked up a dark-red fountain pen. After some thought, he wrote:

“1. I possess a damaged Beyonder weapon. Seeking someone capable of repairing it. Price negotiable.

“2. Buying information on a peculiar creature. This female-looking entity is suspected to be a Spirit Body. It has long turquoise hair that envelops its body and exudes an alluring aura. It can induce erotic dreams with itself as the central figure. Additional details unknown. Reward depends on the value of information provided, ranging from 10 to 100 verl d’or.”

Lumian considered adding a third point about a Provoker’s acting experience but decided against it after some thought.

He remembered Aurore mentioning acting techniques, the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation, and other mysticism knowledge in his nightmare. Such knowledge wasn’t common among ordinary Beyonders. And he was currently impersonating a newcomer who had just entered the Beyonder world due to a disaster, seeking more knowledge and resources.

If he were to write the word “acting,” Mr. K would surely grow suspicious.

Of course, Lumian didn’t think of it as a pretense. He genuinely was a novice who had entered the Beyonder world following a disaster and sought more knowledge and resources. However, his involvement in the original disaster was quite high-level, allowing him to encounter powerful figures like Madam Magician. As a result, he possessed extensive high-end knowledge but lacked common sense, relying on Aurore’s grimoire to fill the gaps.

Having set down the letter and pen, Lumian left with Osta and entered a room at the end of the corridor.

The room appeared to be a salon. Sofas, chairs, a round table, a coffee table, barstools, and other furnishings were arranged casually, creating a relaxed atmosphere.

Several gathering attendees had already arrived. Some wore black robes and hoods that nearly covered their faces. Others donned clown or devil makeup, while a few wore crude or intricate masks.

For a moment, Lumian felt as if he had entered a masquerade ball.

He and Osta Trul took separate seats after entering separately.

Lumian chose a barstool, almost tempted to order a glass of absinthe to complete the look.

Soon enough, Mr. K entered and settled into the armchair reserved for the organizer. His masked and gloved attendants brought in a portable blackboard filled with transaction requests.

The first thing Lumian noticed was a request for Beyonder characteristics.

“Warrior pathway Sequence 8 Pugilist Beyonder characteristic, 15,000 verl d’or. Negotiable.”

A Sequence 8 Beyonder characteristic selling for 15,000 verl d’or or more? Lumian was initially stunned, then overwhelmed by heartache and regret, as if he longed to drink from the Fountain of Oblivion.

He had just killed Margot, a Sequence 8 Provoker of the Hunter pathway!

Playing it safe, Lumian hadn’t harassed Margot until the Montsouris ghost attacked, leaving the battlefield early.

While he had gained over 1,000 verl d’or from Margot through the fate exchange, it paled in comparison to the worth of the Provoker Beyonder characteristics.

Moments later, Lumian barely pulled himself together.

His actions had been the best course. If he had continued to pester Margot, something might have gone awry or drawn the authorities' attention. While Margot would still be dead, he could have landed in another crisis.

Lumian then examined the other transaction details.

"One Elf's Dark Leaf, 180 verl d'or."

"Two pages of Emperor Roselle's original diary. 300 verl d'or."

"Sequence 6 Baron of Corruption potion formula, 65,000 verl d'or."

"…"

As Lumian scanned the list, he understood why his sister Aurore was so extravagant with her spending.

"Let's begin," Mr. K rasped, scanning the room.

His attendants read the entries aloud one by one. Some went unanswered, while others were discreetly finalized through the attendants.

Lumian observed quietly, intent on familiarizing himself with these situations and gathering intel.

As the gathering neared its end, the attendant by the portable blackboard finally announced Lumian's first request.

Silence ensued.

After more than ten seconds, a man lounging in a corner divan snickered.

"Most of those skilled in restoring mystical items and Beyonder weapons are found in the God of Steam and Machinery Church. Try looking there."

His face was smeared with oil paint, as if he were masquerading as a

savage from the Southern Continent's forests.

Ignoring the unfunny remark, Mr. K's attendant relayed Lumian's second request.

The gathering's attendees exchanged bewildered glances, as if this strange creature was news to them.

Just a bunch of clueless Low-Sequence Beyonders… Lumian inwardly scoffed in disappointment.

Just then, the man who had joked earlier shared, "This brings something to mind. Heh heh, here's a freebie.

"Where the Srenzo River meets the Ryan River downstream, there's a town called Aunett. Many middle-class Trier folks enjoy sailing and swimming there.

"Early last year, or maybe earlier, three consecutive female deaths occurred. They died of weakness from overindulgence, with no known partners, secret or otherwise. Their only shared trait was telling friends about the vivid, alluring dreams they'd been having recently."

Chapter 140 - 140 Painting

140 Painting

The situation bears a resemblance to Charlie's case, but with a crucial difference: these victims are all women, while Charlie is a man…

Could it be that the strange entity believed to be Susanna Mattise isn't constrained by gender? Or is there another, male counterpart to the creature?

The latter seems more probable, given that all three victims in Aunett were female and no males had been targeted.

Yes, there are distinctions between the three women and Charlie. None of them had a partner, either openly or secretly, and Charlie had become Madame Alice's lover not long after invoking Susanna Mattise. If that hadn't happened, would he have met the same fate as the three victims, drained of life by overindulgence?

Had Madame Alice been a sacrificial substitute? Or had that been merely the beginning?

Lumian pieced together a theory based on the information provided by the man with the painted face.

He hoped the authorities would take this case seriously and not rest until Susanna Mattise had been utterly vanquished.

As for whether the authorities would suspect Beyonders hiding among Charlie's friends due to the letter, Lumian wasn't too concerned. He had intentionally obscured Charlie's information and circumstances in the letter, even inserting a small mistake in a seemingly insignificant detail. The writer appeared to harbor a deep grudge against Susanna Mattise, having tracked her for an extended period, and sought to use Charlie's situation to enlist the help of the

authorities for revenge. As a result, the focus was more on Susanna Mattise's issue, with a limited understanding of Charlie.

After the assembled participants discussed the strange case in Aunett, Mr. K's attendant unveiled an object shrouded in a black cloth.

Another attendant introduced, "This is a painting from a friend of one of our participants.

"He was a fellow Beyonder who met an untimely and bizarre end two months ago. Before his death, he created this painting."

With a swift motion, the attendant removed the black cloth, revealing the deceased Beyonder's final masterpiece.

The oil painting was a riot of vivid colors, weaving a surreal and mesmerizing scene.

Towering green weeds reached for the heavens, a golden sun lay hidden in a well, a blood-red river cascaded from the sky, a shadowy figure danced, and white skulls coalesced into clouds…

Merely glancing at the painting left Lumian feeling disoriented.

The attendant who had introduced the painting elaborated, "This artwork bears a potent psychic imprint. It affects the minds of all who view it, inducing confusion and vertigo to varying degrees. Prolonged exposure could even result in mental illness.

"According to the letters and diary entries left by the painting's creator, it may hold clues to the essence of reality and the origins of mysticism.

"This could also be the key to understanding the true nature of his strange demise.

"Any participant interested in studying the painting can negotiate a price."

You want to sell something like this for money? I wouldn't take it even if you offered it for free! Lumian grumbled internally, tearing his gaze away.

He wanted nothing to do with anything that concealed the truth, essence, or origin of the world. As Aurore had once said, one shouldn't look at or study things one shouldn't see or understand.

It was apparent that most of the gathering's participants were reluctant to spend money on such a foreboding painting shrouded in mystery. Ultimately, Mr. K's attendant put it away, once again veiling it with the black cloth.

Following that, the gathering transitioned into an open discussion stage. Attendees engaged in casual conversation about rumors and legends, careful to hide any details of their true identities.

At 10:15, Mr. K declared the gathering over, and the participants dispersed in groups.

As he departed, Lumian detected the organizer sizing him up, scrutinizing his every move.

Will he send someone to follow and investigate me? Lumian couldn't help but wonder.

Rather than being concerned, he was eager for it to happen.

Aside from occasionally summoning a messenger, his behavior was unremarkable. He could withstand any scrutiny!

As long as he refrained from contacting Madam Magician, Lumian believed Mr. K would soon receive an almost entirely truthful report —Ciel, a wild Beyonder lacking common sense in many areas, was suspected to hail from Cordu and sought Guillaume Bénet and his associates. He was also a wanted man.

In this scenario, if Lumian demonstrated his skills and extreme attitude, it wouldn't be long before he received an invitation from Mr. K to join his ranks and become a part of the organization behind him.

Sometimes, "inadvertently" revealing one's vulnerabilities and true circumstances was an effective means of gaining trust.

With that, Lumian and Osta found a concealed corner at 19 Rue

Scheer, where they removed their disguises before returning to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

As he made his way towards Rue Anarchie, Lumian's brow furrowed in confusion.

He hadn't noticed anyone tailing him.

Is it because Mr. K has no plans to investigate me, or had the person shadowing me been so skilled and uniquely gifted that I had failed to detect their presence? Lumian pondered the possibilities but ultimately pushed them to the back of his mind.

In any case, he wouldn't fear an investigation, unless Mr. K was in league with the Poison Spur Mob.

Upon entering Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian noted that he was still early. He crossed the now pristine lobby and descended into the basement bar.

Before he could take in the scene, Charlie's exuberant voice reached his ears.

"Can you believe it? Just three hours ago, I was at police headquarters, accused of murder. Now, here I am, drinking and singing with all of you!

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've had an incredible experience like no other. I bet none of you can top it…"

The apprentice attendant leaped onto a small round table, beer bottle in hand, and addressed the surrounding patrons.

His short brown hair was disheveled, as if it hadn't been tended to in days, and stubble was evident around his mouth.

Already? Lumian had anticipated it would take Charlie another two or three days to be released.

Spotting Lumian from the table, Charlie waved his short arm and called out to the crowd, "I'll share that even stranger encounter with you all later!"

Donning a linen shirt and black pants, he hopped off the table and jogged to the bar counter, beer bottle in hand. He took a seat beside Lumian and said to the ponytailed bartender, Pavard Neeson, “A glass of absinthe! Thank you.”

Turning to Lumian, he said, “This one’s on me.”

Lumian accepted the offer with a calm smile.

“You’re looking pretty good.”

“Of course. At least I don’t have to worry about being hanged. I’d hate for thousands to gather around me as I die, considering how nobody cares about me when I’m alive,” Charlie said, relief evident on his face.

Trier’s citizens reveled in witnessing the execution of death row inmates.

Whenever someone faced the gallows or a firing squad, the streets would overflow with onlookers.

In the classical era before Emperor Roselle, there even existed a custom centered around this fascination: En route from the prison to the gallows, if any bystander agreed to marry the condemned, their sentence would be commuted, reduced, or even entirely absolved.

“Are you completely fine?” Lumian inquired further.

Charlie took a swig of beer and scanned the room. Lowering his voice, he said, “I can’t divulge the specifics. I signed a pledge, a notarized pledge. You can’t imagine how powerful that is…”

Charlie caught himself and continued, “The only downside is that I’ve lost my job again. That blasted foreman thinks I’ve tarnished the hotel’s image. No matter. I’ll pawn the diamond necklace tomorrow. The officers have already returned it to me. That money will tide me over for quite some time. I can treat the café waiters on Rue des Blouses Blanches to drinks. I’ll surely find a better job!”

He wanted to add, “Let’s go together when the time comes,” but recalling Ciel’s nerve and capabilities, he quietly discarded the idea.

Lumian sipped the absinthe the bartender had slid his way and gestured for Charlie to join him in an empty corner.

Once certain that the noise around them was sufficient to drown out their conversation and that no one was eavesdropping, Lumian asked, “Has the situation with Susanna Matisse been resolved?”

“I don’t know.” Charlie shook his head. “They did a lot of things, but I can’t tell you.”

“Did they promise to provide protection for a period of time?” Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Charlie replied awkwardly, “I can’t tell you.”

Lumian grinned, retorting, “Seems like there is.”

If they hadn’t promised protection, the corresponding words wouldn’t exist and wouldn’t be restricted by the confidentiality pledge.

“Uh…” Charlie hadn’t expected Ciel to guess so accurately.

Lumian inquired, “Did they tell you anything? Share what you can.”

Charlie pondered for a moment and said, “They told me not to panic if I had that dream again. I’m to head to the nearest cathedral after dawn. You don’t know about the Eternal Blazing Sun’s cathedral, do you? I’m now a true believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun!”

Lumian expressionlessly raised his right hand and traced a triangle on his chest.

“…” Charlie fell silent.

After drinking with Charlie, Lumian returned to Room 207 and continued studying Aurore’s grimoire.

He washed up before midnight, lay on the bed, and drifted off to sleep.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian was jolted awake by an insistent knocking on the door.

Who could it be? Frowning, he gripped Fallen Mercury and cautiously approached the door, cracking it open. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Charlie stood outside.

Still clad in a linen shirt, black pants, and strapless leather shoes, his face was ashen and fear-stricken.

Upon seeing Lumian, he appeared to regain his composure. Nearly losing control of his voice, he stammered in terror, “I dreamed of that woman again!”

Chapter 141 - 141 “Hostage”

141 “Hostage”

In the dimly lit corridor, bathed in the eerie glow of the crimson moon, Charlie’s voice echoed, sending shivers down one’s spine.

Dreaming of Susanna Mattise again? Lumian’s alarm gave way to surging anger.

Are you out of your damn mind? If you had that dream again, go to the nearest Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral and find a clergyman! I’m not your father to have you report your wet dreams to me!

Casting a glance at Charlie, whose face was a mask of terror, Lumian reined in his emotions and spoke in a low voice, “Relax. This was bound to happen. For now, get some sleep and seek help from the nearest cathedral at dawn.”

Charlie appeared on the verge of tears.

!!

“B-but, in my dream, she said if I dared to seek help from the Church, she’d kill me on my way to the cathedral!”

“You communicated in the dream?” Lumian was taken aback.

Charlie nodded frantically.

“Yes. Before, she never spoke in my dreams. She only satisfied me, warm and gentle. This time, she warned me. She warned me!”

Could it be that Susanna Mattise hasn’t fully transformed into a monstrous creature and still possesses some level of intelligence? Lumian’s thoughts raced, and he felt a pang of sympathy for Charlie.

If Charlie couldn't get help from official Beyonders, he'd likely end up like the three female victims in Aunett Town, lost in dreams until drained of life.

Hold on, are the official Beyonders handling Charlie's situation so carelessly? Didn't they consider the possibility of Charlie being killed by Susanna Mattise? Lumian instantly thought of Ryan, Leah, and Valentine.

None of them would dismiss the case so casually, merely instructing the victim to rush to a cathedral if he faced any issues.

Remembering how the clergyman from the Church stayed with the lunatic upstairs and protected him after encountering the Montsouris ghost, Lumian grew suspicious.

The official Beyonders overseeing Charlie's case intentionally downplayed the threat posed by Susanna Mattise, allowing him to return to the motel. They claimed the situation was mostly resolved and instructed him to seek help from the cathedral if any issues arose —all to lure Susanna Mattise into revealing herself again!

Realizing this, Lumian looked at Charlie and said coolly, "If you trust me, return to your room, lie down, close your eyes, and sleep until dawn. Don't worry, it'll all be sorted out."

Lumian appeared unruffled, but inwardly, he was cursing.

Get your ass back to the fifth floor! By now, the official Beyonders monitoring the area should've detected the anomaly and be preparing to act. Why are you standing in front of my door? Are you trying to get me caught?

"I, I…" Charlie hesitated, his eyes filled with terror.

Will everything truly be resolved if I do nothing?

Lumian exhaled and forced a smile.

Lumian resorted to coaxing and deception, desperate for Charlie to leave the second floor.

Charlie's face brightened, and he exclaimed excitedly, "Thank you, thank you!"

The moment he spoke, Lumian caught the scent of vegetation, tainted with an unsettling aroma.

In an instant, greenish-brown vines and branches unfurled from the walls, ceiling, and floor. They sealed the windows and doors of the other rooms.

At the staircase, a woman's voice, both beguiling and unnerving, rang out.

"Charlie, are you really going to betray me?"

Charlie's eyes widened in shock as he turned toward the sound.

He saw the woman from his dreams, her turquoise hair cascading from her head to the floor, reaching out to the surrounding walls and ceiling above, melding with vines and branches.

Without her turquoise hair shrouding her body, Susanna Mattise stood entirely exposed, her beautiful curves on display. Scattered among her flesh were flower buds and tree warts—some red, some white, some green, and some brown.

As she spoke, the vivid flower buds and bluish tree warts opened and closed, oozing a foul-smelling, viscous liquid.

The repulsive scene left Charlie feeling as if he'd plunged into a nightmare. He stood there, trembling, his mind a haze.

Susanna Mattise looked at Charlie, her eyes brimming with affection.

"Have you forgotten our blissful moments in the dream? Charlie, I'm your wife."

Snapping out of his stupor, Charlie nearly crumbled.

"No! No!"

You idiot! Just say something to placate Susanna! Lumian cursed

himself for not reacting quickly enough to silence Charlie.

Susanna's expression frosted over.

"Then stay with me forever."

At her words, the terror in Charlie's eyes vanished, replaced by infatuation as he eagerly moved toward the monstrous being.

A moist flower bud on Susanna's lower abdomen opened unnaturally wide, unlike the other flower buds and tree warts that closed slowly.

It seemed to await Charlie.

Simultaneously, Susanna glared at Lumian, her voice seething with hatred, "It's all your fault. You incited Charlie to betray me!"

"Why don't you take a look in the mirror and see how horrifying and repulsive you've become? If I were Charlie, I would've kicked you out of my dream from the start!" Lumian's instincts told him pleading for mercy was futile. Instead, he chose to retaliate and provoke Susanna, hoping to uncover her weakness.

Merely standing near the bizarre creature, Lumian felt a mix of exhilaration and dread. He longed for her, yet resisted, as if caught in a whirlpool of desire, consumed by an overpowering sense of helplessness.

This proved she was far stronger than him!

Lumian cursed inwardly as his thoughts raced, searching for a way to buy time.

He was sure the official Beyonders would arrive soon!

What in the world is this monster?

Why does she believe she's Charlie's wife?

Wife…

In that instant, as Susanna Mattise screeched, incensed by his words,

an idea struck Lumian.

As her scream filled the air, vines and branches surged toward Lumian, amplifying the fear lurking in his heart to the point of near-collapse.

His legs weakened, and his body trembled uncontrollably.

Summoning his ruthlessness, Lumian managed to extend his right hand, grabbing Charlie, who was about to rush toward the creature.

With Fallen Mercury in his left hand, he pressed the sinister dirk to Charlie's throat.

Susanna Mattise looked bewildered, her anger palpable.

"What are you doing?"

Lumian smirked menacingly.

"I forgot to mention, my Beyonder weapon is called Cursed Blade.

"A single cut drawing blood will curse his entire family to death, including his wife.

"And you're Charlie's wife!"

Recalling the lunatic upstairs, Lumian suspected that the Montsouris ghost would target not only one's immediate family but also their spouse.

Although he didn't understand how a spouse was determined in mysticism, since Susanna Mattise claimed to be Charlie's wife, he treated her as such! Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Of course, Lumian knew allowing Fallen Mercury to curse Charlie with the fate of the Montsouris ghost wouldn't immediately impact Susanna Mattise. It wouldn't affect the present situation at all.

He gambled that Susanna Mattise didn't know this, and that she could sense the danger in Fallen Mercury.

It was a bluff!

Susanna Mattise's expression froze, and the attacking vines and branches halted midair.

Her jade-green eyes radiated menace.

Lumian's vision shifted. He saw Guillaume Bénet, the hawk-nosed padre clad in a white robe adorned with golden threads.

Suppressed hatred erupted like a volcano.

Lumian released Charlie and advanced toward the "Guillaume Bénet" he had locked onto.

But before him stood only Susanna Mattise.

In that instant, Charlie, his face awash with infatuation, saw Lumian approaching his "wife" with a dirk. He lunged at the assailant, shouting, "Don't hurt her!"

Lumian snapped to his senses, realizing Guillaume Bénet had morphed into Susanna Mattise, her flower buds and tree warts blossoming one by one!

She controlled my emotions? In his shock, Lumian twisted violently, seizing Charlie again and pressing Fallen Mercury to his throat.

Susanna Mattise didn't conceal her disappointment. After a moment's silence, she parted her red lips.

Suddenly, the creature halted, staring solemnly at the wall near Rue Anarchie in Auberge du Coq Doré.

In the next second, her turquoise hair retracted, and the vines and branches disintegrated, vanishing.

Wh— The official Beyonders are here? Lumian watched Susanna Mattise's figure burrow through the wall and disappear from the corridor.

He released Charlie and shook him, urging him to wake up. He

quickly instructed,

“Lie down on the second-floor stairs and keep your eyes closed until someone wakes you!”

With that, Lumian pushed Charlie and retreated to his room, closing the wooden door and feigning sleep, like the other tenants.

As Susanna departed, the obsession faded from Charlie’s eyes. When Lumian jolted him back to reality, he had no choice but to follow Lumian’s directions. He jogged to the staircase leading to the ground floor, lay down, and closed his eyes, feigning unconsciousness.

Almost simultaneously, a red hue filled Charlie and Lumian’s vision, as though the sun had risen prematurely, heralding the day.

…

Minutes later, a golden sword formed from light stabbed into the ground of Rue Anarchie, skewering a writhing turquoise vine.

“Is it resolved?” A young man with the Sun Sacred Emblem pinned to his chest asked the one brandishing the sword.

He was a rugged man with blond hair, golden eyebrows, and a golden beard, wearing a brown coat adorned with two rows of golden buttons.

He exhaled and declared, “We’ve resolved it for now, but unless we find the origin of this evil spirit, it’s only a matter of time before she regenerates there.”

Chapter 142 - 142 Mother Tree

142 Mother Tree

“Evil spirits can reform again?” The young man bearing the Sun Sacred Emblem on his chest inquired, astonished.

From his mysticism knowledge and experience gained through case files, he knew that unless an evil spirit possessed unique abilities, purification equated to total annihilation.

Such soul-type entities were either the offspring of powerful Beyonders’ deaths or vengeful spirits that managed to break through various constraints. The mightiest could even wield a degree of godhood, but resurrection and rebirth were not among their traits.

The blond man, clad in a double-breasted brown coat, straightened up and eyed the dissipating, writhing vines. After some thought, he said, “Evil spirits can have unique distinctions. Under specific conditions, they rely on an object to be born. This object often lies at the heart of their territory.

“As long as this object remains intact, the evil spirit, even if not entirely purified, will gradually reform within the corresponding area.” nove(l)bi(n.)com

Evil spirits would assimilate their birthplaces, merging with the spirit world and the Underworld to obtain the power necessary to maintain their existence. Otherwise, they would slowly weaken until they vanished completely.

In essence, evil spirits had a fixed range of activity and couldn’t wander far from their birthplaces. This was their “territory.”

The young man donned in the Sun Sacred Emblem and a white robe adorned with golden threads roughly grasped the reasoning. He

furrowed his brow and said, “We’ve been searching for days, yet we haven’t found the birthplace of the evil spirit, Susanna Matisse.”

Logically, Susanna Matisse couldn’t stray far from her territory. If official Beyonders carefully searched Rue Anarchie and its vicinity, they would surely locate the evil spirit’s birthplace and destroy the object it depended on.

However, this was Trier, a city with not only an above-ground area but also an underground section. Another Rue Anarchie and Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman mirrored the area above, with numerous obscure paths and empty spaces.

More crucially, deeper underground, lay Trier from the Fourth Epoch. Even for official Beyonders, it was a perilous place they scarcely comprehended.

As a deacon of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman’s Inquisition, Angoulême de Fran?ois had never understood why Trier had been rebuilt atop the original site, right above the sunken Trier of the Fourth Epoch, in the late era.

Although geographically ideal, this decision had spawned countless troubles over the ensuing thousand years.

The Purifiers weren’t incapable of resolving the Beyonder incidents; they just couldn’t get to the root of the problem, hidden within the underground ruins of the Fourth Epoch’s Trier.

Rumor had it that not even Demigods dared or were willing to venture into those depths.

Angoulême sheathed his golden longsword, which seemed to be condensed light, into a grayish-white, steam-powered humanoid head contraption, allowing it to sink into the corresponding “vertebrae.”

Dark liquid seemed to fill the device.

A man in a white suit, yellow vest, and light-colored shirt, adorned with the Sun Sacred Emblem, emerged from Auberge du Coq Doré.

His light-yellow hair was neatly combed, skin-colored tape covered

the bridge of his nose, and his lips were thick. A hint of a Southern Continent ancestry showed through his slightly brown skin.

“Deacon, I’ve spoken to Charlie Collent,” he reported to Angoulême de Fran?ois.

Angoulême touched the golden button on his brown coat, asking, “Is he alright?”

The brown-skinned man shook his head, replying, “We arrived just in time. He wasn’t physically harmed.

“According to him, after he dreamed of Susanna Matisse again, although she warned him, he still chose to seek help. He was intercepted by Susanna Matisse on the second floor of the motel and almost became one with her forever. At least, that’s what she said.

This development seemed normal and reasonable, aligning with the details provided by the Purifier elite team led by Angoulême. Neither Angoulême nor the other two Purifiers had any doubts.

In their understanding, Charlie’s request for help was in accordance with their instructions to head to the nearest Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral.

Angoulême surveyed the unusually quiet Rue Anarchie and nodded slightly.

“For now, let’s put Charlie Collent aside. But if we don’t find Susanna Mattise’s birthplace in two weeks, consider arranging a civilian job for him and telling him the truth.”

This was the standard procedure used by official Beyonders to protect ordinary people who had yet to fully escape the influence of Beyonder events.

Of course, it often appeared they had resolved the problem and informed the victim to live peacefully, only for the person to die mysteriously weeks, months, or years later.

Angoulême continued, “We have two priorities. First, investigate this area, including the underground, to find Susanna Mattise’s birthplace.

Second, locate the person who warned us with the letter. He seems to have deep knowledge of Susanna Mattise."

Before releasing Charlie, Angoulême and his team had secretly investigated Auberge du Coq Doré but found no suspicious areas that could be the birthplace of the evil spirit.

Additionally, they had used Beyonder methods to verify Charlie's encounter and confession. They confirmed that the victim had interacted with ordinary people from the moment he prayed to Susanna Matisse until he was arrested by the police.

That was why Angoulême suggested not to worry about Charlie's situation for the time being.

As for the sender, he had impressive methods and extensive anti-divination and anti-tracking experience. He had chosen to use a spirit world creature to write and send the letter.

It was worth noting that even when using the same descriptive incantation to summon a spirit world creature, a different one would likely appear each time.

The challenge with using just a three-line description was that it could potentially match hundreds of thousands of spirit world creatures, if not more. What they could summon each time relied solely on chance.

Without a corresponding medium and a description that highlighted the subject's unique traits, it was nearly impossible to zero in on the target spirit using the incantation alone. Most spirit world creatures simply weren't distinctive enough.

Angoulême had previously sought the help of colleagues adept in such matters. Employing the letter as a medium, he tried summoning the associated spirit world creature, hoping to glean any clues from it. Alas, whether it was the letter's transcriber, author, or sender, they came up empty-handed.

The issue could have been a flaw in the descriptive statement, or perhaps the corresponding spirit world creature sensed their ill

intentions and refused the summoning.

Even with a flawless summoning ritual, it could still fail if the spirit world creatures fitting the description declined to respond. Only those Sequences skilled in summoning could significantly boost the odds or even force the issue. Naturally, Beyonders rarely faced such obstacles. Their three-line descriptions cast a wide net, ensnaring numerous spirit world creatures, with a handful always eager to enter the real world and absorb some spirituality.

…

Lumian feigned sleep, poised to flee at a moment's notice.

It wasn't until the nearby cathedral clock struck six that he allowed himself a sigh of relief.

Seems like the battle between the official Beyonders and Susanna Mattise has ended. They didn't even realize I briefly confronted her… Lumian rolled out of bed and rubbed his face.

He couldn't be certain if the official Beyonders had completely neutralized Susanna Mattise or if this ordeal was truly over.

Recalling Susanna's intense hatred for him, Lumian knew he couldn't rely on hope alone.

He decided to write a letter to Madam Magician, reporting his encounter with Mr. K and inquiring about Susanna Mattise's nature and weaknesses.

For good measure, he also planned to ask Hela, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's vice president—after all, Madam Magician wasn't all-knowing.

After penning the two letters and tidying the room, Lumian summoned two messengers at ten-minute intervals, ensuring each took the correct letter.

By the time he finished washing up and returned to Room 207, there were already two replies waiting silently on the wooden table.

Wow, Madam Magician is quick too. Did the messengers run into each other? If so, what would they talk about? Lumian muttered, picking up one of the replies.

The letter was from Hela.

“Similar cases have occurred in the Northern and Southern Continents. Men and women often dreamed of the opposite sex and engaged in intimate acts, ultimately dying from exhaustion.

“If the victims have partners or lovers, these innocents are killed one by one by creatures like Susanna Mattise. These creatures seem to believe they’re the dreamer’s spouse.

“Such creatures are said to possess powerful abilities on par with Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

“Some details suggest Susanna may have already died, becoming a vengeful or evil spirit…”

It is indeed quite powerful… Lumian recalled his encounter the previous night, realizing that without Fallen Mercury’s deterrence, Charlie as a “hostage,” and Susanna’s conviction that she was Charlie’s wife, he might have been defeated within a minute.

After burning Hela’s reply with a flame conjured from his spirituality, Lumian unfolded Madam Magician’s letter.

“I’m unsure whether to congratulate or commiserate with you. Your chances of encountering an evil god’s Blessed seem higher than those of ordinary Beyonders. This may be due to the corruption sealed within you.

“It’s difficult to explain this phenomenon using the law of convergence of Beyonder characteristics. It’s more like repulsive forces rejected by this world, attracting each other.

“That’s my theory. I can’t guarantee its accuracy. If I’m wrong, don’t forget to inform me and provide the correct answer.

“Based on your account, I suspect Susanna was once a believer of an evil god, who bestowed her with strength equivalent to a Sequence 5.

“That evil god goes by the pseudonym Mother Tree of Desire in this world. Don’t attempt to understand Her, let alone guess Her true and complete title.

“Susanna is likely a Fallen Tree Spirit or Spirit of Lust, also known as Baby Cupid in some regions. They can appear as men or women, engaging in intimate acts within dreams and absorbing the victim’s energy. Over time, their possessiveness leads them to believe they’re the victim’s spouse, driving them to kill the victim’s partner or lover in a fit of jealousy.

“However, Susanna also exhibited traits of a soul-type entity. It’s highly plausible she met her demise in an accident or failed to endure the boon, morphing into an evil spirit. She grew increasingly paranoid, clinging to her instincts.”

Chapter 143 - 143 Lie

143 Lie

Having briefly outlined the nature and territorial tendencies of malevolent spirits, the woman known as Magician continued,

“Though Susanna Mattise’s power is on par with a Sequence 5, it’s not impossible for you to handle her. You could use the dirk on Charlie and swap your fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost with his. After the Montsouris ghost kills Susanna Mattise, you can transfer the fate of encountering it back into the knife.

“Alright, that was a joke. This plan has far too many uncertainties. It’s virtually impossible to pull off.

“Firstly, the Montsouris ghost might only kill those who come across it.

“Secondly, even if the Montsouris ghost does kill Susanna Mattise, you won’t know. You wouldn’t be able to change fate in time without affecting Charlie.

“Thirdly, Charlie shouldn’t be an orphan. His parents and siblings might still be alive. No one knows if the Montsouris ghost will leave Trier to kill.

“Fourthly, the Montsouris ghost might not be able to kill Susanna Mattise.

“Fifthly, Charlie himself admitted that he and Susanna are mystically bound as husband and wife.

“I’m saying all of this mainly to discourage you from going down that path. Using Charlie as a ‘hostage’ suggests that you’re inclined to take such risks.

“Actually, this situation presents both a crisis and an opportunity.

“For you, the best solution is to ask Mr. K for help in dealing with the threat posed by Susanna Mattise.

“Remember, asking for help is an effective way to build relationships and earn someone’s trust. Of course, the other party must be willing and capable.

“You can showcase your potential and make Mr. K see that you’re valuable.

“I wish you the best of luck. I hope you can quickly gain Mr. K’s initial trust and join that organization.”

Lumian’s initial reaction to the letter was that Madam Magician tended to ramble and digress. She seemed to enjoy finding lofty excuses and often entertained far-fetched notions bordering on absurdity. This contrasted sharply with Madam Hela’s succinct and polished reply.

This writing style must be Madam Magician’s trademark… Lumian pursed his lips, summoned his spiritual energy, and ignited a flame, burning the paper in his hand.

After reading the two letters, he discarded the idea of using Fallen Mercury to resolve his issue with Susanna Mattise. Their fates had been entwined for more than just a brief moment. It couldn’t be as simple as erasing the fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost.

In comparison, seeking Mr. K’s assistance was indeed an effective solution Lumian hadn’t considered.

This could quickly bridge the gap between him and Mr. K, fulfilling Madam Magician’s mission.

After contemplating for a moment and determining how to approach Mr. K and demonstrate his worth, Lumian changed into a grayish-blue worker’s uniform, put on a dark-blue cap, and left Room 207.

Upon reaching the ground floor, Lumian saw Charlie lingering near the entrance, wearing a linen shirt and black pants.

“What are you up to?” he asked with a grin.

Charlie forced a smile.

The establishment’s official name was Pawnbroker Shop or Pawnshop Company.

“To the pawnshop?” Lumian sidled up to Charlie and lowered his voice. “Are you alright?”

Charlie glanced around and gave a bitter smile.

“They said there’s no problem this time. Susanna, that evil spirit, has been purified.

“Whether there’s an issue or not, life has to go on. Haha, I heard that from a hotel guest. Sounds pretty sophisticated, right?

“Anyway, for people like us, a day without work puts us on the brink of financial ruin. We’d soon be hungry again. I have to pawn the diamond necklace for cash. You know, only cash gives people a sense of security. Clothes and jewelry can’t do that. Even food is lacking!”

At this point, Charlie’s excitement grew.

“Madame Alice said the necklace is worth 1,500 verl d’or. If I pawn it, I should get around 1,000.

“My god. I’ve never seen 1,000 verl d’or before. Even if I become an attendant foreman, it’d take me years, maybe more than a decade, to save that much!

“When it’s time, we’ll have lunch at a café on Rue des Blouses Blanches. I want DuVar broth, coarse salt beef in red wine sauce, and apple tenderloin!”

Did you learn nothing else at H?tel du Cygne Blanc, just the names of dishes? Lumian grumbled and asked thoughtfully, “You want me to protect you?”

Charlie laughed.

“I’d be scared carrying that much money alone. Ciel, you might not have had that experience yet—thinking everyone’s a thief who’ll rob you on the streets.

“I felt that way when I got the necklace. I was so nervous, I nearly passed out. Can you imagine?”

“Yes.” Lumian smiled. “I probably won’t have that experience. Not now, not ever, because I’m the one who makes others think I want to rob them.”

Take Margot, for example, who had just forked over more than 1,000 verl d’or, nearly enough to buy the diamond necklace!

Charlie’s smile froze.

After a few seconds, he forced a smile and said, “That’s why I want you to come with me to the pawnshop.”

He had seriously doubted Ciel’s means of making money. His neighbor was clearly capable and smart, but he wasn’t rushing to find a job. He roamed around daily, seemingly without money troubles, but lived at Auberge du Coq Doré, not H?tel du Cygne Blanc.

Remembering how Ciel had posed as a lawyer to infiltrate the police station, provided vital information, and helped him survive Susanna Mattise’s threat, Charlie felt it was a small concern.

Even if Ciel’s a thief, robber, or con artist, he’s one who risked his life to help me!

Pleased with Charlie’s apprehensive expression, Lumian asked, grinning, “Which pawnshop are you going to?”

“I heard the pawnshops in Quartier de l’Observatoire offer better prices.” Charlie had already decided.

Lumian nodded.

“I’m actually headed to Quartier de l’Observatoire.”

He planned to ask Osta Trul for Mr. K’s contact information.

Charlie was thrilled. He spent a whopping 1 verl d'or to treat Lumian to a barbecue pie, cream bun, and plum wine. Naturally, this included his own portion.

Lumian graciously accepted.

Exiting Rue Anarchie, Charlie winced when he saw Lumian heading straight for the public carriage sign.

He glanced around, making sure no one was nearby, and whispered,

"Last night, you said your blade was called the Cursed Blade. Will anyone cut by it really have their entire family die?"

Before meeting Susanna Mattise, Charlie never believed in such things. Even if he had heard about them, they were just fodder for boasting and tall tales. But now, he couldn't help but wonder if Ciel truly wielded a mystical weapon.

Lumian turned to Charlie and grinned.

"Want to give it a try?"

Charlie shuddered and smiled sheepishly. "I believe you."

"Do you? Well, I was just bluffing Susanna Mattise last night. I'm just an ordinary guy. If I hadn't, I'd be dead!" Lumian said, still smiling. "Doesn't the Cursed Blade story I made up ring a bell? You've heard of the Montsouris ghost legend when that maniac was having his bout of clarity, right?"

Charlie's eyes widened in realization.

That's it! It's a spin on the Montsouris ghost legend!

Ciel is a master of deception. An ordinary person managed to fool that malevolent spirit, Susanna Mattise, and saved our lives!

I only spin tall tales in bars and occasionally lie. I can't even begin to compare to him.

He's got guts and smarts. A person like that is destined to make it

big!

Seeing that Charlie genuinely believed the lie he'd just spun, Lumian did his best to keep a straight face.

He asked earnestly, "Are your parents still alive? Do you have siblings?"

"…" Charlie was taken aback and leaped to the side like a spooked rabbit. "Why do you ask?"

Could it be that the Cursed Blade is real? Is he trying to figure out which family members I have?

Lumian couldn't contain his laughter anymore.

"You're not actually scared, are you? Aren't you too easily pranked?"

Charlie slapped his forehead, exasperated with the thought of the Idiot Instrument.

He couldn't distinguish which of Ciel's words were false and which were true.

However, after being pranked, he felt even more certain that the Cursed Blade was fake and based on the Montsouris ghost legend.

Ciel loves using such fabrications to fool others, just like the Idiot Instrument. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Hmm… The Cursed Blade story is a good one. Now that it's mine, I'll use it at the bar tonight to spook people!

The two of them arrived at Quartier de l'Observatoire in a public carriage. Charlie asked for directions several times before finally finding Phil's Pawnbroker Shop.

Housed in a seven-story off-white building, it featured pillars, arches, relief sculptures, and large windows.

Etched above the grand entrance were the words: "Freedom, equality, fraternity"

Freedom to pawn any item; equality to discriminate against anyone who comes to pawn something? Fraternity to seize every opportunity to lowball prices? Lumian couldn't help but criticize.

How ridiculous for a pawnshop to carve the Republic's political slogan on their door?

Inside the hall, there were several counters, with rows of benches in front of them.

At the moment, dozens of people sat there, waiting for the clerk to appraise their items and call their number.

Charlie easily found an empty counter and handed over the diamond necklace. He received a slip with the item's name and corresponding number for appraisal.

Soon, Charlie's number was called from the counter.

He walked over with anticipation, only to return looking as if his spirit had been crushed.

Lumian, who was browsing newspapers in the hall, asked in confusion, "What's wrong?"

Charlie spoke in a daze, his voice tinged with disappointment, "That necklace, that necklace is a fake. It's only worth 12 verl d'or…"

Chapter 144 - 144 Conditions

144 Conditions

Fake? Lumian's right eyebrow twitched, as if fate was mercilessly mocking Charlie.

Charlie had forsaken his fragile principles and bedded Madame Alice for days, only to get embroiled in a life-threatening lawsuit and lose his job as an apprentice attendant—all for a counterfeit diamond necklace?

For some reason, Lumian felt a sudden urge to defy fate.

This wasn't his problem, but he couldn't shake the feeling.

To hell with this inevitable destiny!

You mock me, so I'll mock and provoke you in return!

In that moment, Lumian began to grasp another aspect of the Provoker's acting principles, albeit crudely and imprecisely.

He eyed Charlie and asked thoughtfully, "Do you think Madam Alice lied to you, or did the pawnshop see your desperate situation, knowing you couldn't determine the necklace's authenticity, and use it as an excuse to offer the lowest possible price?"

"I-I don't know." Charlie was at a loss and in pain.

After a pause, he added with difficulty, "I suspect it's Madame Alice. Look, there are so many people here pawning their items. Appraisers handle dozens or hundreds of items every day, most of them valuable. They can't just lie to me, right?

"H-how could she…"

Charlie couldn't go on.

Can't pawnshops deceive everyone equally? Lowballing the offer as much as possible, especially for the pricey items? Lumian scoffed.

"Why not?

"Many wealthy people don't amass fortunes through kindness and hard work. If they can trick you with a fake, why give you the real deal?

"Maybe Madame Alice is one of those people. She might not even be that rich. She relied on staying at the H?tel du Cygne Blanc to dupe a gullible lad like you."

Lumian didn't distrust every rich person. Many had made their fortunes through talent, hard work, and opportunity—like Aurore.

Stung by Lumian's words, Charlie's face twisted with anger.

He muttered to himself bitterly, "That's right. During this time, Madame Alice hasn't even treated me to a big meal. She only calls me to her room at seven or eight at night for… service."

You're so naive. Are you really from Reem? Lumian couldn't help but facepalm.

He stood up and said, "Get that necklace back. Let's try another pawnshop. What if it's real?"

Charlie was taken aback.

"Alright, alright!"

Lumian urged him, "Be vigilant. We can't let them switch the necklace."

"Yes." Charlie tried his best to rally. "I've been studying that necklace daily recently and memorized every detail!"

After retrieving the diamond necklace, Lumian accompanied Charlie to two other pawnshops in Quartier de l'Observatoire.

The appraisal results were the same as before. The necklace was fake and worth only 11 to 15 verl d'or.

Charlie's frustration mounted, and he crumbled.

Lumian glanced at him and consoled, "At least you can get a dozen verl d'or. It'll last you more than a week. With the money, you can buy drinks for waiters at cafés on Rue des Blouses Blanches and ask them to help you find a new job."

Including rent, Charlie spent about 1 verl d'or a day. If he skipped the underground bar, his expenses would be even less.

"Yeah…" Charlie sighed.

He was utterly disappointed. But after accepting reality, he found a glimmer of hope.

Lumian hesitated before suggesting, "We can't dismiss other possibilities. For instance, the pawnshops around here might have secret ways of communicating. They could specifically target people like you—those who don't dress well and pawn valuable items without proper documentation. How about taking the necklace to a specialized jewelry shop for appraisal?"

"We'd have to pay a fee." Charlie's face clouded with worry.

If the appraisal confirmed its authenticity, that would be great. But if it turned out to be fake, his already meager assets would be reduced by a third or even half.

Lumian sighed and offered, "Hand me the diamond necklace, and I'll find a friend to appraise it for you—one who won't charge.

"You've still got some cash to get you through the day, right?"

"I have 2.6 verl d'or left." With hope in his eyes, Charlie handed the diamond necklace to Lumian.

As Lumian pocketed the necklace, he grinned and asked, "Are you not worried that the appraisal might prove it genuine, but I'll return a fake one to you and claim there's no issue with the pawnshops'

assessment?"

"…" Charlie's face tensed once more.

After a moment, he exhaled and admitted, "I trust you. Besides, I've already written it off as a fake."

Lumian waved goodbye to Charlie and strode toward Place du Purgatoire.

…

Near the catacombs, Osta Trul occupied his customary seat facing the bonfire, clad in a hooded black robe. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian approached and asked with a hint of amusement, "Don't you ever change areas?"

Osta chuckled and replied, "My divination and interpretation skills are fairly accurate. Many people have introduced their friends. If I switch locations, wouldn't I lose my clientele? They're all verl d'or!"

"What do you mean by clientele? They're clearly a bunch of fools," Lumian half-jokingly and mockingly remarked.

Osta didn't dare to argue.

Lumian inquired, "I need to discuss something with Mr. K. How can I reach him?"

So he's not here for me… Osta sighed in relief and quickly answered, "Anyone who has attended the gathering can go straight to Psychic's headquarters, located in the building where our gathering took place. At 19 Rue Scheer, knock on Room 103 with three long, two short, and one long beats. Someone will take you to see Mr. K.

"If you don't want to go in person, you can send a letter. Address it to Room 103, 19 Rue Scheer, Avenue du Boulevard. The recipient is Guillaume Pierre."

What a fake name… The knocking rhythm differs from the

gathering's… Mr. K never told me this. Did he think Osta would inform me? Lumian nodded, bid Osta farewell, and returned above ground.

At the catacombs' entrance, he spotted a group of visitors carrying lit white candles, following the administrator through the naturally formed arch and into the Death Empire.

Withdrawing his gaze, Lumian took a public carriage to 19 Rue Scheer on Avenue du Boulevard.

He lowered his cap and knocked on Room 103.

The dark-red wooden door creaked open, revealing a handsome young man with shoulder-length brown hair, resembling an artist.

The lad scrutinized Lumian with his dark brown eyes for a couple of seconds.

"Who are you looking for?"

"I'm Ciel. I need to speak with Mr. K," Lumian replied bluntly.

The young man cocked his head slightly, as if listening for a faint sound.

Soon, he instructed Lumian, "Follow me."

The lad led him to a vintage-styled room and unveiled a secret door hidden within the dressing area.

A staircase descended underground, its walls on either side adorned with gas lamps encased in black grids.

Lumian entered the basement and traversed a short corridor before reaching a rather barren chamber.

He suspected other exits were present, some possibly connecting to areas in Underground Trier.

At that moment, Mr. K lounged in a red armchair, his face concealed by the shadow of his large hood.

The gathering's organizer studied Lumian wordlessly, exuding an unnerving air of intimidation.

Lumian pressed down on his cap and smiled.

"Good morning, Mr. K. I require your assistance.

"The price I'll have to pay is your call."

Mr. K remained silent for a few seconds before inquiring in a deep, raspy tone, "Does the Poison Spur Mob know you killed Margot?"

As expected… Lumian wasn't surprised that Mr. K had information on him.

When he attended the gathering, he deliberately wrapped his face in bandages to recreate his appearance when he killed Margot. He wanted Mr. K to be aware of it and display his worth and impulsive nature.

This could also help "earn" Mr. K's trust.

Lumian shook his head.

"It's another problem…"

Lumian recounted his encounter with Charlie and how he had helped him escape his predicament, only to be despised by Susanna Mattise and nearly killed by that peculiar creature. Fortunately, the official Beyonders had arrived in time. He didn't lie, but he didn't share too many details either.

This aligned with the information he sought at the gathering.

Mr. K listened intently and asked in a low voice, "You want divine protection?"

Divine protection? Aren't you overestimating yourself? Just protection! Lumian thought silently and nodded solemnly.

"Yes."

Mr. K rasped, “That creature is likely a soul-type being, akin to an evil spirit. Normally, it wouldn’t affect you as long as you leave the market district. However, the official Beyonders have clearly taken an interest in this matter. If you move now, you might arouse suspicion. Moreover, if Susanna Mattise remembers or even marks you, you could be attacked anywhere. Many abilities can surpass distance limitations. There’s no need for the creature to truly leave its territory.”

No wonder the two ladies didn’t suggest I leave… Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

“What should I do then?”

Mr. K spoke deliberately, “I can offer some protection, but you need to do something for me.”

“What is it?” Lumian inquired “eagerly.”

Mr. K clasped his hands together and said, “Join any gang in the market district and become a leader.”

So the organization behind Mr. K wants to control the market district indirectly? Lumian agreed without hesitation, “No problem!”

Mr. K nodded slowly and held his left index finger with his right hand.

Then, he yanked the finger off, exposing a bloody wound and ghostly white bones.

Lumian winced at the sight.

Surprisingly, no blood flowed from Mr. K’s wound or finger. Instead, it hovered at the edge, twisting and contracting as it gradually “healed.”

“Take this with you. It can help you in critical moments.” Mr. K tossed the severed finger to Lumian.

The flesh on his fingerless left hand writhed violently, as though a new digit was about to sprout.

Chapter 145 - 145 Service Fee

145 Service Fee

Lumian deftly extended his right hand, snatching the severed finger from the air.

Feeling its weight and the warmth that hadn't yet dissipated, he was both surprised and disturbed.

He had anticipated Mr. K would offer some form of protection, but he hadn't expected the man to rip off his own finger and toss it to him, claiming it could prove helpful in a tight spot!

Was this some kind of sick joke?

Setting aside the dubious utility of a severed digit, didn't Mr. K worry about the potential consequences of handing over a piece of his own flesh?

In the world of mysticism, one's flesh and blood held significant power. In the wrong hands, they could lead to disastrous consequences.

No one wanted to become the target of a horrifying curse without reason!

Given Mr. K's formidable abilities and his knowledge of mysticism, to the point of being able to act as a Notary, Lumian suspected the man had a way to nullify the various dangers associated with parting with his flesh. That was why he had dared to sever his own finger and hand it over.

Moreover, the detached finger was clearly imbued with magic.

I wonder if I can trade the prospect of meeting the Montsouris ghost

with Mr. K by using Fallen Mercury, drawing blood when cutting this finger… As Cordu's Prankster King, Lumian was never short of unconventional ideas.

Suppressing the urge, he shifted his gaze from the finger back to Mr. K.

By now, Mr. K had regenerated a new finger, slightly damp and covered in delicate, fair skin.

"Thank you," Lumian murmured, stowing the severed finger in the pocket of his slate-blue workman's uniform.

Mr. K gave a curt nod and said, "You may leave. Don't forget our agreement."

"One more thing." Lumian produced the diamond necklace. "Could you help me determine if it's real or fake? I need to exchange it for some cash."

He already owed Mr. K a favor; he didn't mind owing a little more.

And if he couldn't repay the debt? At worst, he'd sell himself to the organization behind Mr. K!

That was Lumian's endgame.

Mr. K directed the attendant who had led Lumian underground to pass the diamond necklace to him and examined it.

From the corner of his eye, Lumian could see a golden glow emanating from the shadows beneath Mr. K's hood.

After a few seconds, Mr. K handed the necklace back to the attendant.

"It's a fake. The craftsmanship is quite impressive, though. It's worth 50 verl d'or."

"Alright." Lumian didn't bother hiding his disappointment, adding, "I also need a set of identification papers."

After receiving Mr. K's affirmation, Lumian left 19 Rue Scheer and caught a public carriage back to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. His thoughts bounced between joining a gang without raising suspicion, pondering the purpose of the severed finger, and devising ways to get pawnshops to pay more for the counterfeit diamond necklace—at least 30 verl d'or…

Amid these thoughts, an idea began to crystallize.

Simultaneously, he planned to find a couple of safe houses in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman district and Quartier du Jardin Botanique before noon—the kind that didn't require identification.

I still have 850 verl d'or and 24 coppet on me. After setting aside the remaining 400 for the information broker Anthony Reid, I'll have 450 verl d'or left. I can rent two or three safe houses… Lumian carefully calculated his remaining assets.

He pursed his lips, feeling an urgency to leave Mr. K's severed finger at Auberge du Coq Doré before securing a room.

…

By 3 p.m., Lumian had found rooms in both Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman on Rue des Blouses Blanches, and Quartier du Jardin Botanique on Rue des Pavés—neither of which required identification.

Naturally, there was a surcharge for such discretion. The former was hardly better than Room 207 at Auberge du Coq Doré, costing 6 verl d'or per week. The latter, more akin to Osta Trul's rented apartment, neighbored factory workers from the south and cost 10 verl d'or per week.

Lumian paid four weeks' rent upfront but received no discounts.

Returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, he skimmed through Men's Aesthetics for a while, using cosmetics to soften his sharp features, add shadows, and trim his eyebrows.

Soon, Lumian had completed his initial disguise, transforming into an ordinary-looking man in his mid-twenties with a dangerous air.

After combing his golden-black hair, he donned a dark blue cap, took Mr. K's severed finger, and made his way to Salle de Bal Brise on Avenue du Marché.

Unlike other guests, he didn't enter directly. Instead, he stopped between the khaki building and the white spherical statue made of countless skulls, addressing the two gangsters guarding the entrance, "I need to see Baron Brignais."

Without waiting for their response, he added, "Tell the baron it's Ciel, from our last meeting. He'll be pleased to see me again."

The two gangsters exchanged glances, not daring to delay the baron's business. One of them entered the ballroom.

In under five minutes, the gang member reemerged, telling Lumian, "The baron wants you to meet him where you last saw him."

The café on the second floor? Lumian smirked. With hands in his pockets, he sauntered up the stairs and entered Salle de Bal Brise, spotting Baron Brignais with a mahogany-colored pipe.

The gentleman sported a black, thin tweed suit, a half top hat nearby, and a gleaming ring on his left hand. Four thugs flanked him.

"Sit." Baron Brignais's brown eyes scanned the room, his smile indicating the seat across the table.

Lumian approached and sat, studying Baron Brignais's sharp features and naturally curly brown hair, and said, "Good afternoon. We meet again."

Baron Brignais tapped the pipe's base, smiling as he asked, "What brings you here?"

Lumian produced Charlie's counterfeit diamond necklace, calmly stating,

"I've been strapped for cash and want to pawn this necklace to you. It's worth 1,500 verl d'or. I'll take 1,000."

Baron Brignais turned to a subordinate, commanding, "Get someone

to appraise it."

"Yes, Baron." A thug with conspicuous bruises on his forehead left the café.

Brignais appraised Lumian again, nodding in approval.

"Not bad. Your makeup skills have come a long way. Although still flawed, you're no longer as easy to recognize."

"Thanks for the tip," Lumian grinned. "Men's Aesthetics is quite the resource."

They exchanged small talk until the thug who had left the café returned with a man in his forties, dressed in a formal suit and bow tie, carrying a toolbox.

After assessing the necklace, the man approached Baron Brignais, set the necklace on the table, and whispered, "It's fake."

Instantly, all the thugs present drew their revolvers.

Baron Brignais observed Lumian, who appeared unfazed by the appraiser's declaration or the thugs' actions.

His grin never wavered as he nodded to the appraiser, "You may leave."

"Yes, Baron." The appraiser hurriedly exited the café.

Baron Brignais set down his mahogany pipe, playing with the diamond ring on his left hand. He asked Lumian, still smiling, "Were you aware this necklace was counterfeit?"

Lumian smiled as well. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"Indeed."

Before he could finish, the thugs aimed their revolvers at him.

Intrigued by Lumian's composure, Baron Brignais inquired, "Did you anticipate I'd have someone verify the necklace's authenticity?"

Lumian's grin remained steady.

"Indeed."

Baron Brignais's eyes narrowed.

"Knowing all this, why would you still attempt to borrow 1,000 verl d'or with a fake necklace?

"What makes you think I'd grant your request?"

Lumian slowly rose, disregarding the revolvers aimed at him. He placed his hands on the table's edge, leaned down to meet Baron Brignais's gaze, and smirked.

"Because I killed Margot of the Poison Spur Mob."

Baron Brignais's smile froze.

His pupils involuntarily dilated as if to scrutinize the man before him.

The four thugs, their revolvers aimed at Lumian, also reacted with shock.

As enemies of the Poison Spur Mob, they knew Margot's capabilities all too well.

Lumian's emotionless gaze scanned the thugs' faces, causing them to avert their eyes and, unconsciously, their weapons.

Baron Brignais recovered quickly, addressing the four thugs, "Holster your revolvers! Have I not taught you how to treat guests?"

Reprimanding his subordinates, he turned to Lumian, curiosity piqued, "How did you manage to kill Margot?"

"I stabbed him with something poisonous, but I don't know where he fled before succumbing," Lumian replied nonchalantly.

This aligned with the preliminary intel Baron Brignais had received. Eyes narrowing, he asked with a grin, "Do you understand the implications of taking my 1,000 verl d'or?"

Lumian smirked, unfazed.

“Indeed.”

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 504.

Upon seeing Lumian outside the door, Charlie eagerly inquired, “So, is it the real deal?”

“It’s a fake. Worth no more than 50 verl d’or,” Lumian casually replied as he entered the room.

He noticed that Charlie had already ripped off Susanna Mattise’s portrait, leaving behind a sticky residue.

Charlie, having mentally braced himself for the outcome, was disappointed but not crushed. He chuckled self-deprecatingly, “Well, it’s still worth 50 verl d’or at least. A generous pawnshop might give me 20 for it.”

Lumian shot him a glance and grinned.

“But I managed to sell the fake necklace for 1,000 verl d’or.”

“What?” Charlie was dumbstruck.

Lumian pulled out a thick wad of bills, still smiling.

“The fake necklace is yours and worth 50 verl d’or. That’s all I can offer you. The rest is my fee for services rendered. Is that acceptable?”

Chapter 146 - 146 Turf

146 Turf

Charlie was dumbstruck and answered subconsciously, “No problem.”

Only when Lumian laid out the 50 verl d’or notes did he snap back to reality. He cautiously peeked out the door.

The evening light was fading, and unlike the second floor, the fifth floor had large balconies on both sides, casting deep shadows. It was as if night had already descended.

Seeing the corridor empty, Charlie breathed a sigh of relief. He lowered his voice and asked Lumian, “You conned someone into buying the fake necklace for 1,000 verl d’or?”

“You’ve got two things wrong.” Lumian grinned and handed the stack of 50 verl d’or notes to Charlie. “First, I didn’t con just any person.”

“Then who?” Charlie questioned, puzzled as he instinctively took the mix of 1 and 5 verl d’or notes.

Lumian’s grin broadened.

“The Savoie Mob.”

Hearing this, Charlie nearly dropped the banknotes in his hand.

He stared at Lumian in terror and blurted, “Are you insane?

“They kill people. Folks go missing all the time on Rue Anarchie!”

Lumian smirked and replied, “Second, it wasn’t a con.”

“What?” Charlie couldn’t follow Lumian’s logic.

Lumian clarified, still smiling, “They knew the necklace was a fake, yet they still forked over 1,000 verl d’or.”

Impossible, Charlie thought, certain it was a joke.

The Savoie Mob might be ruthless, but they weren’t idiots. Why would they pay 1,000 verl d’or for a fake necklace worth only 50 verl d’or?

Then, a wild thought crossed Charlie’s mind.

“You didn’t steal the leadership from the Savoie Mob, did you?”

That would be even more insane!

Lumian smirked again.

“Relax. Baron Brignais and I reached an agreement through a friendly conversation.

“Don’t worry. There won’t be any trouble in the future.

“So, do you want the 50 verl d’or or not?”

Considering his own financial situation, he took the 50 verl d’or and muttered,

“Thank you.”

Lumian nodded with a smile and turned to go.

In that instant, Charlie grasped the whole picture and blurted out, “Did you join the Savoie Mob?”

Lumian didn’t turn around. He waved his hand and replied, “That’s right.”

Charlie opened his mouth to speak, but no words came out. He watched Lumian’s silhouette vanish into the darkness outside and disappear down the shadowy staircase.

…

Upon returning to Room 207, Lumian, fresh out of his disguise and ready to hunt for a tasty meal, caught a familiar curse coming from the fourth floor.

“If you think this money is easy, you can lie down and earn it yourself!”

“Useless coward. A dickless wretch; all you dare to do is bully women!”

“Send your mother to me if you dare!”

“…”

Lumian listened for a few seconds and quickly deduced that Wilson from the Poison Spur Mob had come to Ethans with his crew to collect “protection money.”

A grin spread across his face.

In the next instant, Lumian donned a dark-blue cap, left Room 207, and made his way to the fourth floor.

Before he could reach Room 408, he heard the sharp crack of a slap followed by Ethans’s even more vehement cursing and struggle.

The tenants on this floor shut their wooden doors tight, not daring to step out.

With one hand in his pocket, Lumian arrived outside Room 408. The first thing he noticed was the presence of two goons.

They were clad in dark jackets, blocking the doorway.

At this moment, Ethans’s curses blended with sobs and screams.

“You sons of bitches!

“I curse you!

“I’ll rip off your dicks!”

Lumian raised an eyebrow and approached the two thugs at the door.

“What do you want?” one of them barked.

Lumian didn’t reply. Instead, he took a sudden step forward, reaching out to grab them.

His movements were so swift that he had the two thugs by the back of their heads before they could react.

Lumian applied force, slamming their skulls together.

With a sickening thud, their foreheads bulged, eyes rolled back, and they crumpled to the ground.

As they “cleared the way,” Lumian glimpsed the scene inside the room.

Ethans, her flaxen hair and delicate features in disarray, lay on the bed. Her dress was torn, her face visibly bruised and swollen. Wilson, his curly brown hair and deeply creased face sneering, was pocketing a stack of banknotes. His belt unbuckled, another thug was holding Ethans down.

Sensing the disturbance at the door, the Poison Spur Mob leader swiftly reached for his belt and glanced outside.

There he saw Lumian, casually wiping his hands and stepping over his two fallen comrades.

Not giving Wilson a chance to speak, Lumian grinned and said, “Didn’t anyone tell you that Auberge du Coq Doré is now under the Savoie Mob’s protection…”

Mid-sentence, he lunged forward, throwing a punch before Wilson could fasten his belt.

Wilson hastily dodged and buckled his belt.

Simultaneously, his eyes narrowed as they locked onto Lumian.

Lumian suddenly felt a wave of fear.

It was the unbridled fear of an ordinary person facing a villain or a

thug. Wilson had manifested such emotions!

Yet, even as an ordinary person, Lumian wasn't cowed by villains who wouldn't dare to fight back. As a vagrant, he had always believed in fleeing and surrendering if possible. If not, he'd drag the other party down with him. Now, as a Sequence 8 Beyonder, he was even more fearless.

Another Beyonder? Lumian harnessed the intensity of his fear to grapple with Wilson and unleash his close-quarters combat skills.

His hands, elbows, knees, and feet transformed into weapons, overpowering Wilson, who had barely buckled his belt.

As the sounds of their struggle filled the air, another thug sprang into action. He grabbed a chair in the room, poised to smash it into Lumian's back.

But Lumian twisted his upper body like a serpent, circling behind Wilson.

Bang! The chair struck Wilson's head, sending him reeling.

With a crash, the already unstable chair splintered.

Lumian coiled his body like a spring and lifted his right leg.

His heel struck the thug's lower abdomen with pinpoint accuracy, eliciting a muffled groan. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

The thug's eyes bulged as he clutched his crotch and crumpled to the floor. He writhed in pain but couldn't make a sound, like a rooster with its neck throttled.

As Lumian's right foot swung back, his arm lashed forward, whipping Wilson's chest.

Unable to dodge, Wilson heard the crack of his ribs breaking.

Before he could recover from the pain, Lumian seized his arms and yanked him closer.

Pfft!

A knee to the chest greeted him.

Wilson's face paled, and his body doubled over.

Lumian clenched his fists and hammered Wilson's back.

Plop! Wilson collapsed to the ground.

Lumian capitalized on the opportunity, pouncing on him. He pinned Wilson's arms behind his back and pressed his knees into his spine.

"I thought you were quite the tough guy," Lumian taunted. "Turns out, you couldn't even last ten seconds."

Based on his assessment, Wilson was only at Sequence 9, a Sequence that focused more on combat and physical enhancement. However, he wasn't sure which pathway he belonged to.

Wilson, provoked and enraged, struggled with all his might but couldn't break free from Lumian's grip.

Lumian glanced up at the dumbstruck Ethans and chuckled at Wilson and the incapacitated thugs.

"Go back and tell your bosses that this is Ciel's turf. If you've got any business, feel free to look for our Savoie Mob!"

"You're a dead man!" Wilson snarled.

Lumian smirked, retorting, "I'm not sure if I'll die, but you're the one dying now."

"You dare to kill me in front of so many witnesses?" Wilson mocked.

Lumian said nothing. He tightened his grip, and a sickening crack echoed in the room.

Wilson let out a spine-chilling scream, beads of cold sweat the size of beans breaking out on his forehead.

His arm was broken!

Lumian hoisted him up and leaped onto Ethans's wooden table. He pushed open the window and dangled Wilson over the outer wall.

Glancing down at the deserted alley, Lumian smiled at Wilson and taunted, "Try guessing. Do you think I dare to throw you down?"

Wilson stared at the cobblestones more than ten meters below and recalled how resolute the other party had been when he said he'd break his arm. For a moment, he didn't dare answer.

Just then, Lumian released his grip.

I haven't answered yet! Wilson's body plunged downward in sheer terror.

With no other option, he desperately tried to adjust his posture to protect his vitals.

Crash!

He hit the ground with a sickening thud, his flesh instantly mangled in multiple places.

Lumian observed for a couple of seconds before chuckling.

"Quite a tough one. You're still alive. Is your nickname Rue Anarchie Cockroach?"

Ignoring Wilson, he jumped off the wooden table and addressed the three thugs struggling to their feet, "Did you hear what I just said?"

The three thugs nodded fearfully and turned to flee.

"Wait," Lumian called out to them.

The three thugs froze on the spot, their bodies trembling slightly.

Lumian gestured at the shattered chair and grinned.

"Aren't you going to compensate for the damage?"

The three thugs hastily pulled out all the banknotes they had and tossed them on the floor.

With Lumian's nod of approval, they stumbled out of Room 408.

Ethans stared blankly the entire time, only recalling the words that this place had been taken over by the Savoie Mob.

Then, she realized that Ciel from the Savoie Mob hadn't informed her about how much she should pay or how often she should pay in the future. He didn't even glance at her as he walked straight to the door.

Ethans instinctively opened her mouth, wanting to ask something, but she hesitated, fearing the Poison Spur Mob might retaliate. She watched Lumian's figure vanish into the darkness beyond the door.

Chapter 147 - 147 Reaction

147 Reaction

Lumian had just returned to the second floor when he spotted Charlie lingering outside his door.

“Hey, don’t tell me you had another dream? You make me nervous, just popping up at my door like that,” Lumian teased with a hint of mockery.

He couldn’t shake the fact that Charlie had sought him out rather than heading directly to the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral.

Charlie glanced at the stairs and lowered his voice.

“Something happened on the fourth floor?”

“You’ve got good ears,” Lumian commended. “There was an incident. I tossed Wilson down the block.”

“Huh?” Charlie appeared bewildered once more.

It took him a moment to process.

“Which Wilson? The one from the Poison Spur Mob who collects money from Miss Ethans?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded candidly.

At first, Charlie’s expression read, “I see.” Then, he blurted out in shock, “You threw him down the block? From which floor?”

“Fourth floor,” Lumian replied, grinning.

Charlie’s mouth fell open, forgetting to close it.

“You’re not joking, are you?” he asked nervously after a few seconds.

Lumian gestured toward the room across the hall.

“If you don’t believe me, take a look at the alley behind. That guy’s like a cockroach; he didn’t die from the fall.”

“…” Charlie assessed Lumian anew, as though seeing him for the first time. He realized that his mischievous, audacious, and clever friend possessed a side he didn’t grasp at all.

In Lumian’s eyes, there seemed to be no law, and a chilling coldness ran deep within him. Fear was absent from his mind, and he had genuinely thrown a living person from the fourth floor. Moreover, he was a leader of the Poison Spur Mob!

Wasn’t he afraid of dying?

Wasn’t he afraid of the Poison Spur Mob’s retaliation?

This brought to mind how Ciel had held a dirk to his throat when Susanna Mattise threatened him.

Of course, his weapon wouldn’t have been some Cursed Blade.

The next second, Charlie glanced around and lowered his voice again.

“A-are you out of your mind? The Poison Spur Mob isn’t to be trifled with!

“Why don’t you move away? You should be safe once you leave the market district.”

He felt that no matter how reckless Ciel was or how little he respected the law, he was someone who had genuinely helped him. He had to warn him of the danger so he could escape swiftly.

Lumian smirked and shot back, “Our Savoie Mob isn’t to be trifled with either.”

“Uh…” Charlie suddenly sensed that the situation might not be as he’d imagined.

Lumian opened the door to Room 207 and declared as he entered,

“From now on, Auberge du Coq Doré is our Savoie Mob’s turf. I’ll throw out anyone from the Poison Spur Mob who shows up.”

Had the Savoie Mob enlisted Ciel to handle Wilson? Charlie came to a realization and felt a mixture of relief.

Since the Savoie Mob had instigated the confrontation, they surely had a plan to counter the Poison Spur Mob’s retaliation. A broke, jobless guy like him needn’t worry.

Lumian snapped the suitcase shut, concealing a few sets of clothes and Aurore’s grimoire within. He slid it under the bed and draped a blanket over it. Straightening up, he instructed Charlie,

“If anyone comes looking for me, tell them I went to the Salle de Bal Brise.”

“A-alright.” Charlie watched as Lumian vanished down the stairs, a sudden realization hitting him.

What would become of Miss Ethans after this?

Would she be claimed by the Savoie Mob, or was there still a chance for her to redeem herself?

…

Avenue du Marché, Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian perched at the bar counter, tapping his fingers on the surface.

“One glass of Lover, a serving of mashed potatoes, veal slices in lard, a pork sausage, and a croissant.”

Lover referred to a sugar alcohol brewed from sugarcane syrup, served with ice and water. It was common slang in Intis bars.

Soon enough, Lumian sipped the amber-hued, sweet alcohol and savored the aromatic veal slices.

As he relished the delicacies and listened to the music from the dance floor, his body swayed rhythmically.

Just then, one of Baron Brignais' gang members sidled up beside him.

Lumian turned to the man, noticing the blood clots on his forehead. He smiled and said, "This is our third encounter, right? What should I call you?"

The thug replied cautiously, "Just call me Louis."

Another Louis… Lumian mused.

In the Intis Republic, Louis was as common a name as Pierre and Guillaume. The last Louis Lumian had met had given birth to a child, despite being a man.

Louis watched Lumian take a bite of the croissant and offered casually, as if trying to build rapport, "This one's on me. It's your first time at our Salle de Bal Brise."

"Alright." Lumian didn't bother with pretenses.

Louis ordered a syrupy lemon soda alcohol dubbed Demon and took a sip.

"You live at Auberge du Coq Doré, right?"

"Yeah." Lumian grabbed a piece of sausage and popped it into his mouth.

Louis pondered for a moment before asking, "That's Poison Spur Mob territory. Want to move to Rue des Blouses Blanches?"

"No need." Lumian sipped his ice-cold Lover, its caramel scent wafting through the air, and grinned. "It's now our Savoie Mob's turf."

"What?" Louis nearly choked on his drink.

Lumian swiveled his head and smirked.

“I tossed Wilson from the Poison Spur Mob off the fourth floor. Auberge du Coq Doré is now Savoie Mob turf.”

Hearing Lumian’s account, Louis’s face gradually stiffened.

After a few seconds, he forced a smile and stood up.

“I need to report this to the baron.”

Why is this guy even more brutal and unhinged than the baron?

“Alright.” Lumian didn’t care.

Louis took a few brisk steps before turning back, leaning in to whisper, “Is Wilson dead?”

“No.” Lumian feigned regret.

What are you regretting? Louis studied Lumian’s face, suddenly wondering: Did we gain a weapon or a massive problem?

…

Avenue du Marché, Unit 126, inside Roger’s three-story building with a modest garden.

As the injured Wilson was carried past him, Roger’s icy blue eyes scanned the three trembling thugs and he demanded, “Who did this?”

“Someone from the Savoie Mob!” A thug answered hastily, slightly hunched. “He calls himself Ciel and says that the Auberge du Coq Doré now belongs to the Savoie Mob!”

Ciel… Black Scorpion Roger’s somewhat plump face registered a mix of confusion and wariness.

He murmured to himself, “There’s no Ciel among the top brass of the Savoie Mob… How did he manage to thrash Wilson like this?”

It was worth noting that Wilson was a Villain, equivalent to a Sequence 9 Beyonder—a master of combat!

At that moment, another thug spoke up speculatively, “Boss, I

remember something. We went to Auberge du Coq Doré the night Margot was killed."

Roger's expression darkened, a fierce hatred seeping in.

"Was that also Ciel's doing? How did he pull it off?

"Did the Savoie Mob secretly recruit such a formidable figure to drive us out of the market district?"

A man standing beside Black Scorpion Roger spat hatefully, "First, an assassination; now, an open taunt. If we don't retaliate, who knows what'll come next!"

The man had a shaved head but boasted striking features. His lake-blue eyes, high nose bridge, thick brown eyebrows, and curved lips rendered him handsome despite his baldness.

Dressed in a black shirt, dark breeches, and strapless leather boots, he forewent a coat and stood nearly 1.8 meters tall.

Roger pondered for a few seconds before instructing the man beside him,

"Haman, go to Baron Brignais and find out what's going on. Ask if the Savoie Mob intends to wage an all-out war against our Poison Spur Mob."

"If they're open to reconciliation, we can make appropriate concessions.

"Remember, learn to endure—the time isn't right yet."

…

On the balcony of a third-floor room in Salle de Bal Brise.

Baron Brignais leisurely puffed on his peach-colored pipe, observing the guests entering and exiting the dance hall.

Suddenly, he turned his gaze towards the door.

Two seconds later, Louis pushed open the door, entering the balcony and stepping past the other thugs.

“Your footsteps are a bit heavy and hurried. Something happen?” Baron Brignais inquired with a smile.

Louis replied anxiously, “Baron, Ciel threw Wilson off the fourth floor of the Auberge du Coq Doré!”

“Wilson from the Poison Spur Mob?” Baron Brignais recalled, seeking confirmation.

“Yes, he’s severely injured but not dead,” Louis quickly added. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Baron Brignais held his pipe, pondering for a moment before asking, “Did Ciel mention why he did that?”

“He said that the Auberge du Coq Doré is now our Savoie Mob’s turf,” Louis repeated Lumian’s words.

Baron Brignais couldn’t help but chuckle.

Taking a drag from his pipe, he spoke with a hint of meaning, “If you don’t handle a sharp weapon properly, it’s easy to hurt yourself. I’ll have to find an opportunity to give him some ‘guidance.’

“What should we do about the Poison Spur Mob? Should we inform the Boss?” Louis asked, concerned.

Baron Brignais considered for a moment and responded, “Not for now.

“Ciel actually performed well this time. I’m curious to see how the Poison Spur Mob reacts.”

Noticing his subordinate’s puzzled expression, Baron Brignais—always fond of ‘educating’ them to showcase his intelligence—smiled and explained, “Since the Poison Spur Mob’s inception, their number of Beyonders has swelled, nearly matching ours in just under two years. They’ve seized a significant amount of territory. Don’t you see a major issue here?

“Give them another two years, and we might be completely driven out of the market district.

“If they want to escalate this matter, I’m more than willing. It’s a prime opportunity for the authorities to take notice and uncover who’s backing them.”

Chapter 148 - 148 “Lord of the Motel”

148 “Lord of the Motel”

At 10 p.m., while returning to Auberge du Coq Doré from Avenue du Marché, Louis, who was with Baron Brignais earlier, guided Lumian from the main road bathed in yellow light to a side street swallowed by darkness.

Surveying the neglected, broken street lamps, he remarked nonchalantly, “The baron has cut a deal with the Poison Spur Mob. From now on, Auberge du Coq Doré is officially under our Savoie Mob’s control.”

Lumian snorted. “Is the Poison Spur Mob that easy to negotiate with?”

What do you mean? Are you hoping for the two parties to fight? Louis increasingly sensed that Ciel was a dangerous man who thrived on conflict.

!!

He was convinced that Ciel’s nature and approach would bring trouble to the Savoie Mob time and time again in the future.

The market district, already strained by the Poison Spur Mob’s rapid ascent, would certainly become more chaotic.

As a seasoned gang member, Louis believed in bullying ordinary people rather than resorting to violence and bloodshed. Life was precious; he’d witnessed several comrades die in gang wars and police raids. Initially, their families were taken care of, but as time passed, their circumstances deteriorated.

But if cornered, Louis wouldn't shy away from brutality. Every thug under Baron Brignais had climbed the ranks through street brawls and alley fights. They may not be brainy, but their skills and courage were nothing to sneer at.

Louis slowly exhaled.

"You showed enough force to protect Auberge du Coq Doré, and the Poison Spur Mob didn't want to escalate matters and draw police attention. So, after the baron covered Wilson's medical expenses, the matter was settled.

"Keep a low profile for now. If you catch the police's eye, you won't withstand a thorough investigation."

It doesn't matter to me. I'll just find a hideout before the official Beyonders corner me. The Poison Spur Mob can run, but they can't hide… Lumian murmured, borrowing a line from Aurore's book.

Louis continued, "The baron wants me to tell you that since you're staying at Auberge du Coq Doré, it's your turf now.

"And for members who control their own turf, we don't usually provide daily allowances."

What he implied was that the Savoie Mob likely wouldn't give Lumian any more money beyond the initial 1,000 verl d'or. He'd have to find a way to generate income from his turf.

Lumian was momentarily stunned before replying with a chuckle, "Alright."

As they spoke, they stopped outside Auberge du Coq Doré.

Lumian gazed at the old, cream-colored building and was struck by a bizarre, ludicrous thought.

This is my turf?

The residents of this ramshackle place are all destitute. How can they afford to pay protection fees?

Forget it. It's already a blessing that they don't create trouble for me like Charlie. I can't squeeze money out of them!

Having already consumed two drinks, he skipped the basement bar and retreated to Room 207.

No one had visited.

After perusing Aurore's grimoire for a while, Lumian recognized a familiar footfall, followed by a knock on the door.

He opened it, unsurprised to find Charlie standing there.

Charlie's face was flushed from drinking. He grinned and exclaimed, "Can you believe it? I'm about to land a new job! I went to Rue des Blouses Blanches tonight and bought the waiters drinks. They introduced me to a hotel manager who said they needed a few full-time attendants!"

"If that manager learns you hooked up with a female guest at your previous hotel and were recently implicated in a murder case, will he still consider you?" Lumian retorted.

Charlie's smile froze. He massaged his face and replied, "He might still give me a chance. But Ciel, that's not why I'm here. I wanted to ask what you plan to do with Miss Ethans?"

"What do you mean?" Lumian inquired, smirking.

Charlie forced a smile and asked,"Will you stop her from leaving Rue Anarchie? If you make her keep working the streets, how much should she pay you each time? And how often?"

Lumian chortled.

"She's free to do whatever she wants. It's none of my business. I have plenty of ways to make money."

"I knew it! Praise the Sun and Saint Vième!" Charlie cheered. "I could tell from the moment I saw you at the bar that you were a clever and capable gentleman!"

“Trusting the judgment of the Idiot Instrument?” Lumian jested.

Charlie sheepishly smiled.

“That’s one factor.”

He waved his hand.

“I’ll share this news with Miss Ethans!” After taking a few steps, Charlie halted and spun around, asking unusually cautiously, “Will the Poison Spur Mob come back?”

“Baron Brignais has brokered a deal with them. Auberge du Coq Doré is now Savoie Mob’s turf,” Lumian answered nonchalantly. “And I’m the one in charge here.”

Charlie was ecstatic. He spread his arms wide and exclaimed, “Praise the Sun, praise Saint Vième, and praise you, Ciel!”

With that, he dashed into the stairwell.

Comparing me to the Eternal Blazing Sun and Saint Vième… Are you trying to get me killed faster? Lumian snorted and shook his head. He then retreated to his room and resumed studying Aurore’s grimoire.

Outside Room 408, Charlie knocked on the wooden door.

Ethans, her cheek red and swollen, opened the door and stated flatly, “I’m not feeling well today. Find someone else.”

Charlie couldn’t contain the exciting news.

“Guess what? The motel’s no longer under Poison Spur Mob’s control. It belongs to the Savoie Mob!” Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Ethans suddenly remembered the evening’s events and hesitated before asking, “Are you sure?”

“Absolutely!” Charlie replied, his signature enthusiasm returning. “You won’t believe it. I found out from the leader of the Savoie Mob. Ciel, who lives in 207. He’s already become a leader of the Savoie

Mob. Auberge du Coq Doré is his turf now! He personally told me that the Poison Spur Mob bastards have scrammed and won't be back! He also said that the Savoie Mob and the Poison Spur Mob reached an agreement!"

Ciel… The man who threw Wilson down? Ethans's eyes darted, seemingly awakening from her puppet-like state.

"The Poison Spur Mob was really driven away?"

"It's true!" Charlie nodded emphatically.

Ethans stood stunned for a moment, then clenched her teeth and spat out, "Those sons of bitches, rotten scum, they're finally gone!"

Charlie continued, "I've asked Ciel. He said you can do whatever you want. It's not his concern. He's incredibly resourceful. So much so that he can change my opinion of pranksters like him. Can you believe it? He comes up with lucrative schemes every minute!"

Ethans was dumbstruck.

As far as she knew, none of the gangsters were good people. They were all despicable scoundrels who deserved hell!

Charlie kept talking, but Ethans tuned him out. The words "do whatever you want" resonated in her mind.

After Charlie left, she retreated to her room and quickly changed into a lady's blouse and light-colored pants.

Next, she lifted the mattress and retrieved a stack of 200 verl d'or notes.

She crammed all the bills into her pocket, then hesitated for a moment before removing more than half and hiding it back in its original spot.

With the remaining 40 verl d'or, she shut the door and headed downstairs.

Before long, she stepped out of Auberge du Coq Doré and onto Rue

Anarchie.

A solitary gas lamp illuminated the street from a distance. Bathed in crimson moonlight, numerous inebriated people stumbled along the road, shouting, singing, or sporadically clashing with one another.

Ethans sidestepped the drunks and nervously followed the shadows along the street, aiming for Rue Anarchie's exit.

Throughout her journey, memories of escaping and being apprehended by the Poison Spur Mob on the street haunted her.

The memory of the beating made her shudder involuntarily.

Ethans slowed down, as though the Poison Spur Mob lurked around the corner.

Finally, she reached the exit of Rue Anarchie and saw the broad main road beyond.

Ethans stared at the once-unreachable scene, feeling as if she were in a dream.

Subconsciously, she quickened her pace, striding faster through the dark night under the crimson moonlight.

In no time, she arrived at the nearest public carriage stop.

She still remembered disembarking from the public carriage here on her first day in Trier.

Now, she had finally returned.

With no public carriages running late at night, Ethans didn't mind. She gazed at the street ahead, the postbox shrouded in darkness, and the sign displaying the carriage route. Her eyes welled up with tears.

Suddenly, Ethans spun around and bolted.

She had to get back to Auberge du Coq Doré, pack her belongings, and leave at daybreak!

Ethans sprinted faster, feeling the wind slap her face, cold and damp.

Her vision blurred, and she seemed to see a ghost of her past self.

The former Ethans, who arrived in Trier filled with dreams and enthusiasm, stood beneath the streetlamp, gently beckoning.

Hurry up and catch up!

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Ethans dabbed the corners of her eyes and rapped on the door.

Lumian swung the wooden door open and cast a cursory glance at her.

“What can I do for you?”

In a raspy voice, Ethans inquired, “Why are you helping me?”

Lumian sneered. “Why should I help you? What do you possess that’s worthy of my assistance? You’re not beautiful, and you don’t have much money.”

Ethans’s words of gratitude were immediately choked off.

She couldn’t even recall how she left the second floor. As she packed her belongings, the whole experience felt surreal.

Watching her vanish down the stairs, Lumian snickered.

I’m not helping you. I just can’t stand fate’s cruel taunts.

We are all victims of fate’s ridicule, but I want to defy and resist it, even if I’m not capable enough, until death puts an end to it all!

In that moment, Lumian sensed his Provoker potion digesting a bit further.

Although he was far from fully digesting it and needed time to work through it, this indicated that he had adapted to the Provoker potion,

and his condition had stabilized. He could contemplate extracting the sealed power within him and obtaining the Alms Monk's boon.

Judging by the name, it should compensate for his lack of mystical techniques.

Chapter 149 - 149 Five Ritualistic Spells

149 Five Ritualistic Spells

Lumian wasn't eager to perform the ritual just yet. For one, he had been swamped all day and was far from his peak condition. He needed rest, or at least to wait until he reset at six in the morning. Secondly, the ritual involved two hidden entities and a corruption that had trapped a village in a time loop. If something went awry, it wasn't just the Auberge du Coq Doré that could be in jeopardy—the entire Rue Anarchie might face destruction. Who knew how many lives would be lost?

Thus, Lumian planned to head underground after daybreak, seeking a secluded quarry cave to serve as the ritual site.

As for the materials, he had already brought them from Cordu. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Rue Anarchie's nights were seldom peaceful, but Lumian managed to sleep well, practically dreamless. He awoke early to the sound of cathedral bells.

Rising slowly, he washed up and headed to a café on Rue des Blouses Blanches. His breakfast consisted of plum pie, savarin, and a café au lait with plenty of milk.

Delicacies always lifted one's spirits, and the Auberge du Coq Doré was no longer under the Poison Spur Mob's thumb. Lumian gradually adjusted to his optimal state.

With renewed purpose, he returned to Room 207, intending to gather the necessary materials and carbide lamp for his venture into Underground Trier.

Just as Lumian finished preparing and was about to leave, he heard a soft knock on the door.

Confused, he opened it to find Anthony Reid standing outside, clad in military-green attire and strapless leather boots.

The forty-something information broker stroked his short blond hair and said to Lumian, “I got something.”

The padre or Madame Pualis and her underlings? Lumian stepped aside, allowing Anthony Reid to enter the room.

Anthony scanned the surroundings, Lumian’s reflection caught in his dark brown eyes.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt an all-too-familiar unease.

Suppressing his thoughts, he inquired, “What are they?”

Anthony Reid gave a slight nod before replying, “Someone spotted a man suspected to be Louis Lund on Avenue du Marché, the one you believe to be Madame Pualis’ butler.”

On Avenue du Marché? Lumian’s excitement surged.

Louis Lund, Madame Pualis, and I are so close?

“Are you sure?” he asked urgently.

Anthony Reid shook his head.

“I’m not sure. I’m just here to let you know that I haven’t forgotten your task. When I’m certain it’s really Louis Lund, I’ll collect the balance from you.”

“My money can’t wait to part with me.” Lumian made no effort to conceal his eagerness.

After seeing Anthony Reid off, his resolve to obtain the Alms Monk’s boon only intensified.

…

A chilly wind whispered through the tunnels, leaving faint traces of moisture on the stone walls above.

Navigating the subterranean streets and alleys, Lumian discovered a passage that led even deeper.

Utilizing a Hunter's innate ability to memorize environments, he descended until he finally reached a quarry hollow, roughly the size of two or three Auberge du Coq Dorés.

Sparse white mushrooms grew in the rock crevices.

Charlie had mentioned that many people in Rue Anarchie and the surrounding areas scoured these underground quarries for mushrooms to bolster their income and meals. Trier mushrooms had become synonymous with these fungi, but the specimens here were clearly natural.

Lumian circled the cave twice, inspecting it thoroughly.

Satisfied that there were no issues, he found a half-meter-tall stone and placed the blood-infused musk candle on it. The other candle was positioned closer to him.

Having tidied the area, Lumian lit the two grayish-white candles in the order of top to bottom—divine before mortal—by channeling his spirituality.

Next, he drew the ritual silver dagger and swiftly sanctified it, erecting a barrier of spirituality.

Unlike the last time he had prayed for the Dancer's power, Lumian's spirituality remained plentiful after completing these tasks. He effortlessly entered a somewhat ethereal state, enabling him to perform rituals without the aid of incense.

He exhaled slowly, picked up the gray amber perfume on the altar, and dripped it into the deity-representing candle.

As the scent sizzled, a sweet, elegant fragrance filled the air, calming his nerves.

After the gray amber perfume came tulip powder. As a strange aroma permeated the spiritual barrier, Lumian took two steps back, gazed at the flickering candle flame, and bellowed in ancient Hermes,

“Power of Inevitability!”

A howling gust swept through the chamber, causing the deity-representing candle’s orange flame to quiver. It hung by a thread, threatening to go out at any moment.

In the dimming light, Lumian’s left chest seared with pain, accompanied by a wave of dizziness.

Once again, he heard the enigmatic sound that seemed to originate from an infinite distance, yet felt close at hand. However, it wasn’t loud enough to engulf him in agony.

Lumian continued chanting the subsequent incantations in ancient Hermes.

“You are the past, the present, and the future;

“You are the cause, the effect, and the process.”

Within the spiritual barrier, an invisible wind turned pitch black as a faint gray fog filled the space.

Rocks and bottles warped and twisted, appearing as malleable objects.

Silently, the deity-representing candle’s flame swelled to the size of a fist, shimmering silver-white with a hint of black.

Granules emerged on Lumian’s skin and on the rocks, writhing and stretching, poised to burst forth at any moment.

The terrifying sound filled his ears, drowning out all else. His head spun, threatening to make him vomit.

His thoughts wavered between disarray and chaos as he barely finished reciting the incantation.

As Lumian spoke the final words, the silver-black candle flame contracted into a beam of light that struck his left chest.

Silver-black phantasmal liquid flowed out, enveloping Lumian's body as though it possessed its own life and will.

Lumian had already steeled himself for the onslaught. In his uncontrollable frustration, he felt a prickling pain erupting all over his body. As the piercing ravings seemed to saw through his skull, a burning sensation flared within him.

He collapsed, curling up and enduring the agony with gritted teeth.

All he could do was struggle to maintain the "boat" of rationality amidst the tempestuous waves of pain.

Throughout the ordeal, he was tempted several times to surrender to the malevolent thoughts gnawing at his heart. He longed to merge with the pain, to escape the torture. However, the lingering elegant and sweet fragrance in his nostrils caused his ruthlessness and frustration to ebb and flow repeatedly.

Ultimately, Lumian felt as if his body and mind ceased to exist, leaving only a sense of rational spirituality.

As the pain and ravings began to subside, he realized he had endured.

Lumian lay motionless on the cold ground, not willing to move for an extended period.

After what felt like an eternity, he mustered enough strength to hastily end the ritual and clean up the altar, warding off any potential mishaps.

Having dealt with these matters, Lumian sat on the stone that had served as the altar and scrutinized the changes within himself.

Soon, he muttered, My tolerance for extreme environments has increased a bit… Heh, guess I won't need to buy winter and summer clothes anymore?

Beyond this, Lumian discovered another newfound intuition.

An intuition for luck!

He could roughly sense the recent fortunes of others—good luck, bad luck, potential for disaster, romantic opportunities, and so on—but he couldn't discern the precise details.

In other words, Lumian could detect that someone was experiencing bad luck, but had no way of knowing how unlucky they would be or how long their misfortune would last.

"Truly worthy of a monk with the power of inevitability," Lumian couldn't help but sigh, feeling he could entirely replace Osta Trul as a diviner for others.

Although ignorant about divination, wouldn't he be able to fabricate the corresponding words when he could glimpse the rough strokes of someone's fortune?

Moreover, Lumian acquired an abundance of sacrificial knowledge and five ritualistic spells in his mind.

The former compensated for his many shortcomings in the realm of mysticism, while the latter augmented his repertoire of mystical techniques.

The five ritualistic spells were Animal Creation Spell, Prophecy Spell, Luck Enhancement Spell, Substitution Spell, and Exorcism Spell.

Through ritualistic magic, the Animal Creation Spell utilized sheepskin, cowhide, and other animal hides to morph the target on the altar into the corresponding creature. This could also be applied to Lumian himself. As long as he mastered the incantation to break the curse or waited for the ritual to end, he could revert to human form. While transformed into an animal, he would be unable to speak or wield most of his Beyonder powers.

The Prophecy Spell was entirely different from what Lumian had envisioned. The process involved gathering ingredients such as a snake's venom sac and a rock from an eagle's nest. Using ritualistic magic, one could concoct an unusual concoction. Next, one had to

find a corpse dead for less than seven days and not yet cremated or purified. Pouring the concoction into the corpse's mouth would momentarily revive it, allowing the caster to ask three questions about the future.

The Luck Enhancement Spell employed ritualistic magic to create an object linked to one's misfortune. By sending the object away and having others open, consume, step on, or wear it, the caster could transfer their bad luck onto them, thus enhancing their own luck.

The Substitution Spell was even more intricate, and Lumian suspected it was a lower-tier reflection of a Fate Appropriator's abilities. For example, if he wished to evade Susanna Mattise, he would need to find a vagrant and make them live as Ciel for a while. During this period, the vagrant would have to stay in Room 207, use all of Lumian's money, and gain recognition from Charlie and other acquaintances to establish sufficient mystical connections before performing the ritual to complete the substitution.

Upon the ritual's completion, Susanna Mattise would seek vengeance on the vagrant rather than Lumian.

Of course, Lumian wasn't certain he could deceive Susanna Mattise, who was on the verge of becoming a demigod, with a Sequence 8 Substitution Spell. He even doubted whether the ritualistic magic would succeed at all.

Chapter 150 - 150 Voice

150 Voice

When Lumian first gained the mysticism knowledge, he had placed high hopes on the Exorcism Spell. It appeared to be the perfect solution to deal with Susanna Mattise—provided she hadn't been entirely wiped out by the official Beyonders.

But it was only upon truly grasping the Exorcism Spell did Lumian come to the sobering realization that his jubilation had been premature.

The ritualistic spell was capable of banishing wraiths and even evil spirits, preventing them from tormenting a soul. But it came with two caveats. First, he needed to know the specter's real name and possess a personal item she'd held dear in life. Second, he needed ample time to conduct the ritual.

That second condition meant the Exorcism Spell was a no-go in the heat of battle. It was better suited for situations like Charlie's, haunted by constant dreams of Susanna Mattise, plagued by wraiths or evil spirits, but not on the brink of death.

Lumian, however, hadn't been physically hurt by Susanna Mattise, just targeted. The Exorcism Spell needed a victim, and without one, he couldn't banish her.

When Susanna Mattise made her next move, Lumian knew she wouldn't be playing nice. She'd leech his energy through erotic dreams, leading him slowly but surely towards his demise. Given her prior displays of venom and paranoia, she was sure to strike directly, unleashing her supernatural arsenal to kill on contact.

In such a scenario, Lumian wouldn't have a chance to wield the Exorcism Spell unless someone could buy him a few minutes.

Should I turn to the official Beyonders for help? But that would expose me to the authorities, causing a world of trouble down the line…

Or perhaps Charlie could play the martyr, soothing Susanna Mattise with heartfelt words of love, buying time in the flesh? The longer he held out, the better Lumian's odds of completing the Exorcism Spell… Heh heh, a bizarre thought that's like underground literature, Lumian mused quietly.

Though the current mantra of the Intis Republic was 'freedom,' it was a far cry from true liberty.

On the one hand, they wanted to quash the nostalgia of Roselle's followers and the Carbonari's revolutionary impulses. Opposition threatened the ruling party's authority. On the other hand, they faced the traditionalist Church of the God of Steam and Machinery and the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun. The Intis Republic's censorship of publications was heavy-handed.

They'd even plant spies or groom authors as double agents to keep an eye on influential content creators, ensuring they didn't tarnish the ruling party's image or produce content deemed too explicit or blasphemous for the wider readership.

But with every prohibition came violations. Trier spawned a thriving underground literary scene that reached beyond its borders.

Aurore once, driven by curiosity, bought a few such books. She forbade her brother from reading them and tucked them away in the bookcase's darkest corner. But prohibition bred violation. Lumian had snuck a peek at one and was taken aback.

The book was a critique of the clergy's indulgence and corruption, peppered with erotic content. It was titled 'Monks Chasing Dogs.'

Lumian's plan to use Charlie as bait for Susanna Mattise had a certain subversive literature charm to it.

Then again, I don't have any of Susanna Mattise's personal items to use as a conduit. I could try to hunt down something in the coming

days. Regardless of whether it ends up being useful, it's better to be prepared than caught unawares… Lumian shook off his reverie, considering the potential of the other four ritualistic spells and their relevance to him.

To Lumian, the Animal Creation Spell seemed mystical, malevolent, uncanny, and downright horrifying.

If utilized right, it could work wonders. Imagine turning captives into sheep, cows, horses, and just walking away with them. Or infiltrating places no human could, in the form of a critter. But in the thick of a fight, this ritualistic spell was pretty much a dud.

According to the mysticism wisdom bestowed upon Lumian, the invocation for the Animal Creation Spell could be made to the hidden existence known as Inevitability, a host of honorific names unknown to him, or even himself.

Naturally, the prerequisite was ample spirituality and the corresponding rank. Also, the ritual's success rate and the spell's longevity were significantly lower than the previous methods.

The minimum requirement for the Animal Creation Spell was a Sequence 7 Contractee. The higher the rank, the better the chances of the spell working, and the more potent the effect.

With the corruption sealed within him, Lumian wasn't concerned about his rank. He was unsure, though, if his spirituality reserves could endure the consumption of the Animal Creation Spell. If they could, how many times could he bear it?

This led Lumian to speculate that these five ritualistic spells could be simplified at higher ranks and deployed in real combat. For instance, he could simply drape an enemy in sheepskin, chant the preordained incantation, and transform them into sheep. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

That doesn't seem plausible for a Contractee, equivalent to a Sequence 7. A Sequence 4 Circle Inhabitant is too lofty for such a rudimentary spell… Could a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator accommodate such a simplification, or is it a Sequence 6, the name of

which escapes me? Lumian mused subconsciously.

As for the Luck Enhancement Spell, he felt it could only “assist” others at present, not himself. His destiny was deeply entwined with the corruption sealed within him and the great existence behind the seal. Unless he prayed directly to the power of Inevitability, altering his luck was a non-starter. Only when he ascended to the Fate Appropriator rank could he choose a fate unbound by those lofty beings.

The Substitution Spell was just too convoluted, and it would severely disrupt Lumian’s routine and other tasks. He wouldn’t consider it unless he was out of options.

Compared to that, the Prophecy Spell seemed like a piece of cake and rather handy as ritualistic magic went.

Lumian had already decided to gather the necessary intel and find a suitable corpse. By inquiring about Charlie’s future, he could estimate when Susanna Mattise would strike next and locate Madame Pualis and the others by delving into Louis Lund’s destiny.

Dog’s drool, lynx innards, hyena tongue, stag bone marrow, sea or aquatic monster flesh, lizard eye, rock from an eagle’s nest, snake venom gland, and deadly herbs. These ingredients aren’t all that hard to come by. The only pain is the sea or aquatic monster flesh, but the ritual doesn’t specify a rank. Technically, the feeblest aquatic monster still counts as an aquatic monster; it just impacts the effect, right? Lumian ruminated for a bit, noticing that his energy levels had considerably rebounded. He readied himself to leave the subterranean quarry cave and head back to Auberge du Coq Doré.

Just as he rose to his feet, a sudden furrow creased his brow.

A faint sound reached his ears.

The voice echoed inside his ears!

Lumian fought to steady his nerves, straining to discern the sound.

With each passing moment, the voice grew clearer, more potent, more imposing.

“Lumian Lee!

“Lumian Lee!

“…”

It knows my name? Instinctively, Lumian swept the area with his carbide lamp, yet found no figure, nothing out of the ordinary.

“Lumian Lee!

“Lumian Lee!

“…”

The voice reverberated as if it were emanating from the very core of his being, muffled by his flesh, organs, and bones, creating overlapping echoes.

Inside my body… The thought struck Lumian the moment he made this realization.

In a hushed whisper, he asked, “Who are you?”

The deep, majestic, and spectral voice ceased its chant and solemnly declared, “I’m the Angel of the Lord, Termiboros.”

“Lord? Which lord?” Lumian’s eyes narrowed, the corners of his mouth twitching into a smirk.

He suspected the entity communicating was the corruption entombed within him. After receiving the Alms Monk’s blessing and nearing the entity of Inevitability, it had managed to transmit a voice devoid of corruption via their intertwined powers.

The spectral voice echoing in Lumian’s ears intoned reverently, “The Lord is the ruler of the Great Old Ones, the Essence Above the Sequences, the mighty Circle of Inevitability…”

Merely contemplating these words sent an inexplicable shiver down Lumian’s spine. It felt as if a gaze had pierced the cosmos, the clouds, the surface-level Trier, layers of earth, and was fixed upon him.

Suddenly, Lumian found himself glancing over his shoulder, as if unseen entities were scrutinizing him from the enveloping darkness.

The sensation sent chills down his spine, sowing unease in his mind, threatening to unhinge him.

Out of nowhere, a faint gray fog materialized and shrouded the surroundings, significantly pacifying Lumian's agitated mind.

He sneered at the self-proclaimed Angel, Termiboros.

"So, you're the one sealed within me?"

I wonder if it's a bona fide Angel with Beyonder characteristics or just an Angel-tier servant boasting only a boon…

This insolence seemed to digest Lumian's potion further along its course.

Undeterred by Lumian's provocation, Termiboros continued solemnly, "Follow my instructions, break my seal, and I will aid you in resurrecting Aurore Lee.

"You should be well aware that my Lord's power spans the past, the present, and the future. It can weave a cycle of destiny.

"In due time, I will restore Aurore Lee's soul fragment to its state prior to the descent ritual. All you need to do is prepare a body with the essence of life for her."

Lumian fell silent. After a moment, he asked in a low voice, "Descent ritual… Is that the ritual to forge a body for your descent?"

Chapter 151 - 151 Temptation

151 Temptation

Termiboros' thunderous voice resonated in Lumian's mind.

"Yes."

A snort of laughter broke free from Lumian.

His words oozed sarcasm as he retorted, "So, Aurore and the entire village were snuffed out just so you could set foot on this soil?

"Why the hell should I help you shatter your shackles? If you morphed into an Angel with a boon, I could've swiped your abilities over and over with the ritual I just performed, under the watchful eyes of the mighty existence. Until, of course, I too bask in the angelic status of the Inevitability pathway. Then, I could breathe life back into Aurore and restore everyone to the pre-Cordu destruction era. How pathetic would you look then?

!!

"If you hold the right Beyonder characteristic, I can bide my time until I ascend as an Angel of the Hunter pathway, seizing power on par with your Inevitability skills. Once my army is vast enough, I'll free you, crush you, subjugate you, and make you resurrect Aurore. Hell, I might be able to pull it off myself. I'll subject you to an eternity of torment till the end of time.

"I never had the hots for the Inevitability pathway's boon, but now that I know the ritual was meant for your descent, I'm salivating at the thought of siphoning off all your might and pride."

The more Lumian rambled, the higher his adrenaline spiked. His Provoker potion seemed to digest a notch.

Termiboros' voice was eerily steady, unfazed by Lumian's rant.

"I've encountered my fair share of Beyonders in the cosmos, and I've seen legions of races graced by the Lord's touch. Most of them can't cross the threshold into divinity because that one extra step would obliterate their physical and mental existence.

"The quest for godhood is rife with peril. Are you so sure you can truly evolve into an Angel?

"You should be aware that we're not talking about slim odds here. Saying it's a one-in-a-million or one-in-ten-million chance doesn't even begin to capture the enormous task of ascending to the Angel level.

"If you perish on the Beyonder path, Aurore Lee will follow suit. The seal binding you will naturally dissolve, freeing me from my predicament."

Lumian threw his head back and laughed.

His laughter bounced off the quarry's cavernous walls, heightening the eerie quiet and heaviness underground.

"So, why aren't you sitting tight, waiting for me to kick the bucket?" Lumian picked up the carbide lamp and strode out of the quarry cave. A cryptic smile played on his lips. "I don't give a damn what you're plotting or what your endgame is. I couldn't care less whether you're a saint or a sinner. All I know is that Aurore and everyone in Cordu Village are dead because of you."

He paused for a beat, his face contorted into a maniacal grin.

"Someone's gotta pay the piper for this. Guillaume Bénet, you, and even your so-called lord!"

Termiboros fell silent. The booming voice that had filled Lumian's mind, heart, bloodstream, bone marrow, and cavities disappeared entirely.

Phew… Lumian heaved a sigh, clutching the carbide lamp as he navigated the pitch-black underground.

Despite the conversation's brevity, it had drained him.

In Lumian's previous world-view, corruption was merely that—corruption. At its extreme, it was comparable to power granted by an evil god. The concept of an Angel being shackled within him was beyond his wildest dreams!

Amidst the wreckage of Cordu Village, atop the crimson-hued mountain, stood the body of a three-headed, six-armed behemoth—a vessel designed for an incoming Angel. It was a mystery how much it deviated from a bona fide Angel, but it already filled Lumian with a sense of invincibility.

Had he not remembered their vile deeds, he might have been swayed to give it a shot.

From where he stood, pledging allegiance to the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery seemed no different than submitting to the hidden existence known as Inevitability. At worst, he'd lose himself.

Regaining his composure, Lumian's senses suddenly tingled. He darted into a side alcove, using loose gravel to snuff out the carbide lamp.

Moments later, the hurried footfalls of three people echoed from the adjacent tunnel, soon swallowed by the inky darkness.

Underground Trier is a hive of activity too… Lumian bided his time for a couple of minutes before digging out the carbide lamp and rejoining the upward path.

The interruption allowed him to collect his thoughts and consider a conundrum.

Given that the corruption inside him was a living entity, the Angel of the Inevitability domain, Termiboros, why had his plea for a boon been successful?

Termiboros wasn't just raw power lacking consciousness, responding automatically to the "correct" ritual. He could deny granting the boon.

Could it be that His imprisonment is so severe that He can't even choose to resist the ritual? The thought made Lumian realize why Termiboros was so desperate to flee.

According to Madam Magician, with every boon He granted, Termiboros would weaken marginally, and the corresponding corruption would dwindle.

Simultaneously, the seal imposed by the great existence wouldn't slacken. As Termiboros's power faded, He would be shackled to the brink of extinction. Eventually, even His consciousness might be expunged.

Lumian steadied himself and began to replay Termiboros's utterances.

Great Old Ones, Above the Sequences, he'd said Great Old Ones and Above the Sequences…

Lumian's head pounded, as if something was attempting to burrow out of his skull, the instant he dredged up these topics.

He stopped his recollection abruptly and murmured to himself, a residual sense of dread lingering, Merely possessing certain knowledge can inflict serious harm? Had I not been safeguarded by the seal of the great existence, would I be dead or afflicted with abnormalities?

I was contemplating exploiting Termiboros's desperation to escape, to bleed Him dry by compelling Him to respond to the ritual magic, thereby boosting the likelihood of success and the eventual impact. But it seems the Angel has plenty of tricks up His sleeve to screw me over, even in His imprisoned state…

I need to tread carefully. Before I really tap into Termiboros, I must have Madam Magician verify my plan for any flaws.

On this front, Lumian doubted that the vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Hela, would offer any viable advice. Only Madam Magician, who could effortlessly slip in and out of the time loop and easily tackle the colossus atop the crimson mountain, was worthy of his trust.

Lost in a whirlwind of thoughts, Lumian, lamp in hand, navigated his way back to the level marked by a street name, leveraging his honed Hunter's intuition and recollection.

He attempted to shout in a hushed tone, "Termiboros…"

No answer came.

Lumian intended to inquire whether the Angel, imprisoned within him, was aware of the events in Cordu. After a thoughtful examination, he concluded that Termiboros likely remained in the dark.

Termiboros had only materialized in Cordu at the ritual's culmination before being shackled. He was oblivious to the intricate details.

Phew… Lumian let out a sigh, surveying his present condition.

His Provoker potion had undergone further digestion. It was akin to encapsulating a fresh principle of action.

Could inciting a superior entity expedite the digestion of the Provoker potion? Ah yes, this is a high-ranking entity within the Inevitability domain. In a way, it's a tip of fate. It aligns somewhat with the principles I've deduced… Lumian mused with a chuckle.

Were it not for Termiboros's silence, he would have stirred Him up thrice daily, like clockwork meals!

Pondering over this, Lumian felt that goading an Angel to digest this morsel of a potion wasn't a worthy trade-off.

He hypothesized two reasons. First, Termiboros was sealed and presented a relatively low threat. Second, Termiboros hadn't genuinely been incited.

Shaking his head, Lumian curbed his thoughts, shelving matters whose solutions eluded him.

He retraced his steps to the subterranean Rue Anarchie and climbed the stone steps towards the surface.

Having snuffed out the carbide lamp and returned to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian instantly noticed Charlie perched on the steps outside.

Charlie puffed on a cigarette, gazing at the grayish-white sky with a somber countenance.

“What’s up?” Lumian settled down next to Charlie. Updated from novelbIn.(c)om

Charlie heaved a sigh. “Miss Ethans has moved out.”

“Isn’t that a good thing?” Lumian queried, his smile unwavering.

Charlie stammered, pausing for a few seconds before admitting, “Yes, it indeed is. Too many folks around here know her and her deeds. Sigh…”

Lumian clicked his tongue and rose, approaching the Whiskey Sour vendor and presenting 5 coppets worth of copper coins.

“Half a liter of Apple Whiskey Sour.”

The vendor responded with a grin, “Got it.”

He ended up pouring Lumian more than the requested volume of liquor.

Lumian’s eyebrows quirked, but he refrained from questioning. He ambled back to Charlie, took a seat, and nonchalantly remarked, “Seems like the Whiskey Sour guy recognizes me?”

Charlie chuckled.

“He might be aware you’re with the Savoie Gang. No, the Savoie Mob.”

Lumian sipped his Whiskey Sour, inquiring, “How’d he find out?”

Charlie cleared his throat.

“After breaking the news to Miss Ethans last night, I hit the underground bar for a drink and mentioned your induction into the

Savoie Mob and your takeover of Auberge du Coq Doré."

A vivid image flashed in Lumian's mind:

Charlie, beer in hand, clambering onto a small round table, flailing his stubby arms.

"Ladies and gentlemen, lend me your ears! You wouldn't believe the bombshell that dropped at the motel today! Ciel, our Room 207 resident, is now calling the shots for the Savoie Mob and has sent the Poison Spur Mob packing!"

With a drawn-out sigh, Lumian turned to Charlie and quipped, "You're just worried the police won't come knocking at my door, aren't you?"

Chapter 152 - 152 “Entrustment”

152 “Entrustment”

Charlie’s bones shook as Lumian’s words settled in his ears.

“S-so you’re saying, you don’t want word getting around about you joining the Savoie Mob?”

Charlie had seen the leaders of the Savoie Mob, Poison Spur Mob, and the rest; their names carried weight in the market district of Rue Anarchie. Yet, as notorious as they were, the law never seemed to touch them.

Lumian took a slow pull of his Whiskey Sour, his grin returning.

“That’s fine. Just think twice before you speak, that’s all.”

Even though Lumian had infiltrated the Savoie Mob, he was far from claiming the title of a leader. He hadn’t been privy to the mob’s deepest secrets, didn’t have a crew of thugs at his disposal, and all he had to show for it was the rundown dump they called Auberge du Coq Dor.

So Lumian had his sights set on a fast-track to infamy, eager to climb the mob’s ladder and fulfill Mr. K’s mission.

A mission that involved gaining the trust and favor of Mr. K, and eventually finding a place in the organization behind himall to complete the task given by Madam Magician.

There is something off about the whole thing Lumian thought, his left hand stroking his chin.

Charlie, standing by his side, asked hesitantly, “What exactly should I keep quiet about?”

He had his hunches, but he didn’t want to risk annoying the lawless Lumian by not covering all bases.

Lumian’s smile didn’t falter as he turned to Charlie.

“Avoid discussing anything tied to Susanna Mattise. That includes any mention of threats I made to her, or that time I posed as a lawyer to get into the police station to talk to you.”

He had meant to warn Charlie about this, but hadn’t found the right moment.

“Got it.” Charlie visibly relaxed. “You know, I was thinking about telling the guys at the bar about the time we chased Wilson out of that motel” Updated from novelbIn.(c)om

Charlie’s number one hobby was regaling the crowd with his exploits.

But Lumian’s eyes turned stormy at his words.

His gut was telling him Charlie was about to walk into some minor trouble, but it wouldn’t be anything life-threatening.

In theory, it has nothing to do with Susanna Mattise. If it did, it wouldn’t be just trouble, it would be a disaster I suppose I can stop worrying about Susanna Mattise for a while, but how long is a while? Lumian mulled over the sense of bad luck.

He’d come to realize that unless someone was extremely unlucky or lucky, or if danger was about to strike, he needed to concentrate to perceive a person’s general luck through his intuition.

It was unlike a Hunter’s danger sense. It wasn’t always activated passively.

Charlie’s voice began to fade as he talked. He turned to Lumian and asked, “Why are you staring at me like that?”

He was half expecting Ciel to jump out with a prank.

Lumian sneered.

“You might want to swing by the nearest Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral and say a prayer. I have a feeling you’re about to hit a rough patch.”

His tone mirrored that of Osta Trul, the conman.

“What kind of rough patch?” Charlie asked, his voice sharp.

Then it hit him. “How would you know?”

“I have a hunch,” Lumian replied, a smirk playing on his lips.

Of course, it’s a joke Charlie let out a sigh of relief.

“I’m hoping your prediction’s off, then.”

“On the contrary, I couldn’t be more certain.” Lumian’s words were rock solid.

Charlie squinted at him, suspicion etched on his face.

Lumian let out a low chuckle.

“And if I’m wrong, I’ll give you a thrashing. That way, even if something bad does happen, that just proves me more right.”

“” Charlie was speechless.

Is that even allowed?

Regardless, this approach could come in handy for some practical jokes with some slight modification

Lumian was about to rise when he noticed a thin, mangy mutt creeping towards Auberge du Coq Dor from the shadowy street, eyeing the trash he’d tossed from the fruit vendor’s cart.

The mutt moved with care, aware that many of the destitute locals would gladly turn him into dinner.

Just then, Lumian lunged forward, pressing the dog’s neck to the

ground.

Caught off guard, the mutt writhed helplessly, baring its teeth in a futile attempt to bite, but its head was immobile.

With his free hand, Lumian pulled out a small vial of tulip powder, emptying its contents into his pocket.

Then, he held the vial to the mutt's frothing mouth, collecting the saliva as the dog squirmed.

Soon, he had five milliliters. He released his grip and stood up.

The mutt, ready to snap at him, whimpered and scampered off, tail tucked between its legs, when Lumian shot it a menacing glance.

Charlie, who had been standing by, was flabbergasted.

A story he'd once heard came rushing back to him.

The protagonist in the tale would often describe the villain's cruelty with a line penned by best-selling author Aurore Lee: He would kick any dog that crossed his path!

Lumian downed the rest of his Whiskey Sour and made his way into the motel.

As he passed the front desk, the perpetually grumpy Madame Fels, forced a smile.

"Good morning, CielMonsieur Ciel."

Lumian gave the plump Madame Fels a sideways glance and asked nonchalantly, "No sign of Monsieur Ive today either?"

Monsieur Ive, the owner of Auberge du Coq Dor, was known far and wide in Rue Anarchie for his penny-pinching ways.

As the new 'guardian' of Auberge du Coq Dor, Lumian figured he ought to have a word with Monsieur Ive, just to make sure he didn't run crying to the cops, afraid the Savoie Mob would shake him down for more cash.

Madame Fels pursed her lips.

“As stingy as he is, only paying for a weekly cleaning crew, he’s a stickler for cleanliness and wouldn’t be caught dead in the motel.”

“Who cleans his house?” Lumian asked, a hint of amusement in his voice.

“He’s a widower. He and his two kids take care of it.” Madame Fels scoffed.

If she were the one with that kind of money and a motel to boot, she would hire someone to handle such chores. She’d just sit back and enjoy life.

Lumian nodded and chuckled.

Madame Fels replied, a hint of fear in her voice, “I visit him thrice a week to deliver the motel’s earnings and various bills. I’ll let him know you want to see him.”

She mistook Lumian’s words as a veiled threat to Monsieur Ive. If he didn’t meet with the new guardian of Auberge du Coq Dor soon, his survival might be at stake.

Lumian didn’t bother to clarify. He climbed the stairs to his room on the second floor. Under his pillow, he found Mr. K’s finger and tucked it back into his pocket.

After dealing with the tulip powder, he planned to pick up some containers for the ingredients he needed to gather next. But then, a knock on the door interrupted his thoughts.

Lumian swung the door open, curiosity piquedhe didn’t recognize the footsteps.

In the doorway stood a man in his forties, clad in a dark jacket, worn-out brown trousers, and a grubby cotton hat. He offered a smile, asking, “Is this Monsieur Ciel?”

“Who else would it be? Madam?” Lumian retorted, his eyes taking in the man’s appearance, expression, and body language.

His brown hair, though slightly greasy, was neatly combed. His dark-brown eyes held a hint of sycophancy, and his lips were creased with lines of practiced smiles. He had an affable air, but there was an unmistakable slickness about him.

“Yes, yes, yes,” the man echoed Lumian’s words.

Lumian’s eyebrows twitched.

“And who might you be?”

“I’m Fitz from Room 401. Bankrupt businessman,” the man introduced himself with a congenial smile.

Without waiting for Lumian to press further, he spilled his beans.

“I went belly up ’cause of a con that cost me 100,000 verl d’or. I’ve been traveling between Trier and Suhit for over a decade, saving up. Wanted to settle down, start a family, but then this swindler tricked me out of everything, promising a joint venture.

“If you help me recover that money, I’m willing to part with 30%, no, 50%!”

Lumian didn’t invite Fitz into Room 207. Leaning against the doorframe, arms folded, he asked, “Why didn’t you go after that money with Margot or Wilson before?”

It wasn’t as if they required an upfront payment.

Fitz didn’t beat around the bush.

“I did go to Margot. He agreed initially, but then one day, he just said it wasn’t possible to recover the money.”

Even the Poison Spur Mob couldn’t retrieve it? Was the con man bankrupt or backed by someone who made the Poison Spur Mob tread lightly? Lumian, who had been only half-interested till now, leaned in. “Did Margot say why?”

Fitz shook his head. “No, but it’s certainly not because Timmons is broke. His dance hall in Quartier de l’Observatoire is printing

money!”

Timmons Lumian suspected the con man had either powerful backing or was shielded by a high-ranking figure, which made the Poison Spur Mob wary of pressing him for repayment.

Or maybe, Timmons was a force unto himself.

“So why do you think I can get your money back?” Lumian asked Fitz, a smirk playing on his lips.

Fitz pondered for a moment before laying it all out.

“You’re more ruthless than Margot. Plus, even if you decide not to pursue after your investigation, I have nothing to lose.

“Without that money, I can’t afford to pay a dime.”

“Honest to a fault.” Lumian nodded, appreciating the candor. “I’ll look into it, but don’t get your hopes up.”

If Timmons was simply bluffing and managed to scare off the Poison Spur Mob, the prospect of pocketing an easy 50,000 verl d’or was tempting to anyone.

Fitz, the bankrupt businessman, was playing a long shot. With a nod of assurance from Lumian, he thanked him and made his exit from the second floor.

In that moment, Lumian realized that his spirituality had bounced back considerably. The recovered amount surpassed his original spirituality reserves.

The Alms Monk has boosted my spirituality significantly. At Sequence 8, I can rival the spirituality of other pathways Lumian mused quietly.

Simultaneously, he recalled an uncanny sensation he experienced while sipping the Whiskey Sour.

If he chose to live in poverty, practiced self-restraint, abstained from alcohol, shunned wastefulness, sought alms, and preached, all while

adopting the demeanor of an ascetic monk, he would likely experience an enhancement in his intuitive sense of destiny and the likelihood of success of his five ritual spells.

Yet, Lumian had no intention of following that path. He believed it would morph him into a mirror image of the Bestower, gradually merging his identity with His.

Shaking off his introspective thoughts, Lumian left the room, making a beeline for Salle de Bal Brise. His next move was to solicit the Savoie Mob's help to gather the remaining ingredients and the right containers required for the Prophecy Spell.

He had to seize every opportunity at his disposal!

Chapter 153 - 153 Strange Rule

153 Strange Rule

Standing before the white globe-shaped statue, an assemblage of countless skulls, in the Salle de Bal Brise,

Lumian paused. His eyes scanned the Intis inscription—"They sleep here, waiting for the arrival of happiness and hope."

Pulling his gaze from the statue, he strode toward the entrance.

Two henchmen, donned in crisp white shirts and dark overcoats, spun on their heels to face him,

"Good morning, Ciel."

They'd been buzzing with the whispers about this brash newcomer who'd reportedly offed Margot and left Wilson licking his wounds, all within a few fleeting days. It was no secret that he'd been roped into the Savoie Mob.

"Good morning, my cabbages," Lumian tossed back, his lips curling into a grin as he borrowed Darième's pet phrase.

The Salle de Bal Brise was still waking up. Waitstaff moved with placid efficiency, arranging chairs, scrubbing the floors.

Lumian had intended to seek out Louis, a familiar face. No need to ruffle the feathers of Baron Brignais over such small matters. But there, nestled at the bar, sat Maxime—the very same one who'd tailed him.

Maxime, still sporting his trademark cap, drank a pint of rye beer.

A smirk spread across Lumian's face as he sauntered over.

Perceiving a presence nearing him, Maxime, out of habit, flicked a sidelong glance.

He went rigid, as though struck by a sudden frost.

In the next heartbeat, he vaulted off his stool and swiveled toward Lumian, plastering on a toadying grin.

“Good morning, Ciel.”

He too had caught wind of the rumors—of Ciel’s assassination of Margot and the defenestration of Wilson from the fourth floor of Auberge du Coq Doré.

A surge of relief washed over him. Thank the stars he hadn’t pushed his luck when he’d been nabbed tailing Ciel. Considering Ciel’s penchant for violence, he could’ve easily ended up as fodder for the rats in some godforsaken corner of Underground Trier.

This man was a bona fide killing machine. No qualms, no hesitation!

Lumian smiled.

“Merely ‘Ciel’ doesn’t quite ring with the proper respect, does it?”

Seeing Maxime blanch, Lumian added,

“I’m curious as to when I’ll hear ‘Baron Ciel’ rolling off your tongue.”

This was a jest, yes, but also a thinly veiled indication of his ambition —to rise to the ranks of the Savoie Mob leadership, and sooner rather than later.

His internal dialogue sang a different tune: I’d call you ‘Baron’ this very moment if it kept you happy, just like our ‘Baron’ isn’t a real baron, but a self-proclaimed one.

Lumian claimed a stool at the bar and patted the one next to him.

“Have a seat. I have a few questions for you.”

Maxime swiftly obliged, gesturing to the rye beer before him. “Fancy

a pint?”

“Ranger for me, if you please,” Lumian responded without missing a beat.

A ‘Ranger’—a tangy blend of orange and pomegranate beer—cost two licks more than the rye.

Though it pinched his pocket, Maxime hollered over to the bartender, “A glass of Ranger.”

Swiveling back towards Lumian, he flashed a grin.

“What would you like to know?”

Lumian bided his time until the generous pint of the orange-colored beer was delivered before launching his inquiry, “How did you join our Savoie Mob?”

“I’m Savoie born and bred.” Maxime gestured to his weather-beaten features. “Hopped over to Trier in search of greener pastures, but my buddy who’d put me up had already joined the Savoie Mob.”

The Savoie Mob was the brainchild of a handful of Savoie natives who’d made their living as laborers, servants, and peddlers in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. They were a fierce lot, unafraid to put themselves in harm’s way, and they’d quickly carved out their own slice of the pie. As the mob’s influence grew, they began to pull in recruits from other provinces and even Trier locals, but the heart of the organization still came from Savoie.

Lumian gave a slight nod, steering the conversation to his next question,

“And is Baron Brignais the head honcho of the whole Savoie Mob?”

“No.” Maxime stared at Lumian, aghast.

He’d joined the mob without even grasping the basics?

And he’d taken out Margot and severely injured Wilson in the name of the Savoie Mob!

Lumian took a leisurely sip of his orange-pomegranate beer, a playful grin adorning his face.

“I was under the impression that Baron Brignais was the head honcho. I mean, his swagger, his flair, his brawn… how could he not be the top dog?”

Maxime recoiled in terror, clapping a hand over Lumian’s mouth.

Were such words safe to spill in such an open area?

If word got back to that person, it could put a serious kink in his relationship with the baron!

Maxime wasted no time in setting the record straight.

“The baron is in charge of the Salle de Bal Brise, Avenue du Marché, and the loan shark operations. His peers include “Rat” Christo who oversees smuggling, “Giant” Simon who runs the dance joints on Rue du Rossignol, “Red Boots” Franca who oversees Rue des Blouses Blanches, and “Bloody Palm” Black who controls half of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

“There’s a top dog above them, but I’ve never laid eyes on him nor do I know who he is.”

In a hushed voice, Maxime added, “Rumor has it he’s a legitimate merchant, a card-carrying member of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce. And he’s no small fry, either.”

A member of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce? So, the Chamber of Commerce is backing a mob to handle their dirty laundry and keep the competition in check… Lumian pieced together the puzzle from his own experiences as a drifter, snippets from Aurore’s offhand comments, and a smattering of books, magazines, and newspapers he’d devoured at home.

News of Ciel’s arrival at the Salle de Bal Brise reached Louis, Baron Brignais’ shadow. He made a beeline for the bar, his heart pounding with worry that the audacious country boy was about to stir the pot yet again!

He was really worried that the bold country boy would cause trouble again!

Finding Lumian engrossed in conversation with Maxime, Louis slid onto a stool on the other side, easing into the chat, “What’s got you coming to the Salle de Bal Brise at this hour?”

Lumian shot him a sly smile. “I’ve got a favor to ask.”

Louis, his forehead still sporting a nasty bruise, shrank back at the sight of Lumian’s grin.

“What is it?”

Sensing they were about to dive into heavier matters, Maxime beat a hasty retreat from the bar, nursing his rye beer closer to the dance floor.

Lumian retracted his gaze and said slowly, “I need you to fetch me a lizard’s eye, a rock from an eagle’s nest, and a snake’s venom gland.”

He kept the full list of the Prophecy Spell’s ingredients under wraps, planning to source them from different places.

“What do you need those for?” Louis found the trio of items vile and bizarre.

Lumian chuckled. “Remember how Margot bit the dust?”

Louis felt a chill run down his spine. It felt like a veiled threat, and it was working!

I’m not trying to rattle you… Lumian snickered to himself.

“I stabbed him. My blade was laced with poison.”

“Right,” Louis remembered Ciel’s chat with Baron Brignais.

Seeing Louis still hadn’t caught on, Lumian mentally berated, Why is this guy denser than Charlie?

He sighed, spelling it out for him. “Those items are to whip up

another batch of poison."

"What are you planning?" Louis nearly jumped out of his skin.

He had a hunch Lumian was about to stir the pot.

"Self-defense," Lumian replied tersely.

With no grounds to object, Louis let out a sigh of relief, promising,

"I'll get someone on the job to collect those three items for you."

He ran through the list of items again, making sure he'd got it straight.

Once he'd confirmed the details, Lumian took a swig of his Ranger, switching gears.

"Ever heard of the Salle de Bal Unique?"

Louis eyed Lumian suspiciously, advising, "Best steer clear of that place. The dance hall's owner, Timmons, is tight with the police commissioner of Quartier de l'Observatoire. And there's a shadowy organization pulling his strings. Anyone who's tried to squeeze them has found themselves in a world of hurt, and some have even vanished off the face of the world."

Each quartier in Trier had its own police headquarters, each headed by a commissioner.

The police commissioner's official title was the Commissioner of the Trier Police Affairs Committee, answering to the Minister of the Trier Police Department.

So that's why the Poison Spur Mob never had the guts to chase up Timmons' debt… Lumian nodded, deep in thought.

Seeing the worry etched on Louis's face, afraid he was about to stir up a hornet's nest, Lumian threw him a curveball.

"Who else in the Poison Spur Mob ranks up there with Margot? And who's their boss?"

What are you trying to do? Louis almost blurted out.

Could it be that Ciel's planning to knock off all the heavy hitters in the Poison Spur Mob?

Are you out of your mind?

Keeping his cool, Louis replied, "That's none of your concern right now."

Lumian responded with a knowing smile, not pushing the matter. He downed his Ranger.

…

In the shadowy enclave of Quartier de l'Observatoire, nestled near the catacombs,

Lumian found Osta Trul huddled by the bonfire.

He laughed mockingly.

"You're the most professional person I've ever come across."

Like clockwork, Osta was here seven days a week, peddling his con.

"I'd love to be soaking myself on some beach, but my debts tell a different story." The thought of hopping a steam locomotive out of Trier and dodging his outstanding loans had crossed Osta's mind. Yet, each time he made it as far as the station, Baron Brignais's goons would be there to give him a good thrashing.

This had instilled in him a healthy fear of the Baron's reach, and he'd since abandoned any such ideas.

"I need you to fetch me a few things," Lumian cut to the chase, settling down beside Osta. "For each item you bring, there's an extra 5 verl d'or in it for you."

Osta's eyes sparked with interest.

"What are you after?"

Lumian stared into the fire, his voice low. “Lynx innards, hyena tongue, stag bone marrow, and any deadly herb.”

“They’re not easy to come by.” Osta tried to haggle.

He’d already made up his mind to scour the eateries in Quartier de l’Observatoire.

Lumian brushed him off, changing the subject. “Where can I find aquatic monsters in Trier?”

Osta pondered a moment before replying, “There’s an underground river in the catacombs nearby, fed by the Srenzo River. Every so often, someone claims to have run into an aquatic monster. And occasionally, some surface along the Srenzo River banks, but they’re quickly dispatched by the Purifiers or the Machinery Hivemind.”

Lumian nodded. “Do you know the Salle de Bal Unique?”

“Sure do.” Osta pointed skyward. “It’s over on Rue Ancienne, right by Place du Purgatoire.”

“1 verl d’or. Show me the way.” Lumian rose to his feet.

He planned to scope out the place, gather what intel he could. If it was a dead end, he’d move on.

In no time, Osta was leading Lumian topside, veering into Rue Ancienne near the square, and halting in front of a vintage edifice.

The building, a somber shade of blue-gray, retained its pre-Roselle charm.

Classic pediments, a chevron roof, and leaded windows.

The Salle de Bal Unique occupied the ground floor, its entrance resembling a giant maw.

It happened to be past noon, and a carriage pulled up to the curb as three men and a woman alighted.

Dressed in dark short suits, they sauntered towards the Salle de Bal

Unique.

As they neared the entrance, each member of the quartet produced a monocle, fitting it over their right eye.

Watching this, Lumian turned to Osta, bemusement written all over his face.

Osta, flashing a knowing smile, enlightened him, “That’s one of Salle de Bal Unique’s rules. Everyone who steps inside must be donning a short suit and a monocle.”New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Chapter 154 - 154 Mini-Theater

154 Mini-Theater

Taking in Osta's revelation, Lumian couldn't help a chuckle, thinking, What kind of strange rule is this?

His mind flicked back to the turtle-walking, the space bridge, clutching a candle while touring the catacombs, and sprinting just to keep up with the latest fad. He felt that this seemed inconsequential, but perhaps not for the folks of Trier, who seemed to relish something unique.

As the stream of monocle-clad patrons flowed in, Lumian queried with a casual air, "What happens if a newcomer isn't privy to the rule?"

Osta gestured to the far end of Rue Ancienne.

"There's a place selling monocles and short suits there.

"I'd wager the proprietor of Salle de Bal Unique is behind it."

No doubt about it… Lumian murmured under his breath.

He wouldn't put it past Timmons to concoct such a rule for the Salle de Bal Unique to cash in on the monocle and short suit trade.

Undeniably, it was also a nod to the citizens of Trier's relentless pursuit of the latest trends and fashion.

"How long has this joint been in business?" Lumian nonchalantly gestured toward the Salle de Bal Unique across the street.

"Over two decades. It's been here since I first landed in Trier. Rumor has it, it opened when dance halls became the rage." Osta stole a glance toward Place du Purgatoire. "Anything else? I need to get back

underground."

His mind was on making money, wary of missing out on potential clients seeking his divination and "assistance."

Lumian swung his gaze onto him.

Osta's heart stuttered, feeling as though he were in the crosshairs of a formidable predator.

"What's the matter?" He subconsciously forced a smile again.

Lumian withdrew his gaze, nonchalantly advising, "Stay sharp for the next couple of days."

"What?" Osta found himself flustered, bewildered, and somewhat frightened.

Ciel isn't threatening me, is he? We just had a smooth collaboration. He even tasked me with finding some materials!

A grin played at the corners of Lumian's mouth.

"Exactly as I said, but it's got nothing to do with me.

"Also, do me a favor and dig up more details on the aquatic monster. The more comprehensive, the better. Same pay as before."

Is he implying that I might be getting unlucky and be beaten up? Osta tried to decipher Lumian's cryptic message.

At the same time, he found something oddly familiar about Lumian's demeanor and tone but couldn't quite put his finger on it. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

As a Secrets Suppliant, his divination prowess was remarkably superior to the average person.

Suddenly, it struck him why he found the whole exchange eerily familiar.

Wasn't this the exact manner he addressed his own "customers"?

Across from the antiquated building, Lumian contemplated whether to invest in a short suit and monocle to infiltrate the Salle de Bal Unique and gather intel.

If Timmons is indeed part of some mysterious organization and chummy with the police commissioner, snatching him for a bounty of verl d'or isn't a smart move. It'd muck up my operation. Wouldn't the money spent on the short suits and monocles go down the drain? They don't come cheap, after all. Lumian was never one to hold back on expenses, with Trier teeming with "generous souls," but he knew when to pinch pennies.

Mulling over his options, he scanned his surroundings, his eyes landing on an "Alone" bar diagonally across the Salle de Bal Unique.

Patrons of a dance hall would likely frequent a bar too. They must be rivals… Suddenly, a light bulb went off in Lumian's head.

After all, enemies often knew one another best, and those most familiar with a dance hall would likely be its competitors!

Even if their accounts were likely embellished, they could still offer some grains of truth.

Without missing a beat, Lumian swiveled around and sauntered into the Alone bar.

The buildings on Rue Ancienne were steeped in antiquity, with most dating back to pre-Roselle times. Their windows were mere slits, letting in scant daylight. The overarching theme here was one of darkness.

Unperturbed by the unlit gas lamps, Lumian navigated through the dimly lit hall, sparsely populated by patrons, and took a stool at the bar.

Removing his cap, he ordered, "A gin on the rocks."

The bar counter was tucked away in the darkest corner of the joint. The lean bartender was shrouded in shadows, his features obscured, revealing only a silhouette.

Despite Lumian's keen eyesight, he could barely discern the man's curly black hair, slightly blue eyes, and a somewhat low bridge of his nose.

As he awaited his gin, Lumian flashed a casual smile and remarked,

"Business seems slow here. The Salle de Bal Unique across the way appears to be drawing quite the crowd."

The bartender slid a lemon wedge and iced gin across to Lumian.

Casting a glance at the door, he replied, "We do alright, but most folks are downstairs waiting for the play.

"How about it? Fancy a peek? Patrons with drinks can gain entry to the cellar for five licks. Uh, make it eight for your gin."

"A play?" Lumian couldn't hide his astonishment.

This was a facet none of the Rue Anarchie bars could boast.

The bartender sighed, explaining, "They can dance, sing, shoot pool, play cards across the road. We've got to stand out somehow to lure in customers.

"Many bars and cafes on the north shore now have their own mini-theaters."

Lumian was at a loss for words, resorting to a mere sigh. "Has the bar scene gotten so cutthroat?"

He then produced three 20-coppet silver coins etched with gears and a 5-coppet copper coin, handing them to the bartender.

The total amounted to 13 licks or 65 coppets, including the ticket to the mini-theater for the performance.

The bartender promptly pointed to the stairs next to the counter leading down.

"You can head to the cellar anytime. Feel free to take your drink with you."

No ticket required? Lumian wasn't in a rush to vacate the counter. He smiled, asking, "The Salle de Bal Unique across the way seems rather… unique?"

"It certainly is." The bartender lowered his voice. "Did you get swindled over there? Is that why you're so curious?"

"Exactly." Lumian nodded without missing a beat.

He saw no reason of hiding it.

The bartender chortled.

"We get scammed hopefuls straggling in here every day, but none ever pull it off. Heck, I once spotted the police commissioner of Quartier de l'Observatoire, Conde, strutting into the dance hall, all decked out in a short suit and a monocle."

Timmons is no pushover… Lumian quickly abandoned any notion of conning the proprietor of Salle de Bal Unique.

Gin in hand, he pushed away from the counter, making his way down to the cellar.

Before he could reach the timber door, the bartender's shout echoed, "Patron coming through!"

The door creaked open with a groan.

Lumian slowed his stride, taking in his surroundings as he stepped inside.

It was a makeshift theater, a half-height wooden platform stretching across the far end. Two gas wall lamps cast a feeble light.

Where the illumination fell short, stools and chairs were scattered sparsely.

At that moment, over 20 guests were settled in, engrossed in the show unfolding on the stage.

The silence was deafening, punctuated only by the sporadic clink of

glasses, the dimly lit cellar rendered almost eerily hushed.

Lumian claimed a chair near the exit, his eyes drifting to the stage.

The performer was not a person but a puppet half the height of a person.

Adorned in a palette of yellow, white, and red paint, regardless of gender, each puppet bore an overstated grin.

Guided by nearly invisible threads, the puppets moved, opening their mouths, turning, running, carrying out a variety of plays.

From somewhere, a deep male voice and a slightly shrill female voice took turns delivering the lines.

Bathed in the faint, yellowish glow from the gas lamps, against the looming darkness, the painted clown puppets took on a sinister edge.

Lumian was instinctively put off by the ambiance.

Not one to squander the ticket cost, he stuck around a bit longer until the play wrapped up.

Throughout, not a sound was made. The audience, some faces bathed in the yellow light, others shrouded in darkness, were far more engrossed than Lumian had imagined.

Having drained his gin, Lumian took his leave of the mini-theater, where only two gas lamps held off the darkness.

…

As Lumian made his way back to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, he claimed a window seat in a public carriage. As the shops and pedestrians retreated in the backdrop, he mulled over his next moves.

First order of business, secure some aquatic monster flesh and collect the necessary components for the Prophecy Spell. Second, elevate my standing in the Savoie Mob, aiming for a leadership position sooner rather than later… What's the plan…

Lost in his thoughts, his eyes snagged on a familiar figure.

There was Wilson of the Poison Spur Mob, clad in a white shirt and black jacket, his craggy face framed by a mop of curly brown hair.

With his two goons in tow, Wilson navigated Avenue du Marché, disappearing down a side alley. He moved with an assured stride, his posture unscathed.

Lumian was taken aback. He's up and about after being thrown down by him?

The fall was from four stories high!

That was some recovery. Made cockroaches look like amateurs!

A theory started to form in Lumian's mind.

The Poison Spur Mob has extraordinary healing powers?

Possibly Planter pathway's Doctor?

As he pondered, a memory surfaced.

In his dream, Madame Pualis had demonstrated the power to heal wounds instantaneously!

Although the dream might have distorted or exaggerated the reality, Madame Pualis's anomalous pathway did encompass a sphere related to life.

And Louis Lund was suspected to show up on Avenue du Marché… Could the force behind the Poison Spur Mob be linked to the evil god worshiped by Madame Pualis? As Lumian ruminated over this, a smirk slowly crept onto his face.

Chapter 155 - 155 Jenna

155 Jenna

The circumstances of Wilson's rapid recovery were riddled with uncertainty. Lumian toyed with the idea that it was the work of a Sequence 8 "Doctor" from the Planter pathway, or a Sequence 9 "Apothecary" from its namesake pathway. Yet, his heart clung to the hope of unmasking Madame Pualis and her subordinates.

Had he pieced together the puzzle sooner, and had Wilson and his crew not gone far off into the distance, Lumian would have thrown himself from the moving public carriage, hot on their trail. He envisioned wrangling Wilson into some clandestine quarry cave, pressing him for answers about his miraculous recuperation.

If this saga bore no link to the evil god that Madame Pualis revered, Lumian was prepared to swallow his pride and apologize to Wilson, who, in turn, would owe Lumian his life for not permanently silencing him.

But, to snuff him out was also on the table. The ball was in Lumian's court.

As the carriage came to a halt at its station, Lumian was the first to alight, retracing his steps to the alley where Wilson and his crew had disappeared.

No barricades existed here. It was a bustling place, with people constantly coming and going. Wilson and his gang hadn't left any clear trail. Lumian devoted a painstaking quarter of an hour to trying to discern any signs of them, finally admitting defeat.

But he wasn't beaten down. Wilson may have slipped through his fingers, but there were others like Will or Williamson. The Poison Spur Mob was a hydra of sorts, with a plethora of leaders just a notch

above Wilson. Each had their own turf, their own dealings. They could run, but they couldn't hide. Lumian just needed patience. Sooner or later, he'd cross paths with one or two of them. And they, undoubtedly, were more intimately involved with the shadowy forces pulling the strings behind the Poison Spur Mob than Wilson. They knew more!

Phew… Exhaling a deep breath, Lumian wrestled his impatience into submission, deciding to lay low and watch for a while before concocting a hunting strategy.

If the Poison Spur Mob truly was entwined with the evil god that Madame Pualis worshiped, then the leaders on par with Margot were either Sequence 8s, endowed with Beyonder characteristics, or they were spawn of an evil god, gifted with boons akin to a Sequence 8 Beyonder. They could even be stronger. If Lumian didn't arm himself with enough intel and set an appropriate snare, he was likely to end up on the losing side.

I can't forget I'm a Hunter, just because I've become a Provoker. Chiding himself, Lumian slipped down Avenue du Marché and strolled into the Salle de Bal Brise.

Given it was barely past three in the afternoon, the place was practically deserted. No music played, no one danced. His eyes immediately found Louis, the thug, nursing a glass of pomegranate ale at the bar counter.

"Soda?" Lumian grinned, sauntering over. "How about drinking something an adult would drink?"

Louis swiveled, meeting Ciel's amiable smile draped over the bar counter.

The sight left him momentarily stunned, as if he couldn't quite place the young man before him.

Was this the same Ciel who masked his wild ruthlessness behind a constant grin, one who'd resort to violence over the slightest disagreement?

He seemed more like a greenhorn, a na?ve country boy who had just been roped into the Savoie Mob.

Louis gave his soda a wistful swirl, a bitter smile tugging at his lips.

“I’ve got to be at the baron’s side later. Can’t afford to get sloshed.”

Lumian’s eyes flicked to the bruised knot on Louis’ forehead, a chuckle bubbling up. He pointed at his forehead, commenting, “Still nursing that bump? How long’s it been?

“I ran into Wilson earlier. After I broke his arm and tossed him from the fourth floor, you’d think he’d be worse for wear. But he looked perfectly fine.”

Louis was taken aback.

“Seems so, at least on the surface. Wanted to say hello, but he hightailed it out of there too fast.” Lumian’s tone carried a hint of regret.

Say hello? More like you want to rough up Wilson again and not even give the guy a chance to heal, Louis thought, but he didn’t dare voice it.

His face took on a grave cast as he muttered to himself, “When we clashed with the Poison Spur Mob in the past, their wounded always bounced back in just a few days. The baron thinks they’ve got some Beyonders with a knack for healing. But for someone like Wilson to recover so rapidly from such serious injuries… that’s unheard of.”

“Could it be because you guys have never managed to put a serious dent in any of the Poison Spur Mob members?” Lumian’s voice was laced with mockery.

Louis pondered, then conceded, “There have been a few, but not many. Plus, we usually don’t see them again for a good long while. By then, they’re all healed up.”

So, Wilson’s recovery outpaces even Doctor and Apothecary Beyonder powers? Lumian managed to glean a crucial tidbit from Louis’s words.

Although it could point to a higher Sequence Beyonder on the corresponding pathway, it at least narrowed down some possibilities for him.

Just as Lumian was gearing up to probe the progress on gathering concoction ingredients, a stunning figure swept into the room.

A woman, ostentatiously attired, with her chestnut hair tied up, loose tendrils framing her ears, cheeks, and falling down her back.

Her face was dusted with powder, black eyeliner accentuating her blue eyes, lending them a deep, decadent allure.

At present, she was decked out in a bold red dress that left little to the imagination, sequins catching the light at strategic spots.

Isn't this the chanteuse known for her bawdy songs at the Poison Spur Mob's Salle de Gristmill? Lumian did a double take.

This was the Savoie Mob's Salle de Bal Brise!

Still, Lumian couldn't be entirely sure if it was the same woman. The singer had a mole by her lips, while this woman sported one at the corner of her left eye.

"Catching your eye, is she? That 'Little Minx'?" Louis followed Lumian's gaze.

Lumian chuckled. "How about we use a more respectful moniker? Manners matter."

"You sound just like the baron sometimes," Louis mused. "Her stage name is 'Little Minx', 'Little Minx' Jenna. She's known as a 'Showy Diva'."

"And what exactly is a 'Showy Diva'?" Lumian didn't attempt to cover up his ignorance. After all, he was a newcomer to Trier, straight out of a backwater like Cordu.

Louis took a moment to recall the baron's words and then delivered smoothly, "It's all about her performance style, her acting, her flamboyant outfits. She's a standout singer."

She's a chanteuse too? Lumian probed, "She performs at the Salle de Gristmill as well?"

"Sure does. As long as she's getting paid, she'll belt out tunes in any dance hall on Rue Anarchie." As Louis spoke, "Little Minx" Jenna sauntered over.

Her blue eyes roamed the room, lingering on Lumian before moving to Louis.

"Ten songs, four verl d'or. I'll keep a third of the tips thrown on stage."

"Deal." Louis had the baron's approval.

Only 4 verl d'or for a night's performance? Lumian found himself questioning. Had he overpaid Osta Trul?

In unfamiliar territory, he was woefully out of touch with the going rates.

Spotting his lingering gaze, Jenna swiveled her head, flashing him a grin.

"Feel free to let your eyes wander a bit lower."

She was referencing her scantily clad chest.

For Lumian, whose only exposure to such scenarios was through novels, this was uncharted territory. Yet, his face betrayed no unease. Flashing a smile, he said,

"I was merely wondering. The last time I spotted you, your mole was by your lips. Now it's nestled by your eye."

Jenna's reply came in the form of a captivating smile, which made Louis swallow hard.

"Are you from out of town?" Jenna queried.

Lumian bobbed his head in affirmation.

With a playful grin, Jenna leaned in, a finger tracing her cheek as she softly elucidated,

“It’s all the rage here in Trier. Ladies often sport a faux mole. Right in the middle of the cheek for elegance, smack in the middle of the nose for audacity, at the corners of the eyes for passion, by the lips for allure, and nestled in the décolletage for secrets…”

As she spoke, she sent Lumian a saucy wink, as if to say, “Today, I’m all about passion.”

Ah, Trier… Lumian could only shake his head in amazement.

Given their proximity, the intoxicating blend of Jenna’s natural scent and the heady perfume she wore invaded his senses.

This led Lumian to instinctively rub his nose.

Jenna’s reaction was immediate.

“Don’t tell me you still have your virginity? I’m not a street girl, but for you, I might make an exception.”

She took a moment to appraise Lumian, seemingly pleased with what she saw.

Virginity? Something that magically returns every morning at 6 a.m.? Lumian scoffed inwardly, his smile nonchalant.

“Right now? I’m afraid you might miss your performance tonight.”

Back at the Ol’ Tavern in Cordu Village, Lumian often had to match the locals in their coarseness, else he’d become the butt of their jokes.

Jenna’s response was a hearty laugh and a dismissive wave of her hand.

“I’ll find you after my set tonight.”

With that, she sauntered off towards the modest wooden stage at the front of the dance floor, keen to get a feel for the place.

Isn't she jumping the gun a bit? Where's the agreement on a time and place? Lumian mused to himself. nove(l)bi(n.)com

She was clearly just yanking his chain!

Louis chimed in, a tinge of envy coloring his voice, "Don't fall for her act. She gets a kick out of toying with good-looking men. She won't actually follow through.

"I reckon she's Franca's sweetheart."

"Franca, 'Red Boots' Franca?" Lumian's surprise was palpable.

"Red Boots" Franca was a key figure in the Savoie Mob, ruling over Rue des Blouses Blanches, and rumored to be a woman.

"Exactly," Louis affirmed. "Franca appears to be the Boss's mistress, but she seems to swing both ways. She and 'Little Minx' are thick as thieves."

A lover's lover… Lumian once again marveled at the peculiarities of Trier.

Louis watched Jenna, now swaying gracefully on the stage, a look of longing etched on his face.

"She wasn't this mesmerizing when she first arrived in the market district. Over the past couple of years, she's become more adept at presentation, more feminine. What a shame…"

"If you manage to climb the ranks and stand toe to toe with Red Boots, you might have a shot," Lumian teased, stoking Louis's ambition. He then shifted gears, "Any luck tracking down those three items I needed?"

Louis tore his gaze away from Jenna to respond, "I was just about to tell you, we've managed to gather them all."

"That quick?" Lumian was taken aback by the Savoie Mob's efficiency.

Why not start a factory? Why stick with the mob life?

Louis elaborated, "'Rat' Christo keeps a variety of critters, some rare, some less so. Some we could take off his hands for the right price. That's how we got the lizard's eye and the snake's venom sac. The eagle's nest rock was a bonus."

"Rat" Christo, the one in charge of smuggling? Lumian mulled over this newfound information.

Chapter 156 - 156 Landlord

156 Landlord

Louis carried on, “I’ll arrange for someone to bring those three items to Auberge du Coq Doré later.”

“And the cost?” Lumian was prepared to offer Louis an extra reward for his diligence.

Louis merely shook his head.

“The baron says you needn’t worry about the payment. He believes your strength building equates to our Savoie Mob’s strengthening.”

Even without Baron Brignais spelling it out, Louis deduced his ploy of roping Lumian in. In any case, the cost was under 10 verl d’or.

!!

So according to the baron’s logic, I can have him refund the materials I require to progress to Pyromaniac? Lumian mused with a hint of sarcasm.

Louis was taking a sip from his pomegranate soda when a group sauntered into the Salle de Bal Brise.

The group’s leader was strikingly tall, towering over 1.9 meters. His light-yellow hair, short and plush, clung to his scalp akin to high-grade velvet.

He had a huge nose, light-blue eyes, and a roughly textured face. He was dressed in a figure-hugging black suit, topped off with a wide-brimmed round hat.

Louis’s features tightened, he carefully placed down the soda bottle, turning to Lumian, “I need to attend to the baron.”

Just then, the beefy man in his early thirties walked a crew that had the air of gangsters about them towards the café's staircase.

"Who's he?" Lumian questioned, unable to hide his curiosity.

Louis rose, offhandedly answering, "That's 'Giant' Simon, runs the dance halls on Rue du Rossignol."

"Isn't he a part of our Savoie Mob as well?" Lumian probed further.

Louis nodded. "True, but he's not on good terms with the baron. He's always arguing that the baron, since he oversees the loan-sharking, ought to relinquish control of the Salle de Bal Brise.

"I'm heading up; need to see what he's here for."

Louis had barely taken two steps when he noticed Lumian, still planted at the bar counter, from his peripheral vision.

He couldn't resist an inward sigh.

He just doesn't grasp how to seize the moment. Shouldn't he have shown some initiative and backed me up with the baron? If 'Giant' Simon dares say anything unsavory, stare him down, threaten him with a gun. Only then will he start to earn the baron's trust.

Yes, he may be ruthless, mad, and powerful, but he remains a greenhorn when it comes to these things.

Naturally, if Lumian truly wanted to accompany him to the second floor and aid Baron Brignais in maintaining appearances at the café, Louis would turn him down. After all, the baron and "Giant" Simon could potentially be discussing confidential matters concerning the Savoie Mob. It was no place for a rookie to eavesdrop.

Lumian ruminated, The Savoie Mob seems riddled with internal strife…

Suppose there's a showdown between Baron Brignais and "Giant" Simon and one bites the dust. And then the head honcho needs a strong hand to quell the storm and take over their positions, wouldn't I be the perfect candidate? When that time comes, as long as I pass

muster, I'll have fulfilled Mr. K's mission.

Now the trick is to pit Baron Brignais and "Giant" Simon against each other without arousing suspicion…

Lost in his strategic contemplation, Lumian requested a glass of absinthe.

Before he could savor the last of the enigmatic emerald elixir, he spotted "Giant" Simon emerging from the staircase, henchmen in tow, a thunderous expression on his face.

Well, he doesn't seem pleased… Lumian noted, retracting his gaze.

He wasn't rushing to translate his thoughts into action; he was still woefully short on the ins and outs of the Savoie Mob.

Later that evening, on his return to Auberge du Coq Doré, Madame Fels, seated at the reception desk, rose and informed him, "Monsieur Ive has arrived. He's waiting for you in the first-floor dining room, by the window."

Not bad. He came quite quickly… Lumian nodded approvingly, making his way to the small dining room opposite the lobby.

Monsieur Ive had heard tell of Ciel's eccentric yet stylish hair. On seeing him step into the dining room, he rose, all smiles.

"Monsieur Ciel, right this way." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

He was a man on the cusp of his fifties. His blonde hair, streaked with silver, was neatly arranged. He sported a faded dark suit with a pair of chestnut tweed trousers. His eyes were a bright blue, and he bore a thin beard.

Lumian glanced at the cane resting against the dining table, then approached, a congenial smile playing on his lips.

"Good evening, Monsieur Ive."

Once both men were seated, Ive beckoned the waiter to begin

serving.

“My apologies for the delay in visiting, I’ve been swamped recently,” Ive expressed remorsefully.

His accent distinctly belonged to the Trier region.

Feigning ignorance, Lumian questioned, “Do you own more than one motel?”

Otherwise, what’s kept him so busy?

Ive was taken aback. He hadn’t anticipated that Lumian would take his polite remark literally.

He stammered, “There are… some other affairs, but they’re neither here nor there.”

As their conversation flowed, the waiter brought in the evening meal, a serving each.

Bean soup, pork sausage, Feynapotter rice, and a sauce that occupied a fifth of the plate.

“This is their signature meat sauce,” Ive informed, bubbling with enthusiasm.

Is that all? Lumian’s perception of the landlord’s miserliness took a new dimension.

It didn’t overly concern him, though. He dug into the Feynapotter rice, smothered in the mildly meaty sauce, laced with pepper and vinegar.

After consuming his meal for about a minute, Lumian looked up, addressing Monsieur Ive with a wry smile, “With your penny-pinching tendencies, why provide each room with sulfur?”

He purposely avoided the softer term “frugal,” his tone saturated with sarcasm.

Monsieur Ive’s face clouded over, evidently displeased.

He kept his emotions in check, forcing a strained smile.

“The motel is riddled with bedbugs. Nobody would stay here without the sulfur we provide.”

Really? As long as the price is low enough, those hard up for cash won’t fuss about a few bedbugs… Lumian casually sectioned off a piece of sausage, taking a bite.

After mulling it over a bit, he suggested, “Why not employ a couple of regular cleaners for daily cleaning? That could effectively cut down on the bedbugs.”

“Two full-time cleaners would set me back 130 to 150 verl d’or a month, while a thorough cleaning once a week only costs 18 verl d’or,” Monsieur Ive protested, visibly pained at the prospect.

Lumian simply smiled.

“I meant, why don’t you do the cleaning yourself, get your kids to help?”

That would shave off 18 verl d’or from his weekly expenses.

Monsieur Ive appeared to mull over the proposal, seeming to see the merit in it.

However, after a reflective pause, he sighed and said, “Sadly, we’re otherwise occupied.”

Doing what? Lumian didn’t push for an answer.

He had already established that Ive was nothing short of a tightwad.

Monsieur Ive studied Lumian, hesitating before he offered, “I used to hand Margot 20 verl d’or weekly. Which day would you prefer?”

Lumian scoffed.

“No need to hand it over to me. Invest in an additional thorough cleaning each week.”

Monsieur Ive was somewhat surprised but raised no objections. After all, the cleaning service cost only 18 verl d'or, and if contracted for twice a week, he could haggle for a better rate.

Having polished off his plate, Lumian queried,

"Do you happen to know what happened to the tenant from 504?"

He was speaking of the man who'd plastered Susanna Mattise's portrait in Charlie's room, a frequent face on Rue de la Muraille, Rue de Breda, and Rue du Rossignol, who had since moved on.

Lumian had sought this information from Madame Fels earlier, but she'd offered no insight. As far as she was concerned, her interest in tenants ceased as soon as they paid their rent and didn't damage anything.

Monsieur Ive appeared taken aback, glancing at the leftovers on his plate before replying,

"I'm not sure who you mean. I don't often visit the motel. I'm unaware of who's occupying which rooms."

That response… Smacks of guilt… Lumian's eyebrows twitched slightly, but he didn't push the issue. He watched as Monsieur Ive tidied up his plate, not a morsel of rice or a trace of sauce left behind.

After Monsieur Ive had taken his leave, Lumian emerged from the motel some 20 seconds later, tailing the landlord from a safe distance.

He tracked Monsieur Ive to a beige, six-story apartment block situated in the heart of Avenue du Marché.

From what he'd gathered from Madame Fels's usual chitchat, this was most likely Monsieur Ive's residence.

Lumian didn't rush to make a "house call". There were certain activities best carried out under the cloak of night. Moreover, he wasn't entirely sure whether the official Beyonders were still probing into Susanna Mattise's affairs or hoping to find any leads through Monsieur Ive. An accidental encounter could be rather awkward.

If it came to that, Lumian would have to make himself scarce promptly.

Under the warm glow of the streetlamps, he circled Monsieur Ive's apartment, taking in his surroundings.

What struck Lumian most was the three-story, brick-red edifice diagonally across from the apartment on the opposite side of Avenue du Marché.

The foyer, propped up by pillars, bore a sign overhead: "Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons."

People streamed in continuously. Every now and then, bursts of applause and strains of music floated out, creating a lively atmosphere.

Lumian knew that this was a theater catering to common folk with its affordable ticket prices, holding a monopoly in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

An ideal spot for evading pursuit… Lumian was reminded of theater-related incidents from various novels. Grinning, he crossed the street and entered the foyer of the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Posters advertising current and upcoming plays, as well as a few past classics, adorned the walls.

As Lumian considered how best to exploit the theater, he stood there, earnestly examining the photographs, sketches, and captions.

Suddenly, a familiar face caught his eye on a poster tucked away in a corner.

Playing an extra in the background, a man with a shock of starkly blond hair, blue eyes, and a wispy beard was featured. It was none other than Monsieur Ive, the man he'd been tailing!

Chapter 157 - 157 Ancienne Cage à Pigeons

157 Ancienne Cage à Pigeons

Monsieur Ive, a theater actor as well? Or merely an enthusiast? Lumian pondered the enigma.

His immediate impression was, as proprietor and landlord of the Auberge du Coq Doré, Monsieur Ive could be classified as affluent. Moreover, he managed several other enterprises, so the notion of him dabbling in acting appeared improbable. Nevertheless, taking into account Ive's proclivity for hoarding wealth and his frugal tendencies, Lumian couldn't completely rule out the possibility of the man dabbling as a minor actor during his idle hours. It was an opportunity, after all, to rake in a few more coins and avoid squandering valuable time.

Once satisfied that the small-time character indeed was Monsieur Ive, Lumian's eyes drifted to the poster's title: Forest Fairy.

From the additional script, Lumian deciphered that this was a classic production from the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, occasionally revived for new runs.

The actress portraying the Forest Fairy boasted distinct facial contours, an ethereal and captivating aura, and lake-blue eyes filled with innocence and sanctity.

However, Lumian found her less than bewitching, given her adornments of bracelet, necklace, and belt fashioned from tree branches and verdant leaves, topped off by a floral laurel crown. She stirred memories of Ava, the Spring Elf from his dreams, and Susanna Mattise with her cascading turquoise tresses.

For Lumian, these were not nostalgic musings. Especially the latter, bereft of the unusual allure her hair had once commanded, now evoked an eerie and revolting image.

Charlotte Calvino. After noting the actress's name, Lumian scrutinized the other posters for more clues.

Ultimately, he deduced that Monsieur Ive had performed in three plays at the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, yet in each, he was but a mere supporting actor, easily replaced.

Entering the theater with a thoughtful demeanor, Lumian forked out ten licks for a ticket.

The Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons was a well-designed edifice. A large stage dominated the far end, illuminated by gas wall lamps, cloaked by lofty curtains and equipped with several steam-powered machines.

Neat rows of seating lined the theater, progressively ascending like terraced staircases.

Lumian took his ticket stub and located his seat.

The ongoing play was "Princess and the Beast". The actors' attire tended towards the liberal, with hints of risqué—entirely in keeping with the aesthetic sensibilities of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Watching the performance unfold, Lumian was struck with an internal gasp of awe.

Could this be Trier's standard for acting?

Such theatrics only earn them keep in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman? What caliber do the theaters in Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra hold?

Lumian wasn't a stranger to the world of theater. Despite Aurore's homebody tendencies, even she occasionally craved the outdoors. Sometimes she borrowed a pony from Madame Pualis, or chatted with Cordu's old ladies, narrated stories to local children, and

occasionally she'd even take Lumian to Dariège to attend plays, opera, circus performances or visit the underground book market for creative inspiration.

In comparison to the Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, those theatrical performances seemed akin to amateur efforts.

The lead actors on the stage were simply spellbinding. Whether through their facial expressions, physical gestures, or delivered lines, they were as though plucked from the narrative's pages and set into the world of the living. Lumian, initially focused on scouting for anomalies, found himself unexpectedly engrossed in the unfolding drama. He felt a pang for the Beast's tangled turmoil of self-doubt, brutality, and torment, and for the Princess, her unspoiled innocence, kindness, and heartfelt distress.

Any one of these principal performers could easily steal the spotlight in a Dariège theater.

As the curtain fell, Lumian found himself rising to his feet, clapping his approval, a twinge of disappointment in his heart that the performance had concluded so swiftly.

He detected nothing suspicious with the actors, nor could he discern anything out of the ordinary within the theater itself during his regular sojourns to the restroom during intermissions.

Madame Fels had hinted that Monsieur Ive cultivated a rooftop vegetable garden as a cost-saving measure. Lumian deduced that the Ive residence must, therefore, be on the apartment building's top floor, the sixth to be exact.

After a brief scrutiny, Lumian's gaze landed on the faintest of the glowing windows.

In keeping with Ive's penny-pinching character, he probably refused to light an additional gas lamp.

Finding a secluded, dark corner, Lumian set himself up, his focus locked onto the dimly lit window, a silent sentinel awaiting any sign of activity.

As the hours wore on, a homeless man wandered by, hoping to claim this sheltered nook as his makeshift bed for the night. However, catching sight of Lumian's shadowy figure, he reluctantly shuffled off elsewhere.

Such encounters barely registered with Lumian anymore. Unperturbed, he maintained his vigil.

Close to 11 p.m., the feeble light in the window blinked out.

Roughly fifteen minutes later, Monsieur Ive, garbed in a faintly dark suit and chestnut-hued tweed trousers, materialized at the apartment door.

With cautious glances cast about him, clutching a carbide lamp, he made his way along the street's shadowy cloak towards the Underground Trier entrance a stone's throw away. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Lumian bore witness as a living statue, observing the retreating illumination of Monsieur Ive's lamp until it was swallowed by darkness.

Several minutes later, with no signs of official Beyonders tailing Monsieur Ive, Lumian arose, dusted off his attire, and crossed the Avenue du Marché towards the hidden stone staircase leading underground.

Lumian did not attempt to follow him. First and foremost, he had no source of light; his only candles were those used in ritualistic magic, their scent too conspicuous. Second, he lacked knowledge about Monsieur Ive's true capabilities, his motives for venturing into Underground Trier, or the extent of power he might command.

Retracing a few steps, Lumian melted into the shadow of a nearby building's pillar, shrouding himself in the comforting dark.

A tedious wait ensued. As midnight loomed, the blue radiance of the carbide lamp punctuated the darkness at the underground entrance.

The elongated shadow of Monsieur Ive once again graced the scene.

Just as he came to the bottom of the stone staircase, Lumian tugged

his cap lower over his eyes and stepped forward, barking out, “This is a hold-up!”

The strategy behind this sudden ploy was to gauge Monsieur Ive’s strength. Should the landlord be a formidable force, Lumian suspected he would merely dismiss the mugger with lethal efficiency. In that case, Lumian would have the opportunity to make a swift exit, his greatest risks being some minor injuries and a dent in his pocket.

If, however, Monsieur Ive failed to exhibit significant ability, the faux robbery would quickly morph into a real kidnapping. Lumian would then corner the landlord in a remote pocket of the Underground Trier, demanding answers about his secretive behavior around Room 504’s tenant and his nocturnal trips to the underground world.

At Lumian’s gruff demand for a ‘hold-up,’ Monsieur Ive visibly flinched.

Seeming to accept his fate, he pulled out a worn brown leather wallet, extracting a single silver coin valued at 1 verl d’or.

An unexpected surge of avarice flooded Lumian at the sight of the silver coin. Its intricate design, with the cherubic relief on the surface and radiating lines, drew him in.

Almost against his will, he found his right hand reaching out to snatch the coin from Monsieur Ive. With a swift pivot, he spun on his heel and took off, playing the part of a robber to perfection.

Five or six steps into his escape, a niggling thought started to bother Lumian.

What sort of robber would flee after pilfering a solitary 1 verl d’or coin?

And why did I even seize the coin?

Lumian’s senses abruptly reignited. Channeling Dancer’s agility, he made a forceful twist of his frame and skidded to a halt.

He noticed Monsieur Ive was also on the run.

The landlord of Auberge du Coq Doré darted across Avenue du Marché and made a beeline for Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Lumian, originally preparing to pursue, abruptly dropped his pace.

Monsieur Ive, now a victim of robbery, didn't aim for the sanctuary of his home nor the aid of law enforcement in the bustling market district. Instead, he elected for the theater, situated at an angle from his dwelling!

Could it be that he perceived a more effective guard there? Lumian's brow furrowed in contemplation.

Then, within the span of a heartbeat, he spun around and resumed his faux robber's role.

He was anxious that Monsieur Ive might rally a force capable of reclaiming his pilfered silver coin.

Given Monsieur Ive's infamous miserliness, such a response was within the realm of possibility!

Although Lumian was not particularly concerned about losing a single verl d'or, getting caught would undoubtedly unmask his identity.

Exiting Avenue du Marché, he nonchalantly flipped the silver coin to a destitute vagabond dozing at the street's edge.

At the metallic ring, the man's eyes flickered open, resting on the gleaming piece nestled under the nearby lamplight.

Once back on Rue Anarchie, Lumian peeled off his cap and coat, tucking them under his arm as he resumed his leisurely stride.

His test had confirmed his suspicions: Monsieur Ive was no ordinary man. He possessed Beyonder abilities, albeit seemingly ill-equipped for combat. He had elected to "gift" a silver coin to an apparent burglar and retreat.

This little episode filled me with a sudden, overwhelming desire for that silver coin. A desire so fierce, I nearly abandoned my true

intentions, almost succumbing to madness… Lumian reflected on the strange encounter.

It was a sensation he recognized.

He had experienced a similar one when facing Susanna Mattise.

One filled him with paralyzing fear, the other stripped him of rational thought, substituting it with raw hatred.

The similarities of these abilities' manifestations… Could Monsieur Ive be linked to Susanna Mattise? What fate could have befallen Room 504's tenant… The Forest Fairy, the foliage, laurels… Does Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons have ties to Susanna Mattise as well? Lumian speculated as he retraced his steps to Auberge du Coq Doré.

He slipped into the underground bar to find Charlie, glass of beer in hand, belting out a tune with a few of the inn's tenants.

"We impoverished souls, dwelling in the attic…"

Catching sight of Lumian's return, Charlie excused himself and ambled over to the counter, heaving a sigh as he began,

"You wouldn't believe what transpired this afternoon. The hotel manager nicked my drinks twice, and then had the gall to say that because of Madame Alice's situation, he couldn't promote me to an official attendant. I'm stuck as a lowly handyman. How utterly odious. Just how unlucky can I get?"

Suddenly, Charlie fell silent, muttering to himself, "Unlucky, unlucky…"

After repeating it a handful of times, he glanced up at Lumian, a look of surprise registering on his face at the sight of Lumian's subtle smile.

Chapter 158 - 158 “Report”

158 “Report”

As he pondered on Ciel’s early morning warning of potential misfortune, Charlie was dumbstruck. The very afternoon he had lost the job prospect he’d been eagerly awaiting and even squandered a few verl d’or hosting a round of drinks. The thought of it all intensified the weight on his shoulders.

Ciel’s smirk hit him, and Charlie’s voice instinctively dropped to a hush.

“You can predict the future?”

His forecast had hit the mark with uncanny precision!

“Didn’t I tell you? Just a wild guess,” Lumian stated, his lie rolling smoothly off his tongue.

Yet, it wasn’t entirely untruthful. It was more an educated guess, based on the luck patterns he’d perceived. It was akin to devising the method after having the final answer.

Charlie’s expression reflected his disbelief, yet he didn’t challenge the claim. Instead, he asked hopefully, “Has my run of bad luck ended?”

Lumian turned, his focus shifting, and his eyes growing stormy.

His face soon mirrored the seriousness of his thoughts.

Charlie, witnessing Ciel’s shift in demeanor, felt his pulse quicken and his mouth go arid with anxiety.

“What, what’s going on?”

Lumian pressed his lips together before stating, “You’re in for a

disaster."

Charlie's countenance faltered, his complexion turning pale, a stark contrast to its earlier flush.

Lumian chuckled.

"Just pulling your leg. You may not have the best luck for a while, but you won't be particularly ill-fated either."

It suggested that even if the issue with Susanna Mattise hadn't been entirely handled, it wouldn't escalate any time soon.

Charlie couldn't quite grasp Lumian's words. "Really?"

"It's a tall tale! Believe it if you wish. No skin off my back if you don't," Lumian remarked, ordering a glass of absinthe fennel with a dismissive smile.

Lumian's nonchalant demeanor helped Charlie breathe easy. He nestled onto the bar stool next to him, sipping his rye beer.

"I had thought the whole situation wasn't quite done yet."

That's not out of the question… Lumian made no effort to unnerve Charlie further.

Charlie's gaze fell on the bar top as he murmured, "You know, in that moment, I wished to be a lowly handyman and leave the market district ASAP."

Lumian glanced his way.

A raw bitterness bared itself on Charlie's face.

Lumian suggested further, "You might as well pay a visit to the nearest Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral and pray more.

"And by the way, I dined with our landlord, Monsieur Ive, today. He seemed a bit odd when Room 504 came up in our chat, almost as if he knows something about the previous tenant but isn't keen on sharing."

Charlie froze for a moment before comprehending Ciel's reference.

He lowered his voice again. "The one who hung that woman's portrait?"

Lumian confirmed with a slow, assertive nod.

Charlie stayed quiet for a beat before muttering, "Does that woman have any ties to Monsieur Ive? Does he suspect something off about the portrait? I-I should inform the authorities. I'll head to the nearest cathedral at dawn and speak to the priest…"

Not bad. A few days under my wing and you're much sharper than Louis from the Savoie Mob. You caught my hint right away… Lumian raised his glass, taking a sip of the visually appealing green liquid.

Lumian was not well versed in the details of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, hence the severity of the problem was a mystery to him. Any self-led investigation would take at least a couple of weeks to gather any meaningful information. Even then, he might not possess the means to tackle it. As such, his best course of action was to alert the authorities from the get-go, allowing them to take the reins.

Once he'd reached a decision, Charlie shot a covert glance at Pavard Neeson, who was engrossed in the art of mixology. Confirming that he had the man's undivided attention, he leaned in and whispered to Lumian, "If they query the source of my information, what should I say?"

"Just tell them that it cropped up during our chat," Lumian responded candidly.

With Charlie previously singing his praises, the police in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman were aware that Auberge du Coq Doré had fallen under Ciel's jurisdiction. Thus, it was only a matter of time before Ciel and Monsieur Ive, the landlord, crossed paths over a meal and some idle chatter.

When the time came, the official Beyonders could make casual inquiries and ascertain that all was in order. They would have no

reason to cast suspicion upon Lumian.

“Alright.” Charlie’s demeanor noticeably relaxed.

Lumian savored another sip of his La Fée Verte before posing a question, “Which of the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob do you know?”

Charlie had previously alluded to the leaders of the Savoie Mob, the Poison Spur Mob, and several other smaller gangs having a certain notoriety in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman—enough to frighten the youngsters.

“What are you scheming?” Charlie’s countenance lit up with excitement.

“I intend to ask them a question or two,” Lumian chose to frame it in the most courteous manner possible.

Charlie’s enthusiasm dipped a notch, realizing he wouldn’t be privy to any spectacle.

“Besides Margot, I know of two others. One’s ‘Hammer’ Ait. He was a regular at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, but he’s been frequenting Rue Anarchie of late. Then there’s Harman, sans any nickname. I’ve observed Margot in his company on multiple occasions, showing him considerable deference. He’s bald, by the way.

“The head honcho of the Poison Spur Mob is ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger. He appears to reside somewhere on Avenue du Marché…”

Garnering Margot’s respect implies Harman’s status and power within the Poison Spur Mob superseded his… Perhaps “Hammer” Ait has taken control of Salle de Gristmill and Rue Anarchie, hence his regular appearances here? Lumian pondered, setting his sights on “Hammer” Ait.

His plan was to shadow the gang leader over the ensuing days, familiarizing himself with his routines and behaviors. Should he fail to locate Wilson in due course, he would contemplate making an example of Ait.

After emptying his glass of absinthe, Lumian and Charlie made their way upstairs.

Upon reaching Room 207, Lumian noticed a wooden crate, adorned with the black-painted emblem of the Savoie Mob—a bullet and a dirk—placed near the entrance.

Could it be the ingredients sent by Louis? Lumian stooped to pick up the crate, subsequently unlocking the door to the room.

As he flipped open the lid, the foul stench of bird droppings wafted up from a dark stone, accompanied a pair of eyeballs, bloodshot and haunting, and a poison sac, securely encased within a glass jar.

…

Avenue du Marché was bathed in a yellowish glow thanks to the gas lamps.

Ive, the landlord of Auberge du Coq Doré, was guiding someone towards a vagrant, slumbering soundly with eyes tightly shut.

“Here lies my silver coin!” he pronounced. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The person behind him threw a skeptical glance towards the sleeping tramp and queried, “Did he rob you?”

“Absolutely not,” Ive replied with firm conviction. “The differences in height, physique, even clothing are too significant.”

“A robber that tosses stolen loot to a tramp… this situation is undeniably peculiar.” The figure, teetering on the edge of the lamp’s glow, nodded in near imperceptibility. “We must remain vigilant, prepared for unforeseen complications or potential investigations.”

Ive simply grunted his agreement, grumbling under his breath, “Had he not cast my silver coin to this vagrant, we could have traced him directly.”

He possessed the unique capability to sense the location of his possessions, but only for a limited time.

…

The following morning found Lumian holed up in Auberge du Coq Doré, engrossed in Aurore's grimoire.

He needed to keep an eye on "Hammer" Ait and his cohorts, which meant altering his study routine to the morning. These gangsters only made their appearance in the afternoon, and their nightly escapades ended in the early morning hours.

Charlie had left at dawn for the closest Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral. Upon his return, his calm demeanor was underscored by a radiant smile; he seemed to have found a source of solace and received validation.

As the clock approached noon, Lumian stowed his grimoire and ambled over to Avenue du Marché. He positioned himself a short distance from Monsieur Ive's apartment and the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, hoping to witness any activity from the official Beyonders.

The streets were bustling as usual, the shops brimming with activity, and carriages weaving in and out. Yet, none bore any hints of the recent events.

After observing for some time, Lumian was about to seek out a restaurant to satiate his hunger when he spotted Monsieur Ive in the distance.

Still clad in his faded formal suit and chestnut tweed trousers, donning a gray wide-brimmed hat, and grasping a black cane, he made his way towards his apartment.

The official Beyonders haven't made their move yet? Lumian contemplated briefly before crossing Avenue du Marché to intercept the landlord.

"Good afternoon, Monsieur Ive. Out on an errand?" he greeted, all smiles.

Monsieur Ive looked slightly disoriented before scrutinizing Lumian, a touch of trepidation in his gaze.

“I’d something to attend to at the police station.”

So, the official Beyonders roped in Monsieur Ive through the police station, but delegated the interrogation to someone with the required abilities? Lumian surmised the situation, albeit with a lingering query: The officials didn’t uncover that Monsieur Ive possessed Beyonder powers?

Lumian responded with a gentle nod and a reassuring smile.

“Is there something I could assist you with?”

“No need,” Monsieur Ive responded, his tone veering between guarded and resistant.

He gestured towards the beige apartment.

“I need to get home.”

In an effort to not arouse any suspicion, Lumian made no further attempts to detain or probe him.

As Monsieur Ive walked away, Lumian was left behind, a slight furrow marking his brow.

Looking back at their brief exchange, nothing seemed off. Yet, certain details felt out of place, leaving him with a peculiar sensation.

On impulse, Lumian shifted his focus to the retreating figure of Monsieur Ive, attempting to gauge his recent string of luck.

It seemed pretty ordinary; nothing too fortunate or adverse.

Nonetheless, Lumian found his suspicion intensifying rather than alleviating.

During their dinner the previous night, Lumian had instinctively assessed Monsieur Ive’s luck.

It had leaned towards the unfortunate end of the spectrum!

And now, in a span of a day, his luck had taken a turn for the better.

What could've transpired? Lost in thought, Lumian sauntered down Avenue du Marché, his hands nonchalantly tucked into his pockets.

Chapter 159 - 159 Savage

159 Savage

The tide of fortune seems to have taken a turn for Monsieur Ive…

His handling of the robbery the previous night must have laid bare his secret, especially in the face of a disguised Beyonder masquerading as a police officer…

Had they sniffed out something amiss and laid a trap in anticipation?

The gears in Lumian's head whirred ever faster, his growing suspicion suggesting that his 'robbery' attempt on Monsieur Ive had alerted the man and his unseen benefactors.

Still, he couldn't verify any peculiarity regarding the landlord without attempting some sleuthing.

Realizing the eyes of the figure at the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons could be upon him, Lumian abandoned the thought of paying a 'visit' to Monsieur Ive, making a hasty exit from Avenue du Marché.

An urgency overwhelmed him to execute the Prophecy Spell in order to unravel some of the mysteries plaguing him.

…

Within the confines of Quartier de l'Observatoire, near the subterranean cemetery, warmed by a flickering bonfire, Lumian spotted Osta Trul's peculiar stance. "Did you manage to procure the items I asked for?"

Osta responded with a genuine grin, "Indeed. The entrails of a lynx, tongue of a hyena, marrow of a stag, and some gray henbane. It all amounts to 5 verl d'or. Including the reward you pledged, it comes to

20 verl d’or.”

Per their agreement, Lumian was to hand him an extra 5 verl d’or for each item. But, noticing the sum worth of the items was only 5 verl d’or, Osta’s conscience wouldn’t allow him to charge full price, hence the discount.

Lumian didn’t mind. The arrangement saved him a great deal of time.

Naturally, he didn’t push to pay more, handing Osta a sum of banknotes amounting to the quoted price of 20 verl d’or.

The four items were contained in either modest glassware or small wooden boxes and cloth bags. Lumian inspected them individually before sliding them into his pocket.

His gaze once again fell on Osta Trul. “Any further insights on the aquatic monster?”

Osta nodded. “Indeed.”

His expression bore a plea for affirmation.

“In my effort to gather more information about the aquatic monsters, I even ventured into the underground river myself. Regrettably, the ground was treacherous, and I ended up taking a tumble.”

He pulled up his sleeve, revealing the distinct marks of his slip on his forearm.

So that’s why his posture seemed off… If I hadn’t requested Osta to gather information on the aquatic monster, would he have avoided the injury? Yet I only enlisted him after foreseeing an imminent accident. What could have transpired if I had rescinded? A feeling of inevitability wrapped Lumian.

He was also a pawn in the game of destiny, his actions and will embedded in the luck he sensed.

Lumian curtailed his musing and responded with a light chuckle.

“I did advise you to be cautious.”

The recollection of Ciel's warning for the upcoming days suddenly sprung to mind.

Did it manifest so rapidly? Is his divination prowess truly this potent? Amid his astonishment, Osta queried, "You divined I would be injured within the next two days?"

What Sequence does Ciel belong to?

Not only does he appear combat-savvy, but his divination skills are impressive!

A grin played at the corners of Lumian's mouth.

"It's not divination."

He held back further explanation, leaving Osta to his own conjectures.

Seeming to take the hint, Osta didn't press further. Instead, he shifted the conversation back to the aquatic monster.

"I've been able to piece together the whispers and conjecture, and it seems there are three kinds of aquatic monsters in the underground river:

"The first appears to be a drowned corpse, bloated and eerily pale. The second resembles a grotesquely mutated fish, standing nearly as tall as a man, covered in sturdy scales that seem impervious to harm. The third bears an uncanny resemblance to strands of black hair floating atop the water, only to suddenly reach out and ensnare the unwary souls on the banks, dragging them under.

"These aquatic monsters, however, aren't particularly formidable. Most of their attacks on humans end in failure, which accounts for the abundance of tales and rumors.

"They're an elusive lot. Sometimes seen two or three times a month, sometimes they disappear entirely. I ventured down there last night myself, but aside from my unfortunate slip, I found no trace of them."

Lumian scoffed at this, saying, "With your level of combat prowess, I

wouldn't bet on your return if you ran into one of them."

Osta only managed a sheepish smile in response, not deigning to refute the comment.

The only reason he dared to venture there was due to the aquatic monsters' reputed weakness and his own divination.

Lumian's brow furrowed in contemplation. Given the aquatic monsters' record, any Beyonder team from the two Churches or Bureau 8 could effortlessly eradicate them. So, why were they still prevalent?

If the underground river concealed a greater peril, any poor soul encountering the aquatic monster should have no chance of escape.

As these thoughts spun in his mind, Lumian took the materials Osta Trul had provided and carefully concealed them between a pair of nearby rocks.

He was cautious, thinking that should he engage in a heated battle with the aquatic creature in the future, these delicate items might get damaged.

Afterward, Lumian handed Osta a 5 verl d'or note.

"This is for your insights about the aquatic monsters."

Lumian picked up his carbide lamp and, following Osta's instructions and the tunnel signs, began his journey towards the underground river.

A few moments of hesitation later, Osta quickly rose, grabbing his own carbide lamp and hurriedly following Lumian.

Upon hearing the rapid footsteps, Lumian spun around, his puzzled gaze landing on Osta.

Osta managed a strained smile and said, "I'll come with you. I might be of some assistance."

"You?" Lumian couldn't veil his incredulous disdain.

Osta cleared his throat before divulging his actual motive.

“The aquatic monster is a spiritual being. It’s improbable that you’ll want everything. I-I’m hoping to scavenge what you leave behind.”

If fortune smiled upon him and he found a buyer for the parts, he could make a tidy sum of more than ten verl d’or!

Lumian merely stared at Osta, letting the tension build before finally breaking into a grin.

“You’re welcome to tag along, but don’t expect me to play your bodyguard.”

From what he could discern, Osta’s luck was veering away from a bloody end and instead showing promise of a minor financial windfall.

Essentially, if Osta joined him on this underground river expedition, it implied that the hunt might be relatively safe and potentially lucrative.

Of course, Lumian couldn’t be entirely sure that his decision wouldn’t sway the course of Osta’s luck.

“No problem.” Osta replied, devoid of apprehension.

In his mind, he’d merely be tailing Ciel from a distance. If they happened to encounter an aquatic monster, he’d simply keep a wider berth. The threat to his own life seemed minimal at best.

Osta’s unwavering resolution prompted Lumian to study him a moment longer.

Seeing that his luck hadn’t shifted, Lumian lifted his gaze, picked up his carbide lamp and resumed his journey forward.

In a way, having someone like Osta trailing behind had its benefits.

Sometimes, the art of fishing required bait. On other occasions, in the face of a formidable monster, one needn’t outrun the beast. One just needed to outpace their so-called allies!

The two of them ventured deeper into the subterranean world, each step guided by the flickering light of their carbide lamps.

After roughly ten minutes, they were engulfed by an escalating humidity, and Lumian could discern the faint murmur of flowing water.

He held his lamp aloft, casting an eye over the tunnel signage before veering into a pathway shrouded in darkness to his right.

Soon, the telltale shimmer of water, distorted by the lamp's radiance, beckoned ahead.

Lumian approached the underground river with caution.

It stretched five to six meters wide, ensconced beneath a naturally-formed stone dome peppered with stalactites. The water was relatively clear, meandering through the carved gullies.

Apart from a scattering of moss, Lumian detected no signs of life at first glance.

Osta had already ceased advancing, observing from a safe distance as the dangerous Beyonder meticulously combed through the riverside.

The pair maintained a distance of over ten meters, sporadically progressing and halting.

Fifteen minutes elapsed, and Lumian's search bore no fruit.

Half an hour passed, and the situation remained unchanged.

As the path ahead began to constrict, Lumian's keen eye spotted some anomalies.

By the riverbank, several rocks lay scattered, their edges tinged with soil.

A struggle here? This thought nudged Lumian's heart as he cautiously neared the area. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

He crouched down, setting the carbide lamp aside and examined the

vicinity with careful scrutiny.

Soon enough, he discovered a pair of footprints and signs of something being dragged away.

Yet, where these traces led, the river flowed transparent and calm. The riverbed was clearly visible and bore no hint of lurking dangers.

Drip. A solitary droplet of liquid landed on Lumian's nape.

It was chilly and adhesive.

An immediate sense of peril overwhelmed Lumian. Without delay, he jerked his head upwards.

In the cavernous interlude between stalactites, a glistening figure of grayish-white writhed.

Its head resembled a python, the body slick with scales akin to a fish. From where fins should have been, emerged two arms and a single leg, eerily human-like.

The monster's mouth gaped open, unveiling a neat row of ferocious white teeth. From its mouth corner dripped a viscous and foul-smelling liquid.

In the following heartbeat, the monster pounced, soaring towards Lumian.

Crouched on the ground, Lumian tumbled backwards.

Simultaneously, his body coiled like a spring, catapulting his right leg upwards in a swift whip-like motion.

With a satisfying crack, Lumian, teetering on the brink of falling, landed a solid kick on the airborne monster who failed to evade the strike, hurling it towards the opposing stone wall.

Crash!

The monster collided with the rocky facade.

Lumian was back on his feet, charging at his opponent with the feral urgency of a cheetah.

As the monster slid off the wall, Lumian's form was mirrored in its muddy yellow eyes.

Lumian reached out, seizing its arm.

The monster didn't evade but opened its palm to welcome the assault.

Each of its digits sprouted sharp scales, glinting ominously with a deep blue sheen.

Without warning, Lumian twisted his elbow and flicked his wrist, clasping the monster's wrist with both hands to thwart the menacing blue scales.

He then extended his right foot, sweeping away the monster's lone leg.

With just one leg, the monster was powerless to resist. Its only option was to harness Lumian's grip on its wrist to propel itself upward, its solitary leg trailing behind and its monstrous maw leading the charge, ready to devour Lumian's entire head.

At this critical moment, Lumian relinquished his hold, lowered his stance, and rolled towards the stone wall.

Thud!

The aquatic monster landed heavily behind him.

In a fluid motion, Lumian swiveled, snatching the monster's leg. Channeling his strength from the core, he swung it towards the stone wall.

Crash!

The monster's skull crumpled upon impact.

Lumian didn't pause. He maintained his swinging momentum,

battering the monster against the pillar, the wall, and the floor, with dark red blood and pale yellow fluid splattering everywhere.

Amid the pounding sounds, craters formed on the stone wall, and the monster's skull started to fragment, the contents spilling out in a gruesome red tide.

More than ten meters away, Osta Trul stood agape, utterly mesmerized by the violent spectacle.

How savage!

Incredible!

Thump! Lumian unceremoniously dropped the mutilated, lifeless aquatic monster onto the ground.

Chapter 160 - 160 Pervert

160 Pervert

Osta Trul had never questioned Ciel's competence in tackling the aquatic monster, yet the ruthless efficiency with which he dispatched it caught him off guard.

It felt much like witnessing an adult landing a blow on a child.

A persistent inquiry bobbed to the surface of Osta's thoughts.

To what path and Sequence could Ciel possibly belong?

Why could he engage in combat and appear to wield formidable prophetic capabilities?

Within a region speckled by dark-crimson and dull-golden symbols, Lumian crouched, brandishing his ceremonial silver dagger. He slid the blade into the monster's open wound, cleaving through its flesh, and deposited it in the hollow timber container prepared earlier.

Once two containers brimmed with the monster's flesh and scales casting a dim cerulean glow, he uncapped a metallic flask and began collecting the monster's blood that burbled ceaselessly.

Witnessing this, Osta methodically closed the gap between him and the vanquished monster, lingering nearby.

Before too long, Lumian rose, pivoted, and retraced his steps.

Scrambling, Osta hastily crouched and started amassing blood, scales, and what he believed to be spiritually rich organs.

His gaze frequently darted to Lumian, who was steadily increasing his distance, showing no signs of halting for Osta.

A sense of unease began to seep into Osta.

After all, Ciel had dispatched the aquatic monster with terrifying ease. Given his earlier performance, Osta feared that Ciel could also eliminate him without much effort. Should he remain alone by this subterranean river in the depth of the darkness, and should another monster be lured by the scent of blood, he would find himself in dire straits!

With a sense of urgency, Osta hastily stowed the harvested materials, not daring to dawdle. Fighting the temptation to salvage more of the monster's remains, he left a good 90% behind and hurried after Lumian.

As their carbide lamps winked out at the tunnel's end, darkness reclaimed the area, save for the perpetual whisper of water.

After an indeterminate time had passed, a group of thrill-seeking university students made their way through the cavernous labyrinth, kerosene lanterns in hand.

They discovered a partially collapsed stone wall and a pathway disordered and fragmented.

Apart from that, all was serene and silent. Not a trace of the aquatic monster or blood stains were found.

…

Having bid Osta Trul adieu, Lumian found himself a seat in a public carriage, bound for Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Retrieving the remainder of his ingredients from Auberge du Coq Doré's Room 207, he grasped his carbide lamp and plunged once more into the realm below ground.

As Lumian descended from the floor, mimicking the surface world, his pace slackened.

Under the glow of the carbide lamp, he noticed fresh, evident footprints marking the slightly damp path. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Heavy footprints… Lumian studied them for a moment, voicing his puzzlement.

From the looks of these prints, he concluded that the passerby must've weighed upwards of 100 kilograms, or been shouldering something hefty.

Who could it be? An underworld smuggler? Lumian had his suspicions, but he didn't intend to tail them.

Trier's subterranean labyrinth was brimming with people. Obsessing over each footprint would only exhaust him.

Besides, the other party had no quarrel with him. Provided they didn't interfere with his upcoming ritual magic, he had no concern even if he was ready to ensure their silence.

Turning the lamp's dial, Lumian tempered the reaction between carbide and water, thus dimming the flame's intensity and casting less light.

He was concerned that the maker of the footprints was near, and might detect the bright light closing in from behind.

Continuing his journey, Lumian suddenly halted, nose twitching.

He detected a familiar aroma.

A musky perfume designed to awaken masculine desires, intermingled with a citrus hint.

After a brief moment of mental rifling, Lumian identified the scent's owner.

Little Minx Jenna, the Showy Diva!

Could these be her footprints? Preposterous. Surely she doesn't weigh more than 100 kilograms? She's not cast of iron! Besides, the prints were clearly a man's… Lumian mulled over two possibilities.

Either Jenna is adept at concealing her tracks, leaving no corresponding marks, or she's been hoisted by a man…

It's quite ordinary for two individuals collectively to exceed 100 kilograms…

Judging by the footprints, the man stands between 1.65 and 1.7 meters tall. His gait seems slightly peculiar…

As Lumian turned this over in his mind, his brow furrowed.

Piqued by curiosity, he resolved to tail the trail and ascertain what predicament Jenna had stumbled upon, or rather, what scheme she was brewing.

It was crucial to note that this Showy Diva was suspected of being Franca's paramour. Her entanglement might reveal a clandestine secret of the Savoie Mob.

This could potentially provide Lumian, who was pursuing "loftier heights," with an opportunity.

Lowering the carbide lamp's intensity further, he hoped that once switched off, the flame would snuff out promptly.

Sticking to the tunnel's shadows, he tracked the footprints, vigilantly gauging the distance. Should anything go awry, he was ready to extinguish the light.

As the footprints appeared increasingly fresh, as though only moments old, he extinguished the carbide lamp and ventured forward in the darkness, relying on his memorized path.

Before he knew it, Lumian had reached a divergence in the path, a faint blue light emanating from the stone wall's end on his left side.

Slipping his black gloves on, Lumian inched closer, a wraith in the shadows.

The blue light radiated from a small cave nestled at the end of the stone wall.

Stationed against the stone, Lumian tucked himself into the shadow's embrace, craning his neck ever so slightly to catch a glimpse of what lay within.

At the cave's heart, a rather primitive iron-black carbide lamp sat in a relatively flat expanse.

Nearby, a capacious bag of grayish-white fabric bulged, seemingly at its full capacity.

A man loomed beside the bag, adorned in a blue cap, a common tweed suit of brown that one would see in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, with a linen shirt peeking out from beneath his darker jacket.

The man's breathing was noticeably labored. Standing nearly 1.7 meters tall, his side profile revealed a thin and slightly worn countenance, his brown eyes ablaze with unmasked desire.

Lumian's gaze dropped, registering the man's arousal.

He inwardly chided, Impatient, aren't we? No wonder he was lagging. That explains the irregularity in his footprints.

Lumian grew more convinced that the bag concealed none other than Jenna, the Little Minx.

She must have fallen prey to a kidnapper and rapist.

The man proceeded to remove his cap, casting it aside as his heavy panting echoed through the cave.

His countenance was laid bare before Lumian.

His eyebrows, pale and disordered, were sparse. His eyes sagged slightly at the corners. His nose was a hint of red at the tip, and his mouth bore dry, cracked lips. His complexion was a shade too pale, betraying signs of fatigue and exertion.

The man squatted, loosening the bag's ties, revealing its contents.

Lumian's intuition proved correct—it was indeed Jenna, the "Showy Diva."

Her customarily tied brownish-yellow hair was in disarray, cascading over her body. Her eyes were sealed shut, framed by a layer of deep

shadows. Adorned in a white blouse and a beige fluffy short skirt, it was unclear whether she had lost or hadn't yet donned her mole.

As the man drew Jenna from the bag, his breathing was so labored that Lumian could discern it effortlessly, even if he wasn't a Hunter.

Such a strong desire… bordering on the perverse… Lumian found himself thinking this almost subconsciously.

Stumbling upon such a scenario, he resolved to come to Jenna's aid while he was here. If the Savoie Mob's boss ever considered appointing a new leader, "Red Boots" Franca might vouch for him.

But a hasty rescue wasn't on his agenda. Lumian intended to observe further, ascertain whether the man possessed any unique abilities that emboldened him to cross a leader of the Savoie Mob, "Red Boots" Franca.

He would swoop in once the man was mid-stripping, incapacitated in his haste.

If only I had a long-range weapon. This wouldn't be such a chore… Lumian heaved a sigh, pondering on getting the Savoie Mob to supply him with a firearm.

The man's hands found their way to Jenna's face, patting it lightly twice.

Next, he withdrew a small metal bottle, unscrewing the cap and brought it to Jenna's nose.

Achoo!

A sneeze jolted Jenna awake, her eyes fluttering open.

The man's visage reflected in her wide blue eyes, sparking alarm. An instinctive urge to rise seized her.

But in the next moment, she registered the absence of strength in her body, rendering resistance futile.

"Damn you, dog sh*t, what do you think you're doing?" Jenna

mustered enough strength to spit out the words.

A twisted smile spread across the man's face.

"Do you know? I've watched you sing countless times. Each time, the desire to tear away your clothing and have you perform solely for me is overwhelming."

Jenna hurled back, her voice seething with rage, "You lunatic, a bastard who deserves being f*cked by a donkey! You're done for! The Savoie Mob will have you sleeping with the fishes!"

The man remained silent, his brown eyes gleaming with a peculiar light.

Jenna's cheeks flushed crimson, and her breathing grew shallow.

Her body twitched involuntarily, her eyes widening in shock at her own reaction.

"This is just perfect. Not only a hint of resistance but a subconscious acquiescence too…" The man stood up, brimming with anticipation, rapidly disrobing his clothes, trousers, and shoes.

Lumian, observing from his hidden spot, felt a sudden jolt of alarm.

Jenna's reaction is abnormal! Could she be under the influence of some Beyonder power?

Did every human and dog in Trier have access to Beyonder powers?

Has Jenna been coerced into arousal? This… This bears an uncanny resemblance to Susanna Mattise and Monsieur Ive's act…

Lumian's thoughts spiraled as he drew out the ritual silver dagger, tucking it into his right pocket with the blade pointed inward and the hilt pressing against the outer cloth.

Lowering his body, he silently moved from the stone wall into the cave, stealthily approaching the man from the shadow's edge.

The man's attention was fully riveted on Jenna. His eyes blazed with

a fanatic light, his face twisted into a perverse grin. As he worked his belt loose and shed his trousers, his gaze roved over Jenna's form.

Emerging from the shadows, Lumian sprang forth like a cheetah on the prowl.

Chapter 161 - 161 Special Traits

161 Special Traits

It was only when Lumian sprung from the darkness that the man—his gaze fixated solely on Jenna—realized the invasion of his secluded lair.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Lumian stormed in, raining a barrage of fists, elbows, knees, and feet upon the intruder.

The man was taken aback, yet not feeble. His resistance was robust, fending off blows with forearms while retreating. His chest, calves, and thighs bore the brunt of Lumian's missed strikes, but he held his ground.

With a shake of his head, his brown eyes morphed into a haunting green, casting an eerie reflection of Lumian.

Suddenly, Lumian was overwhelmed by a powerful surge of desire. Beside him, "Showy Diva" Jenna radiated a captivating allure as she strained to watch the struggle, her whole being pulsating with magnetism.

This desire exploded within Lumian like a live grenade. He ceased his assault, eyes smoldering with a reddish hue as his breaths quickened. Whirling around, he lunged towards Jenna.

Jenna sensed the abnormality and bellowed out, her voice a mix of anger and fear, "Pull yourself f*cking together!"

But her words were smothered as Lumian pinned her down.

In tandem with this action, a hard object pressed against Lumian's right side.

What was that? Reacting instinctively, his hand grazed the hilt of the ritual silver dagger he'd strategically placed for self-injury.

A vague understanding of his intent to use it flickered back into his mind.

In the next heartbeat, Lumian—now mostly irrational from his burgeoning desire—seized the handle of the silver dagger and drove it into his own flesh.

The silver tip sliced through cloth, skin, and muscle alike.

Excruciating pain thundered into Lumian's consciousness, restoring some rationality from the grips of his wild desire, allowing him to regain some lucidity.

Pretending nothing had changed, he continued his actions on Jenna, his hands wandering aimlessly.

"Are you f*cking useless? Can't even handle a pervert!" Jenna scolded, hoping to jolt her lone protector back to reality.

Seeing his opponent under control, the man hastily retrieved his own concealed dagger, preparing to strike Lumian from behind.

Just then, Lumian's hands slid and he steadied himself against the cool cave floor beside Jenna.

With a swift motion, he flexed his waist and kicked his right foot backward.

Whack!

Lumian struck, his attack to the man's groin swift and precise, akin to a whip's snap.

A guttural crunch echoed, the man's visage draining of color as pain contorted his features.

Clatter! His weapon slipped from his grasp.

Not one to squander an advantage, Lumian lunged, ensnaring his

prey in a swift embrace.

His right arm snaked up, seizing the man's head and wrenching it with an unyielding force.

Crack!

The man was granted a view of his own back, his focus mercifully diverted from the torment below.

Once his adversary's life was unequivocally extinguished, Lumian withdrew his arms and produced his ritual silver dagger. With a white bandage he had in his possession, he attended to his own wound.

He held no fear of infection—even if such an eventuality arose, his Provoker constitution would endure until the 6 a.m. of the next day.

The primary purpose of his first-aid efforts was to prevent the cave from retaining traces of blood.

Jenna, sprawled on the cold ground, mustered the strength to hoist herself up. She observed as Lumian retracted his deadly grip and the man crumpled lifelessly to the ground.

Just like that? A shiver of shock rippled through her, effectively quelling her previously stoked desires.

She was no naive observer. She had gauged the formidable, almost magical aura of that lecherous man, but he was annihilated in mere seconds by this handsome rural lad!

Barely a heartbeat—eight or nine seconds at most—had transpired before a life was extinguished.

Upon tending to his injury, Lumian collected the man's outer garments and moved towards Jenna. She blinked out of her stupor and queried curiously, "Why are you here?"

Almost reflexively, she added jokingly, "Don't say you're enamored by me and have been trailing me?"

Lumian's response was a soft chuckle as he squatted down, drawing Jenna's hands behind her back.

"What are you doing?" Jenna's voice teetered on panic.

Despite her feeble struggles, Lumian effortlessly secured her wrists using the man's shirt.

In the blink of an eye, he pulled a dark jacket over Jenna's head, blocking her sight completely.

"Dogsh*t, bastard, pervert, what do you want?" Jenna's words tumbled out, a jumble of anger, anxiety, and confusion.

Lumian dismissed her outburst. Ripping off the remaining piece of his shirt, he wadded it up and thrust it into Jenna's ears and mouth.

"Mmmmm…" Jenna was silenced.

A resignation washed over her as she thought, Fine, I'll endure this like a dog bite. As long as he doesn't kill me…

Yet, her apprehension was met with stillness. Lumian had risen, leaving her side to approach the lifeless form on the cave floor.

Upon purifying his ritual silver dagger and wiping it clean, Lumian circumnavigated the petite cave, weaving a wall of spirituality.

Next, he commenced the Summoning Dance.

His intention was to invoke a spirit via this rite!

Despite this method's efficacy falling notably short compared to traditional psychic spells, the goal of the Summoning Dance wasn't strictly spirit invocation. Nevertheless, it was far better than the alternative—doing nothing.

His spirituality melded with natural forces and diffused in every direction, but was confined within the wall of spirituality enveloping the cave.

Thus, the summoning wouldn't attract any unwanted entities.

In the midst of the chaotic, mesmerizing dance, Lumian perceived the spectral form of the man.

Drawing the ritual silver dagger, he let a droplet of blood fall, commanding the spirit to bond with him.

Almost instantaneously, Lumian was gripped by a chilling sensation as an unusual and fervent heat ignited within him. This was accompanied by an overwhelming desire for women.

Is this an actual side-effect? Does it parallel the insatiable hunger experienced with the mouth-orifice monster? Lumian made a conscious effort to avoid glancing at Jenna, who was now bound and blindfolded, as he noted his newly acquired “head.”

Since the man had recently perished, his other “head” was saturated with lingering emotions such as lust, pain, fury, loathing, and the instinctive urge to utilize his distinctive traits. Also present were traces of obsessions and the most profound memories.

Analyzing the situation, Lumian understood that this pervert possessed far more abilities and traits than the mouth-orifice monster.

“Inciting avarice in others;

“Becoming miserly and greedy, able to detect items that once belonged to him;

“Stimulating others’ appetites;

“Maintaining a robust and healthy physical state;

“Existing in perpetual hunger and thirst;

“Constantly utilizing mental faculties to augment strength, reflexes, agility, and resilience;

“Employing one’s gaze, speech, and actions to subtly induce a measure of lust in the target.

“Through direct contact and spell-like abilities, the target will

experience varying degrees of lust.

“Preparing rape drugs and the like.

“Differentiating hormonal information of various individuals…”

Did Monsieur Ive utilize the first one? This pervert is indeed connected to Monsieur Ive and Susanna Mattise… A constant state of hunger and thirst. No wonder he targeted Jenna and dared to abduct her. Can this be categorized as a negative effect? Indeed, Jenna may not be his first victim… Lumian didn’t select any specific trait. He was limited to general observations of the spectral companion and was unable to comprehend any of the more nuanced abilities.

Lumian made an attempt to amplify the man’s most profound memories.

Suddenly, he was in the midst of a bustling theater. On stage stood a young woman clad in a divine white dress, her deeply carved features accented by lake-like eyes, crystal clear and rippling with innocence and charm.

Charlotte Calvino… Lumian identified the woman instantly. She was the reigning star of the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt the man’s excitement, the predatory hunger within him intensifying.

However, with the crowd around, he refrained from any untoward behavior. He bolted to the lavatory as soon as the scene concluded.

As the memory faded, Lumian ceased the Summoning Dance, letting the man’s spirit withdraw from his being.

Almost immediately, he performed the Summoning Dance again, inviting the spirit to rejoin him.

This was because each possession allowed Lumian to select only one trait, one memory, or one obsession. Once chosen, it was irrevocable.

Lumian had opted for one of the spirit’s most poignant memories.

In the next instant, Jenna appeared before him, giving an overtly dramatic performance on-stage.

"…" The situation became clear to Lumian. He couldn't resist clenching his jaw and cursing, "Is there nothing else in your mind but women, women, women!"

He abandoned the idea of spirit channeling, regretting that he hadn't yet achieved the status of a Contractee, unable to forge a long-term contract with the spirit and borrow a skill. Lumian appraised the man's traits, certain that some of them would prove immensely useful in combat.

If only I could rear this spirit… Lumian sighed, conceding his present limitations.

Subsequently, he dissolved the spiritual barrier, sheathed his ritual silver dagger, and returned to Jenna. He removed the jacket shrouding her eyes and the shirt binding her hands. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Jenna winced, plucking the cloth from her mouth and ears.

She massaged her reddened wrist, throwing a skeptical look at Lumian who was busy searching the pockets of the man's clothing. She inquired, "Why did you blindfold me and block my ears earlier?"

"I was protecting you. You shouldn't see or hear what isn't meant for you," Lumian responded in a half-jesting tone, his search yielding a total of 8 verl d'or coins and three somewhat antiquated metal canisters.

Perceiving no threat from him, Jenna huffed. "What could possibly be unseen or unheard here? Unless you… you didn't… with the corpse…"

Her voice faded as she connected a few dots, roughly guessing that Lumian might have been using some power to extract information from the corpse.

Upon noticing Lumian evaluating the three metal canisters, Jenna deflected the topic and reminisced, "One of these bottles contains a

gas that knocks you out, leaving you feeble. That's how he abducted me.

"Also, another bottle has this gas, extremely foul-smelling but strangely enough, it wakes you up. Damn, that pervert deserves being f*cked by a donkey!

"I don't know what's in the remaining bottle, and I can't distinguish between the other two."

Chapter 162 - 162 Fresh Corpse

162 Fresh Corpse

Lumian crouched down, clutching the three metal canisters in his hands. He cast a glance at Jenna, a mischievous smile playing on his lips.

“I know just the way to confirm it.”

“What…” Jenna’s curiosity piqued, but soon a hint of nervousness and panic crept into her expression, triggered by Lumian’s enigmatic smile.

Unfazed by her reaction, Lumian responded with a smile of his own.

“Help me determine which canister is which,” he suggested.

“What sort of joke is this?” Jenna thought, grateful for the fact that had Lumian not saved her and aware of her own weakened state, she would have unleashed a stream of curses.

However, Lumian’s expression turned serious.

“Rest assured, if it contains the gas that knocks you out, the worst that can happen is you fainting again. I won’t harm you, and even if I wanted to, you wouldn’t be able to resist. Besides, once we ascertain which canister is which, I can use a stimulating gas to revive you and bring you back to normal.”

“If luck is on your side and you encounter the stimulating gas, you’ll regain most of your strength immediately,” Lumian added.

That makes sense. Regardless of the outcome, it can’t possibly be harmful. She was almost convinced by Lumian’s words.

However, snapping out of her daze, Jenna clenched her teeth and

voiced her concerns.

“But what if you end up selecting the other canister? We have no idea what it contains!”

If it turned out to be poisonous gas, there was no one present with the knowledge to treat her.

Lumian responded with a mocking tone, a smile still tugging at the corners of his mouth, “Are you daft? Canisters filled mostly with gas and those containing liquid have a significant weight difference!”

“This particular bottle should be filled with liquid!”

He picked up one of the metal canisters and gave it a slight shake.

He “clearly” heard the unmistakable sloshing sound of liquid inside before pocketing it.

“Is that so…” Although Jenna had been mocked, her attention was focused on the “experiment,” and anger didn’t consume her.

After a few seconds of hesitation, she closed her eyes and tilted her head slightly, determined.

“Go ahead, give it a try!”

Lumian stowed one of the metal bottles in his pants pocket, leaving only one in his grasp.

With a leisurely pace, he brought it near Jenna’s nose.

In the next moment, Jenna slowly cracked open her eyes.

In an instant, an intensely pungent odor, reminiscent of fermented excrement, assailed Jenna’s senses, causing her to sneeze repeatedly. Tears threatened to spill from her eyes, and her nose threatened to drip.

However, each sneeze served as a catalyst, restoring a significant portion of her strength. As Lumian sealed the canister and rose from his crouch, Jenna leaped to her feet, instinctively stretching her

limbs.

Jenna happily adjusted her clothing and skirt, muttering to herself, “Seems like luck is on my side!”

On her first attempt, she managed to obtain the canister with the foul-smelling gas.

But then she noticed Lumian’s playful expression.

Jenna’s heart skipped a beat, sensing that something was off.

Curiosity getting the better of her, she inquired, “Did you already know which gas canister was which from the start?”

Is that the reason he was able to accurately select the metal canister containing the pungent gas?

Lumian grinned and handed the metal canister to Jenna.

“Smell the cap for yourself.”

Jenna eyed the canister suspiciously before cautiously sniffing the bottle.

A faint odor lingered, not particularly stimulating or potent, but still unpleasant.

“The other canister has no scent,” Lumian added with a smile.

Jenna’s flushed face turned an even deeper shade of red.

She felt foolish, having believed the words of the other party and willingly taken part in the so-called “experiment.”

Any feelings of gratitude she had prepared were instantly quashed.

Ignoring Jenna’s enraged state, Lumian pocketed the 8 verl d’or banknote and marked the metal canister with a scratch before stowing it away.

Though the man possessed the ability to sense the whereabouts of items that had once belonged to him, Lumian wasn’t afraid of being

tracked since the man was already dead.

As for the function of the liquid in the remaining metal canister, he planned to test it on rats, stray dogs, and other animals.

Having completed the necessary tasks, Lumian pointed at the pervert's lifeless body and instructed Jenna, "Take a good look at him and commit his face to memory. We'll need to investigate who he is."

"He probably has accomplices."

"Alright." Jenna strode toward the corpse, earnestly engraving his face into her memory.

After observing for a while, the recent events flooded back into her mind, fueling her anger. She raised her right leg and ruthlessly kicked the pervert's groin.

Again and again, without restraint.

"Dogsh*t, pervert, damn your mother, damn your entire family!" Jenna vented her emotions to her heart's content. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Lumian winced, feeling a twinge of pain, as he lowered his head to clean up the remnants at the scene.

Once Jenna had calmed down, he approached her with a large grayish-white cloth bag. As he stuffed the corpse and clothes inside, he casually inquired, "How did he abduct you?"

Jenna smoothed her disheveled brownish-yellow hair and tied it back into a simple ponytail.

Gritting her teeth, she recounted, "I encountered him in an alley next to the Salle de Bal Brise. He claimed to be a fan of my singing and asked for an autograph. The paper he handed me was sprinkled with that odorless gas. As soon as I signed it, I sensed something was wrong and lost most of my strength.

"After that, he attacked me, restrained me, and brought the bottle to my nose. That's when I passed out."

Lumian couldn't help but mock, "Aren't you being too careless?"

Jenna didn't agree.

"I've seen him several times while singing. I was certain that he genuinely enjoyed listening to me. Otherwise, I wouldn't have given him the time of day.

"And, as an unknown singer, it's an honor to have someone ask for your autograph…

"Besides, the gas doesn't have any smell!"

How could anyone have guarded against this?

Lumian scoffed.

"That's not what I meant. It's obvious that the gas dissipates quickly on paper. It needs to be used within a short period of time to have a certain effect. In other words, that pervert has been tailing you for a while and has probably figured out your routines. Otherwise, he wouldn't have cornered you so accurately in an empty alley and tainted the paper with the gas ten to twenty seconds in advance.

"Didn't you notice despite being followed for so long?"

Jenna fell silent, at times clenching her teeth, at times frustrated.

Lumian shifted his gaze and chuckled.

It was understandable that she didn't notice. That guy could discern hormonal information from different individuals.

If it weren't for the fact that Monsieur Ive was clearly weaker than the pervert and probably hadn't mastered the power of lust, Lumian would have suspected that his identity as a "robber" had been exposed.

He resealed the grayish-white cloth bag and used it to further erase any traces at the scene. Observing this, Jenna lent him a hand.

She's quite skilled at dealing with evidence… Lumian glanced at

Jenna and left the cave with the cloth bag slung over his back, harboring some suspicions.

Due to Jenna intentionally not mentioning her unusual behavior under the influence of the pervert, Lumian believed that this Showy Diva had some understanding of the Beyonder world, or she might even be one herself.

And her source of information or power most likely stemmed from "Red Boots" Franca from the Savoie Mob.

When Lumian arrived at his hiding spot, he ignited the carbide lamp and held it in his hand, glancing back at the depths of the path.

The path descended. There was darkness in the distance,

a void that swallowed everything as it lay in wait for its prey to approach.

"What are you looking at?" Jenna asked curiously.

She sensed that Ciel was acting mysterious.

Lumian ended his gaze and smiled.

"I'm wondering where we'll end up if we keep going down. Perhaps the Trier from the Fourth Epoch?"

In reality, what he was truly pondering was:

The abnormal ability displayed just now was strikingly similar to Monsieur Ive's. If the two of them were accomplices, would they instinctively choose a familiar place in the underground world for the crime? The same underground destination where Monsieur Ive had entered that night?

If that were the case, perhaps he would uncover something if he continued down this path.

Disappointed, Jenna remarked, "That's not a good place."

Lumian remained silent as he retraced his steps along the path. Lost

in her own thoughts, Jenna followed silently, clutching the carbide lamp left behind by the pervert.

Just as he was about to reach the level that roughly replicated the layout aboveground, Lumian halted and said with a contemptuous smile, “Do you need me to escort you to the surface?”

“You’re not going back?” Jenna asked, surprised.

Lumian shrugged. “I need to find a suitable place to dispose of this corpse.”

Jenna nodded and refrained from prying further. “I can ascend on my own. I’ve been underground before.”

Does that imply you possess the means to protect yourself? Lumian watched Jenna depart with light footsteps, inwardly sighing.

Does every human and dog in Trier have access to Beyonder powers?

Is something amiss with Trier, or is something amiss with me? Why do I always encounter such individuals?

Shaking his head, he hoisted the corpse onto his back. As he dealt with the footprints, he made his way toward the hidden quarry cave where he had previously sought the boon.

Along the way, he performed two instances of anti-tracking to ensure no one was tailing him.

Upon reaching the underground quarry cave, Lumian tossed aside the grayish-white cloth bag containing the corpse and arranged the altar.

Initially, he had intended to visit the nearest hospital morgue during the night to acquire fresh corpses, but now he had a better option!

After setting up the altar, lighting the candles, and constructing a wall of spirituality, Lumian retrieved the pre-drawn faux goatskin adorned with the corresponding symbol.

The central pattern on the paper consisted of a ring formed by thorns, encircled by symbols representing eyes, curves, and rivers.

Just tracing these patterns in Room 207 had drained Lumian's spirituality.

With the faux goatskin in place, Lumian took two steps back and gazed at the flickering candles, preparing for the subsequent incantation.

In this ritual, one couldn't employ the phrase "I! I summon in my name" to beseech oneself. Instead, they had to craft a three-line description of their being and feign the role of a creature from the spirit world.

It could be done in any manner, devoid of any wielding of authority, as long as it could pinpoint the location within the wall of spirituality.

Lumian parted his lips and muttered in Hermes, "Cordu Village's Trickster King, Aurore Lee's younger brother, an entity known as Lumian Lee…"

Chapter 163 - 163 Three Questions

163 Three Questions

The flame of the orange candle, representing the focal point of the prayer, flickered as though stirred by an unseen breeze. Apart from that, it remained unaffected, maintaining its ordinary hue without any hint of transformation.

Lumian sensed an unusual pulsation deep within his soul, as if a distant cry had reached his ethereal essence.

Temporarily unable to respond, he continued to recite the incantation.

“I implore you,

“I beseech to be bestowed the Prophetic Concoction…”

In this ritualistic spell, words like “help create” couldn’t be used. It had to be “bestowed” or “gifted.”

Lumian’s spirit trembled with each uttered word, like ripples extending outward, leaving him with an unsettling sensation of both elevation and dizziness.

Taking two steps forward, he surveyed the aquatic monster’s flesh, the lizard eyes, and the gray henbane. Retrieving the faux goatskin adorned with enigmatic symbols, he positioned it atop the orange candle’s flame, symbolizing the target of his prayer.

Once the faux goatskin was ignited and placed within the natural hollow of the stone altar, Lumian meticulously gathered tulip powder and other ingredients, sprinkling them into the flames.

A peculiar fragrance swiftly permeated the ethereal barrier, causing Lumian to experience hallucinations.

He witnessed a profusion of mystical symbols adorning the faux goatskin, materializing in the void, in constant motion and reconfiguration, perpetually altering their collective form.

Lumian stepped back and scrutinized the diverse materials on the altar. In a resonant voice infused with Hermes' power, he invoked, "Tulip, a herb that belongs to inevitability, please pass your powers to my incantation!

"…"

As Lumian uttered the final word, his spirit's ripples merged, granting him the illusion that he could graze the candle's flame with a mere touch of his palm.

Simultaneously, a searing sensation ignited within his chest, accompanied by a faint hum resonating in his ears. His surroundings spun, akin to being tossed into the air and spun around repeatedly.

Guided by his spirituality, Lumian extended his right hand, pressing it toward the candle's flame.

His vision dimmed as his spirituality surged forth, intertwining with the flames.

The candle's flame promptly expanded, casting a radiant and ethereal glow upon the entire altar.

The disparate ingredients of the Prophetic Concoction, once gathered, stirred and converged. Blood churned, and shadows undulated, crafting an exceptionally sinister tableau.

Struggling to maintain a steady flow of his spiritual essence, Lumian observed the physical components fade into specters, completing their reassembly.

A dark crimson phantom, infused with silver-black tincture, materialized before him, condensing into a murky liquid.

The liquid incessantly bubbled, each burst releasing sinuous tendrils of silver-black light, reminiscent of slithering serpents.

Lumian advanced two steps, seizing a metal canister from the altar. Unscrewing its lid, he positioned it beneath the liquid's surface.

Having placed the vessel containing the Prophetic Concoction back on the altar, Lumian composed himself, preparing his mental state.

As Lumian calmed the ripples within his spirit, he recollected the entire process of the ritual.

If the thorn symbol hadn't reached a certain level of activation, elevating my status, I wouldn't have been able to respond and the endeavor would have failed… I can only perform two similar ritualistic spells consecutively… Lumian ruminated, gradually finding his thoughts settling.

Completing the five ritualistic spells required a minimum of Sequence 7, or even Contractee. Lumian, an Alms Monk of Sequence 8, could only accomplish it by relying on the corruption within his body.

Correspondingly, his spirituality couldn't endure for much longer.

After concluding the ritual and tidying the altar, Lumian dispelled the ethereal barrier and approached the grayish-white cloth bag to drag out the lifeless body.

With gentle care, he twisted the other party's head to its original position and opened the mouth.

Bathed in the glow of the blue carbide lamp, Lumian retrieved the Prophetic Concoction, unscrewed its lid, and poured the dark liquid into the corpse's mouth.

Rather than immediately permeating through the larynx, the liquid remained within, akin to a pool of water.

Suddenly, Lumian sensed the quarry's breeze turning colder, and the carbide lamp's light deepened to a richer blue.

Almost simultaneously, he heard a rumbling sound, witnessing the

corpse's throat writhe as it consumed all of the Prophetic Concoction.

In the next moment, the naked corpse sat upright, engulfed in an unnatural darkness that defied illumination.

His eyes snapped open upon his pallid, worn face. The once-brown irises had lost their color, now crystal-clear and devoid of hue.

Within the depths of those translucent eyes, layers of vibrant colors seemed to reside. A pure light hung high, countless nearly imperceptible figures, and flickering silver radiance…

Withstanding the bone-chilling cold, Lumian composed himself and inquired, "Where will Guillaume Bénet, the former padre from Cordu Village in Dariège, Riston Province, Intis Republic, appear in a month?"

During the interim, Lumian had contemplated the three questions he wished to pose.

Four primary rules governed the questioning:

First, it must pertain to the future. Inquiries regarding someone's whereabouts or past actions were forbidden.

Secondly, the description had to be precise enough, or an unanswered query would arise. The name Guillaume Bénet was commonplace in other parts of Intis. Numerous individuals shared the same name. Unless the village of origin was specified, the corpse might reveal the future fate of a different Guillaume Bénet.

Thirdly, regardless of the corpse's country of origin or familiarity with the corresponding language, it would respond in the same language as the question posed.

Lastly, a question could only contain one element requiring an answer. It could not be framed in the manner of "when and where will it be?"

The corpse's pale countenance took on a dark green tinge. It parted its lips and uttered in Intis, "Trier's Quartier de la Princesse Rouge."

The voice resonated with an illusory and ethereal quality, as if it emanated from another realm. It bore no resemblance to the deceased's living voice.

So, it can only be narrowed down to the Quartier de la Princesse Rouge? Lumian's brow furrowed slightly.

He could comprehend the reason behind it—this was not a Prophetic Concoction obtained from hidden entities. Its creator was essentially an Alms Monk, hence the effects naturally wouldn't be outstanding.

Lumian proceeded to raise his second question.

"Where will I encounter Louis Lund, the former butler of the village administrator in Cordu Village, Dariège, Riston Province, Intis Republic?"

He refrained from mentioning Madame Pualis since he was uncertain of her connection to Madame Night. He feared that her elevated status might interfere with the prophecy's accuracy.

The corpse's eyes remained vacant and translucent as it gazed ahead. It responded with an ethereal voice, "Trier's Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman Avenue du Marché."

Avenue du Marché? It seems Louis Lund's presence there isn't mere happenstance… Lumian mused, a sense of satisfaction washing over him.

As he contemplated, he noticed the strange visions reflected in the corpse's transparent eyes gradually fading. Acting swiftly, he posed his third question.

"Where will Monsieur Ive, the proprietor of Auberge du Coq Doré in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, be from 11 p.m. to 12 p.m. this Sunday?"

Having observed Monsieur Ive previously entering the underground at this time, Lumian sought to ascertain the specifics of his destination.

Considering that Monsieur Ive had recently been "robbed" and had

visited the police headquarters, he might refrain from venturing into the underground for the time being. Lumian specified the time as Sunday.

The corpse swiftly replied, “Trier’s Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.”

With that, the corpse thudded to the ground and closed its eyes once more, emanating the putrid stench of death.

Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons once again… Lumian bundled the corpse back into the cloth bag, intending to bury it even deeper underground.

… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

In front of a beige three-story building, a stubbly-bearded tramp found himself cornered by two valets beside a pillar.

“I-I’ll leave now,” he stammered, trembling.

At that moment, a man dressed as a butler approached, his face filled with surprise.

“Master, is that you? Master!”

“What?” The tramp was perplexed.

The butler couldn’t contain his excitement.

“Don’t you remember? You’re the owner of this place, and we are all your loyal servants. You suffered a head injury and lost many memories. One day, you suddenly ran away from home.

“It’s been months. I’ve finally found you! You’ve returned!”

“I’m not, I’m not…” The tramp remembered his past clearly.

However, the butler and the two valets refused to listen to his explanation. They “encircled” him and led him into the building.

“Madam, Madam, the Master has returned!” the butler shouted with

elation.

Before long, the tramp laid eyes upon an elegant and beautiful woman.

She wore a light-green dress, her eyes exuding a mature allure.

Overwhelmed with joy, she burst into tears and threw herself into the tramp's arms.

"You're back! You're finally back!"

As he inhaled the sweet scent of her perfume and felt the softness of her body against his, the tramp attempted to argue that he wasn't her husband, but the words caught in his throat.

In a daze of confusion, he was guided to the dining room. There, under a crystal chandelier, he beheld a sumptuous feast—a dozen oysters, a pot of succulent chicken, a plate of beef stewed with prunes, suet pudding, salad, and a bottle of White Elixir wine…

Simultaneously, the tramp's gaze fell upon the oil paintings adorning the walls of the dining room.

One of them was a portrait, strikingly similar to him.

Could it truly be me? But I recall every experience… Could there be another who bears my resemblance? The tramp grew even more bewildered.

After indulging in a hearty meal and savoring fine wines, he was led to the bedroom. Soon, the beautiful and elegant madam entered, dressed in a silk nightgown.

Her eyes shimmered with tears as she spoke, "Do you still remember my passion?"

The tramp's breathing quickened, and he couldn't resist taking a step forward.

The two of them embraced passionately, tumbling onto the bed, their desires overwhelming them.

In that moment, the tramp began to “believe” that he truly was the owner of this grand house. He had a beautiful wife, a professional butler, and a multitude of servants.

Even if the original master were to return, he would ensure that the other was exposed as a fraud!

…

Lumian resurfaced and entered Auberge du Coq Doré, carrying the extinguished carbide lamp.

Madame Fels, who manned the front desk, immediately stood up upon seeing him.

“Ciel—Monsieur Ciel, Baron Brignais wishes to meet you at the Salle de Bal Brise after dinner.”

Baron Brignais is seeking me? What could it be about? Lumian nodded.

Chapter 164 - 164 Intelligence

164 Intelligence

Salle de Bal Brise, the café on the second floor.

Lumian strolled over to Baron Brignais with an air of nonchalance and took a seat.

Not only did he lack any sense of deference or humility, but he also showed a blatant disregard for basic politeness, as if they were equals.

Louis, standing discreetly behind Baron Brignais, silently shook his head.

He had encountered many such individuals before, and their fate had always been the same—either handed over to the police by the Savoie Mob or gravely wounded in a violent gunfight, losing their capabilities in the process. They had no choice but to become subservient, like dogs wagging their tails, in exchange for the gang's protection. Some met their demise due to various reasons, their bodies cast into the dark recesses of the underground world or packed into wooden barrels filled with stones and thrown into the depths of the Srenzo River.

"Good evening, Baron," Lumian greeted with a disarming smile.

Baron Brignais betrayed no sign of anger on his face. He leisurely took a puff from his mahogany-colored pipe and casually inquired, "Where have you been this afternoon?"

"Underground," Lumian responded, resembling the corpse that had imbibed the Prophecy Concoction. He answered the other party's questions without any elaboration.

If “Little Minx” Jenna and “Red Boots” Franca concealed the fact that he had dispatched the pervert and saved the former, his response would have been a display of utmost candor.

Baron Brignais appeared momentarily taken aback but refrained from further probing. As he rubbed the mahogany pipe in his hand, he calmly stated, “I have a task for you.”

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire, he explained with a smile, “I hold great expectations for you. I believe you can become a crucial member of our Savoie Mob, entrusted with significant matters.

“However, my favorable opinion alone is insufficient. You must demonstrate strength that surpasses most and make contributions that garner their recognition.”

A carrot dangling before a donkey? Lumian scoffed inwardly.

Outwardly, he deliberately narrowed his eyes.

“And what might this be about?”

Baron Brignais set aside his mahogany pipe, took a sip of his coffee, and adopted a soothing tone as he spoke,

“Assault any prominent member of the Poison Spur Mob. It would be best if you inflict severe injuries. Killing them outright works too.”

Lumian chuckled.

“Just two days ago, you cautioned me against causing a commotion and provoking an all-out conflict between the Poison Spur Mob and us.

“Aren’t you concerned that such actions might transpire, ultimately leading to you becoming a target of the police headquarters?”

Although he had intended to lie in wait for the Poison Spur Mob’s “Hammer” Ait, Lumian refused to be treated as a fool by Baron Brignais.

“You are far more intelligent than those who surround me.

“For the past two days, I’ve been closely observing the Poison Spur Mob’s reactions, and it seems they have no immediate plans for revenge against you.

“What does that imply?”

“It means they’re terrified of our Savoie Mob,” Lumian replied with a jest.

It was, of course, a jest. If the Poison Spur Mob feared the Savoie Mob, they would never have grown to become the second-largest mob in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Baron Brignais shook his head.

“In the past, they would have undoubtedly retaliated, exacting a higher toll than just medical expenses from our Savoie Mob.

“Moreover, after Margot’s demise, they merely put on a show on the surface. In reality, they took no actions that would attract the police’s attention. It seemed they were searching for the true assassin amidst the chaos.

“These recurring anomalies lead me to believe that the Poison Spur Mob is preparing for something significant—something very, very important. That’s why they remain patient and restrained.

“I can’t be certain whether their forthcoming actions will impact our Savoie Mob, but we cannot idly wait for answers.”

At least you’re astute… Lumian grudgingly commended Baron Brignais within his thoughts.

With a smile, Lumian posed a question, “Are you suggesting that I eliminate their key members and observe their reactions?

“If they endure it without retaliation, it signifies a considerably grave problem. We would need to instigate a full-blown conflict and compel them to expose the issue, wouldn’t we?”

Baron Brignais chuckled.

“I enjoy conversing with clever individuals.

“So, are you willing to undertake this task?”

Though his tone appeared inquisitive, his posture, gaze, and actions left no doubt that it was an order.

Should Lumian refuse, the Savoie Mob would withdraw its protection.

Lumian chuckled.

“I require information on all the significant members of the Poison Spur Mob—names, appearances, capabilities, distinguishing traits, and whether they have immediate family or spouses…”

Louis, who stood behind Baron Brignais, was taken aback.

Why is he asking about the family members of the Poison Spur Mob leaders? Is he planning to use them?

Among Trier’s mobs, an unspoken rule prevailed—one that everyone abided by unless it was an exceptional circumstance: never target family members who weren’t involved in the mob.

Most individuals had parents, spouses, and children. If they were to abandon all moral boundaries and kill without hesitation, none would be spared. Everyone would be in jeopardy.

Secondly, dealing with the families of low-ranking mobsters held no value. However, at Baron Brignais’s level, his family remained confidential, known to only a select few. Furthermore, they resided outside Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Thirdly, those who held a certain status within the mob could be deemed ruthless. Threatening them with their families would only ignite their fury.

Fourthly, the annihilation of a family would inevitably make headlines, angering the higher-ups at the police headquarters and triggering a severe crackdown.

Thus, it was only in the process of eliminating a faction that they would confront the family of an enemy leader, avoiding the sowing of seeds of animosity and serving as a deterrent to other mobs.

What was Ciel's intention inquiring about the immediate family and wife of a crucial member of the Poison Spur Mob?

Baron Brignais gazed at Lumian for a few moments before a slow smile crept across his face.

"The boss of the Poison Spur Mob is Roger, known as Black Scorpion. He resides at 126 Avenue du Marché. I'm uncertain if he has a wife or immediate family. Even if he does, they aren't in the market district. They might not even be in Trier.

"He possesses sinister spells and magical powers. Even I wouldn't dare to confront him."

Baron Brignais seized the opportunity to caution Lumian about the formidable strength of "Black Scorpion" Roger. It was wise to avoid any designs against him, for death would be the only outcome.

Sinister spells… A Beyonder focused on spellcasting? Considering Roger's ability to subdue Margot, he must be at least a Sequence 7. He might even possess a mystical artifact or Beyonder weapon… If Beyonders of this caliber lack robust bodies or special life-preserving abilities, they may resort to traps, close-range assassinations, and other methods. If their bodies aren't weak and they excel in close combat, or if they possess a substitution spell like Leah's paper figurine, I'll have hardly any chance of victory. Unless I employ the Luck Enhancement Spell to prearrange his misfortune and make him sufficiently unlucky… Lumian's thoughts raced like lightning, fleeting as they disappeared.

He nodded and inquired, "What about the others?"

Baron Brignais took a leisurely puff on his pipe before responding,"The Poison Spur Mob once had four powerful and significant members who were slightly inferior to us in the market district. However, after Margot's demise at your hands, his replacement, Wilson, is quite feeble. Their overall strength has

greatly diminished.

“Roger’s deputy, ‘Baldy’ Harman, is one of them. Initially, he and Roger arrived in the market district, establishing the Salle de Gristmill and gradually recruiting a group of individuals to form the Poison Spur Mob.

“He’s highly skilled in combat, on par with Margot in that regard. Additionally, he possesses peculiar abilities. For instance, he can withstand a blade and only suffer minor injuries. At times, he exhibits sudden bursts of violence, as if under the influence of some drug. He can instill fear in others. Oh, and he wields a knife coated with poison.

“He’s exceedingly cruel. He doesn’t have a family or a mistress, but he takes a keen interest in women. He often dallies with street girls under the Poison Spur Mob.

“His usual residence is ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger’s house. When he seeks the company of a woman, he opts for a relatively clean motel or hotel within the market district.” Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Lumian listened attentively, gradually formulating a plan.

There’s a highly effective trap for ‘Baldy’ Harman.

Regardless of how Harman acquires such formidable defenses that only result in minor injuries after being slashed, it suggests a high probability that he’s willing to trade injuries for victory. He relies heavily on his strengths in this aspect.

If that’s the case, I can provide him an opportunity. However, Fallen Mercury will be the one to inflict those minor injuries upon him.

Even minor wounds can bleed!

Baron Brignais continued, “Most of the dancers under the Poison Spur Mob are under the supervision of Castina from Feynapotter. She was abducted to Trier and later became ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger’s mistress.

“‘Short-legged Candlestick’ was her nickname back when she worked

as a dancer, owing to her relatively petite stature."

Lumian envisioned a compact candlestick and formed a rough image of Castina in his mind.

"Castina doesn't engage in frequent fights, but she exhibits remarkable combat skills when she does. She's cold and merciless when dealing with disobedient dancers. Perhaps she's forgotten the hardships she endured," Baron Brignais remarked with a touch of gentlemanly courtesy. "She resides in an apartment at 19 Rue du Rossignol. We're unsure of the specific floor or room she occupies. She often frequents Roger's house."

What right do you have to speak of her like that? Why don't we discuss the person who became a singer at Salle de Bal Brise after her father was forced to die due to a debt? Lumian never believed that mobsters possessed a true conscience.

No matter the camaraderie, loyalty, or care they exhibited toward their peers, they were merely wildflowers adorned with mud. They essentially sought out victims among the dancers, street girls, ordinary individuals persecuted by loan sharks, and the peddlers they extorted.

Brignais proceeded to introduce the final leader of the Poison Spur Mob.

"'Hammer' Ait was originally a member of our Savoie Mob. He possessed courage, intellect, and a sturdy physique. I held him in high regard and planned to recommend him to the boss. However, he betrayed us and joined the Poison Spur Mob. He swiftly acquired Beyonder powers.

"I suspect he consumed a potion from the Warrior pathway and has already reached Sequence 8. His towering height, nearly 1.9 meters, and his conduct during conflicts lead me to this deduction.

"'Hammer' describes his fists, which possess the hardness and force of iron hammers. He typically fights unarmed, but he's also adept with a revolver and a dirk.

“He resides at 25 Rue des Pavés, adjacent to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. There is a sizable contingent of Poison Spur Mob members in that area.”

Pugilist? Will Beyonder characteristics manifest upon his demise? Lumian nodded and queried Baron Brignais,

“I also require their approximate travel patterns. Additionally, provide me with a revolver, an ample supply of bullets, and a portable weapon. A dirk, dagger, bayonet, or axe will suffice.”

“No problem. I’ll have Louis deliver them to you tomorrow morning.” Baron Brignais nodded with satisfaction.

After observing Ciel depart from the café, Louis lowered his voice and inquired, “Baron, are we truly going to let him confront the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob?”

Baron Brignais chuckled.

“Didn’t you hear my explanation earlier? I didn’t deceive him about this.

“However, the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob are not easily dealt with. Whether he struggles and requires our aid and protection afterward, or if he fails and finds himself on the brink of death, we can crush his arrogance and make him obedient.”

Chapter 165 - 165 Meeting Jenna Again

165 Meeting Jenna Again

Louis exclaimed in surprise, “What if Ciel fails and gets done in by the Poison Spur Mob?”

Baron Brignais chuckled and replied, “When has our Savoie Mob ever kept all its members?”

…

On the way back to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian found himself in quite a good mood.

Initially, he had intended to apprehend a significant member of the Poison Spur Mob, probing into their source of power and their affiliation with the wicked deity Madame Pualis worshiped. But now, the Savoie Mob had assigned him a similar task. It aligned perfectly with his desires.

This way, he not only swiftly gained detailed information about multiple targets, saving valuable time, but he could also fully utilize the Savoie Mob’s resources, such as weaponry, manpower, and connections.

A moment ago, Lumian contemplated requesting explosives from Baron Brignais, mulling over the possibility of setting a trap to blow up one of the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob.

In the end, he decided against it. Firstly, he felt it was too brazen and would attract unwanted attention from the police. Secondly, being a wanted criminal, he couldn’t afford to be investigated. Thirdly, if he obliterated his target entirely, how could he gather any information?

Of course, he could employ the Summoning Dance and the wall of spirituality to allow the deceased spirit to cling to him and enhance the memories that left the deepest imprints. However, this method was entirely unpredictable. Who knew if those individuals' minds would be as deranged as the previous pervert's? Moreover, each Summoning Dance could only amplify a single memory. If luck wasn't on his side, it could take a significant amount of time to find useful information. This contradicted his intention of swiftly departing from the scene of the assassination.

Initially, Lumian planned to deal with "Hammer" Ait, but upon hearing Baron Brignais's description, he considered "Baldy" Harman as a viable candidate as well.

Compared to Ait, Harman had notable "weaknesses" that Hunters could exploit to set traps!

His power granted him exceptional body resilience. On numerous occasions, he sustained only minor injuries despite being slashed with knives.

Lumian recalled Aurore's words: "Those skilled in swimming are prone to drowning."

In Harman's case, one could interpret it as, "Those adept at blocking weapons with their bodies are more susceptible to perishing by weapons." As for Lumian, he possessed Fallen Mercury, the Cursed Blade.

Furthermore, in comparison to "Hammer" Ait, who frequently traveled with a large entourage and resided within the Poison Spur Mob's settlement, "Baldy" Harman ventured out alone occasionally, seeking street girls and dancers. Consequently, he proved to be a simpler target for assassination. Moreover, he was closer to the core power of the Poison Spur Mob and held more secrets.

However, the conundrum arose. If Lumian were to set a trap and employ Fallen Mercury to deal with "Baldy" Harman, capturing him alive and extracting information would be impossible. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

If Lumian could overpower “Baldy” Harman after stabbing him and dragging him to a secluded corner in Underground Trier, why bother stabbing him initially?

If he couldn’t, his only recourse would be to stab the enemy and allow him to flee. Alternatively, after his escape, Lumian could await the intervention of the Montsouris ghost to “assist” in the target’s demise.

Whether this would implicate the target’s family wasn’t his concern.

Hence, the pursuit of “Baldy” Harman and “Hammer” Ait presented their respective pros and cons. Lumian was not yet able to reach a decision.

He intended to contemplate his target selection after receiving more detailed information, weapons, and ammunition from Baron Brignais the following morning.

“What’s all this?” Lumian inquired curiously as he traversed the lobby.

Weren’t these the same elderly folks peddling counterfeit street ma? tresse d’atelier photos at Suhit steam locomotive station? Why were they bringing back such a sizable bag?

Ruhr ceased pulling at the cloth bag, wiping the sweat from his forehead. He forced a smile and replied, “Don’t you know, Monsieur Ciel? We moonlight as scavengers by night. We salvage discarded items that might still hold value.”

Informed by Charlie’s “advertisement,” the couple was aware of Ciel’s newfound leadership role in the Savoie Mob. Consequently, they saw no issue with Ciel seeking answers from them since Auberge du Coq Doré was his turf.

From their perspective, as the guardian of Auberge du Coq Doré, Monsieur Ciel needed to stay informed about the establishment to prevent any mishaps.

Juggling two occupations, one of which involves deception… It certainly reeks of all sorts of rubbish… Lumian pinched his nose and

silently muttered. He pondered and asked thoughtfully, “Do you hoard all this trash in your room?”

Ruhr wore an ingratiating smile and confirmed, “Indeed. We visit the waste disposal site every few days. People drop off various items there. Heh heh, while scavengers are filthy, without us, Trier would be overwhelmed by foul odors. Every nook and cranny would be brimming with refuse.”

In Trier, scavengers served as supplementary cleaners.

No wonder there’s a stench in the room. No wonder you perpetually reek and forgo bathing… As Lumian ascended the stairs at a leisurely pace, he stole a glance at the wrinkled faces and slightly stooped postures of Ruhr and Michel. He casually inquired, “You’re not young anymore. Why do you still toil so diligently for money?”

Ruhr and Michel were taken aback, their smiles faltering subtly.

After a brief pause, Ruhr mustered a pained and helpless smile.

“It is precisely because we are old that we must labor so strenuously.

“We arrived in Trier when we were very young and took up various occupations. We had a child, but he did not survive to adulthood. The monthly wages we received merely sustained our survival. As our health began to decline and our strength waned, fear gripped us. We were uncertain of what the future held.

“What if we grow too old to engage in our usual work someday? What would we do? Deplete our meager savings within a few months and rely on the charitable acts of the Church and the government to eke out a meager existence until we perish from hunger?

“I-I do not wish for such a fate…”

Lumian was suddenly reminded of something his sister had once uttered. “Intis is exceedingly harsh now. There is no protection for hardworking individuals in their twilight years.”

Stirred by his thoughts, Ruhr continued, “Thankfully, our appetites have diminished with age. We don’t eat or sleep much. That leaves us

with more time to earn money. We don't have to worry about anything else. We can save most of what we earn.

"In the coming years, we should be able to enjoy a few more good ones by relying on our savings…

"Heh heh, truth be told, compared to most people, we're considered fortunate. None of them made it to our age."

Madame Michel, standing beside him, wore a wistful expression.

"Once we've saved enough, we'll return to Aurmir and purchase a plot of land to cultivate grapes. Even if we lack the strength in the future, we can hire assistance. We don't have extravagant expenses anyway."

Aurmir stood as the provincial capital of Champagne Province, renowned as the foremost hub of wine production in the Northern Continent.

Silently, Lumian nodded as he observed the elderly couple laboriously hauling the bag of trash upstairs.

After a brief respite, he put on simple makeup and changed his attire. Clad in a linen shirt, brown overalls, loafers, and a dark bowler hat, he made his way straight to Salle de Gristmill.

Since "Hammer" Ait remained one of his targets, he needed to personally observe him.

It was the late hours of the night, and Salle de Gristmill buzzed with activity. Amid the pulsating music, men and women gyrated on the dance floor, releasing their frustrations.

Concerned about being recognized by the Poison Spur Mob, Lumian approached the bar and ordered a glass of rye beer before making his way to the dance floor. As he swayed to the rhythm, he surveyed his surroundings.

Before long, he spotted "Little Minx" Jenna appearing on the raised wooden platform in front of him.

She wore a similar outfit to the one she had donned in the afternoon, a short white blouse and a flouncy skirt, showcasing her fair chest.

This time, she sported a mole on the bridge of her nose.

It signified audacity.

Impressive mental strength she possesses. Despite the afternoon's events, she's back at work in the evening… Lumian couldn't help but marvel.

In his opinion, since Jenna was "Red Boots" Franca's lover, there was no need for her to be so committed.

The rhythmic drumbeats halted, and all eyes on the dance floor turned to Jenna, panting.

Jenna began with a high-pitched tone.

"Ernest, stay away from my wife and pipe!"

Laughter erupted from the crowd as if a collective realization had struck them.

In sync with the cheerful and bawdy singing, they swayed their bodies gently.

As Jenna sang, she executed high kicks, shifting her position and winking at the audience from different angles, even performing an exaggerated split.

During this display, her gaze briefly crossed paths with Lumian. She appeared momentarily stunned before returning to her normal demeanor.

Once she finished her song, the intense drumbeats resumed. Jenna wasted no time resting. She leaped onto the dance floor, navigating through the sudden eruption of cheers, whistles, and men vying for proximity. She approached Lumian and shouted with a playful smile, "Handsome lion, dance!"

In Intis, the lion was often used to describe alluring men due to their

radiant mane, akin to the sun.

Lumian sensed that Jenna had something important to share. He set aside his beer and joined her on the dance floor, engaging in a lively dance with the Showy Diva, face-to-face.

Just as they were about to embrace, Jenna threw herself into Lumian's arms and whispered into his ear, "You're quite the talented dancer. By the way, I've discovered the identity of that pervert. His name is Hedsey. He used to reside in Room 504 at Auberge du Coq Doré."

Charlie's room? The occupant of Room 504 who put up Susanna Mattise's portrait? Lumian was taken aback.

Chapter 166 - 166 In Return

166 In Return

Lumian had always believed that the tenant, like Charlie, had been enchanted by Susanna Mattise in his dreams. His vitality had been gradually drained, until he met a sudden demise in the room. Monsieur Ive, the hotel owner, had secretly transported the lifeless body to a secluded spot in Underground Trier. Little did he expect that the tenant would transform into a pervert with Beyonder powers. He now roamed Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, preying on attractive women.

Lumian was convinced that Hedsey's newfound abilities stemmed from a boon granted due to the absence of Beyonder characteristics after death. It was clear that these powers originated from the same source as Susanna Mattise and Monsieur Ive.

In essence, not long after Susanna Mattise's portrait was plastered, something extraordinary had occurred to Hedsey. He had become a devout follower of the Mother Tree of Desire and received two to three boons within a few short months. As a result, he had gained significant strength and mastery over various mystical techniques.

For Beyonders who progressed by consuming potions, such speed was unimaginable, unless they possessed profound understanding and were at a remarkably low level.

However, Hedsey's boons also came with a downside. The recipient would be influenced by the power and gradually deviate from their true self. In certain aspects, they would become increasingly extreme, often engaging in actions that seemed irrational to ordinary individuals and inviting disaster upon themselves.

Both Monsieur Ive's miserliness and Hedsey's insatiable lust for women fell into this category.

Lumian suspected that nearly all boons had similar repercussions to some extent. Over time, they would inexorably draw the recipient closer to the bestower and induce corresponding mutations.

The reason Lumian remained unaffected by the powers of the Dancer and Alms Monk was that they didn't directly come from the hidden entity known as Inevitability, but rather the corruption within his body that had been filtered through the seal. Additionally, Lumian had always maintained a vigilant stance in such matters. He not only refrained from altering his style and way of life to exploit the traits of the Dancer and Alms Monk for greater control over his strength but at times even went against their influence.

Furthermore, Lumian would advance in Sequence and have a preliminarily digestion before obtaining the corresponding boon. He sought to preserve the balance of power within his body.

Lowering his head, Lumian whispered to Jenna in a hushed voice, "How did you discover this?"

As Jenna swayed to the rhythm, she pursed her lips and replied, "It's quite evident that the pervert cannot exist without women. Kidnapping a woman every day and dragging her underground simply isn't feasible, or else he would have been apprehended long ago. Damn it, there must have been several victims. Do those incompetent black-skinned dogs even notice?

"Then how does he usually solve his problem? Clearly, relying on himself isn't sufficient to satiate his desires. So, I enlisted Franca's help and inquired with the dancers and street girls from the Savoie Mob. I swiftly obtained an answer."

"How can that pervert, who deserves to be f*cked by a donkey, possess such virility? He can perform multiple times a day!"

"Why doesn't he pursue those wealthy old ladies? Both parties would be satisfied!"

Jenna recounted her investigation with a sense of pride, showcasing her intellect.

Throughout the afternoon, she had been brooding over Lumian's earlier prank, which had made her appear foolish.

Before embracing the beliefs of the Mother Tree of Desire and receiving the boon, Hedsey was a regular visitor to Rue de la Muraille, Rue de Breda, and Rue du Rossignol. However, after obtaining the boon, his mind became consumed with thoughts of women… Lumian couldn't help but acknowledge that Jenna occasionally demonstrated some intelligence.

With that in mind, Lumian decided to share some information.

"That abnormal desire must be a result of his Beyonder powers' influence."

"Beyonder powers…" Jenna glanced up at Lumian.

She had expected him to feign ignorance, just as they did in Underground Trier, where neither side openly acknowledged Hedsey's displayed Beyonder powers. To her surprise, he spoke candidly.

After a brief pause, Jenna, who was dancing closely with Lumian, whispered in confusion, "Why do Beyonder powers make him so perverse?"

Lumian smirked once again. "It's an abnormal Beyonder power."

"Do you think I can't tell that it's abnormal?" Jenna grew infuriated once more.

Lumian chuckled.

"As for why it's abnormal, go back and ask Franca. If Franca doesn't know either, have her inquire with the Boss."

He shared this information with Jenna because he was concerned that there might be more to the issues surrounding Monsieur Ive, Susanna Mattise, Hedsey, and the others.

If the official Beyonders failed to uncover the truth, his only hope lay with Mr. K's finger and the Beyonders associated with the Savoie

Mob.

Jenna snorted and dropped the matter. She refocused on dancing with Lumian.

As the music neared its end, she suddenly reached out and touched Lumian's chest.

"Haha, nice bod!" Jenna grinned, then retreated, heading towards the half-height wooden platform in front of the dance floor.

It seemed as though she had finally exacted her revenge for what had transpired underground. She was filled with elation.

Lumian scoffed and left the dance floor, once again picking up his glass of rye beer.

As he listened to the music, he swayed his body gently, all the while observing the situation within Salle de Gristmill.

As Lumian surveyed the area, his attention was drawn to a group of mobsters congregating near the stage. They wore a mishmash of outfits, surrounding a towering man who stood at a staggering height of nearly 1.9 meters.

The burly man bore a striking resemblance to "Giant" Simon. His black shirt and formal attire emphasized his bulging muscles, but the dark-blue canvas pants and strapless black leather boots seemed out of place, creating a peculiar ensemble.

With his tousled brown hair and slightly set-apart brown eyes, his ordinary facial features were complemented by a chiseled jawline. His hands and legs were longer than those of an average person.

"Hammer" Ait… Lumian averted his gaze, suspecting that this man was one of his targets.

In Trier, there weren't many individuals towering at nearly 1.9 meters

Lumian wasn't concerned about "Hammer" Ait and his subordinates recognizing him from this distance. The ballroom was dimly lit, with

only the soft glow of gas wall lamps and a chandelier above, providing enough illumination for dancing and discreet conversations. Unless someone was intimately familiar with Lumian or had just seen him, they wouldn't be able to identify him.

Furthermore, Lumian had taken precautions to disguise himself. He hadn't anticipated Jenna recognizing him at first glance either.

After Jenna finished singing another song, "Hammer" Ait led his subordinates off the dance floor and ascended to the second floor.

Lumian continued his observations when he suddenly spotted a familiar figure entering the room.

It was Monsieur Ive, the proprietor of Auberge du Coq Doré, his attire slightly faded from washing.

His anxious and worried expression was evident as his blue eyes scanned the surroundings.

Is he searching for Hedsey? The pervert didn't return after leaving in the afternoon. They suspect something happened to him, so they're scouring the dance halls, seeking clues with the street girls? Lumian withdrew his gaze thoughtfully and shifted his attention back to the dancers on the floor.

Based on the characteristics exhibited by Hedsey's Spirit Body, Lumian sensed that Monsieur Ive was much weaker in comparison. He likely possessed the power of a Sequence 9 boon, focused on greed, possibly with elements of appetite.

As for Hedsey, he was likely on the level of Sequence 8, with a slim chance of being a Sequence 7. Lumian leaned more towards the former, as the few Sequence 7 individuals he had encountered before were formidable adversaries, difficult to overcome even with preparations and traps.

Of course, had Lumian not carefully observed and realized that Hedsey had the ability to trigger others' desires, he might have been swiftly dealt with.

In that environment, without Jenna's presence, Lumian would have

relied on his own strength to resist the influence and not completely forget the existence of the enemy. With Showy Diva, it was challenging for him to restrain himself. He had to rely on pain to awaken his senses.

From the corner of his eye, Lumian observed Monsieur Ive engaging in conversation with the part-time street girl dancers. The way they scolded him, wearing expressions of disdain, struck Lumian as amusing.

Is he pretending to negotiate a price in order to gather information about Hedsey's whereabouts?

In the end, he's just too stingy, always bargaining down the other party's offer by half or more, resulting in their scolding?

Heh heh, Charlie was worried that Monsieur Ive, an old widower, wouldn't be willing to spend money on a licensed prostitute and risk contracting a disease. It seems he's overthinking it. Monsieur Ive can't even bring himself to spend money on an unlicensed street girl!

The negative effects of a boon are truly potent…

Hmm, if there are women in that group who possess the same boons as Hedsey and are on the same level, they should be in a constant state of hunger and thirst. Monsieur Ive wouldn't need to seek out another street girl. Heh heh, he would only end up despising himself for being a man. He would be on the verge of being drained dry, with his desires forcibly aroused.

The best disguises for those women would be dancers and street girls? Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

Something doesn't add up. If there really were such women, Hedsey wouldn't need to come out and harm others… Could it be that everyone at this level has advanced or died, with no replacements? Or is there an imbalance in the number of men and women? Is Hedsey the one being ostracized?

As Lumian contemplated these thoughts, the band struck up another lively dance tune.

After finishing her song, Jenna leaped off the half-height wooden stage once again and approached Lumian, inviting him to dance.

This elicited boos from the surrounding crowd.

Knowing that Jenna had something else to say, Lumian deliberately maneuvered to provoke those who were jeering.

He stepped onto the dance floor, drew closer to Jenna, and began swaying his hips.

Jenna looked up at him, smiling, and asked, “What brings a Savoie mobster like you to the Salle de Gristmill?”

Lumian clicked his tongue and chuckled.

“Don’t you think I’m fond of you? Of course, I’m here to listen to your singing.”

Jenna scoffed.

“Your target is ‘Hammer’ Ait, isn’t it? You want to repeat what happened with Margot?”

“You’re quite clever,” Lumian praised in a taunting tone.

Jenna smirked confidently. “I can assist you and provide important information.”

Lumian suppressed his nonchalance and asked thoughtfully, “What do you desire in return?”

Jenna snorted and cursed, “Are you f*cking underestimating me?

“Although I didn’t thank you this afternoon, I won’t forget that you saved me. Coincidentally, I’m familiar with all the dance halls in the market district. Moreover, I just had a chat with Ait about some matters after the performance. I should be able to help you.”

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, she gritted her teeth and continued, “‘Hammer’ resides in the innermost room on the second floor, towards Auberge du Coq Doré. He has ten thugs by his side.

Four stationed at the door—two inside and two outside. Two by the window, two near the sofa, and two always behind him. They're all armed.

"The security wasn't this tight before, and there weren't as many people. It's all because of what you did to Margot.

"That room has an attached washroom. It's currently unoccupied. If the window is fully opened, it can just about accommodate a person.

"From the ventilation pipe in the ballroom kitchen, you can climb up to the second floor and bypass the guards stationed at the stairs. Then, enter the adjacent room and leap from the windowsill onto a narrow ledge outside the washroom. It requires considerable skill to pull off successfully."

Chapter 167 - 167 Convergence

167 Convergence

Upon hearing Jenna's account, Lumian instinctively twirled and spun, his surprise evident as he asked, "How do you know all this?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

It made sense that Jenna would have a basic understanding of the room layout and the thugs' positions after venturing to the second-floor room and conferring with "Hammer" Ait. However, how did she know about the ventilation pipe in the ballroom kitchen leading to the second floor? Or jumping from the neighboring windowsill to the washroom? And what about the ledge on the outer wall of that specific room? Were these details within the grasp of an underground singer, known for her bawdy songs and exaggerated performances?

She shouldn't possess such knowledge!

Jenna, her face adorned with black eye shadow and a fake mole, sported a smug expression.

"Don't fret about how I know. I avoid seeing what I shouldn't, hearing what I shouldn't, and asking questions I shouldn't," she retorted, cleverly turning Lumian's words back on him.

This brought her considerable satisfaction.

Only those planning an assassination or devising an escape in dire circumstances would pay attention to such particulars and observe with a purpose… Which category does Jenna fall into? Her powers of observation in this environment are nearly on par with a Hunter's. Sequences leaning toward assassination required gathering environmental information. Assassination… Lumian's mind raced, concocting a plan to bluff Jenna.

Grinning mischievously, he uttered, “So you’re an Assassin.”

He stressed the word “Assassin.”

Jenna’s expression changed, her smile freezing.

“How did you figure it out?” she blurted out, shocked.

“By using my brain,” Lumian replied, his smile unwavering.

There were still a few Sequences that excelled at environmental observation. Lumian had taken a bold guess, considering Jenna as an Assassin. He recalled Ryan and his companions mentioning that Demoness was a relatively common pathway in the central and northern regions of Intis, especially Trier. In any case, he had nothing to lose if he was wrong.

Meanwhile, Lumian pondered to himself, Not long after arriving in Trier, I encountered an Assassin and came to her aid. Can this be seen as a manifestation of the convergence of Beyonder characteristics?

Jenna can’t have reached Sequence 7; she isn’t a Witch. Otherwise, even if weakened by the sedative on the paper, she could have effortlessly overpowered Hedsey with her mystical abilities. The term Witch clearly indicates proficiency in spells and curses, as Aurore’s notebook had mentioned.

She is unlikely to be a Sequence 8 Instigator. How could an Instigator be fooled by me repeatedly?

But it isn’t out of the question. Perhaps Jenna had been more foolish in the past and relied on the Instigator path to enhance her intelligence? Furthermore, her willingness to provide information on “Hammer” Ait could be interpreted as a form of instigation.

Heh heh, Jenna is a woman, so there’s no need to worry about her gender changing after consuming the Witch potion.

Where had Jenna obtained the potion? Had Franca given it to her? Could Franca also be a Beyonder following the Demoness pathway?

If Franca is only a Sequence 8, that would be fine. But what if she

were a Sequence 7 Witch? Who knows if Franca had been male or female before? Well, her behavior towards women is certainly peculiar. She is in a romantic relationship with Jenna. Hmm…

Jenna quietly contemplated her recent words, but she didn't uncover any information that might have revealed her own Sequence.

"Although you can fight, I believe there's a high chance you'll be killed on the spot if you engage him in a place like the washroom, which isn't spacious enough."

"Madame, are you persuading me or taunting me? It seems you still possess some potential as an Instigator," Lumian candidly voiced his thoughts, not holding back his criticisms.

He realized that Franca knew "Hammer" Ait better than Baron Brignais. She had mentioned a crucial point that the latter had omitted.

Setting aside the possibility that Franca had a personal grudge against "Hammer" Ait, Franca either had a formidable background or had earned the trust of the boss of the Savoie Mob, gaining access to more mysticism knowledge and Sequence information than Baron Brignais.

Jenna was taken aback. "You know about Instigators?"

Is this still a country bumpkin from the countryside? How does he possess such extensive knowledge about the Beyonder pathways?

Franca had mentioned that he's wanted by the authorities. It seemed he had been involved in a Beyonder incident?

"I know more than you think," Lumian replied, smiling.

As he spoke, he suddenly recalled a title that had recently belonged to him: "Mysticism Illiterate."

Lumian swiftly pushed aside his melancholy and earnestly considered Jenna's warning.

Indeed, while Hunters were also skilled in combat and killing as

Sequences, if traps and abilities like Provocation were excluded, they still couldn't match the prowess of Pugilists in close combat. Especially in a confined and cramped environment, they couldn't employ their combat intelligence effectively. It would be difficult for them to achieve the feat of the weak defeating the strong.

Taking into account the modifications to his Dancer abilities and the utilization of various unorthodox tactics, Lumian felt he could just about hold his ground. He wouldn't fail immediately. If he wanted to eliminate "Hammer" Ait, he could only rely on Fallen Mercury and escape after a successful strike.

But what set this apart from killing "Baldy" Harman? There was no need to factor in the presence of ten thugs and ten revolvers.

Lumian assessed his possessions to see if anything could be useful in such a battle.

Over 1,700 verl d'or… Fallen Mercury… Blood from the aquatic monster… Poisonous scales from the aquatic monster… A vial of the sedative that rendered Jenna powerless… A bottle of stimulating gas to counteract the effects of the sedative… A bottle of liquid with unknown properties… A dagger left behind by that pervert… A ritual silver dagger… Several white bandages…

As he contemplated, a plan gradually took shape.

As he swayed to the rhythm, he cast a sidelong glance at Jenna and posed his question.

"Is that washroom spacious?"

Jenna made confirmation. "No, it's not. Besides the bathtub, toilet, and sink, it can only accommodate four to five people."

In other words, if Lumian and "Hammer" Ait engaged in close combat, there wouldn't be room for anyone else.

"Is there a curtain outside the bathtub?" Lumian inquired further.

"Yes," Jenna pondered for a moment. "Do you have a gun with you? I believe it would be better to use a gun. It's safer and gives you a

higher chance of success."

"I don't," Lumian replied, shaking his head.

Jenna sneered, "You intend to carry out the plan tonight with just that?"

She paused briefly before continuing, "If you truly wish to kill 'Hammer' Ait tonight, I can lend you my revolver."

"You still have a revolver on you?" Lumian was surprised this time.

He hadn't suspected that Jenna had a concealed revolver.

The Showy Diva wore a short white blouse with a wide collar that allowed her bra to peek out. Her beige fluffy short skirt and black boots that didn't reach her knees added to her attire. Moreover, she kept raising her legs as she danced. It seemed impossible for her to have a gun holster strapped to her inner thigh.

Lumian speculated that the only possible place for her to hide the revolver was within her pair of boots.

Jenna assumed Ciel was questioning why she carried a revolver, so she responded with a disdainful sigh.

"I perform in dance halls in places like the market district. Do you think all those monsters are upstanding citizens? Do you think they won't act impulsively and try something on me? Those pieces of filth have twisted minds all day. When their thoughts are controlled by their desires, they won't consider that I have a connection with Franca and a good relationship with her. Damn it, if deterrence always worked, there wouldn't be so many criminals!"

While speaking, Jenna followed the rhythm of the drums and crouched down, searching inside her boots.

Swiftly standing up, she pressed herself against Lumian. Twisting her body, she slipped her hand into his naturally lowered and swaying palm.

Lumian immediately felt the cold metal texture and the solid wood.

Without missing a beat, Lumian withdrew his hand and discreetly tucked the gun into his pocket.

Afterward, Jenna continued, “I bought it with most of my savings when I first arrived in the market district, before meeting Franca. That blasted black market merchant even tried to bed me, but I kicked his shin, making him scream in pain.”

Carrying a gun for self-defense at all times… You’re quite vigilant. Otherwise, those mobsters could have controlled you before meeting Franca. You might have even become a part-time dancer or a street girl… Lumian replied with a smile, “Well done!”

As the accompanying music reached its end, Jenna fell silent.

With the drumbeats fading away, Lumian observed Jenna as she walked toward the stage. He left the dance floor and returned to the outer circle.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to visit the washroom, he carefully examined and familiarized himself with the revolver Jenna had given him.

It was a compact revolver with a short barrel, ideal for concealed carry.

Its color was a dark iron-black, and the grip was crafted from walnut wood. It held a total of six bullets.

After tinkering with the revolver for a while, Lumian realized a predicament.

His shooting experience was lacking. Previously, he had primarily relied on the shotgun’s wide spray of pellets.

Oh well. I don’t expect to kill Hammer Ait with a single shot. Injuring and weakening him will suffice. At such close range, with my grip and some shooting experience, I can’t miss by much…

In an environment like the washroom, there’s only one opportunity for a shot. “Hammer” Ait won’t provide me with a chance for a second shot… Lumian swiftly made up his mind.

Exiting the washroom, he headed toward the kitchen of the Salle de Gristmill, taking advantage of the absence of people in the vicinity.

Chapter 168 - 168 Prayer Target

168 Prayer Target

As Lumian made his way, his nimbleness served him well in evading servers bustling with trays of food and busboys returning used utensils.

He pressed forward until he reached the kitchen, only to find it in complete disarray.

Stacks of unwashed utensils lay haphazardly in the sink, coated in layers of greasy oil. Two dishwashing maids stood by, tirelessly scrubbing away at the never-ending pile of dishes.

The stoves emitted fierce yellow flames, turning the small space into a sweltering inferno. Sweat poured down everyone's faces as they toiled away.

Three chefs, adorned in white aprons, each prepared their own dishes. They would occasionally taste their concoctions by dipping their fingers in the sauces or sampling a morsel, wiping their hands casually on their aprons before moving on to the next dish.

Once the chefs approved, the servers would whisk the plates away, oblivious to the fact that their thumbs often grazed the food and thick soups. They paid no mind to it whatsoever.

The kitchen helpers scurried around the chefs, chopping vegetables, handling fish, tidying up ingredients, taking out the trash, and fetching various seasonings and supplies. They never ceased their efforts, yet the kitchen remained in disarray. Vegetable leaves, fish scales, and fruit peels were strewn about, oily and scattered across the floor, near the stoves, and close to the sink.

The clamor of the chefs and kitchen helpers filled the air with shouts

and curses, creating a chaotic symphony.

Lumian could easily mistake it for a battlefield if he closed his eyes and listened closely.

Taking advantage of the chaotic scene, Lumian deftly navigated through the busy crowd and reached the cabinet brimming with ingredients. Using partitions, handles, and the grayish-white gas and water pipes, he skillfully ascended to the ceiling and slipped into the ventilation shaft.

The overpowering smell of oil and smoke assailed Lumian's senses, nearly overwhelming him.

But with the tolerance of an Alms Monk toward extreme environments, he pushed himself forward, crawling through the ventilation shaft and occasionally climbing higher.

After about ten seconds, he poked his head out from above a second-floor washroom.

Ensuring the coast was clear, Lumian agilely leaped down and swiftly made his way to the door, carefully scanning both ends of the corridor in secrecy.

The area was eerily silent, with only two henchmen guarding the stairs, their focus solely on the first floor. They paid no mind to what lay behind them.

Relieved, Lumian let out a sigh and pinpointed his target. Crouching down, he leaped to the adjacent room.

Although the door was locked, Lumian encountered no obstacle he couldn't overcome. Utilizing a half-broken wire he had brought along, he managed to pry open the wooden door after a few attempts.

Just as Jenna had described, the washroom attached to "Hammer" Ait's room lacked a protruding window sill. It only had a decorative ledge, barely providing enough space to stand on its side.

Even for a Hunter, leaping from the window sill to the narrow ledge posed a significant challenge, demanding perfect balance.

Fortunately, Lumian possessed the extraordinary flexibility of a Dancer, almost surpassing human limits.

After careful observation, he jumped up and landed precisely on the ledge with his right foot. His left side wavered, threatening to tip him over.

Squatting down, he revealed only half of his head, peering silently into the room.

The washroom door stood ajar, and occasional mobsters passed by.

Lumian exercised patience, studying their movements until he discerned a pattern. Seizing the opportune gap when the washroom door was momentarily unattended, he skillfully pried open the window using Hedsey's dagger and clambered inside.

Maintaining composure and confidence, he swiftly closed the glass window before hurrying to the space beneath the bathtub, concealing himself with the undrawn curtains.

Lumian, having successfully infiltrated the premises, arranged his few essential items in easily accessible positions. He took a moment to double-check their locations, ensuring he wouldn't fumble in a state of panic.

Standing there motionless, he strained his ears to catch the activities in the adjacent room.

"Hammer" Ait occasionally inquired about their recent earnings to the dance hall manager, scolded his subordinates with anger, or engaged in flirtatious exchanges with the star dancer, accompanied by seemingly intimate gestures.

After a while, when the dance hall manager and the star dancer departed, Ait seemed to rise from his seat and began pacing slowly.

He addressed the mobsters in the room, saying, "In the following days, send out all your boys and have them 'visit' every individual within our territory. I want you to ensure that we know who can be elected as the market district's member of parliament in next week's election!"

Oh, so your mob is meddling in the parliamentary elections? Lumian felt a mixture of surprise and lack thereof.

The growth of Trier's mobs was impossible without some form of backing. They either maintained favorable relations with the police department and influential figures within it, enjoyed protection from powerful political figures, or acted as the black-gloved enforcers for influential merchants. The latter undoubtedly had connections to high-ranking government officials, upper echelons of the Churches, and military generals.

Lumian had never anticipated that the mastermind behind the Poison Spur Mob possessed the audacity to vie for a parliamentary seat. He had initially assumed their ambitions would extend no further than becoming the market district's police commissioner or a member of the Trier City Council.

Intis functioned as a parliamentary republic, where members of parliament represented various constituencies and formed the National Convention. This Convention held the authority to appoint the president, prime minister, who in turn appointed ministers—although their decisions required approval from the Convention.

The National Convention also possessed the power to legislate, declare war, and determine the government's budget. Each member of parliament held considerable influence and authority.

At present, the National Convention consisted of over 300 individuals, with one-tenth of them being former nobles. The Sauron family, once part of the royal lineage, served as their leaders. The remaining seats were allocated based on the economic status of different provinces and territories, particularly the prosperous Trier Greater Region.

Trier, whether in terms of population or economic prowess, stood unrivaled in Intis and the Greater Trier Region. It held nearly 40 seats in the National Convention.

These approximately 40 seats were distributed among 20 districts, accommodating as few as one member of parliament or as many as four to five. These representatives also held ex officio positions as

councilors in the City Council.

The Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, a relatively small constituency, possessed only one seat in the National Convention. The individual chosen to fill this seat would wield immense power and influence within the region.

Currently, the ruling National Party, the popular Enlightenment Party, and the Revolutionary Party, seeking to address existing flaws, were vigorously preparing for the upcoming National Convention elections.

The party that secured a simple majority in the Convention would become the new ruling party. Otherwise, they would have to negotiate, compromise, and form a coalition with another party.

In addition to the National Party, the Enlightenment Party, and the Revolutionary Party, Intis also had the Emperor Party (restorationists who advocated Roselle's rule) and the Carbonari. They voiced discontentment with the current system and sought to bring about change through force.

The mobsters replied one after another, assuring "Hammer" Ait that nothing would go awry.

However, they remained tight-lipped about which faction or candidate they supported, leaving Lumian feeling a sense of disappointment.

Tell me! New n***o***vel chapters are published on

After briefing them on the election, "Hammer" Ait instructed his subordinates, saying, "Leave for a while. Return only when I summon you."

What is his plan? Lumian's eavesdropping had taken him by surprise.

Soon enough, the mobsters vacated the room, leaving "Hammer" Ait alone.

Lumian refrained from taking immediate action. After careful analysis, he believed that the confrontation between him and

Hammer Ait in the washroom would have a more targeted impact than engaging outside, even without resorting to the use of Fallen Mercury.

The room beyond fell into an eerie silence. Lumian strained his ears and managed to catch faint voices.

It seemed like “Hammer” Ait was muttering to himself, “Protector of Evil People… The Lady who Births Deities…”

The Lady who Births Deities? That sounds impressive… Is Ait praying to some secret entity? There are about four or five sentences, and it’s more of a description? It deviates from the usual three-stanza template… Lumian made a rough guess at what “Hammer” Ait was up to.

As for whom he was praying to, Lumian couldn’t even begin to speculate based on the fragmented description he barely heard.

It lay beyond the scope of his current knowledge in mysticism.

Lumian felt a vague sense of malevolence emanating from the room outside.

Indeed, it was as if the room itself had turned wicked.

Holding his breath, Lumian composed himself, refraining from listening to the turmoil outside.

After a while, the sinister atmosphere dissipated, and everything returned to normal.

Lumian let out a slow exhale, heating up his palm.

At that moment, “Hammer” Ait summoned his subordinates, who had previously left the room, to return.

Lumian continued to bide his time.

Seconds turned into minutes until finally, he heard the heaviest footsteps approaching the washroom.

They belonged to “Hammer” Ait. Lumian had already distinguished their sound.

Swiftly, he retrieved a metal canister marked with a symbol.

Unscrewing the cap, he inserted a thin, pre-kneaded paper ball into the bottle.

Seconds before the footsteps drew near the washroom, Lumian retrieved the paper ball and twisted the cap shut.

He then tore the paper ball in two and inserted each piece into his nostrils.

The stench, reminiscent of fermented excrement, assaulted Lumian’s senses, nearly bringing him to tears. His right hand instinctively moved to remove the thin paper ball.

With great resolve and the endurance of an Alms Monk accustomed to extreme environments, Lumian exercised control. His expression contorted, and his muscles twitched ever so slightly as he stood there, retrieving another metal canister filled mostly with gas. He unscrewed its cap.

Clang!

“Hammer” Ait shut the washroom door and approached the toilet bowl.

The space now became partially enclosed. Only the gaps between the door and windows allowed a hint of fresh air to seep in.

Yes, a gruesome encounter awaits him… Lumian observed the fluctuations in his target’s luck, silently tossing the open metal canister into the air, allowing the colorless and odorless gas within to disperse and fill the washroom.

This was the sedative concocted by the perverted Hedsey. Even catching a whiff of it at close range could severely weaken an Assassin’s strength!

It was ideal for a confined, partially enclosed space like the

washroom.

This was the trap Lumian had set for “Hammer” Ait!

Of course, it would take some time for the gas to spread throughout the washroom and take effect to a certain extent. After all, Lumian himself wasn’t breathing it in at close proximity.

What Lumian needed to do next was to prevent “Hammer” Ait from leaving the washroom or allow anyone outside to open the door.

He placed the open metal canister by the edge of the bathtub and retrieved Jenna’s revolver, aiming it at the toilet bowl through the curtain.

Chapter 169 - 169 Battle in the Room

169 Battle in the Room

The rush of water persisted, and Lumian grew anxious, fearing that “Hammer” Ait might sense danger. He needed to calculate the height just right before pulling the trigger.

Bang!

The bullet tore through the drapes, leaving behind searing scorch marks.

“Hammer” Ait’s hair stood on end before any of this happened. He paid no mind to the fact that he was mid-stream and promptly collapsed to the side.

Yellowish liquid splattered in all directions. The bullet grazed Ait’s arm, striking the wall and narrowly missing Lumian on the rebound.

Lumian’s revolver flew from his grip after a missed shot. He seized the edges of the curtain, yanked it off, and used it to ensnare Ait.

Before Ait could recover from the agonizing cramps, darkness enveloped his vision, and he found himself wrapped in a cream-colored shower curtain.

Unfazed, he rolled and concealed himself beside the bathtub. Then, he grasped the shower curtain with both hands, using it as an improvised weapon.

With a soft whoosh, the curtain, now wrapped around Lumian’s fist, veered off course, thwarting his attempt to strike Ait’s head.

Ait seized the moment and rose, inadvertently tearing his pants in the process.

He swung his heavy fist at Lumian, hammer-like.

Lumian quickly raised his arm to shield himself, realizing that his opponent possessed exceptional strength—he couldn't withstand it.

Forced to retreat a step in order to regain his balance, Lumian found himself on the backfoot. Ait wasted no time, relentlessly bombarding him with a flurry of punches from both hands.

Leveraging his height, long arms, and superior strength, Ait employed straightforward punches akin to cannonballs, neglecting any fancy techniques.

It was only then that he could clearly discern the assailant's visage.

Golden hair tinged with black, bright and light-blue eyes, nostrils stuffed with bits of white paper—creating a peculiar sight.

Ciel? The same Ciel who killed Margot and gravely injured Wilson? Ait felt initial surprise, followed swiftly by delight.

He isn't that formidable. I can take him down completely!

The washroom proved confining, with Lumian enduring the putrid stench. He suffered two blows from the towering 1.9-meter giant before finding himself forced two steps back, cornered near the door.

At that moment, the mobsters outside heard the gunshots and hurriedly approached. One of them gripped the handle and pushed open the door.

Just as Ait's leg aimed for a low kick, Lumian's left leg suddenly swung back, forcefully striking the door.

With a resounding clang, the partially opened wooden door snapped shut again, narrowly missing the mobster's nose.

Realizing they couldn't breach the door for the time being, the mobsters drew their revolvers and aimed at the wooden barrier from

various heights, but they dared not open fire.

Capitalizing on his kick against the rear door, Lumian contorted his body, evading Ait's straight punch and positioning himself beside his adversary.

Delivering a series of rapid strikes—punches, elbows, knees, and kicks—Lumian sought to disrupt the enemy's assault before they could fully unleash their power.

It resembled a Pugilist, the kind who habitually expelled force with grunts of "Heh!" and "Hah!", but now capable of only a single "Heh!" Each time Ait tried to strike with force, Lumian took the initiative and forcefully blocked him.

After altering his combat strategy, Lumian managed to narrow the strength gap between them. Not only did he regain some control, but he also utilized his greater agility to shift his body and change positions.

Soon enough, the figure blocking the washroom entrance turned out to be Ait, his back against the door.

Worried that his subordinates might lack intelligence and open fire from outside, accidentally killing him, Ait quickly diverted his attention and shouted, "Do not fire!"

Despite Ciel utilizing his technique to bridge the gap, Ait remained unfazed. He exuded immense confidence.

As long as he acted in a normal manner, he was certain he could eliminate his opponent in the confined washroom environment. The only uncertainty was the duration it would take.

Nevertheless, Ait remained vigilant. He continued to unleash powerful punches and kicks, attempting to force Lumian toward the window, creating an opportunity for his subordinates to enter.

Fearing that Lumian possessed some kind of Beyonder power, Ait believed that using the threat of a revolver would expedite the process of dispatching his enemy.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian faced the relentless onslaught of the Pugilist's full-powered attacks without showing any signs of surrender. However, he found it increasingly strenuous.

Throughout this ordeal, Ait's eyes darted to his surroundings, wary of potential traps or powerful allies lying in ambush.

His gaze swept across the edge of the bathtub and landed on an open metal canister.

What purpose does it serve? Before Ait could ponder further, Lumian's mocking smile appeared, accompanied by a curse as he struggled to block Ait's onslaught.

"Useless piece of junk! What are you waiting for? Those outside, come in and lend a hand!"

A buzzing anger surged within Ait.

He discarded all other concerns and launched an unusually ferocious attack.

Provocation!

Lumian had added Provocation to those two sentences!

Confronted with the raging "Hammer" Ait and his devastating blows, Lumian fought desperately to hold his ground. Occasionally, he relied on the flexibility of a Dancer to shift positions.

Unbeknownst to him, he was gradually being pushed toward the wall with the window.

This allowed the washroom door to open, but the mobsters outside hesitated, fearing they might collide with "Hammer" if they kicked it open. They cautiously pushed it inward, inch by inch.

In that moment, Lumian, nearly overcome by the putrid odor, keenly sensed Ait's waning strength and slower attacks.

The sedative took effect! Lumian swiftly dodged to the side, regaining his balance. He threw a powerful punch, channeling all the strength

from his arm and waist, launching a counterattack.

Bang!

Ait's arm, which had blocked the blow, visibly trembled, and his eyes betrayed a mix of surprise and panic. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Why? Why have I grown so weak?

Why have my reflexes slowed?

As Lumian grasped the state of his opponent, he unleashed two consecutive straight punches, forcefully parting the enemy's arms.

Without hesitation, he closed the distance and adjusted his body slightly. With a swift motion, he drove his left elbow into Ait's chest.

Caught off guard, Ait failed to react in time, unable to dodge the strike. The elbow connected, cracking his sternum. His vision darkened, and he struggled to catch his breath.

Lumian didn't grant him a moment's respite. He smoothly shifted his body, allowing his poised right fist to collide with Ait's abdomen.

He hadn't harbored any lofty expectations of rendering Ait unconscious solely with the sedative. After all, the other party possessed the ability to resist the effects of certain Beyonder powers through sheer physical and mental fortitude, suggesting a high resistance to the sedative. Furthermore, despite the compactness and semi-enclosed nature of the washroom, with its bathtub, toilet bowl, and sink, the drug's potency would be greatly diminished.

Lumian aimed to exploit the drug's influence to weaken Ait's combat prowess, slowing his reactions and substantially reducing his strength.

In doing so, the tide of victory would tip towards him uncontrollably!

Pfft!

Ait, reeling from the blow to his abdomen, instinctively curled up,

becoming shorter than Lumian.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian raised his fists and swiftly hammered them behind Ait's ears.

Bang!

Amidst the cacophony, Ait's vision faded to black, and he slumped unconscious.

It was the combined effect of a potent strike and the sedative.

Lumian squatted down, using "Hammer" as a shield.

The mobsters had already held the washroom door open for several seconds, but with Ait obstructing Lumian from their view, they refrained from opening fire.

Now, they witnessed their towering boss, Hammer, being taken down by the assailant.

Lumian clasped Ait and offered a smirk to the group gathered at the door.

"Go ahead! Fire! Why aren't you firing?"

One of the mobsters caught sight of the assailant's distinctive blonde and black hair, coupled with his rather handsome face, and suddenly pieced together a series of connections.

"Ciel? You're Ciel?" he exclaimed, his surprise evident.

The same Ciel who killed Boss Margot and threw Boss Wilson off the fourth floor?

Ciel of the Savoie Mob?

He's back at it?

Lumian keenly sensed the mobsters' profound fear. He grinned and gave Ait's shoulder a friendly pat, brushing off the dust.

Then, he took hold of Ait and proceeded towards the washroom door,

one step at a time.

Simultaneously, he curled his lips into a smile.

“You’ve got two options. One, leave this room now and seek help from your Poison Spur Mob boss. Two, meet your demise here, one by one, at my hands.”

As he spoke, he advanced, a cold gaze sweeping across the faces of each mobster, as if contemplating the best way to eliminate them.

The mobsters couldn’t help but tremble, as a similar thought crossed their minds: Regardless, Boss Hammer has been apprehended. If we open fire, we’ll only harm him. It might be wiser to seek help from the boss!

“Well?” Lumian snorted, urging them to decide.

With a swift swoosh, the first mobster turned on his heels and fled the room. The others followed suit, abandoning any notion of confrontation.

When no one remained, Lumian let out a silent sigh of relief.

If those men had truly steeled themselves, their hearts unswayed by fear, the confined space of the washroom and their ten firearms would have posed a lethal threat.

Of course, Ait could forget about survival as well.

They have no more than four minutes to reach Avenue du Marché from here… I must conclude the interrogation before “Black Scorpion” Roger and his comrades depart, granting me ample time to escape the scene and locate Baron Brignais at Salle de Bal Brise… Just four minutes… As Lumian assessed the current situation, he squatted down and propped Ait against the washroom’s door panel.

Then, he dislocated his captive’s shoulder joints and bound his legs together using a shower curtain. Opening the window, he allowed the breeze to circulate from both sides.

With these tasks completed, Lumian removed the paper balls from his

own nose, retrieved the metal canister containing the pungent gas, and held it to Ait's nostrils.

Achoo!

Ait sneezed, his eyes fluttering open.

Lumian promptly stowed away the metal canister, capping it, ensuring the other party remained in a weakened state.

"What do you want?" Ait asked, fear and anxiety evident in his eyes as he recognized the person before him.

Chapter 170 - 170 Nightstalkers

170 Nightstalkers

Lumian brandished Hedsey's dagger, a sly grin forming on his face.

"I've got a question for you."

"You could've come straight to me. No need for all this," Ait instinctively tried to stall for time.

With a quick glance, he scanned the room from the corner of his eye, but there were no lifeless bodies to be found.

Based on his combat with Ciel, Ait knew it was impossible for the other party to eliminate ten armed thugs without a single one escaping.

In fact, even Ait himself wouldn't dare to face the encirclement of ten revolvers in such a confined space. He might take down three or four of them, but he would surely meet his demise.

If Ait, with his abilities, couldn't pull it off, there was no way Ciel—who he believed to be somewhat weaker and reliant on cunning strategies—could achieve such a feat.

Given the circumstances, Ait assumed most of his ten subordinates had fled, while a few might have sought assistance from the Black Scorpion.

With this realization, a strong desire to survive surged within Ait.

As long as I don't anger Ciel and can buy myself six to seven minutes, there's a good chance I'll be saved!

"If I hadn't done this, how else could I have crossed paths with you, considering my relationship with your Poison Spur Mob?" Lumian

deliberately created the illusion that he didn't intend to spill blood.

He raised the dagger, emphasizing his point.

"Enough with the games. Answer my questions. You know I'm not a patient person. If you refuse or lie, I'll end your life right here. I can always ask 'Baldy' Harman later. After all, there are plenty of folks in your Poison Spur Mob who know about those matters."

Lumian had compelled the mobsters to depart, not only due to the situation but also to seize control of the situation.

If he didn't make Ait believe he still had a fighting chance, prying answers from him in a short amount of time without employing mystical means would be futile.

A person who clung to hope would fear death all the more!

Ait promptly responded, "Alright!"

He resolved to divulge some information, delving into the details, hoping to hold out for those crucial six to seven minutes. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Naturally, he contemplated whether Ciel might abandon the inquiry at the last moment and execute him. Yet, aside from cooperating, Ait had no other choice. He could only hope the information he shared would be valuable enough to captivate Ciel's interest and prevent an untimely demise.

About three minutes… Lumian silently counted the seconds and posed his next question.

"Have you encountered Louis Lund?"

Ait hesitated.

In a swift motion, Lumian swung the dagger, piercing Ait's shoulder and eliciting a gush of crimson blood.

Ait, his expression contorted, felt the unyielding ruthlessness emanating from Lumian and sensed the specter of impending death

drawing near. Fear gripped his heart.

He blurted out, “Yes! Wanted posters for Louis Lund can be found in Salle de Gristmill and many other places. The moment I laid eyes on him at the Boss’s hideout, I recognized him.”

Ait realized he couldn’t rely on silence and hesitation to gain more time. That would only lead to uncontrollable consequences.

Lying was also risky since he couldn’t be certain which questions Ciel was using to test his honesty.

In comparison, offering convoluted yet seemingly valuable information would be more likely to appease the other party.

As expected… Lumian was delighted.

Having confirmed the connection between Louis Lund and the Poison Spur Mob’s “Black Scorpion” Roger, Lumian had achieved his objective for this operation. The remaining questions were just an added bonus. It would be nice to get answers, but it wouldn’t be a deal-breaker if he didn’t.

“Why did he go to ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger?” Lumian inquired further.

Ait shook his head.

“I’m not aware of the specifics, but I’ve heard that the lady Louis Lund is loyal to has arrived in Trier. She wants our Poison Spur Mob and their respective spheres of influence to coordinate efforts and avoid conflicts.

“Our boss, with the approval of Madame Moon, took charge of the liaison.”

“Madame Moon?” Lumian never expected another Madame Moon to enter the picture.

He didn’t even know what was happening with Madame Night.

“Madame Moon is the one the Poison Spur Mob swears loyalty to. Well, our boss has mentioned that she’s not just a Madame anymore,

but a Lady who Births Deities. We often offer prayers to her. I haven't seen her myself; only the Boss and Baldy have."

Not Madame… From Madame Moon to Lady who Births Deities… Had she received more boons and elevated her status? Lumian nodded in understanding.

"What's the relationship between Madame Moon and Madame Night?"

"They both belong to an organization called the Nightstalkers. Madame Moon appears to be the leader, or at least a significant figure at the leadership level." Ait provided a convoluted description of what he knew.

A secret organization that believes in some hidden existence? Lumian redirected the conversation to the matter that intrigued him the most.

"Will Louis Lund visit 'Black Scorpion' Roger again?"

"He'll likely come back next week to check if everyone has followed through on their agreements and if any adjustments are needed. I don't know the exact timing," Ait honestly responded.

I'll have the chance to reunite with Louis Lund on Avenue du Marché next week? And I'll be stationed there permanently after Sunday! Lumian felt a surge of delight and excitement.

He then pressed on, asking,

"What kind of power does 'Black Scorpion' Roger possess?"

"H-he's a Heretic Spellmaster," Ait stammered instinctively. "Our boss said it himself. The essence of a Heretic Spellmaster is using their life force to cast spells. It can be their own life force or someone else's, but it seems they need to be controlled beforehand."

So he truly is a Heretic Spellmaster… Truly wicked and cruel… Lumian recalled the battle with the midwife.

Observing Lumian's lack of surprise, Ait felt a sense of relief for not lying. He continued, "I've witnessed him using a few spells. One is a

peculiar curse, another involves manipulating blood, then there's a kind of black flame that weakens people, and finally, he has some effects on corpses and ghosts. I don't know much else."

There's at least one more—the ability to create a 'turf' filled with undead creatures, allowing him to share damage and mysteriously teleport… Lumian silently muttered, his gaze fixed on Ait, gesturing for him to continue.

Ait steeled himself and spoke.

"Our boss also mentioned that if we perform well, he might receive more boons and become a Sower."

Having said that, Ait regretted his decision not to choose a boon back then and instead opt for a potion. It had caused his progress to be hindered by the need for ingredients and other factors. The hope of reaching Sequence 7 seemed distant.

As long as one contributed enough and their body could withstand it, they could attain more boons.

A Sower? A symbol of abundance and life? Hmm, when Madame Pualis was still Pulitt, he had many illegitimate children. He was despised by countless people in the Darième area, to the point that his family had to disown him and pretend he had gone missing… Could this be a manifestation of a Sower's powers? Did Pulitt lose control under the influence of the boons? And after becoming a Sower, it appears that he underwent a gender transformation. Is that the level equivalent to the Madames, or is it one Sequence higher than them? Lumian's mind raced with numerous thoughts.

Observing Lumian's expression, Ait continued speaking.

"I don't know what comes after Sower. All I know is that Wilson is a Villain, equivalent to Sequence 9. Harman is a Gardener, and his strength is similar to mine, but he possesses extensive knowledge of botany. He can create potions with magical effects. Yes, he has a potion that temporarily hardens his skin like tree bark. I tried slashing him with a knife, but he only suffered minor injuries. He also has medicines to treat various illnesses and injuries."

So, becoming a Heretic Spellmaster requires being a Gardener. No wonder the midwife used those giant scissors as a weapon… Fortunately, I obtained this information. If I had assassinated “Baldy” Harman without giving him time to react, he wouldn’t have used his body to shield Fallen Mercury… Targeted intelligence is truly valuable… Lumian sighed with a mix of emotions.

Ait pondered for a moment and continued, “Harman once mentioned that the spiritual monsters born from trees and flowers become highly frightened when they see him since he is a Gardener and responsible for their pruning.”

Ait, who was trying to buy more time, quickly brought up another topic.

“Our boss mentioned that among the unrecognized paramount beings, only three can bestow godhood without much difficulty. One is the Great Mother of our faith, another has ‘Desire’ and ‘Tree’ in its name, and the third appears to be a mysterious fog. As for the other beings, if they wish to grant godhood, they have to perform a very, very complex ritual that would easily be discovered and destroyed.”

The Mother Tree of Desire? What sets them apart from the being with the name Inevitability? Why can they bestow godhood without the need for an extensive ritual? Heh heh, I wonder what will happen when a Gardener encounters a Fallen Tree Spirit, the latter undergoing a suppression brought about by their inherent order in the hierarchy? Lumian’s thoughts raced, and he suddenly changed the subject.

“Who is the candidate for parliament you support?”

“It’s Hugues Artois from the Enlightenment Party.” Ait’s anticipation grew as he noticed that quite some time had passed.

If those rascals hurry, they’ll meet the Boss!

Ait, who was waiting for Lumian to ask about the Poison Spur Mob’s recent plans, suddenly saw the other party raise his right hand and swing his dagger.

With a soft sound, the dagger pierced Ait's temples and stirred them a few times.

Ait's mouth hung open in horror, and his eyes grew desperate and unfocused.

With a thud, he collapsed, no longer drawing breath.

Lumian left the dagger lodged in Ait's head and swiftly bandaged his wounds. He then stowed away his belongings, shouldered the lifeless body, and pushed open the room's window before leaping down.

Since it was only the second floor, his landing was steady, and he broke into a run.

Instead of taking the most direct route, Lumian opted for a detour through Rue du Rossignol, making his way to Avenue du Marché.

The late-night atmosphere offered scarce street lamps, casting a pitch-black darkness that seemed to consume anyone on the road.

It took Lumian over two minutes to carry Ait's corpse to the entrance of Salle de Bal Brise.

The two mobsters guarding the entrance were about to halt him when they recognized Ciel's face.

As a result, they ceased their interference and allowed him to enter.

…

In the second-floor café, Louis approached Baron Brignais's side, carrying a stack of papers, a black revolver, a bayonet, and a bag of bullets.

"Baron, I have everything prepared for Ciel."

More information and weapons.

Baron Brignais nodded.

"Send them to Auberge du Coq Doré tomorrow morning."

After issuing the instructions, Baron Brignais spoke with anticipation, “I wonder what kind of performance he will stage for us and when he will make his move. Do you think he will choose ‘Hammer’ Ait, ‘Baldy’ Harman, or ‘Short-legged Candlestick’…”

Before Baron Brignais could finish his sentence, the sound of approaching footsteps interrupted him.

The mobster guarding the first-floor entrance wore a terrified expression as he addressed Baron Brignais, “C-Ciel is here! He—he’s carrying someone—or rather, a corpse!”

At that moment, Lumian emerged from the staircase, a smile on his face. His steps seemed heavier than usual.

“That is?” Baron Brignais looked at the lifeless body trailing behind Ciel, a mixture of confusion and seriousness on his face.

Lumian tossed the corpse to the ground, clapped his hands, and grinned.

“‘Hammer’ Ait.”

Chapter 171 - 171 Rapid Idea

171 Rapid Idea

With a resounding thud, the lifeless body crashed to the floor, sending a shockwave through the hearts of Baron Brignais, Louis, and their comrades.

Baron Brignais rose to his feet and beheld the corpse lying at Lumian's feet. He took in the tangle of abundant, disheveled brown hair, the lengthy limbs, and the imposing, robust physique.

It was none other than "Hammer" Ait!

Louis's eyes widened in disbelief at the realization that the treacherous member of the Savoie Mob lay dead on the café floor.

The baron had entrusted the task to Ciel right after dinner, and the hour had not even struck ten.

What's more, Ciel had managed to accomplish the mission before they could deliver the comprehensive intelligence and weaponry that would have enhanced his chances of success.

Moreover, "Hammer" Ait was a true Beyonder, surpassing even Wilson from before in strength. He wasn't as vulnerable as Margot, always surrounded by a retinue of followers. Yet, he had failed to survive three hours after the baron had issued the assignment.

Was this any different from purchasing a pig at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman and slaughtering it?

Even if the baron had taken personal action, it wouldn't have been that effortless or straightforward. It could have even ended in failure.

Louis's gaze shifted from the lifeless body to Ciel's countenance, as if

only now did he truly perceive the true nature of this rural novice.

It was somewhat understandable that Margot had fallen prey to him due to carelessness and the poisoned slash. Wilson's defeat could be explained away by his own feebleness and entrapment within the room. However, "Hammer" Ait was a Beyonder whose combat prowess was not significantly inferior to the baron's, and he had always been on high alert against potential assassinations by the Savoie Mob. He wouldn't have been careless.

Yet, Ciel had managed to dispatch such a formidable adversary within a matter of hours!

Just how formidable was he?

What were his limits?

In comparison to the baron, who was the stronger one?

A cascade of questions raced through Louis's mind, and his gaze at Lumian now held a tinge of fear.

The other thugs shared the same unease.

Baron Brignais's gaze constantly shifted between "Hammer" Ait's lifeless form and Lumian's visage, as if searching for any trace of deceit.

Had Lumian Lee effortlessly completed a mission that the baron himself would have considered challenging?

If "Hammer" Ait was so easily dispatched, why had the Savoie Mob, who had long sought to punish the traitor, allowed him to live until now?

This guy is even more terrifying than I had suspected. In terms of strength, intelligence, execution, and seizing opportunities, he is no less capable than I am… He must be concealing some secrets. There's more to him than meets the eye… Baron Brignais barely contained the turmoil within his heart and reclaimed the clarity, rationality, and intelligence he typically boasted.

Baron Brignais's expression turned to stone as he locked eyes with Lumian.

"Does anyone else know that you've taken down 'Hammer' Ait?"

Lumian replied candidly, "Quite a few."

Baron Brignais's countenance underwent a dramatic shift, losing its refined and confident air.

In that moment, all he wanted was to unleash a torrent of curses upon Lumian.

Is your f*cking brain filled with shit? So many people are aware of your involvement in 'Hammer' Ait's demise, and yet you boldly bring his lifeless body to Salle de Bal Brise, right in front of me?

Do you think that these individuals won't inform 'Black Scorpion' Roger? Do you believe he won't storm into Salle de Bal Brise seeking revenge? Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Do you think I can fend off 'Black Scorpion' Roger? Damn it, you're leading me to my own demise!

You better find a bloody corner to hide in at Underground Trier!

Seizing the opportunity presented by Baron Brignais's subdued breathing and silence, Lumian smiled nonchalantly and said, "'Hammer' Ait's subordinates must have found 'Black Scorpion' Roger by now. Only you, Baron, can offer me sufficient protection.

"Baron, weren't you anticipating retaliation from the Poison Spur Mob? That's why you sent me to hunt down one of the trio—Hammer, Baldy, or Short-legged Candlestick?"

Bitterness filled Baron Brignais's mouth at Lumian's question. For a brief moment, he couldn't bring himself to order Lumian to leave.

He had made two plans in preparation for the potential revenge from the Poison Spur Mob. He was confident that he would remain unscathed.

Wouldn't it be a fortuitous outcome if "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo met their end?

But the predicament lay in the fact that he hadn't had enough time to implement any of his plans or set them into motion!

His intention was to dispatch the intelligence and weaponry to Auberge du Coq Doré tomorrow morning, and only then would he decide on the course of action. Nonetheless, eliminating any leader of the Poison Spur Mob was no easy feat. It would likely require days of meticulous effort before he could even set foot inside their domain.

Yet, Lumian Lee, that madman, had sought out "Hammer" Ait without delay upon accepting the mission. He wasted no time, conducted no reconnaissance, made no arrangements, and didn't wait for the opportune moment to arise.

What further infuriated the baron was that the fellow had actually succeeded! In a matter of hours, he had slain "Hammer" Ait and dragged the lifeless body to Salle de Bal Brise!

F*ck, is he even human?

This caught him off guard. If "Black Scorpion" Roger were to strike, he might meet his demise alongside "Hammer" Ait.

Observing Baron Brignais's silence and darkened expression, Lumian inwardly chuckled.

He had brought "Hammer" Ait's body to Salle de Bal Brise and presented it to Baron Brignais not to boast or intimidate the gang leader and his henchmen.

His intention was to draw "Black Scorpion" Roger and the other formidable members of the Poison Spur Mob to them!

If Baron Brignais were to fall, a new opportunity would arise. A replacement with sufficient strength would be required. When the time came, Ciel, who could fight, contribute, and had aided Red Boots' lover, would undoubtedly be the most sought-after candidate!

Lumian wasn't overly concerned about whether "Black Scorpion"

Roger would kill him.

Mr. K's finger was in his pocket!

Mr. K probably wouldn't mind if I repurposed the finger. After all, I'm doing it to fulfill his mission… Lumian thought casually.

Regardless, the threat from Susanna Mattise wouldn't come anytime soon. He could figure out an alternative approach later. Perhaps Mr. K would reward him with another finger once he saw how well and swiftly Lumian completed the mission?

Baron Brignais's expression underwent several changes. He pushed his chair back abruptly and hurried toward an iron-colored mechanical safe at the café bar counter.

He turned the knob and entered the password.

Lumian watched with a raised eyebrow, puzzled.

What was Baron Brignais planning to retrieve? Was he intending to take the cash and flee?

Or did he possess Sealed Artifacts that he dared not carry with him, fearing their potent negative effects, and had stowed them away in the safe?

Soon enough, Baron Brignais opened the safe and retrieved two bundles of detonators—commonly used in quarries.

Setting a trap to explode "Black Scorpion" Roger? That's quite challenging. He's a Heretic Spellmaster… Lumian refrained from inquiring as he observed Baron Brignais walk toward the wall near Avenue du Marché and push open two glass windows.

The leader of the Savoie Mob placed the bundles of detonators on the windowsill, then lit a match.

Subsequently, he ignited one of the bundles and glanced at the dimly lit Avenue du Marché. Raising his hand, he tossed the explosives into the middle of the road.

Louis and the other mobsters stood in bewilderment, unable to comprehend the baron's intentions.

Lumian's thoughts raced, and he instantly grasped the plan. He couldn't help but inwardly applaud, Very clever…

Boom!

The bundle of detonators exploded in the middle of Avenue du Marché, causing the surrounding glass to rattle.

The few pedestrians on the roadside were startled and fell to the ground, sustaining minor injuries. Some screamed, covering their ears, and frantically sought shelter in nearby locations.

Baron Brignais glanced over, lit another bundle of detonators, and hurled it into the deserted road. Causing casualties would be troublesome aftermath. He didn't wish to attract unwanted attention from authorities.

Boom!

The explosion reverberated once more. The police headquarters on Avenue du Marché, the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral, and the God of Steam and Machinery cathedral responded to a certain extent.

Salle de Bal Brise and the occupants of nearby buildings were thrown into disarray, but they dared not venture outside.

Baron Brignais clapped his hands and returned to the wooden table. He pulled a chair over and sat down.

Resuming his usual demeanor, he smiled at Lumian.

"It's all right now."

This would surely unsettle the police and the clergymen. Some would undoubtedly investigate the cause. It was highly probable that official Beyonders would be among them.

Officers who maintained good relations with the Savoie Mob would inevitably inquire.

Under such circumstances, how could “Black Scorpion” Roger dare to launch an attack?

They couldn’t risk assuming that no official Beyonders would care about the explosion. After all, if they lost that bet, they would be doomed!

Lumian hadn’t expected Baron Brignais to find a way to elude “Black Scorpion” Roger’s assault in such a short span of time. And he had accomplished it using only the resources at hand.

This had momentarily foiled his plan.

True to the reputation of the Savoie Mob’s ‘brain,’ Baron Brignais displays remarkable responsiveness and quick thinking, surpassing even Margot, “Hammer” Ait, and the others in critical moments. Lumian clicked his tongue in acknowledgment, paying no mind to Hammer’s lifeless body on the ground. Taking a seat across from Baron Brignais, he flashed a smile.

“I made the wise choice to seek refuge here.”

Baron Brignais nearly choked, his saliva catching in his throat.

Had it not been for his exceptional intellect, he might have been ensnared and faced a grave fate!

Exhaling slowly, Baron Brignais cast a glance at the motionless corpse and addressed Louis and the rest, “Drag it into a private room and conceal it carefully. The authorities will likely come knocking soon.”

Chapter 172 - 172 Superintendent

172 Superintendent

After concealing the body, Baron Brignais nonchalantly addressed Lumian, his curiosity piqued.

“I must say, I’m quite intrigued. How did you manage to eliminate ‘Hammer’ Ait?”

Lumian didn’t hold back, revealing everything. He retrieved an empty metal canister and placed it on the table before him.

“What’s this?” Baron Brignais examined it carefully for a few moments. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

“Remember when I ventured underground earlier today?” Lumian grinned. “I encountered a deviant individual and, quite accidentally, dispatched him. He happened to possess this gaseous sedative and its corresponding antidote.”

“After infiltrating ‘Hammer’ Ait’s washroom, I consumed the antidote and patiently awaited his arrival. When he entered, I unscrewed the sedative and engaged him in close combat. I restrained him, preventing his escape until the sedative took effect.”

Baron Brignais pondered for a brief moment, confirming the plausibility of this plan. Satisfied, he nodded and remarked, “The washroom is rather confined, and the gaseous sedative will quickly permeate the space. Moreover, there’s no ventilation to speak of. Considering ‘Hammer’ Ait’s cautious nature and his guard against our Savoie Mob, he wouldn’t offer an easy opportunity for infiltration.”

“The gunmen stationed outside wouldn’t dare to open fire, lest they

accidentally eliminate ‘Hammer’ Ait. They might even struggle to unlock the restroom door.”

Baron Brignais spoke with such conviction that it seemed he had witnessed the scene firsthand.

Louis and the others silently acknowledged the validity of this analysis.

Having understood the intricacies, they realized that Ciel’s ability to dispatch “Hammer” Ait within such a short span of time wasn’t as implausible as they had initially thought.

Ciel had indeed discovered a path to success and skillfully utilized the resources at his disposal.

Under this plan, as long as his combat prowess didn’t significantly pale in comparison to “Hammer” Ait’s, he had a considerable chance of dealing with the traitor.

Naturally, achieving success necessitated strength, a stroke of luck, decisiveness, audacity, and adeptness in gathering intelligence.

Ciel’s terror was undeniable, yet it wasn’t as horrifying as they had envisioned.

Baron Brignais further commended Lumian’s sagacity, albeit slightly displeased that he had transported “Hammer” Ait’s lifeless body to Salle de Bal Brise after accomplishing the deed. It had nearly brought calamity upon him.

Nevertheless, Baron Brignais harbored no intention of reprimanding him.

Upon reflection, he realized that the fault lay primarily with himself.

It seems I habitually exude an excessive air of confidence and intellect. As if nothing can perplex me. No wonder he assumes that I can provide ample protection and remain unafraid of ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger.

I even proposed this operation. It’s only natural for him to believe

that I've already made all necessary preparations.

As they conversed, time slipped away. Before long, a guard from the Savoie Mob stationed at the entrance on the first floor ascended and approached Baron Brignais, conveying a message.

"Please, bring him up." Baron Brignais stood and made his way toward the staircase.

Travis Everett served as the superintendent at the police headquarters of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. He held one of the highest positions when it came to carrying out tasks. Above him stood a few deputy directors with the rank of chief superintendent, and overseeing everything was the police commissioner of the district.

Baron Brignais enjoyed conversing with Everett. Emperor Roselle's words described him as the epitome of a "Mr. Nice Guy." He preferred not to delve into the truth, simply hoping for harmonious interactions and a lack of trouble. He possessed a remarkable ability to resolve conflicts between the mobs in the market district.

Ten seconds later, the officer led his two subordinates into the café on the second floor.

Travis Everett appeared to be around 30 years old and stood nearly 1.75 meters tall. His black hair was cropped short, and he wore glasses with relatively large black frames that framed his blue eyes. His chin was slightly broad.

Dressed in a black police uniform, his epaulets showcased five-petaled irises in silver-white against the black background. This indicated his rank as a superintendent. If there were seven petals, he would hold the rank of chief superintendent, and above that, an off-white diamond square.

Travis Everett looked at the smiling Baron Brignais and asked with a stern expression, "What just happened? Please don't tell me there was an explosion at the entrance of Salle de Bal Brise, and you have no idea who did it!"

"Monsieur Superintendent, please have a seat." Baron Brignais guided

Travis Everett to a wooden table and personally pulled out a chair for him.

Lumian, disguising himself as one of the thugs alongside Louis and the others, stood behind Baron Brignais, avoiding direct confrontation with the officers to prevent recognition as a wanted criminal.

Baron Brignais picked up his mahogany pipe and gazed at Travis Everett across from him. With a grave expression, he spoke, "'Hammer' Ait is dead. I was concerned that 'Black Scorpion' Roger would go into a frenzy, so I detonated the explosives and drew everyone's attention. Rest assured, Monsieur Superintendent, I carefully chose the location of the blast. I didn't harm or seriously injure anyone."

Travis Everett raised his right hand, adjusted his black-framed glasses, and pointed at Baron Brignais.

"Can you all refrain from causing so much trouble? The parliamentary election is taking place next week. Do you want us to embarrass ourselves in front of our future superior?

"I don't care about your intentions, nor do I wish to know your motives. All I desire is a peaceful market district.

"If something similar occurs again, I will propose to Monsieur Aymerck that Bureau 8 and the two Churches form a joint investigative team to handle your Savoie Mob!"

Aymerck served as one of Trier's police commissioners, overseeing Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Travis Everett did not mention the death of "Hammer" Ait directly, but he employed it as a warning to Baron Brignais.

Baron Brignais responded with a smile, "Monsieur Superintendent, fear not. For the next two weeks, we shall strictly adhere to the law. I am merely concerned about the Poison Spur Mob…"

Travis Everett nodded and let out a sigh.

“Emperor Roselle proclaimed that peace brings prosperity. If you do encounter any disputes, you can seek me out for a tribunal.”

He then turned to the two lower-ranking officers beside him and said, “Let us return now and find someone to keep a close watch on the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob. We must ensure they behave.”

The superintendent rose from his seat and extended his arms.

“Praise the Sun!”

“Praise the Sun!” Baron Brignais also stood up, echoing the sentiment.

As Travis Everett and his companions descended the stairs, Lumian muttered quietly to himself, Do people in positions of power always enjoy quoting Emperor Roselle? We lower-class individuals are different. We curse and use crude language as needed. The sense of a sentence doesn’t depend on who utters it…

Nearly half an hour later, Baron Brignais turned to Lumian and spoke, “‘Black Scorpion’ Roger and the others should be under surveillance. There is no immediate danger.

“You may return to Auberge du Coq Doré to rest now. Come here at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow. I will take you to meet the boss.”

“Alright,” Lumian replied with a smile. “Thank you, Baron.”

He then inquired, “According to the rules, since I was the one who killed ‘Hammer’ Ait, all his belongings belong to me, correct?”

“That is correct,” Baron Brignais confirmed, displaying a generous nature when it came to such matters.

He motioned for Louis to bring over the black revolver, bullet bag, bayonet, and stack of intelligence.

“These are yours as well.”

Lumian fastened the holster under his left armpit and stowed away the other items before entering the room where “Hammer” Ait’s

lifeless body lay.

Ensuring no one was tailing him, he squatted down and unbuttoned the corpse's shirt.

There, he discovered a golden-red ball resembling the morning clouds and sunset, with a faint flickering light dancing within.

This was a Pugilist Beyonder characteristic!

Lumian happily pocketed it and proceeded to search "Hammer" Ait's pockets. He found 116 verl d'or and 17 coppet notes and coins, along with a pair of boxing gloves made of steel-like material, adorned with several sharp spikes.

For Lumian, this bounty far exceeded the satisfaction of hunting Margot.

On his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré, only sporadic gas street lamps illuminated the path. Lumian weaved through the intersecting shadows, sensing pairs of eyes fixated on him.

Is 'Black Scorpion' Roger commanding the deceased or using other Beyonder abilities to keep tabs on me? Or am I simply being overly vigilant and imagining things? Lumian muttered, raising his right hand to massage his temples.

He activated his Spirit Vision but found nothing amiss.

The unsettling feeling of being watched gradually faded away.

…

In the three-story building with a garden at 126 Avenue du Marché.

The imposing "Black Scorpion" Roger, with his piercing deep-blue eyes, and the charming "Baldy" Harman walked back through the door.

The ten members of the Poison Spur Mob, who had been waiting anxiously, felt the air grow tense and their fear heightened. None of them dared to utter a word, as if they were facing an impending

storm.

After a tense silence that lasted for more than ten seconds, “Baldy” Harman gritted his teeth and spoke up,

“That Ciel doesn’t take us seriously. The Savoie Mob has been provoking us repeatedly. They must pay the price!”

“Black Scorpion” Roger shared Harman’s sentiment, feeling equally provoked by Ciel. He spoke in a low, commanding voice,

“We cannot let this matter go unaddressed!”

Phew… Roger exhaled heavily and motioned for the other members of the Poison Spur Mob to leave.

Only Harman remained, and Roger continued, “But we are being targeted by the police. It is highly likely that official Beyonders will be involved. We cannot seek revenge for the time being.

“Brignais is no ordinary opponent. He is cunning and intelligent.

“When Monsieur Artois is elected to parliament, Madame Moon will grant us a new boon. At that time, I will extract Brignais’s brain and feed it to the stray dogs!

“However, we cannot remain idle. When the surveillance on us becomes less vigilant, I will seize the opportunity to assassinate Ciel!

“If the Savoie Mob can assassinate our men, then we can do the same to theirs!”

…

At Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian had just reached Room 207 when he sensed something. He turned his head and directed his gaze towards the nearby balcony.

“Come out,” he said with a resigned sigh. “Madame Jenna.”

Chapter 173 - 173 Intelligence on the Boss

173 Intelligence on the Boss

With her hair tied up in a simple bun, Showy Diva emerged from the shadows of the balcony, her eyes adorned with dark shadows and a mole positioned neatly on her nose.

Curiosity evident in her voice, she asked, “How did you discover me? How did you know it was me?”

Being an Assassin, she had mastered the art of utilizing darkness and shadows to conceal her presence. Until now, no one had ever detected her in her previous encounters, making this the first time she had been discovered.

Lumian scoffed in response.

“Next time you plan on assassinating someone, remember not to wear perfume.”

After reminding Jenna, he jokingly pointed towards the door of Room 207 and said, “I thought you would enter the room yourself, but instead, you waited so politely on the balcony. It’s unlike you.”

“Dammit, I’ve always been polite!” Jenna retorted, feeling a hint of anger at the accusation.

After a brief pause, she muttered, “You’re cold, sinister, cunning, and devious. You might have set a trap in the room, waiting for someone to walk into it.”

While speaking, Jenna glanced at Lumian and indignantly said, “I understand how you guessed that I’m an Assassin!

“First, you connected the dots from the perfect infiltration route I provided. Then, you deliberately probed me. F*ck, if I had been calmer, you would have said, ‘Haha, I’m joking.’”

“Madame Jenna, your reflex arc is a little long,” Lumian laughed.

“What ‘Madame’ or ‘Miss.’ You’re not one to be polite either. Just call me Jenna,” she controlled her urge to curse and curiously asked, “What’s a reflex arc?”

She had a feeling it wasn’t something favorable, but she couldn’t quite grasp its meaning.

Miss, did you complete your compulsory education? Lumian criticized. As he opened the door, he casually explained, “For instance, you, Franca, Baron Brignais, and ‘Hammer’ Ait hear me telling a joke simultaneously. Franca and Baron Brignais burst into laughter instantly, but it takes you a whole day to find me and say, ‘Haha, how funny.’”

“Dammit! You bastard!” Jenna finally realized she had been mocked.

Following Lumian into Room 207, she asked in confusion, “What about ‘Hammer’ Ait? Why isn’t he laughing?”

Lumian turned his head and solemnly glanced at her.

“Dead people don’t laugh.”

Jenna was momentarily taken aback before she burst into laughter, her body swaying slightly.

“You, haha, you truly have a sense of humor…” She intermittently expressed amidst her laughter.

Lumian ignited the carbide lamp in the room and settled on the edge of the bed. He inquired, “What brings you to Auberge du Coq Doré?”

“I’ve come to retrieve my gun!” Jenna shut the door behind her and dragged over the old, worn armchair. Placing it in front of her, she sat down, resting her elbows on the backrest.

Her eyes sparkled with curiosity she couldn't conceal.

"But don't tell me how you did it just yet. Let me take a guess.

"You… asked me about the size of the washroom. That means you intended to exploit the environment there.

"F*ck! I've got it, I've got it! You have that pervert's sedative on hand. It's perfect for a place like the washroom. It's like trapping a pigeon!

"Dammit, I can imagine 'Hammer' Ait's desperate expression as he struggled, realizing his strength was dwindling. The thugs outside couldn't enter, and they didn't dare to shoot randomly…"

The more Jenna spoke, the more animated she became, as if she were the one who had carried out the assassination of "Hammer" Ait.

"At least you have some wits about you," Lumian begrudgingly acknowledged.

"Heh!" Jenna waved her hand and peered at Lumian. "What I can't figure out is why you weren't affected by the sedative. Did you smell that bottle of 'shit' beforehand? Can its effects last that long?"

Lumian simply smiled.

"I recall something you once said. Avoid seeing what I shouldn't, hearing what I shouldn't, and asking questions I shouldn't."

"…" Jenna glared at Lumian in frustration and refrained from further probing.

Lumian produced her compact revolver and tossed it to her.

Jenna caught it deftly and let out a chuckle.

"You didn't even dare to come up to me and return it in person?"

She smacked her lips and clicked her tongue.

"Is there something about me that frightens you?"

In that moment, she felt as if she had returned to teasing Lumian when they first met.

Lumian appraised her.

“You’re quite audacious to enter a male stranger’s room dressed like this in the middle of the night.”

Jenna was dressed as she typically would for her evening performances. Her white blouse revealed a generous amount of her chest, and her off-white fluffy short skirt didn’t provide much coverage as her legs spread on either side of the backrest.

Jenna deliberately covered her mouth and let out a soft chuckle.

“I was defenseless down in the underground, yet you didn’t make a move, let alone now.

“Do you still hold onto your virginity? Need some help? A mature and beautiful sister can show you the wonders of the adult world.”

As she spoke, she intentionally lowered her body, revealing her cleavage to Lumian.

Lumian didn’t flinch and observed calmly.

Who would be frightened by such a thing?

Jenna’s expectation of a fleeting gaze and a flushed expression from Lumian gradually transformed into discomfort.

She sat up straight and muttered, “Lame, coward…”

In the next instant, Lumian stood up abruptly.

Jenna’s expression underwent a sudden change.

“What are you planning to do?”

Lumian’s lips curled into a smirk as he turned toward the wooden table.

“Just pouring some light beer. Fancy a glass?”

Auberge du Coq Doré didn't offer the option of boiling water. The tenants either drank tap water or resorted to light beer as a substitute.

"…No, thanks." Jenna let out a relieved sigh.

Lumian took a few swigs of light beer and redirected the conversation.

"How can you be so certain that you're older than me?"

"I saw your wanted poster at Franca's. Well, hello there, Lumian. You're not even 18 yet, while I've already reached 21!" Jenna's satisfaction started to surface.

"Is your mental age only 12?" Lumian taunted before inquiring, "How did you come to know the infiltration route to that room?"

Franca had long harbored the desire to carry out an assassination against the Poison Spur Mob?

Jenna pursed her lips and replied, "I've been gathering intelligence for nearly a month, awaiting the perfect opportunity to assassinate Margot. But you beat me to it."

Margot had previously overseen the Salle de Gristmill.

"Do you hold a grudge against Margot?" Lumian asked.

"He didn't do anything to me." Jenna lowered her gaze slightly. "When I first arrived in the market district, searching for singing opportunities in various dance halls, I encountered another Showy Diva singer. She was a few years older than me and took me under her wing. She even helped refine my singing and guided me towards a chance to perform. Over a month ago, Margot violated her. F*cking dammit, did he think all Showy Divas were open for his taking? Afterwards, she left the market district. I later heard she was committed to an asylum…

"That was when I pleaded with Franca to obtain Beyonder powers and assist her."

Lumian fell silent for a few moments before speaking again.

“You see, one mustn’t hesitate. When I made up my mind to kill Margot that morning, I carried out the deed that very night.”

Jenna found herself both enraged and entertained.

“Well, everyone has their own style!”

Lumian changed the subject.

“Tomorrow morning, Baron Brignais will take me to meet the Boss. Do you have any insights on what kind of person he is?”

Jenna pondered for a moment before responding.

“I’ve never met him personally, but I’ve heard Franca mention a few things.

“He resides in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. He’s a bit of a pervert and has a fondness for women, but he’s not twisted. His tastes are quite f*cking normal, and every one of his partners matches Franca’s preferences.

“He’s a merchant by trade. He owns a depot near the steam locomotive station and holds significant shares in the nearby Rist docks. He also runs a freight company and a construction firm, providing employment opportunities for many Savoyards.

“You might not know this, but when the Poison Spur Mob first gained power, they had a major conflict with the Savoie Mob. All the laborers from the depot and the dock workers took to the streets. It was like a protest!”

A considerable number of people. If armed, they could form an army… Lumian motioned for Jenna to continue.

Jenna pulled her collar up slightly.

“Franca mentioned that he’s quite amiable, even with common laborers. Don’t be deceived by his appearance. His goal is to make others drop their guard around him.

He's cunning and highly intelligent. He enjoys playing mind games with others. Don't provoke him, or Franca won't be able to protect you.

"He wields significant power. It seems he's adept at fire manipulation and possesses some mystical artifact."

Adept at fire manipulation… A Sequence 7 Pyromaniac of the Hunter pathway? No, Franca mentioned that he's incredibly powerful, and Franca is likely a Sequence 7 Witch of the Demoness pathway. If she made such an assessment, it's probable that the boss of the Savoie Mob is more than just a Sequence 7…

The Poison Spur Mob's "Black Scorpion" Roger is the boss with a boon equivalent to a Sequence 7. A Heretic Spellmaster might not necessarily defeat a Witch. Franca could easily be a mob boss herself, yet she willingly becomes this person's mistress. I wonder if she has ulterior motives or if his strength and background truly surpass Franca's? Lumian's thoughts raced as he analyzed the situation.

Jenna stood up.

"You better dress like a man tomorrow. Don't be like Baron Brignais. The Boss prefers aggressive subordinates who resemble wolfdogs."

"Is that so…" Lumian scoffed. "I'm afraid I'll appear overly aggressive."

Jenna rolled her eyes.

"That's right. You saved my life, yet there are times when I can't help but want to slap you!

"Anyway, don't go too far." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in). (com)

She reattached her holster to her calf and headed towards the door, yawning openly.

"I'm heading back now. Sigh, I won't be able to perform at the Salle de Gristmill for the time being.

“Why do you still live in such a lousy room?”

Although her own accommodations weren’t great either, they were still much better than Auberge du Coq Doré.

Lumian smirked once again.

“This is my turf.”

“Heh!” Jenna didn’t say anything further. She entered the dimly lit corridor and vanished from sight.

Lumian freshened up and settled into bed. Thoughts of meeting the boss of the Savoie Mob the next day gradually lulled him into sleep.

Chapter 174 - 174 Reward

174 Reward

At half past ten in the morning on the following day, Baron Brignais rendezvoused with Lumian on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian had chosen a simple attire for the day, donning a linen shirt, a black waistcoat, and brown trousers. His cuffs were rolled up to his elbows, and he sported a wide-brimmed, brown hat.

This ensemble lent him an air of casualness, almost uncouth.

Baron Brignais observed it for a few moments but refrained from commenting. Instead, he merely reminded Lumian,

“Once we meet the Boss, it’s best to keep your words to a minimum.”

“Understood,” Lumian replied, tipping his wide-brimmed hat.

Accompanied by Lumian alone, Baron Brignais did not bring Louis and the others. He led Lumian downstairs and directed him towards a four-seater carriage awaiting them at the entrance.

Within half an hour, the carriage navigated through Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative and halted on a comparably tranquil street.

The terrain in this area stood higher than its surroundings. Detached villas, predominantly white, beige, and grayish-blue, dotted the landscape. Each boasted a front lawn and a rear garden enclosed by barbed iron fences.

Lumian’s gaze scanned the street signs, revealing the name Rue des Fontaines.

Following Baron Brignais, Lumian arrived at 11 Rue des Fontaines

and watched as the baron pulled on the rope hanging beside the gated entrance.

Before long, a valet of Southern Continent origin approached and opened the iron gates.

“Monsieur Martin awaits you in his study,” the dark-skinned valet remarked, his tone laced with arrogance.

Without waiting for Baron Brignais and Lumian’s response, the valet turned on his heel and strolled along a cement path flanked by two green lawns spacious enough for three carriages.

After crossing the lawns, Lumian and Baron Brignais reached the grayish-white three-story villa.

The villa’s door swung open, revealing a man in a black suit and a dark bow tie—typical butler attire—standing in the doorway.

Baron Brignais hastened his steps and greeted the man with a smile.

“Good morning, Faustino.”

“Good morning, Brignais,” Faustino, a man in his fifties, replied with a smile.

Baron Brignais introduced him to Lumian, saying, “This is Monsieur Martin’s butler, Monsieur Faustino.”

Lumian greeted Faustino in the usual manner, maintaining proper decorum.

Faustino nodded and offered no further words. Leading them through a hallway adorned with a resplendent crystal chandelier, resembling a dance floor, he guided them into a room lined with bookshelves.

Along the way, Lumian surveyed his surroundings, noting an array of oil paintings and an assortment of weapons adorning the walls—single-handed swords, broadswords, hammers, spears, and short bows. The half-tall wooden platform that ought to have showcased vases and sculptures was instead occupied by silver-white suits of armor, stirrups, breastplates, and other items.

Behind the desk, positioned beside the floor-to-ceiling windows, stood a man who measured nearly 1.8 meters in height.

His hair, typical black as found in Intis, exhibited a few silver strands near his temples. He appeared to be in his early forties, possessed strong facial features, and his slightly reddened eyes contrasted with his otherwise brown irises.

The man possessed full cheeks that contrasted with his sharply defined features. Wrinkles were conspicuously absent from his countenance, and he exuded a relatively amiable temperament. He resembled a businessman who would effortlessly flash a smile before uttering a single word.

In that moment, he wore a white shirt and a formal black suit, devoid of a bow tie or necktie.

“Good morning, Monsieur Martin,” Baron Brignais’s expression turned respectful.

After Lumian offered his greetings, Gardner Martin smiled and let out a sigh.

“So young, aren’t you?

“I’m beginning to understand Emperor Roselle’s words: Heroes often exhibit a different demeanor from others when they are young. Should I address you as Lumian or Ciel?”

“Ciel,” Lumian replied respectfully.

As Gardner Martin strolled away from the floor-to-ceiling windows, he offered warm praise,

“In just a week, you’ve slain two Sequence 8 Beyonders and gravely injured a Sequence 9. I couldn’t have achieved such feats at your age. What’s your Sequence?”

“Sequence 8, Provoker,” Lumian responded candidly.

Gardner Martin expressed great satisfaction with Lumian’s frankness. He nodded and remarked, “What I said earlier wasn’t quite

comprehensive. When I was a Sequence 8, I couldn't have accomplished what you did. Very well. Our Savoie Mob could use an exceptional lad like you."

Without waiting for Lumian's reply, he proceeded to ask, "Did you find anything noteworthy on 'Hammer' Ait?"

This person is aware of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation? Judging by his demeanor, even if he isn't aware of conservation, he believes that human Beyonders are akin to Beyonder creatures. They manifest Beyonder characteristics upon death, or some residual parts or ingredients that can be employed in potion brewing… Lumian contemplated for a moment and withheld nothing. From his pocket, he produced a fist-sized sphere resembling the morning clouds and the evening sun.

"I found this."

Gardner Martin regarded it with approval.

"Excellent. Sell it to me. It holds no value for you. How about 18,000 verl d'or?"

That's considerably higher than the 15,000 verl d'or at Mr. K's Gathering… Lumian pretended to be unaware of the exact price of the Beyonder characteristics.

"Is it truly worth 18,000 verl d'or?"

Baron Brignais, standing beside Lumian, couldn't fathom what peculiar object had prompted his boss to offer such a sum.

Something from 'Hammer' Ait? An ingredient employed for advancement? Or do Beyonders resemble Beyonder creatures? Baron Brignais entertained numerous speculations in an instant.

He suddenly regretted agreeing to surrender all of 'Hammer' Ait's possessions to Ciel the previous night in order to preserve his dignity.

"Haha," Gardner Martin boisterously chuckled. "It is indeed precious, but I'm offering a premium. Consider it your reward."

He then turned to Butler Faustino and instructed, “Go and fetch 18,000 in cash. Avoid denominations that are too large.”

Lumian harbored no objections to selling the Pugilist Beyonder characteristic to Martin. He had intended to sell it at Mr. K’s gathering.

His hope was to amass funds to acquire a mystical item capable of countering adverse effects, compensating for his lack of mysticism means or serving as a disguise.

Taking the Pugilist Beyonder characteristic from Ciel and toying with it for a few seconds, Gardner Martin addressed Baron Brignais, “Despite Ciel’s tender age, he has already rendered significant services to our Savoie Mob and possesses remarkable strength. It is time for him to assume more substantial responsibilities.”

“Yes… You are already burdened with the usury business and the other shops on Avenue du Marché. It is no easy task. Get Ciel to assist you in managing Salle de Bal Brise. Allocate some personnel to support him, so he doesn’t have to rely solely on himself.”

Baron Brignais’s facial muscles twitched ever so slightly. He suppressed his discontent and disappointment and replied, “Very well, Monsieur Martin.”

Salle de Bal Brise was a veritable goldmine, and he was reluctant to let go of it.

If not for Monsieur Martin’s direct order, he would have chosen to hand over the Avenue du Marché business to Ciel and suggested transferring some of the henchmen from “Giant” Simon and “Blood Palm” Black.

Lumian sensed the strain in his relationship with Baron Brignais. He couldn’t deceive him as effortlessly as before.

There might even be clashes and conflicts in the future!

Gardner Martin turned to Lumian and instructed, “Take good care of Salle de Bal Brise. If you perform well, I will entrust you with more significant ventures.”

“Thank you, Monsieur Martin,” Lumian replied, lowering his head and feigning delight.

On the way back to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Baron Brignais seemed to regain his composure. He engaged in occasional conversations with Lumian regarding the Savoie Mob, displaying politeness, courtesy, and refinement.

Lumian was more preoccupied with the small cloth bag brimming with 18,000 verl d’or.

With that sum, he could acquire a modest apartment in Quartier de l’Observatoire!

In the Dariège region, it was akin to owning a villa in a decent neighborhood.

Upon entering Salle de Bal Brise, Louis and the others approached Lumian.

Before they could speak, Baron Brignais drew from his mahogany pipe and announced,

“Louis, Sarkota, from this day forth, follow Ciel. He is now in charge of Salle de Bal Brise.”

Louis, whose forehead bruises had mostly faded, and Sarkota, whose brownish-red hair exhibited slight natural curls, revealed expressions of shock and confusion.

They were aware that Ciel would be rewarded, but they never anticipated him taking over Salle de Bal Brise and themselves being assigned to him. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

He was now a true leader of the Savoie Mob!

Ignoring his subordinates’ reactions, Baron Brignais smiled at Lumian and stated, “Leave me an office on the second floor. I require it for the usury business.”

“Very well,” Lumian responded without objection.

After a brief handover, Baron Brignais led two thugs to address some trouble concerning the usury business. Lumian ascended to the second floor, intending to inquire about Salle de Bal Brise's operations.

Louis leaned in, speaking in a hushed tone. "Ciel, I mean, Boss, Red Boots is in your office. I wonder if she's here for you or the baron. Would you like to meet her?"

"Red Boots" Franca? Lumian nodded subtly.

"Where is my office?"

Louis hurriedly guided his new boss through the café and into the corridor on the second floor, reaching a room at the end.

"Right here." He indicated, pointing to the dark red wooden door.

Lumian nodded, grasped the handle, and pushed the door open.

The first thing that greeted his eyes were a pair of vibrant red boots, elegantly placed on a brown wooden desk.

Adorning the boots were a pair of off-white breeches, and higher still, a white blouse for ladies adorned with a multitude of embroidered flowers and vine-like patterns on the cuffs and collar. Over it, she wore a slender black and white checkered vest.

Continuing upward, Lumian's gaze fell upon a graceful, smooth neck, followed by lips painted a delicate shade of red. A sharp, refined nose, eyebrows that arched toward the temples, and eyes sparkling with a vibrant, cheerful lake-like hue completed the picture. Her long flaxen hair was artfully tied up in a high ponytail.

Seated upon a swivel chair that had once belonged to Baron Brignais, "Red Boots" Franca nonchalantly rested her feet on the edge of the desk, as if it were her own personal territory.

Chapter 175 - 175 Hidden Blade

175 Hidden Blade

Lumian stepped into the room, shutting the door behind him, the dark red wood closing off the outside world. He turned to Franca and asked, “Are you here to see the baron or me?”

Franca leaned back in the chair, stretching her body.

However, the swivel chair tilted slightly, leaving the ground and wobbling uncertainly.

“Care to guess why I’m here? For you or him?” Her voice cut through the air, clear and distinct, in stark contrast to her elegant appearance and demeanor. “Gardner initially wanted you to be Brignais’s deputy, to see if you were capable of handling more than just fighting. I told him then that Brignais hasn’t been very obedient lately.”

Lumian nodded, a sudden realization dawning on him. Aurore was right. A comment made in bed could play a significant role…

His confusion from earlier, on Rue des Fontaines, began to dissipate. How could the boss be so generous as to take away one of Baron Brignais’s most prized “property” and hand it over to an outsider like him?

Salle de Bal Brise was the most popular dance hall in the entire market district!

Initially, Lumian had contemplated mocking Franca’s masculine sitting posture, but the thought of her true gender made him reconsider. He clicked his tongue and remarked, “So, I should be thanking you?”

“No need for that. After all, you saved Jenna,” Franca replied, smiling

as she shook her right foot on her left ankle. “I came here for two reasons. First, I wanted to assure you that I understand the distinction between kindness and animosity. I will surely repay kindness. Second, I wanted to warn you not to harbor any intentions toward Jenna.”

The latter half of her sentence carried a clear warning that she would seek revenge for any offense.

Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Are you lacking confidence? If you manage to make Jenna infatuated with you, nothing I do will change her feelings.”

Had Lumian not known about the potential gender transformation through the Demoness pathway, he might have taunted Franca, asking if her confidence solely relied on her dick. He might have mocked her insecurity and her need to caution an unrelated individual. What did she think Jenna was? Someone who would easily change her heart? Lumian could almost visualize Jenna treating Franca as a friend rather than a lover.

Gradually, Franca’s smile faded. She withdrew her feet and rose from her chair.

Despite being slightly shorter than Lumian, she stood at an impressive height of almost 1.75 meters, a rarity among Intisian women.

Franca circled the desk, drawing closer to Lumian. A smirk formed on her lips as she said, “If you’re in need of women, I can introduce you to some of my top dancers. And if they don’t catch your fancy, how about me?”

As she spoke, she gently hooked her hand around Lumian’s chin, lowering it slowly.

Lumian’s heart remained calm, undisturbed like a still lake. The realization that this woman may have once been a man had extinguished any desire within him. He simply resisted, firmly gripping Franca’s right hand and offering a smile.

“I’m afraid the boss would have me sleeping with the fishes at the bottom of the Srenzo River.”

Changing the topic, Lumian continued, “So, you swing both ways? Men and women?”

Franca withdrew her hand, straightened up, and offered a smile.

“I used to fancy girls exclusively, but after giving it a try with a man, I realized it’s not half bad. It brings about a different sensation.

“Life’s too short to impose limits upon oneself. Break free from unnecessary restrictions and explore. You’ll have more fun and live a truly different life.”

It seems as if Franca had indeed been a man in the past. Is she now a Sequence 7 Witch? And why did her last sentence sound so familiar? In the midst of his pondering, Lumian responded to Franca,

“I don’t hold any special feelings for Jenna, nor do I intend to. I have far more pressing matters to attend to.”

“Very well.” Franca strode toward the door.

Just as her hand reached for the handle, Lumian’s memory was suddenly jogged, and he finally recalled the source of Franca’s words.

It had been mentioned by Aurore in his dream!

She spoke of a member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society who had contemplated the idea of becoming an Assassin and had consumed the corresponding potion. However, at the Witch Sequence, he found himself in a quandary, unsure whether to undergo a gender transformation. Another member of the society had advised him, saying, “Life is short, why not give it a try?””

It was the very essence of what Franca had condensed into those words!

Lumian’s heart stirred as he gazed upon Franca’s graceful figure. He spoke in a deep, resonant voice, “Life is short, why not give it a try?”

Franca's hand froze on the doorknob, and she stood there, as if struck by lightning.

After a few seconds, she spun around, locking her gaze with Lumian's, her voice tinged with anxiety.

"Who are you? What's your code name?"

This reaction… It appears my guess was correct! Lumian felt a surge of delight followed by a sinking feeling in his heart.

"I'm Muggle's brother."

Upon hearing Ciel accurately mention the code name of one of the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Franca breathed a sigh of relief and said,

"I'm not sure if your sister mentioned me, but my code name is Hidden Blade. I belong to the same secret organization as her. No, she must have mentioned me! Otherwise, you wouldn't be familiar with that phrase. Damn it all, what the hell is happening!"

Lumian shut his eyes and spoke with a resolute tone, "She never mentioned your code name or identity because I chose the Hunter pathway. When she reminded me about the neighboring Demoness pathway and its potential for gender transformation, she used your experience as an example."

"So, you do know…" Franca felt a strong urge to disappear into the depths of the sewers.

Despite having adapted to her current form and overcoming her self-imposed limitations, her newfound enjoyment with men was contingent upon her previous gender remaining a secret.

The notion that Ciel knew about her past as a man, and her penchant for intimate relations with men, ignited a dangerous thought within her.

The dead can keep secrets… The dead will forget… The dead won't mock me… Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

After a few seconds, Franca let out a slow exhale and said, “It would be wise for you to forget this. If you weren’t Muggle’s brother, I would have ensured your permanent disappearance.”

At that moment, she projected her true, masculine side, casting her gaze toward the future.

“Let me enlighten you about the Hunter pathway. It, too, involves a gender change. I paid a steep price to acquire this knowledge. Unlike Demonesses, Hunters transition from women to men. It likely occurs at Sequence 4. When the time comes, I will switch paths, become a Hunter, and reclaim my male form!”

Is that so… Hunters symbolize males, while Demonesses represent females? No wonder they are neighboring paths… Lumian restrained his emotions and let out a chuckle.

“When that time arrives, how will you face the men you were once intimately involved with?”

Franca’s expression turned smug as she unveiled her well-devised plan.

“I will administer them the Witch potion. If they are Beyonders unable to transition to the Demoness pathway, I will find a way to transform the characteristics of a Witch Bounded characteristic into mystical items for them to wear. And then, when the time is ripe, hehe…”

Madame, you’re somewhat deranged… Lumian dared not further provoke the Red Boots.

This individual seemed capable of anything!

As he expected, Franca issued a threat, “I’ll emphasize once again, it’s in your best interest to forget about this matter and refrain from harboring any intentions toward Jenna. Otherwise, I will apprehend you and force the Witch potion down your throat! Though Sequence 7 may not grant the ability to switch pathways, it does make one even more dangerous. It might not result in half-crazed madness or loss of control.”

Visualizing such a scenario, Lumian hastened to nod and made a solemn pledge, “You are my sister’s friend. I will surely keep your secret.”

Franca relaxed and inquired about Muggle, “Where is Muggle? Is she also in Trier? Is she strikingly beautiful in reality?”

Lumian fell into silence. After a few seconds, he spoke in a hoarse voice, “She passed away. You must have seen the wanted posters. In that calamity, she…”

Franca parted her lips, but no words escaped them.

She returned to Lumian’s side and gently patted his shoulder, offering solace.

After a moment, Franca dabbed at the corners of her eyes and spoke, “Ever since I became a woman, it seems my tear ducts have become more active… I can’t fathom that Muggle departed from us so suddenly. Whenever we gathered, she exuded gentleness, brilliance, humor, and kindness. Though I’ve never laid eyes on her true form, I believe she must be incredibly beautiful…”

With a regained composure, Lumian gazed at Franca and said, “Madame Hidden Blade, I request that you keep this matter under wraps for the time being. Do not divulge it to other members of your organization. It could impact my investigation into the truth behind the catastrophe.”

In a slightly nasal tone, Franca replied, “No problem.”

Lumian observed Franca’s shimmering eyes resembling tranquil lakes and contemplated before posing his next question, “How many encounters did you have with my sister over the past year?”

“Only once. Why do you ask?” Franca inquired, puzzled.

Lumian continued, “Did she exhibit any peculiar behavior or interact with any unusual individuals?”

“No,” Franca shook her head. “It was a regular gathering where we exchanged knowledge of mysticism and traded items. We belong to

different factions—she's part of the Academy, and I am affiliated with the Sanctuary. Our gatherings rarely coincide."

Lumian refrained from further inquiries. Seeking to gain something from the situation, he spoke with a mindset of extracting information, "Madame Hidden Blade, I am currently studying the grimoire left behind by my sister, but there are numerous sections that elude my understanding. Might I seek your guidance?"

"Certainly," Franca disclosed her address. "I reside in the penthouse at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Room 601. You can find me during Jenna's performances. Every evening, unless I am at Rue des Fontaines or visiting various dance halls, I will be at home. Also, please refrain from using my code name. Just refer to me as Franca."

Why does it feel like we're engaged in a clandestine affair behind Jenna's back… Lumian criticized inwardly, feeling perplexed. He voiced his puzzlement, "Franca, you possess the backing of that secret organization, and you are not lacking in strength yourself. Why did you join the mob?"

Franca grinned and playfully winked her left eye. "Secret."

Chapter 176 - 176 Property

176 Property

After bidding farewell to Franca, Lumian led Louis and Sarkota back to the café and settled himself into Baron Brignais's usual spot.

Already awaiting him was René, the manager of Salle de Bal Brise.

In his forties, René had a gaunt face, leaving one to wonder if he was overworked or simply born that way. His light-yellow hairline was receding in a manner similar to the people from Loen.

Despite being an executive directly appointed by Gardner Martin, the boss of the Savoie Mob, René treated Lumian with utmost respect and wore an ingratiating smile.

"Monsieur Ciel, would you care to learn more about the dance hall?"

"Very well." Lumian reached out to take the stack of reports from René and perused them with unwavering focus.

Standing behind him, Louis and Sarkota couldn't help but feel like they hardly knew their leader at all once more.

Lumian, a young man hailing from the countryside, possessed an understanding of complex financial statements that was far beyond their comprehension.

They would have been left feeling dizzy and yearning for sleep had they been tasked with such a feat.

Can this man both fight and possess a cultured mind? Louis diverted his gaze from the reports, which seemed to possess some kind of "supernatural effect."

René seized the opportunity to acquaint Lumian with the workings of

Salle de Bal Brise.

“On weekdays, we earn a daily income ranging from 1,200 to 1,800 verl d’or. On weekends, that figure can reach as high as 5,000 verl d’or. Typically, it hovers around 4,000…

“Last year, our total income amounted to 645,425 verl d’or and 37 coppet. This year, there has been a slight increase based on current trends, but nothing significant…

“We require 12 bouncers, 4 bartenders, 6 waiters, 3 chefs, 6 kitchen helpers, 3 handymen, 3 dishwashers, 4 cleaners, 1 waiter supervisor, 3 finance staff, 3 alcohol and food procurers, and a carriage driver… Their average annual salary is 1,000 verl d’or. We also provide them with complimentary lunch and dinner, which costs us a total of 53,000 verl d’or.

“As the manager, my annual salary, along with the year-end dividend, amounts to about 7,000 verl d’or.

“As per our agreement with Red Boots, each dancer receives a base salary of 1 verl d’or per day… When they strike a deal with a guest, we take 30%… Transactions usually occur in the rooms on the upper two floors of the dance hall. If they wish to leave, they must settle the fee with the bouncer or the waiter supervisor at the door in advance…

“Wine, champagne, beer, brandy, sugar alcohol, absinthe, and various flavors of soda, along with ice and other ingredients, cost us approximately 120,000 verl d’or per year…

“We’ve already purchased this establishment, so there’s no additional rent to be paid…

“When coupled with expenses for horse care, venue maintenance, gas, tap water, singers, and the band, our annual costs sum up to around 230,000 verl d’or…

“Out of the remaining 310,000 verl d’or, the Boss will claim 100,000 verl d’or. We’ll also need 100,000 verl d’or to establish a favorable relationship with the officers at the police headquarters. Monsieur

Ciel, you're left with approximately 110,000 verl d'or. This needs to cover your personal expenses, firearm and ammunition supplies, rewards for your subordinates, as well as compensation for the victims and the injured…

"Sadly, the income of the people in the market district isn't particularly high; otherwise, we could generate more revenue from alcohol and beverages…"

Inwardly, he couldn't help but let out a sigh.

A mob leader with a profitable enterprise certainly rakes in substantial wealth!

According to newspapers, magazines, and the information collected by his sister Aurore, the annual salary of a minister in Intis amounted to a mere 100,000 verl d'or. Although the government provided free housing, basic household items, silverware, and two private carriages, expenses for personal servants and banquets fell on their own pockets.

Of course, Lumian had to reward his subordinates on occasion and allocate funds for compensations and ammunition in case of conflicts. However, there was no need for extravagant living, hiring servants, or hosting lavish banquets.

All in all, he earned a sum similar to that of a minister.

The only difference was that ministers didn't rely solely on their public salaries for income.

On the other hand, laborers received an annual salary of around 700 verl d'or, while maids earned approximately 480 verl d'or. Construction workers fared only slightly better, with an annual salary of 1,000 verl d'or. Skilled workers brought in a meager 2,500 verl d'or per year, while senior engineers ranged between 10,000 and 20,000 verl d'or annually.

Indeed, the "shortcut" to wealth is written within the laws themselves… No wonder Brignais couldn't bear to let go of this dance hall… Lumian recollected a comment his sister had made.

By saving money and taking care of his subordinates, preventing them from recklessly rushing into battles, he had enough left over each year to purchase a Sequence 6 potion formula and even the corresponding primary ingredients!

Once René finished speaking, Lumian nodded and posed a question, “Why provide the dancers with a base salary?”

It wasn’t that he was reluctant to part with the funds, but rather out of curiosity.

“The dancers under our Savoie Mob are under the control of Red Boots. She insists on a base salary, allowing the dancers to opt-out of additional jobs. If they wish to earn less, they earn less. If they choose to starve, they starve,” René explained. “Apart from Red Boots’s dancers, there are also women who are controlled by figures from the usury business. In the past, Baron Brignais had authority over them all, so there wasn’t any conflict. How should we coordinate matters now?”

Thoughts raced through Lumian’s mind, leading him to notice the resemblances between Franca and his sister Aurore.

Could it be because they are part of the same secret organization? However, if it were Aurore, she would have approached it differently. She would have organized protests among the dancers, established an underground school to educate them, and sought alternative paths… If it were me, what would I do? After pondering for a moment, Lumian raised his gaze and addressed René, Louis, and the others.

“For now, let us maintain the current state of affairs. René, assist me in dealing with the police officers during this period. Once I acquaint myself better with our surroundings, I shall engage in fruitful discussions with them.”

…

After altering the passwords of the two mechanical safes and informing Manager René of one as per the established protocol, Lumian made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré before lunchtime.

He proceeded directly to the fifth floor and rapped on Charlie's door.

Charlie, who was enjoying a light beer with a nibble of baguette, caught sight of Ciel as soon as he opened the door.

He exclaimed happily, "Where have you been these past couple of days? You didn't even show up at the bar for a drink."

Lumian inquired, "There's a job opportunity. Would you be interested?"

"What kind of job?" Charlie worriedly contemplated his diminishing savings and the bleak prospects of finding new employment.

With a smile, Lumian responded, "How about working as a waiter at Salle de Bal Brise? You don't have to join the Savoie Mob. You'll earn 70 verl d'or per month. You can keep the tips, but be aware that folks in the market district aren't inclined to tip unless you become a woman and are willing to engage with them intimately. Yes, there are also female patrons who seek out waiters for such purposes. You're experienced in that domain, so there's no need for further elaboration."

"Salle de Bal Brise?" Charlie's eyes widened. "Have you already gained Baron Brignais's trust?"

To be able to arrange for someone to work as a waiter at Salle de Bal Brise without joining the Savoie Mob!

Lumian simply maintained his smile.

"I don't need Baron Brignais's approval. Salle de Bal Brise is now under me."

"Huh?" Charlie questioned his own hearing.

Lumian clarified, still smiling, "After I eliminated 'Hammer' Ait, the Savoie Mob's leader handed over Salle de Bal Brise to me."

"Is that so?" Charlie had an epiphany before blurting out in astonishment, "You took down 'Hammer' Ait as well?"

Lumian nodded. “Don’t disclose this to anyone. I fear the police might come knocking.”

“…” Charlie was at a loss for words.

After a few seconds, he mumbled, “Perhaps those Poison Spur Mob fellows should pay a visit to the nearby cathedral and pray, see if their luck can change. Ever since you arrived in the market district, their leaders have been dropping like flies. I can’t fathom how they must be feeling now.”

“Great idea,” Lumian commended.

If the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob had the audacity to pray in the Eternal Blazing Sun or the cathedral of the God of Steam and Machinery, the mob would cease to exist.

Of course, Lumian didn’t want them to act so foolishly before Louis Lund visited again.

Charlie pondered for a moment and responded, “Alright, I’ll head over to Salle de Bal Brise in the afternoon. Who should I ask for? Haha, I rarely get to visit the dance hall because I’m always short on cash. Now I can go there every day.”

“Just find Manager René and let him know you’re a tenant at Auberge du Coq Doré,” Lumian replied simply, his gaze shifting to the side.

There were two cleaning ladies nearby. One of them appeared to be in her early fifties, but upon closer inspection, one would think she was only in her forties. She had originally possessed flaxen-colored hair, but she now wore a vibrant blond wig and had applied eye shadow and makeup. This concealed her fine wrinkles to some extent, but couldn’t entirely hide her weariness.

“Who are they?” Lumian inquired of Charlie.

Charlie clicked his tongue and explained, “Don’t you know? Our penny-pinching landlord has changed his ways. He no longer hires someone to clean just once a week. Now he’s opted to have two cleaning ladies work every morning.

“Tell me, tell me, isn’t this a miraculous turn of events? It’s only slightly less fortunate than my own stroke of luck back then!”

Lumian, having just finished perusing Salle de Bal Brise’s financial statements, immediately considered the salary of a cleaning lady.

Around 70 to 80 verl d’or per month.

However, that was for full-time work. This kind of half-day job would cost at most 45 verl d’or.

“Two cleaning ladies working half a day wouldn’t exceed 100 verl d’or per month. Hiring someone for regular cleaning once a week costs 18 verl d’or each time. And Monsieur Ive promised to increase it to twice a week. In other words, it’ll cost 150 verl d’or per month.

“How is this generous? It’s simply meticulous budgeting!” Lumian scoffed.

He suspected that if it weren’t for the fact that a cleaning lady couldn’t finish the entire motel in half a day, no one would take on such a job. Monsieur Ive definitely wouldn’t hire two.

“Is that so?” Charlie scratched his head.

His computational abilities couldn’t keep up with Lumian’s rapid deductions.

As the two cleaning ladies entered a vacant room to rid it of bedbugs, Lumian subtly gestured in their direction with his chin. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Why is one of them wearing a wig and eye shadow?”

What kind of cleaning lady does that?

Charlie lowered his voice and said, “I asked about that. Her name is Elodie. She claims to have been a theater actress and says she’s used to dollying herself up like that. And she continues to do so to this day.

“No one knows if she’s telling the truth. When I worked as an

attendant at H?tel du Cygne Blanc, I heard from the kitchen staff that when aging prostitutes are scorned, their only option is to take on tasks like dishwashing and cleaning…"

Lumian recollected Elodie's appearance and surmised that she must have been quite a beauty in her youth. Whether she had been a theater actress or a woman of the streets had no bearing on her current role as a cleaning lady.

After bidding farewell to Charlie, Lumian made his way to the restaurant on the first floor for a quick meal before taking a public carriage to Avenue du Boulevard.

He intended to inform Mr. K that the mission had been successfully accomplished!

Chapter 177 - 177 Proselytizing

177 Proselytizing

Before stepping onto the public carriage, Lumian made a special effort to spend six licks on purchasing a copy of the Psychic magazine, disguising himself as someone attending a gathering of mysticism enthusiasts at 19 Rue Scheer.

He worried that Gardner Martin, the boss of the Savoie Mob, might secretly tail him to ascertain if something was amiss.

While he could employ some anti-tracking methods to try and shake off potential pursuers, wouldn't that raise more suspicion?

In comparison, it would be more convincing to pose as a naive country bumpkin who had recently arrived in Trier and stumbled upon the Beyonder path. Such an individual would naturally crave knowledge about mysticism, leading to the purchase of Psychic and other magazines. Occasionally attending various gatherings of mysticism enthusiasts would solidify the facade.

In truth, this tale held some merit.

The only hitch was that Mr. K, the organizer of the mysticism enthusiast gathering, had a secret organization backing him.

If Gardner Martin's men had indeed delved into their investigation, Lumian would let them confront Mr. K and witness the clash of strengths!

As the Prankster King of Cordu, Lumian always relished witnessing a spectacle unfold.

When the time arrived, he would adjust his choices based on the outcome of the battle. In any case, his overall direction would remain

unchanged. He would follow the instructions of Madam Magician and infiltrate the secret organization behind Mr. K.

Inside the carriage, Lumian flipped through Psychic.

The current issue focused on the theme of “secret deeds.”

Contrary to Lumian’s initial instinctive interpretation, the term “deed” in the context of secret deeds did not refer to an actual “deed” but rather denoted “compatibility.” It represented a method of merging one’s mind with a specific hidden entity, enabling the acquisition of corresponding mental experiences and a certain amount of mystical knowledge.

Psychic’s editorials stressed that this act was exceedingly perilous. Unless one could verify the trustworthiness and absence of malice in the subject of the secret deed, attempting it was strongly discouraged. It would lead to dire and severe consequences, including but not limited to mental illness, possession by evil spirits, loss of rationality, sudden death, and alterations in personality.

Ah, now it makes sense… Lumian immediately grasped some of the contents of Aurore’s grimoire.

Initially, he had struggled to comprehend those passages, viewing them through the lens of a contract. However, with a change in perspective, he now roughly understood their meaning.

Lumian lowered his gaze to the Psychic magazine in his hand and silently commended it, saying,

It’s more useful than I anticipated. I had thought it was all concocted to deceive enthusiasts of mysticism.

Yes, although there are numerous errors in common sense that suggest it wasn’t written by someone who truly ventured into the Beyonder world and conducted extensive research, their explanations of certain concepts are rather advanced. They come close to the correct answer, and some even enlighten me…

Amidst his praise, he muttered, Considering that Mr. K resides beneath the headquarters of Psychic, could there truly be Beyonders

among the editorial staff and contributing authors of these mysticism magazines? Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Did they intentionally write an accurate article first and then deliberately alter many concepts and common knowledge to something incorrect?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian inwardly hissed.

From this vantage point, the editors of this issue aren't instructing the correct secret deed ritual. Instead, they are cautioning those who attempt secret deeds without discretion!

No, it's not merely without discretion. It's more plausible that it was purposefully guided by someone with malicious intentions…

At that moment, Lumian revisited Psychic, no longer focusing on the specific words.

He even sensed that it was brimming with warnings written in blood-red ink: "Cease! Refrain from engaging in any further secret deed rituals!"

The mysterious world is truly fraught with peril… Lumian closed his eyes and sighed deeply, touched by emotions.

The longer he immersed himself in the field of mysticism, the more he comprehended his sister's helplessness and struggle.

He closed Psychic, a magazine two licks cheaper than the average, and directed his gaze out of the carriage window.

Upon reaching Rue Scheer in Avenue du Boulevard, Lumian executed his customary anti-tracking measures, showcasing his Hunter instincts.

He then entered Psychic's headquarters and knocked on the door of Room 103 using the distinctive pattern of three-long, two-short, and one-long knock.

As before, he was led to the basement and encountered Mr. K.

Mr. K still wore a voluminous black robe with an oversized hood, rendering his face concealed within shadows.

Seated in the crimson-backed chair, he gazed at Lumian for a few seconds before speaking in a low, raspy voice, “What brings you here this time?”

“Mr. K, I have fulfilled the mission you assigned me and have become a leader in the Savoie Mob of the market district. I now oversee Salle de Bal Brise and Auberge du Coq Doré,” Lumian said with a smile.

Mr. K offered a slight nod.

“Excellent. I like your way of doing things.

“What you must do next is earn Gardner Martin’s trust and secure his genuine recognition.”

This time, Mr. K omitted the words “reward” or “mission.” Instead, he issued a direct command, treating Lumian as if he were already his subordinate.

Earning the Boss’s trust? Lumian was momentarily taken aback, followed by intense bewilderment and unease.

He recalled vividly that when Mr. K assigned the mission, he hadn’t specified joining the Savoie Mob. He had used the word “any”!

Yet now, the subsequent task was to be truly acknowledged by the boss of the Savoie Mob!

If I hadn’t chosen Baron Brignais and chose another mob, what kind of mission would Mr. K have assigned me today?

Or was he utterly convinced that I would join the Savoie Mob?

What makes him so certain?

Thoughts swirled in Lumian’s mind, reminding him of recent events

Baron Brignais dispatched me to handle a leader from the Poison Spur Mob after I eliminated the pervert and obtained the canister of

sedatives, putting it to good use…

Isn't this too much of a coincidence?

There are other similar occurrences…

Every so often, I sense someone's gaze upon me from the shadows nearby, yet I perceive nothing…

Could all of this have been orchestrated by Mr. K?

If I had not chosen the Savoie Mob, would I have been "arranged" to join the Savoie Mob following a series of incidents?

The more Lumian pondered, the more a sense of dread overcame him.

When Lumian looked at Mr. K again, the notion of treating him as a cash cow vanished from his mind.

Perhaps, apart from Madam Magician and a few others, this might be the most powerful Beyonder he had ever encountered!

Unknowingly, it compelled him to comply with the other party's desires!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian lowered his head and said, "Yes, Mr. K."

He assumed the demeanor of a subordinate.

Meanwhile, he couldn't help but think of "Red Boots" Franca.

This member of the secret organization, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, possessed both a background and strength, yet she aspired to become the mistress of a mob boss. Clearly, she harbored ulterior motives.

Is her objective also to get close to Gardner Martin? Is she involved in something significant or a crucial secret? Lumian attempted to make an educated guess.

Mr. K nodded in satisfaction.

“I’m pleased to see you know your place. Don’t worry, I won’t be stingy with the rewards.

“Have you not prayed in any cathedral recently?”

He changed the subject.

“I’m a wanted criminal!” Lumian recalled Madam Magician’s warning and retorted angrily, “Besides, those deities won’t save us at all!”

Mr. K chuckled.

“It’s not that they won’t, but they can’t. Their power cannot envelop all believers and assist everyone during times of calamity.

“There are numerous reasons, but to put it succinctly, there is only one:

“Weakness is an inherent sin.

“Are you curious about the Lord I believe in? He embodies the truth of this world. He is supreme. His divine grace flows abundantly like the sea. He created everything and shall annihilate everything. He is power incarnate, as are we.”

Observing Lumian’s silence, Mr. K didn’t press further.

“You need not answer me now. Ponder carefully during this period. Reflect on who can save us and offer protection in this increasingly perilous and deranged world.

“Once you have affirmed your faith in Him, you will genuinely become one of us. It won’t be long before your strength significantly improves.”

“I shall consider it deeply,” Lumian replied in a hushed tone.

Mr. K then inquired, “Is there anything else?”

Having adjusted his mindset, Lumian asked, with the intention of not

missing out on anything by asking,"In the course of fulfilling the mission, if I encounter danger, may I employ your finger? How should I utilize it?"

Mr. K nodded and responded, "Just take it out."

In other words, it could be employed.

"If I use it, how should I deal with the threat from Susanna Mattise in the future?" Lumian probed further.

Mr. K fell silent for a few seconds.

"After you employ that finger, return to me here. I shall provide you with another one."

Indeed, your fingers are consumables… Lumian pondered for a moment and said, "I sold 'Hammer' Ait's Beyonder characteristic to Gardner Martin for 18,000 verl d'or. I wish to purchase a Sealed Artifact that can enhance my mystical abilities or aid me in better disguising myself. Do you have any such items here, Mr. K?"

Mr. K didn't offer an immediate response, as if he were contemplating a suitable candidate.

After a while, he said to Lumian, "Come here and make your selection on Saturday night."

Lumian beamed.

"Thank you, Mr. K."

It felt reassuring to have the support of an organization, even if he was only an unofficial member.

…

After arriving at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Lumian carefully stowed Mr. K's finger in Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré. His next destination was Salle de Bal Brise, where he intended to locate an unoccupied room. There, he would summon the messenger of Madam Magician to relay the progress of his mission. Lumian

hoped to receive valuable feedback from her, particularly regarding how Mr. K had permitted these events to unfold with an uncanny degree of coincidence.

Chapter 178 - 178 The Messenger's Response

178 The Messenger's Response

Evening, Avenue du Marché, Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian made his way to the entrance. Just as he reached the door, he was greeted by two mobsters standing guard.

"Good evening, Boss."

Lumian, still donned in a crisp white shirt, a black vest, and rolled-up cuffs, acknowledged them with a smile and a nod.

Louis and Sarkota had been eagerly awaiting the return of their new leader. Spotting Lumian entering the dance hall, they swiftly abandoned their positions at the bar counter and forced smiles on their faces.

"Boss, why don't you let us accompany you? It's not safe to be unprotected like this!" Louis expressed his loyalty with concern.

Lumian chuckled in amusement and replied, "You two? Protecting me?"

"I worry that if anything were to happen, you both would end up beaten to a pulp. I'd have to compensate your loved ones."

Louis smiled sheepishly.

"I know you're formidable, Boss, and you can handle 'Hammer' Ait and 'Wolf' Margot on your own. But isn't there a saying that goes, 'Two fists can't fight four hands'? Besides, we all carry guns, and our aim isn't too shabby."

Two fists can't fight four hands? Lumian thought to himself. Wasn't that something Emperor Roselle once said? When did it become a saying? Aurore had always suspected that many vulgarities originated from Emperor Roselle, but nobody had ever confirmed it… Lumian glanced at Louis, who appeared tough but had a submissive demeanor, and Sarkota, with his curly brown hair and full lips. He nodded slightly and responded, "When I instruct you to follow, you may do so. When I don't, keep an eye on the dance hall. If anyone dares to cause trouble, shoot them."

"Right, where can I find a shooting range?"

"There's one in the basement of the dance hall," Louis pointed downwards, indicating his feet. "The other leaders also come there to practice their shooting skills, but they have to bring their own ammunition."

"Excellent." Lumian nodded in satisfaction.

He urgently needed to improve his marksmanship, as he lacked effective long-range attacks.

Louis asked again, "Boss, the environment at Auberge du Coq Doré is dreadful. Are you planning to relocate to the dance hall? There are several rooms on the second floor for you to choose from. Or do you intend to stay in the temporary rest area previously used by Baron Brignais?"

Louis displayed his willingness, recognizing that both he and Sarkota had once been trusted aides of Baron Brignais. If they failed to earn the trust of the new leader, they might be relegated to mere bouncers at the entrance. Their status would plummet, and they would be at the mercy of the members of the Savoie Mob, with whom they had never gotten along. Not only would their income suffer, but they would also face significant bullying.

Lumian pondered for a moment before responding, "Show me the rooms."

This location was ideal for the ritual to summon Madam Magician's messenger.

Lumian had no plans to check out of Auberge du Coq Doré anytime soon. His strategy involved selecting a room on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise and Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré as his nightly resting places after dismissing Louis and Sarkota. This increased his chances of being attacked under the cover of darkness. Occasionally, he would also consider his rented safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian sensed that the Poison Spur Mob wouldn't let him off easily. He had eliminated three leaders consecutively and had deliberately provoked them. Once the authorities let their guard down a little, the likelihood of retaliation would be high. Lumian was confident that the other side had been provoked, as his potion had been further digested. In another month or two, he might even consider advancing to Pyromaniac.

Lumian didn't worry too much about being secretly attacked by "Black Scorpion" Roger and the other leaders of the Poison Spur Mob. With Mr. K's finger, he stood a good chance of defending himself, even against Susanna Mattise, who was equivalent to a Sequence 5 Beyonder, let alone "Black Scorpion" Roger and the others who had not yet become Sowers.

Upon reaching the second floor, Lumian made his way through the café and entered the corridor. After scanning the area, he pointed to a room closer to his office and declared, "I'll take this one."

The room boasted classical furniture, a four-piece set of dark red velvet, and a cushioned recliner.

"Boss, should we replace these fabric items with new ones?" Louis ingratiatingly inquired.

Sarkota, ever quiet in comparison, stood by his side.

"No need," Lumian replied, finding an excuse. He then assigned his two bodyguards to watch over the door leading from the café to the second-floor corridor. Locking the door, he settled himself at a wide wooden table near the window to write a letter to Madam Magician.

In the letter, he emphasized that he had completed Mr. K's mission

and earned his trust, even undergoing proselytization. He mentioned the opportunity to join the secret organization supporting Mr. K and inquired about the necessity of praying to Mr. K's lord, as well as the potential consequences of being monitored by that entity. Finally, he highlighted his recent actions and expressed his unease over certain coincidences.

Once he neatly folded the letter, Lumian arranged the altar and conjured a wall of spirituality.

With the summoning ritual completed, he fixed his gaze upon the blue flame of the candle and waited in the chilling and eerie environment.

Before long, a doll-like figure, the size of an arm, materialized above the fire.

Clad in a delicate golden dress, the figure surveyed the area with unfocused, light-blue eyes. Raising its right hand, it delicately pinched its petite, pale-white nose.

"It stinks! It stinks! This place isn't as clean as the last one!"

"Isn't this place supposed to be clean?" Lumian exclaimed, scanning his surroundings in surprise. "There are no bedbugs, and it's just been cleaned."

The messenger continued to wrinkle its nose, its voice ethereal and illusory as it spoke.

"There are old bones buried beneath the ground!

"They're foul, putrid, and repulsive!"

With those words, the blond "doll" snatched the letter and vanished instantly.

Clearly, it had no intention of staying a moment longer!

Old bones underground? Lumian repeated the messenger's words, perplexed.

He remembered that Salle de Bal Brise had been erected upon a cemetery belonging to a cathedral, and the bodies and ashes had been relocated to the catacombs.

Even after the Savoie Mob had acquired the building, there remained an eerie atmosphere. Concerned that some bones might have been left behind deep beneath the ground, they had commissioned a spherical statue crafted from white skulls and placed it at the entrance, accompanied by an engraved inscription. nove(l)bi(n.)com

The messenger's reaction hinted that there truly were ancient remains interred underground.

When the cathedral had moved the remains and ashes from the original cemetery to the catacombs, they likely hadn't intentionally left anything behind, unless they had failed to discover it or were unaware… Could it be that there is a hidden tomb beneath the original cemetery, dating back to the Fourth Epoch? Is that why the messenger reacted so strongly? Well, for now, let's set aside the matter of the old bones underground. After all, nothing untoward has occurred at Salle de Bal Brise throughout these years. It's highly unlikely that anything would go awry the moment I set foot here, right? Lumian mused, concluding the ritual and tidying up the altar.

He settled into the cushioned recliner, gently rocking back and forth, awaiting Madam Magician's response.

Time passed, and the sky darkened completely. Lumian contemplated whether he should have Louis and the others bring dinner to his room or indulge in it at the café or the bar counter.

Suddenly, a stack of papers fell from above, landing on his lap.

This time, the "doll" messenger didn't even reveal itself, clearly displaying its profound aversion to the overall "environment" of Salle de Bal Brise.

In the future, I'll summon it at Auberge du Coq Doré or that safe house… Lumian unfolded the letter and read it attentively.

"Excellent job. It seems you have gained Mr. K's admiration and

initial approval.

“From now on, simply follow his instructions. When the need arises, I will inform you of the true objective in advance.

“You can pretend to believe in the entity mentioned by Mr. K. After all, you already bear traces of two entities. Adding another one won’t be an issue. I’m just concerned it might get a bit crowded.

“Haha, the previous statement was a jest. The real solution is as follows:

“You can feign belief, but whenever you meet Mr. K and engage in prayer, beseech my lord for the protection of an angel. You should have learned the corresponding ritualistic magic, correct? If not, consult your sister’s grimoires.

“Usually, refrain from invoking the honorific name of that individual, even if the order has been disrupted. Unless you are certain you have received the angel’s protection.

“I understand that the more one tries to suppress certain memories, the more they tend to resurface. During your next therapy session, you can attempt seeking assistance from your psychiatrist. In other words, you must postpone the matter of becoming a false believer until after the upcoming treatment.

“As for coincidences, they often have multiple factors intertwined in various things.

“Firstly, the corruption sealed within your body stems from an entity known as Inevitability. Clearly, Inevitability is linked to fate. It will subtly disrupt your destiny, leading you to encounter specific individuals and events that you are ‘destined’ to come across.

“Secondly, it is highly likely that Mr. K has made arrangements to station someone in the shadows, observing you and providing the mob leaders with subtle psychological cues. This leads me to suspect that he is either a Sequence 6 Hypnotist or a Sequence 5 Dreamwalker from the Spectator path. However, based on your earlier description, he also possesses the powers of a Notary.

Therefore, there is a strong possibility that he is a Shepherd. Shepherds are Sequence 5 Beyonders from the Secrets Suppliant path, and they serve the entity in whom Mr. K believes.

“Shepherds can graze upon the souls and characteristics of other Beyonders, enabling them to wield their abilities. This renders every Shepherd incredibly formidable, standing at the pinnacle of Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

“Thirdly, this stems from the law of convergence and my previous hypothesis of repulsion. Trust me, I won’t be surprised that you will encounter more believers of evil gods, Hunters, and Demonesses in a short span of time.

“Stay diligent, Seven of Wands.”

Shepherd? That sounds incredibly powerful… I have already encountered another Hunter and two Demonesses… Lumian ignited Madam Magician’s response by channeling his spirituality.

Chapter 179 - 179 Feast

179 Feast

As Lumian gazed at the smoldering remnants of the paper, memories of Mr. K's relentless pressure flooded his mind.

So a Shepherd's essence lies in Grazing. They graze upon the souls and characteristics of other Beyonders or Beyonder creatures to harness their abilities… nove(l)bi(n.)com

Thus, a seasoned Shepherd is truly unparalleled. They excel in close combat, long-range attacks, and a multitude of mystical techniques…

In fact, a Contractee is somewhat like a simplified version of a Shepherd. Each contract is limited to a single ability. When one's Sequence is low, the number of contracts is severely restricted. At most, it might reach five, but often it doesn't exceed three. If one fails to choose their abilities wisely, they may struggle to defeat an ordinary person armed with a gun. It's not comparable to a Shepherd's power, where Grazing bestows all abilities, undiminished…

Of course, at the level of the padre, signing ten or twenty contracts becomes a different experience. Furthermore, contracts often target beings from the spirit world with a wide array of peculiar abilities. Beyonders encountering them for the first time will find it challenging to adapt…

The more Lumian pondered, the more dread Mr. K instilled in him.

Suppressing his thoughts, Lumian stood up and let out an inward sigh.

No wonder Madam Magician believes Mr. K can withstand Susanna Mattise—an evil spirit…

Leaving the room, Lumian approached Louis and Sarkota with composure and uttered, “Have the kitchen prepare dinner.”

“Boss, what would you like to eat?” Louis inquired before Sarkota could speak.

Lumian couldn’t recall the menu at Salle de Bal Brise’s attached café. He pondered for a moment and replied, “Bring me a set meal. Join me.”

“Alright.” Louis signaled Sarkota to inform the café attendant.

Lumian settled at Baron Brignais’s favored table and picked up the day’s newspaper.

The Trier Gazette adorned the top, followed by The Reformer Daily, People’s Voice, Action News, Intis Daily, Friends of the People, and other prominent newspapers.

Lumian couldn’t resist turning his head, a hint of amusement in his voice as he asked Louis,

“Is that what Brignais typically reads?”

A mobster concerned about national affairs?

Louis glanced at Sarkota on the other side and replied with a smile, “He doesn’t read such things. He only insists that we avoid offending reporters and newspapers. If possible, we should subscribe to influential newspapers. Occasionally, he’ll spend money to place advertisements for Salle de Bal Brise, boasting of the presence of captivating dancers here.

“He usually reads the three newspapers and magazines at the bottom.”

Avoiding conflicts with newspapers and reporters… That makes sense. If the Trier Gazette publishes news of a significant mob presence in the market district, the Savoie Mob would be doomed the next day. Those old men still value their reputation… Lumian gained a bit more understanding.

He then retrieved the newspapers and magazines from the bottom.

Isn't this more interesting than The Reformer Daily and Action News? Lumian picked up Novel Weekly and delved into the latest serialized story.

Casually, he inquired, "Where do the funds and advertising fees for these newspapers come from?"

Louis pondered for a moment, beads of cold sweat forming on his forehead, but he couldn't provide an answer. Just then, Sarkota chimed in, "It's deducted from the 100,000 verl d'or we set aside for cultivating ties with the police."

Lumian nodded approvingly, satisfied that it wouldn't hinder his gains as the new leader of the Savoie Mob!

Before long, the café attendant arrived with their food.

Onion minced pigeon, smoked rock crab, hot bamboo chicken pie, stewed mutton brain, stewed veal slices, grilled oysters with vanilla, two salads, scarlet cheese, grilled almond sauce, a glass of red, white, and blue liqueur, and a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The fragrant aromas mingled together, wafting into Lumian's nostrils and causing his mouth to water even more.

Just as expected from Trier. Even an ordinary café's set meal offers such a variety of dishes. If this were Loen, I'd be limited to choosing between pan-fried steak or stewed peas with tender mutton… Lumian, being a pure Intisian, mockingly compared Loen's cuisine based on his impressions from various newspapers, magazines, and folk jokes.

He lifted the glass of tricolor liqueur and took a sip, then pointed to the armchairs on either side of the table, saying, "Let's eat together."

Louis bowed slightly and replied with a smile, "Boss, we'll take turns eating after you finish."

Lumian didn't insist and savored his first feast since arriving in Trier —and it was on the house.

It had to be said that the chefs at Salle de Bal Brise were truly skilled. Lumian nodded repeatedly as he enjoyed his meal.

Among the dishes, he found the mutton brain most delightful. Skillfully infused with several spices, the fishy and gamey flavors of the brain were cleverly balanced, leaving behind a delicate texture akin to Roselle tofu, accompanied by a rich and enticing fragrance.

He finished the glass of red, white, and blue liqueur and one-third of the bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon. Then, he gestured for Louis and Sarkota to take their turns.

Lumian picked up Novel Weekly and Ghost Face magazines, ready to delve into their contents.

In the pages of Ghost Face, Lumian's eyes fell upon a familiar name: DuVar.

The proprietor of the restaurant renowned for inventing DuVar's broth had amassed a fortune and relocated to Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra.

An intriguing anecdote caught Lumian's attention within the Ghost Face pages:

DuVar's infatuation with Perle, a stage actress from Loen and a Trier courtesan, had cost him a fortune. The tale recounted a banquet held at Perle's private residence, where she lay naked on an enormous silver platter, served by attendants, in the presence of over a dozen guests.

This shattered DuVar's heart. He had even attempted suicide to no avail.

Lumian couldn't decide whether to sigh at the Trieriens' tendency to exaggerate or to jest at the Loenese for not being as conservative as they seemed. It appeared that the latter adapted swiftly in Intis, or perhaps he should mock DuVar for his unblemished innocence despite being a Trierien in his forties.

At times, Lumian couldn't help but wonder if these behaviors stemmed from the influence of a Beyonder's nature or if the followers

of the malevolent god couldn't rein in their impulses.

Naturally, had it not been for the shared inclinations among the Trieriens and the fact that many things posed no issues, these individuals would have been exposed long ago.

After Louis and Sarkota had finished their meal, Lumian led them down to the first floor.

The dance hall buzzed with activity in the evening. Jenna stood upon the wooden stage, her voice carrying a melodious tune accompanied by the band. Couples below embraced one another, twirling around the floor.

Lumian cast a fleeting glance at the scene before redirecting his gaze and striding toward the exit.

"Boss, where are we headed?" Louis inquired.

Lumian chuckled.

"Am I the boss or are you? Do I need to report my whereabouts to you?"

Louis's expression froze. He glanced at the silent Sarkota and suddenly felt that emulating his composure wasn't a bad idea.

"I-I'm merely concerned about our next course of action," he asserted.

As Lumian made his way out of the dance hall, amidst greetings from the bouncers, he smiled and replied, "I will inform you when there is a need for you to know."

He returned to Auberge du Coq Doré but veered away from Room 207, where he had intended to retrieve Mr. K's finger and his revolver. Instead, he ventured into the underground bar.

Before Lumian could assess the situation, Charlie's voice reached his ears, brimming with enthusiasm.

"Have you heard the news? Ciel now goes by the nickname 'Lion'

Ciel!

"'Little Minx' Jenna came up with it. Have you laid eyes on her? I doubt you've ever seen a woman as stunning as her. She possesses an alluring figure and a face that could bewitch anyone. When she sings, everyone yearns to abandon their faith for her. And she took a liking to Ciel and invited him to dance. They were inseparable, grinding each other! Oh, the dance hall was dimly lit. You can well imagine what transpired…"

"…" Lumian suddenly felt like he had become the protagonist of a news story in Ghost Face.

Louis and Sarkota, standing behind him, felt both embarrassed and concerned for their boss.

They were embarrassed that the person at the small round table might be boasting on their boss's behalf. They were worried that if it were true, their boss would be making "Red Boots" Franca a cuckold. In that case, they would be in serious trouble. Franca not only held considerable power but was also the mistress of their big boss!

Charlie, holding a beer, caught sight of Lumian, and his smile froze.

He hopped off the small round table and approached Lumian, coughing before speaking.

"Hey, Ciel, would you mind if I shared some details about your romantic entanglement?"

Instead of answering, Lumian asked, "How did you find out?"

Charlie grinned. "Many people know; it spread from the Salle de Gristmill."

In other words, the Poison Spur Mob is aware that I danced with Jenna twice before assassinating "Hammer" Ait? That's true. I only disguised myself back then, without even changing my hair color. I even provoked those around me. In hindsight, coupled with "Hammer" Ait's demise, they will surely recognize me… As Red Boots' mistress, Jenna may also become a target for their vengeance. There's no need to be overly concerned, though. She is protected by

Red Boots. As a seasoned Beyonder and a formidable Demoness, Franca won't be careless in such matters… Lumian nodded, understanding the situation.

He smiled at Charlie and said, "Feel free to share."

The more the news spread, the more it would attract Red Boots' attention, deterring any potential reprisal from the Poison Spur Mob.

Lumian asked Charlie, "Why didn't you go to Salle de Bal Brise?"

Charlie forced a smile and replied, "The manager, René, wants me to start officially tomorrow. He offered me 80 verl d'or per month."

As they conversed, Lumian noticed his neighbor sitting at the bar counter.

The abject author Gabriel.

He still sported disheveled, greasy brown hair, large black-framed glasses, a faded linen shirt, and black dungarees.

Lumian bid farewell to Charlie and approached Gabriel, asking, "What's the matter?"

Gabriel, sipping on a glass of light-green absinthe, glanced at him and smiled bitterly.

"My script was rejected. Those managers didn't even bother reading it!

"I've submitted it to dozens of theaters, but no one is willing to give it a chance."

Dozens of theaters… Lumian's heart stirred as he casually inquired, "Did you send your script to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons in our market district?"

"Yes," Gabriel sighed. "Their manager turned me down too. He mentioned that they write their own scripts or commission custom ones."

Lumian took a seat and asked, “Who is their manager?”

Chapter 180 - 180 Lazy

180 Lazy

Gabriel took a sip of absinthe and spoke, “Maipú Meyer. He’s a theater manager with big ambitions. He aims to make Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons the most renowned theater in Trier. His ultimate goal is to be awarded the prestigious Intis Legion of Honor medal.” Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

The Intis Legion of Honor medal originated during the time of Emperor Roselle when he was still a Consul. It was created to replace the nobility system of the old royal family. However, when Roselle declared himself Caesar, the medal was abolished, and titles like dukes, counts, barons, and knights were reintroduced.

Later, when the Intis Republic was established, the Legion of Honor Medal was reinstated. It was given to both military personnel and civilians who made remarkable contributions to the Republic. It wasn’t limited to the military but included individuals from various industries. It was the highest honor in the current Intis Republic and being a recipient equated to being a knight from the past.

In the past, painters, authors, actors, journalists, and sculptors had been honored with the Intis Legion of Honor medal, serving as inspirations for future generations.

In the stories he crafted in his dream, he deceived the villagers of Cordu by claiming that Aurore was headed to Trier to receive the Legion of Honor medal. It wasn’t entirely implausible. If Aurore could become Intis’s renowned Fors Wall and the best-selling author on the Northern Continent, gaining recognition from L’Institut de Intis for her artistic achievements, she might have a genuine chance at obtaining the Legion of Honor medal.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “If a person lacks dreams, they’re no

different from salted fish." He found Maipú Meyer, the theater manager, to be quite ordinary.

This led him to believe that the issues with Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons extended beyond the majority of the people. There were only a few individuals closely associated with the landlord of Auberge du Coq Doré, Monsieur Ive, who were peculiar.

After conversing with Gabriel for a while, Lumian guided Louis and Sarkota to the second floor and asked them to wait outside Room 207.

He closed the door behind him, took off his holster from under his left armpit, and stashed away the bullet bag. Then, he put on a dark jacket.

Without delay, Lumian retrieved Mr. K's finger from beneath the pillow and slipped it into his right pocket.

As for Fallen Mercury, the dagger from Hedsey, the awakening gas, and the unidentified liquid, he always carried them with him. However, the bayonet served no immediate purpose, so he left it in a drawer of the wooden table.

Once he completed these actions, Lumian bent down and retrieved a brown suitcase from under the bed. He carefully placed Aurore's grimoires inside.

Given his altered identity and the increased hostility from the Poison Spur Mob, he felt the need to secure these grimoires in a safer and more secluded location—the rented safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

To Lumian, these items held precious clues and knowledge left behind by Aurore. They also possessed an irreplaceable sentimental value that required protection.

As for his daily studies, he would pre-copy a portion of the material and leave it at Auberge du Coq Doré or Salle de Bal Brise. Once he mastered it and ensured there were no issues, he would copy a few more pages at the safe house.

After turning down Louis's offer to assist with his luggage, Lumian made his way back to Salle de Bal Brise and entered a room near the office.

He retrieved the grimoire he had been perusing recently and laid it out on the desk. Taking hold of a dark-red fountain pen, he commenced copying its contents onto a thick stack of white paper.

As he transcribed, Lumian found the task dreadfully dull. Ideas on how to avoid the monotony began to creep into his mind.

Soon enough, an idea struck him.

Why not summon that rabbit-shaped creature from the spirit world, the one who had previously written the report for him, and have it copy his notebook?

Though that creature was dim-witted and lacking in intellect, it proved obedient. It possessed a remarkable speed for copying and could imitate the original handwriting… In that case, all I need to do is provide spirituality while I indulge in reading newspapers and magazines, waiting for my homework to be completed. No, not homework… rather, copying notes… Lumian pondered momentarily before setting his fountain pen down and preparing for the summoning ritual.

Back in Cordu, upon finishing his sister's daily assignments, Lumian often contemplated ways to slack off.

He had been teaching Reimund, Ava, and the others to comprehend words, hoping they could assist him with his homework as they improved.

Alas, the disparity in knowledge between them was too vast. It couldn't be bridged without several years of effort.

Before long, Lumian arranged the altar, consecrated the ritual silver dagger, and erected a wall of spirituality.

As the fragrance of citrus and lavender wafted through the air, he gazed at the candle flame's yellow hue and uttered in ancient Hermes:

“I!”

In the next second, Lumian switched to Hermes.

“I summon in my name:

“Spirit wandering in the void, a friendly creature that can be communicated with, weakling who can write Intisian…”

The candle flame swiftly transformed into a deep shade of green, expanding to the size of a human head.

Completing the remaining incantation, Lumian witnessed the emergence of a translucent and hazy figure from within the candle flame.

Standing at nearly 1.9 meters tall, it possessed the head of an ox atop a human body, garbed in brown fur clothing.

Not the rabbit… That’s right. There must be numerous spirit world creatures that fit the description of my summoning incantation. The one who responds to the summons is entirely random… Lumian experienced a mix of disappointment and anticipation as he pointed toward the grimoire.

“Copy it for me.”

The ethereal “minotaur” nodded faintly.

“Alright.”

Without delay, it seated itself, picked up the dark-red fountain pen, and commenced copying Aurore’s grimoire.

Not bad at all, much more intelligent than that silly rabbit… Lumian thought, his delight evident.

Just as he was about to settle into the recliner and peruse the newspapers and magazines, an unsettling feeling washed over him.

Isn’t the “minotaur” too slow? More than ten seconds have passed, and it hasn’t even copied a word!

No, in fact, it had only written two letters!

“Can you work any faster?” Lumian probed.

“This is already my fastest pace,” the “minotaur” responded truthfully.

“…” Lumian was at a loss for words.

It was even worse than the silly rabbit!

That creature, at the very least, functioned like a mystical typewriter. It could complete a full page of copying in less than a minute!

Lumian unconsciously considered ending the ritual and dismissing the “minotaur” before summoning another spirit world creature. However, knowing that the subsequent ones were likely to be equally peculiar, he abandoned the idea in weariness.

By the time the summoning ritual naturally came to an end, the “minotaur” had managed to copy only half a page.

Lumian rubbed his temples and made up his mind to do it himself.

After transcribing three pages, he heard a knock on the door.

“What’s the matter?” Lumian closed his notebook, set aside his fountain pen, and walked toward the door.

It was Louis outside.

In his rugged guise, he lowered his voice and said, “Boss, ‘Giant’ Simon is here.”

What could he want? Lumian recalled that “Giant” Simon was a leader of the Savoie Mob, overseeing a number of dance halls and bars on Rue du Rossignol. He was suspected to be a Beyonder of the Warrior pathway, with a high likelihood of being a Sequence 8 Beyonder.

Louis simply shook his head.

“I don’t know.”

Lumian inquired, “What did he discuss with Brignais last time? It didn’t seem pleasant.”

Louis elaborated, “‘Giant’ Simon has always held a grudge against the baron because he controls Salle de Bal Brise.”

He instinctively used the term “baron.”

Observing that Lumian didn’t take offense, Louis continued, “Salle de Bal Brise’s profits surpass those of all his dance halls and bars combined. He even has a casino in his bar!

“The last time he approached the baron, he hoped that the baron would prevent some of the more attractive dancers from coming here and instead have them transferred to Rue du Rossignol. The baron replied, ‘Red Boots is in charge of assigning the dancers. I have no objections if you discuss it with her.’

“The prices on Rue du Rossignol are very low. Beautiful dancers are reluctant to work there.”

Lumian recollected Charlie mentioning that one could find inexpensive pussies on Rue du Rossignol for as little as 52 coppet, which amounted to just half a verl d’or. On the other hand, at Salle de Bal Brise, if the dancers encountered generous patrons, they could charge up to 10 verl d’or. Typically, they fetched anywhere between 3 to 5 verl d’or.

This was despite the relatively low income in the market district. If it were Rue de la Muraille in the Red Princess district, an above-average-looking woman would cost dozens of verl d’or.

Is “Giant” Simon envious of my control over Salle de Bal Brise? Lumian nodded subtly, his brows furrowing in puzzlement, and he asked, “There’s something I find rather perplexing. Why are Salle de Bal Brise’s profits so substantial?”

Louis grinned.

“Most of our alcohol comes from ‘Rat’ Christo. It’s tax-free and

incredibly cheap.

“Moreover, we don’t have to pay any rent.”

“Rat” Christo who is in charge of the smuggling business? Lumian grasped the general reasoning behind it.

He exited the room, strolled along the corridor, and entered the café.

“Giant” Simon, still clad in a snug black formal suit, had his light-yellow hair tightly plastered to his scalp.

He set his wide-brimmed round hat on the table and positioned himself by the window, puffing on a cigarette.

The mobsters trailing behind him dispersed, engaging in an intense standoff with Sarkota and the others at Salle de Bal Brise from a distance.

Spotting Lumian approaching, Simon crushed the cigarette in his hand and put on a feigned wide smile.

“Well, well, Ciel, you’ve already gained the Boss’s approval and managed to get to run Salle de Bal Brise. Why didn’t you treat us brothers to a drink?”

As Simon spoke, he strode toward Lumian.

At over 1.9 meters in height, Lumian, who was already standing at 1.8 meters, appeared rather short.

Lumian gazed up at Simon’s prominent nose and pockmarked face, returning the smile.

“I have some sort of social phobia, so I couldn’t bring myself to invite you guys.

“Hey, you’re quite tall. Just as one would expect from a ‘Giant.’ You’re even taller than ‘Hammer’ Ait.”

His words conveyed a message of maintaining their respective territories. If you don’t provoke me, I won’t provoke you. Otherwise,

I’m capable of killing you, just like the Sequence 8 Warrior, ‘Hammer’ Ait.

“Giant” Simon didn’t comprehend the meaning behind the first sentence, but he discerned the provocation in the latter.

His face darkened as a result, simultaneously dispelling his disdain for “Lion” Ciel.

This wasn’t merely a brawny man. Smiles and pleasantries wouldn’t get him far!

Simon gestured toward the table where Baron Brignais often sat.

“I need to discuss something with you.”

Chapter 181 - 181 The Loyal Ciel

181 The Loyal Ciel

Lumian settled back into his seat, taking a casual stance. His gaze locked onto “Giant” Simon as he inquired, “And what’s the matter?”

“Giant” Simon’s cast his light-blue eyes over Louis and Sarkota standing behind Lumian.

“Aren’t they Brignais’s men? Why would you allow them to tail you?

“If it were me, I’d put them to work as bouncers.”

Louis and Sarkota exchanged anxious glances when Simon hit the nail on the head.

Lumian wanted to applaud, grateful that Simon had provided him with an opportunity to win their trust.

However, he couldn’t entirely trust Louis and Sarkota. He had no desire to become a mobster, but he didn’t want to be shot in the back, riddled with bullets someday.

Lumian smirked once again.

“What do you mean Brignais’s men? I used to work under Brignais!”

“We’re all members of the Savoie Mob, loyal to the Boss. As long as I remain faithful, there’s no need to worry about them turning against me!”

Louis and Sarkota nodded repeatedly, impressed by Ciel’s broad-mindedness and demeanor.

That's right. Baron Brignais changed our status in the Savoie Mob and gave us a lot of trust, but we're still members of the Savoie Mob. Betraying the Boss is out of the question. And it was the Boss who commanded us to follow Ciel and obey his orders!

Simon choked on Lumian's words. After a few seconds, he finally said, "You may be loyal to the Boss, but others might not be. Brignais is ambitious."

You find Brignais unloyal to the Boss? Hidden Blade… Uh… 'Red Boots' Franca mentioned that Brignais hasn't been obedient lately… Lumian suddenly felt pity for Gardner Martin, the boss of the Savoie Mob. The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

His most capable subordinates lacked loyalty, and his favorite mistress had ulterior motives. The newcomer he had recently promoted turned out to be a spy from another organization…

Realizing he couldn't shake off Louis and Sarkota, two thugs who often accompanied Baron Brignais and had knowledge of various matters, Simon steered the conversation back on track.

"I came here to discuss the dancers' basic salary."

"F*cking dammit, why the bloody hell do we have to give those sluts money every day, even when they don't have a single customer?

"Franca is overbearing. Just because she's the Boss's mistress, she convinced him to agree to such an unreasonable demand!

"We're mobsters, not a charity. By Steam, when I handed money to those women, I felt like a bloody priest!

"That's fine by me. I only need to give them a few licks each day. But it's 1 verl d'or a day for Salle de Bal Brise. The textile workers in Quartier du Jardin Botanique earn only 1.5 verl d'or a day, and they work from morning till night!"

No wonder Franca's beautiful dancers refused to work on Rue du Rossignol. The prices there are low, and the base salary is meager… Why are you cursing like Franca and Jenna? Can vulgarities be contagious? Aurore seemed to curse in the same manner during her

occasional bouts of madness… Lumian deliberately ignored Louis's suggestion and asked with a smile, "What's your plan?"

Simon's fury remained etched on his face.

"You, me, and Black, we'll go to the Boss together. We must make him change his mind and rein in Franca!

"Which of the other mobs pays their dancers a base salary?"

Is he trying to take advantage of my recent takeover of Salle de Bal Brise? Is he inciting me to rebel against the Boss? Heh heh, as Aurore once said, the early worm gets eaten by birds, and ravens who stick their necks out get shot… Lumian raised his hands, cracking his knuckles with a sly smile.

"It's pointless. Franca is the Boss's mistress. The Boss will undoubtedly heed her. If you want him to change his mind, there's only one way—become the boss yourself!"

Is this something you should say in front of so many people? Louis, Sarkota, and the others behind Lumian were so terrified that they almost covered their leader's mouth.

"Giant" Simon also appeared taken aback.

"What nonsense are you spouting?"

Most of his thugs trembled with fear.

"What I mean is…" Lumian suddenly seized the table's edge and flung it at "Giant" Simon!

Clang!

The table crashed to the ground, and the cups upon it shattered into shards.

"Giant" Simon had already retreated two steps, his expression darkening. His subordinates instinctively reached for their revolvers. He looked at Lumian and demanded,

“What do you want?”

Lumian stood behind the upturned wooden table, seething with anger.

“You wretched dogsh*t, does the Boss mean anything to you? How dare you plot a mutiny in secret, attempting to force him to change his orders!

“Do you truly aspire to be the boss?

“The Boss’s commands must be carried out, whether they’re good or bad. If there’s an issue, you can address it with the Boss privately, but you cannot conspire with others to coerce him!”

The question exposed “Giant” Simon’s true intentions, leaving him unable to explode in anger or continue inciting Ciel.

He spat out his words. “Damn it, is there something wrong with your brain? When did I say I wanted to force the Boss? I merely suggested that everyone should approach the Boss and explain that providing a dancer with a base salary is unreasonable. It places a heavy burden on us.”

With that, “Giant” Simon waved his hand, wearing an expression that conveyed difficulty in communicating with Ciel. He turned and departed, his subordinates trailing after him, descending the staircase.

Observing their departure, Lumian inwardly chuckled.

Thank you so much. Tomorrow, no, tonight, the Boss will come to know how loyal I am!

Lumian had stumbled upon an opportunity to earn Gardner Martin’s trust, and he seized it without hesitation.

Putting on a show, he simulated an angry exhale, restraining his emotions. Pointing at the mess on the floor, he commanded Louis and the others, “Clean this up.”

Just as Lumian finished speaking, a figure emerged from the shadows

near the staircase.

It was Jenna, having finished her performance in the dance hall.

Jenna wasn't wearing a revealing outfit today. Her rose-colored dress, supported by a petticoat, made her resemble an upside-down flower. Her brownish-yellow hair was tied in a simple bun at the back, with some loose strands cascading gently. The dark circles around her blue eyes were less pronounced, lending her a touch of elegance. A mole adorned the middle of her left cheek.

This symbolized elegance.

Observing Jenna, Lumian couldn't help but chuckle.

"Do the folks in the market district appreciate this style?"

He was referring to Jenna's less provocative attire.

Jenna smiled smugly.

"It works surprisingly well from time to time. Franca mentioned that sometimes, the more unattainable something appears to men, the more they desire it. F*ck, I can't quite fathom that mentality."

"What's the matter?" Lumian glanced at the waiters tidying up and found another table to sit at.

Jenna took a seat opposite him and smiled.

"I'm here to discuss the singing fee for next week. Previously, it was 10 songs per night, 4 verl d'or, and a third of the money thrown onto the stage.

"Lately, it seems I've become more popular than in the past few months!"

Lumian pondered for a moment before responding.

"Has the Poison Spur Mob grown suspicious of you, making it difficult for you to perform at their dance halls?"

“F*ck, that infuriates me! Couldn’t you have disguised yourself better? You were identified so easily, and it ended up implicating me!” Jenna replied indignantly.

A mischievous grin played at the corners of Lumian’s mouth.

“Starting from today, you will still perform 10 songs per night, but the fee will be increased to 10 verl d’or. You can keep two-thirds of the money thrown onto the stage.”

Louis, who stood behind Lumian, felt a pang of sorrow.

Although Little Minx didn’t sing here every night, she frequented the place several times a week. This change would result in Salle de Bal Brise earning 2,000 verl d’or less annually!

However, it seemed that Little Minx had played a significant role in the assassination of “Hammer” Ait, the mob leader. As a consequence, she had lost the opportunity to perform in Poison Spur Mob’s territory, amounting to a loss of over 1,000 verl d’or per year.

Jenna appeared quite content.

Receiving 10 verl d’or for 10 songs and keeping two-thirds of the money thrown on stage was the most generous treatment in the underground singer industry.

She smiled and said, “I can only come for three days next week, from Friday to Sunday night.”

“Seeking opportunities at dance halls in other districts?” Lumian inquired casually.

Jenna shook her head.

“No, I don’t have that much time to bloody sing. I have other things to attend to.”

“Isn’t being an underground singer your profession?” Lumian inquired curiously.

“This is just a part-time gig!” Jenna emphasized with a smirk. “My

main job is being the shared mistress of ‘Lion’ Ciel and ‘Red Boots’ Franca!”

Louis’s legs nearly buckled at the jest.

In his mind, Franca was a possessive woman. She had taught a lesson to any man who dared to snatch Little Minx away from her.

If the boss truly became involved with Little Minx, he would undoubtedly face Red Boots’ fury!

This fellow has other identities? Lumian’s thoughts raced as he asked thoughtfully, “Is Jenna your real name or an alias?”

Part-time underground singers often adopted an alias to avoid impacting their other occupations.

Jenna’s lips curled up, and she blinked before replying, “What do you think, Monsieur Ciel?”

She deliberately emphasized the name Ciel, implying that he, too, used an alias.

With that, Jenna rose from her seat, leaned across the wooden table, and whispered into Lumian’s ear, “After hearing your conversation with ‘Giant’ Simon, I have a sincere suggestion. The less loyal someone is, the more they boast about their loyalty. Your performance went a bit overboard, hehe.”

Jenna straightened up, wearing an air of pride, and confidently walked toward the staircase.

Finally, it was her turn to “educate” Ciel!

Is that so? Lumian pondered as he watched Jenna’s departing figure.

“Aren’t you wearing perfume today?”

Jenna turned around, her expression brimming with delight as she inquired, “So you didn’t notice me ascending the stairs?”

Chapter 182 - 182 Truth Serum

182 Truth Serum

“What do you think, Madame Jenna?” Lumian grinned, throwing Jenna’s own words back at her.

“Damn it!” Jenna exclaimed, raising her hand in frustration before turning around with a scowl and storming back downstairs.

Lumian pondered for a few moments, tapping the table in front of him. He turned to Louis and Sarkota and said, “Bring me a glass of fennel absinthe.”

Being the “protector” of Salle de Bal Brise had its perks, and his meals here were on the house.

As he remembered that he had to hand over most of the dance hall’s profits to the Boss and bribe the police, Lumian felt less inclined to be frugal.

No matter how difficult things became, he couldn’t let himself suffer. He had to do his utmost to make the Boss suffer instead!

Lumian drank two glasses of the bitter, mind-altering light-green liquid and remained at Salle de Bal Brise until nearly midnight.

Standing up, he turned to Louis and Sarkota and declared, “I’m going to bed. Wait until the dance hall closes before you head home.

“If anyone causes trouble, throw them out. If you can’t handle them alone, gather everyone and be bold enough to take action. Don’t worry, I’ll take responsibility if anything goes wrong.”

What he left unsaid was: If I can’t handle the responsibility, I’ll leave it for the Boss to worry about.

Salle de Bal Brise stayed open until 2 a.m. every day, usually opening between 10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.

“Yes, Boss,” Sarkota and Louis replied in unison.

Upon returning to his bedroom, Lumian lingered for another fifteen minutes before grabbing the brown suitcase containing Aurore’s grimoires. He squeezed out of the window and smoothly landed on the ground from the second floor.

He walked through the shadows, turning from Avenue du Marché into Rue des Blouses Blanches, and entered the safe house he had rented previously.

After hiding the grimoires and releasing some sulfur to repel the bugs, Lumian left the room and turned into an alley behind Rue des Blouses Blanches. He planned to take a detour to Auberge du Coq Doré, where he would spend the night.

After walking a dozen steps, he noticed a pile of trash beside a barricade.

Scavengers and cleaners wouldn’t come until the next morning to clean it up. At that moment, it had become a haven for rats, cockroaches, flies, and stray dogs.

Seeing the rats and stray dogs, Lumian suddenly remembered something.

Among the three metal canisters he had acquired from the perverted Hedsey, one remained unidentified.

I might as well give it a try… Lumian nodded to himself imperceptibly.

Relying on his exceptional skills, lightning-fast reflexes, nimble movements, and keen observation, he swiftly stepped on a rat with grayish-black fur. He crouched down, retrieved the slightly heavy metal canister, and poured some odorless, colorless liquid into the “prey’s” mouth.

The rat let out a quick squeak, but aside from that, nothing out of the

ordinary happened.

Considering the pervert's methods, I thought it might be an aphrodisiac, but it doesn't seem like it… That makes sense. That pervert possesses Beyonder powers that stimulate desire. He wouldn't need an additional canister with the same effect… Lumian lifted his right foot, watching as the rat scurried back to its companions. It joined the swarm while emitting continuous squeaks, but it didn't do anything else.

Suddenly, a voice as clear as crystal rang out from behind him.

"What are you up to?"

Lumian whirled around and beheld "Red Boots" Franca emerging from the shadows at the far end of the alley.

She still sported her trademark red boots, off-white breeches, and a black-and-white checkered blouse. Her flaxen hair was neatly tied up.

Why are you here? Lumian was about to inquire, but he promptly recalled that Franca resided at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

He could only respond honestly, "Conducting an experiment."

"What kind of experiment?" Franca approached with curiosity.

Her eyes, resembling sparkling lakes, surveyed the rats before she let out a chuckle.

"Has your sister taught you to experiment on rats?"

"Are you referring to laboratory rats?" Lumian found it easy to converse with Franca. Many words required no further explanation.

He then said, "Didn't Jenna inform you that after I disposed of the pervert, I obtained three metal canisters? One contained gas that could render people unconscious. I depleted it when I eliminated 'Hammer' Ait. The second canister contained an accompanying gaseous stimulant, and there's still a fair amount left.

"The third canister holds a liquid. I'm unsure of its properties. Hence,

I experimented on these rats."

Understanding dawned on Franca's face.

"So, it's a leftover from that pervert."

She then asked with anticipation, "Could it be an aphrodisiac?"

Why do you share my thoughts, Madame? Lumian gestured towards the squeaking rat, finding amusement in the situation.

"It doesn't seem so. You appear somewhat disappointed?"

Franca didn't conceal her feelings and let out a sigh.

"Indeed. If it were truly an aphrodisiac, how intriguing it would be."

"If it were indeed an aphrodisiac, what would you want to use it for?" Lumian suddenly harbored suspicions that Franca intended to do something to Jenna.

Franca glanced at him.

"Damn it, are you accusing me in your mind? Do you think I have no moral boundaries?

"I hope it's an aphrodisiac. My main curiosity lies in experiencing its effects and effectiveness. I would consume some myself and have Gardner try it as well. If his mistresses desire, they can partake too. Do you understand the pleasures of flirtation and amusement?"

"…" Lumian was momentarily at a loss for words. After a few seconds, he responded, "You Trierians certainly excel at games."

"I'm not a Trierian," Franca retorted, "but I concur with your statement."

She turned her gaze towards the metal canister in Lumian's grasp.

"Shall I assist you in discovering its properties?"

"Aren't you concerned about the dangers?" Lumian was somewhat taken aback.

It remained uncertain whether this vial of liquid was a slow-acting poison or a vessel for curses!

Franca chuckled and replied, “You truly need to supplement your knowledge of mysticism.

“I intend to employ divination. Witches possess considerable divinatory abilities.”

Aurore’s grimoires made no mention of it. They solely documented the Witch’s Potion, which causes gender transformation. It speculates that every Witch excels in spells… Yes, those proficient in spells shouldn’t be lacking in divination… Lumian handed the liquid-filled canister to Franca.

Franca walked to the edge of the alley and halted behind a five-story building.

She extended her right hand and traced it back and forth on the dim glass window.

Simultaneously, she softly recited something in Hermes. Even with Lumian’s acute hearing, he could only catch a few words.

Spirituality… Inquiry… Answer… Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

A few seconds later, the glass window darkened and deepened, as though it led to an enigmatic, unknown world.

Franca stepped back, raised the metal canister, and spoke in Intis, “What is the purpose of the liquid inside?”

From the depths of the glass window, an aged voice responded, “Induces an urge to confess.”

Franca nodded, expressed gratitude, and concluded the divination.

As the glass window returned to its original state, she turned to Lumian and stated, “It appears to be a concoction akin to a truth serum.”

“Truth serum?” Lumian inquired.

Aurore had never mentioned such a term.

Franca casually explained, “It’s a serum that compels people to speak the truth.

“Once their desire to spill their secrets is triggered, along with the interrogator’s questioning, although there may be a fair amount of nonsense, it becomes exceedingly challenging to lie. What they utter should stem from their innermost desires.”

Confiding their desires… Similar to the pervert’s other abilities, involving diverse human yearnings… As expected of a boon from the Mother Tree of Desire… This could prove quite useful for a Beyonder like me, who lacks proficiency in spirit communication and divination… Lumian retrieved the metal canister from Franca.

Franca glanced around and queried with a smile, “Why did you choose Rue des Blouses Blanches for the experiment? Shouldn’t your activities be centered around Avenue du Marché and Rue Anarchie?”

Lumian withheld nothing.

“I rented a safe house here to safeguard my sister’s grimoires. I fear they may be damaged if I am targeted.”

“Very cautious,” Franca nodded approvingly. “Your sister is fortunate to have a brother like you. I used to have a brother too. He was conceited, enjoyed flaunting his skills, and lacked practicality. I yearned to teach him a lesson every day…”

She trailed off midway, her gaze falling upon her red boots.

Used to have. Does that imply he is no longer present? Lumian keenly sensed Franca’s unspoken meaning and promptly understood the reason behind her sudden despondency.

After a few seconds, Franca’s smile returned.

“Your sister must trust you too. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have revealed our organization to you. Although we never explicitly

mentioned keeping the research society a secret from our families, hardly anyone ever discloses it. After all…"

Franca fell silent once more, her smile taking on a bitter tinge.

After all, what? Lumian was perplexed, but he refrained from asking. Instead, he simply elaborated on Aurore's rationale.

"We were caught in a calamity back then, unsure of who would survive and who would perish. That's why my sister divulged some secrets to me, hoping they would prove useful in the future."

"Understood." Franca nodded, regaining her composure. She smiled and remarked, "I thought you came to Rue des Blouses Blanches in search of me, eager to learn about mysticism."

"It's too late now." Lumian was already feeling weary.

Franca clicked her tongue and chuckled.

"I won't do anything to you. It's too… too mad and shameful to engage in such activities with someone who knows my true gender."

Is that so? I was afraid that once you got accustomed to it, the shame would only heighten your excitement… Lumian suspected that Franca, who could be swayed by the notion of "Life is short, why not give it a try," would engage in more unforeseen endeavors.

After bidding farewell to the Demoness, he returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

Nothing eventful occurred in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman until Thursday.

At 8 p.m., Lumian arrived at 19 Rue Scheer on Avenue du Boulevard and met Mr. K in the basement.

Mr. K gestured towards the three assistants holding silver trays behind him and stated, "There are a total of three mystical items, each priced between 15,000 verl d'or and 20,000. Make your selection."

Chapter 183 - 183 Three Items

183 Three Items

Upon entering the basement, Lumian's eyes immediately fell upon three silver plates holding the items.

There was an unassuming white glove, a pair of gold-rimmed glasses with a tea-colored tint, and a shiny golden button.

Observing Lumian's interest in the mystical objects, Mr. K, seated in a red armchair, introduced them in a low, raspy voice, "That glove is Circus. It grants you some weak but peculiar mystical abilities. It can conjure a gust of wind, create fog, and use bursts of light to mess with your target's vision. By touching them, you can freeze your enemies. You can also open most doors without a key. It can even guide you through solid walls.

"These techniques suit your need for mysticism, but remember, carrying it will make you lose your way more often. And sometimes, getting lost brings misfortune.

"Price is 18,000 verl d'or."

!!

Sounds like the Sequence 8 Trickmaster of the Apprentice pathway mentioned in Aurore's grimoires… Although the powers aren't formidable, if used as support alongside traps or my close combat skills and revolver shots, they can yield miraculous results. Lumian found solace in the positive effects of the Circus glove, compensating for his lack of mysticism and helplessness in certain situations.

However, the negative effects were dire. For Hunters who relied on tracking and pathfinding, losing their way frequently meant losing their strengths entirely. Misfortune could strike at any moment, even

without wearing the glove. Merely having it in his pocket would affect Lumian.

Mr. K shifted his attention to the brown, gold-rimmed glasses and addressed Lumian, “Do you remember the painting from the gathering?”

Painting? Lumian’s mind immediately conjured the image of the dizzying oil painting.

The painting, reputedly created by a Beyonder before his demise, boasted vibrant colors, a peculiar pattern, and a hallucinatory scene. It seemed as if the artist had descended into madness before his death.

“I do.” Lumian nodded.

Mr. K continued, “After the painting’s owner passed away, his Beyonder attributes together with a strange power fused into his glasses, creating a unique mystical item.

“It allows the wearer to perceive things invisible to the naked eye. Occasionally, one can glimpse the truth of this world to some extent…”

Aurore’s cautionary words echoed in Lumian’s mind: “Don’t see what you shouldn’t see, don’t listen to what you shouldn’t hear.”

Internally, Lumian couldn’t help but criticize, Isn’t this pair of glasses doing the exact opposite? It’s like a weapon of self-destruction! These items seem to have nothing to do with my two needs…

Mr. K glanced at Lumian, his voice still low and raspy in the confined basement. “By perceiving the world from a different perspective and witnessing the once-invisible, the wearer will be seized by an uncontrollable urge to paint. Each painting produced will possess supernatural effects. For instance, a painting of an ocean will make onlookers feel as if they’re drowning.”

“In a similar vein, if you apply various cosmetics to your face instead of painting on canvas, you can achieve an excellent disguise. Anyone scrutinizing your face will be convinced that it’s your true

appearance, albeit temporarily."

"Remember, once you've painted a 'new' face, avoid looking in the mirror. Otherwise, you'll believe it to be your real self. Slowly but surely, your body and mind will transform until you become an entirely different person."

"Much like this, you can't sustain that newfound countenance indefinitely. After a span of three hours or more, your sense of self will gradually succumb to its influence until you wholeheartedly believe that you are one and the same."

Upon analyzing the possible Beyonder domain of the mystical item, Lumian couldn't help but speculate, It sounds akin to the hypnosis and suggestions of the Psychiatrist pathway, but it differs greatly in other aspects… Considering the demise of the painter, could it be a power or aura left behind by an evil god?

Mr. K fixed his gaze on the brown glasses.

"You can probably surmise its negative effects. Seeing what should remain unseen and perceiving the truth of the world without adequate protection exposes you to unknown dangers. Perhaps, one day, you may meet a peculiar death like the painter, leaving behind an enigmatic painting.

"The price is 15,000 verl d'or."

Corresponding to a Sequence 9 Lawyer? The crucial aspect lies in the peculiar power associated with it. Yes, it doesn't fully reflect a Lawyer's abilities. Aurore's grimoires describe Lawyers as masters of eloquence and reasoning, adept at uncovering loopholes in rules and exploiting their opponents' weaknesses. They create an advantageous atmosphere to achieve ultimate victory. They can influence judgment, thoughts, and conclusions through their words, actions, and established processes. Additionally, they excel at utilizing the power of order… Lumian mentally reviewed the relevant mystical knowledge.

However, he remained uncertain about the Lawyer trait, particularly how to harness the power of order. Aurore lacked knowledge in that

regard as well.

In essence, the brown gold-rimmed glasses fulfilled Lumian's need for better disguises. They also provided mystical means that required preparation but were less troublesome than the Alms Monk's elaborate rituals.

The only issue was its perilous nature!

Lumian contemplated, but didn't reach a final decision. He awaited Mr. K's introduction of the golden button.

Before long, Mr. K's raspy voice resounded again.

"It's called Flare. It originated from a deceased Light Suppliant.

"It grants additional buffs such as courage and strength through singing. It enables you to sense the presence of undead creatures and evil entities. You can also employ spells and rituals from the Sun domain, making it highly effective against undead souls and similar targets.

"After wearing it, you'll feel compelled to sing. Darkness and cold become unbearable, and you'll yearn for sunlight and warmth. If you haven't removed it after half an hour, you'll become a devoted follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun, earnestly praising the Sun.

"The price is 20,000 verl d'or." New n***o***vel chapters are published on

If it can resolve my issue of resisting the undead, the negative effects are bearable… The problem lies in the limited viable targets… Lumian pondered deeply, torn between which item to choose.

His rationale suggested opting for Flare or Circus, yet he couldn't make a decisive choice.

The brown gold-rimmed glasses catered to both of his needs and were his preferred option.

By wearing them solely before disguising himself and creating paintings with supernatural effects in a safe environment, he could effectively evade most of the negative consequences. Thus, he would

avoid witnessing things he shouldn't and the so-called truth of the world.

In essence, it wasn't an item that needed constant donning. Lumian could choose the opportune moment to utilize it.

This way, he could proactively construct a spiritual barrier, screening out anomalies, similar to when he performed the Summoning Dance.

Considering his seal, the "coincidences" of Inevitability, and the occasional Summoning Dance, Lumian didn't believe an additional trait would worsen matters.

"I want those glasses."

Mr. K appeared taken aback by Lumian's choice. After a few seconds, he queried, "Are you certain?"

"I'm certain." Lumian produced a small cloth bag brimming with banknotes and meticulously counted out 15,000 verl d'or.

Mr. K refrained from further persuasion, emitting a raspy chuckle.

"You're even crazier than I presumed."

There was a hint of admiration in his tone.

Instructing the attendant to accept the 15,000 verl d'or and hand over the brown glasses to Lumian, Mr. K nodded and remarked, "You can give them a test run here. It's safe enough."

Lumian caressed the frame and discovered that the seemingly metallic material had an odd rubbery texture.

I'll dub you the Mystery Prying Glasses… Lumian pondered, recalling his sister's Beyonder pathway.

In the ensuing moment, he placed the brown gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose.

Almost instantly, he beheld a multitude of scenes from various angles.

The mottled ceiling, bloodstains in the corners, Mr. K's back that should have been out of sight, and the attendants stationed in the corridor…

Lumian also caught sight of a blot of darkness, a silhouette, a gaze emanating from an unknown source, and a visage concealed within the shadows.

Beneath the hood lay black, feathery hair, delicate features, sunken eyes, dark orbs, and ageless skin, only visible from below.

Is that Mr. K's face? Lumian experienced a sudden revelation.

Images from different perspectives flooded his mind, leaving him feeling lightheaded. His state of mind grew increasingly abnormal, and an insatiable urge to capture everything overcame him.

Hastily, Lumian removed the Mystery Prying Glasses, and his vision reverted to normal. Yet, the compulsion to draw lingered within him.

Exhaling deeply, he declared, "It's tolerable."

Mr. K offered a brief warning, "Try to employ it in familiar and secure situations."

After bidding farewell to Mr. K and departing the Psychic's headquarters, Lumian boarded a carriage back to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

En route, as he passed through Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, a thought struck him.

I must gather some canvases, brushes, and paints…

Even though my skills are limited to sketching and not particularly exceptional, the quality of the painting shouldn't influence the attached supernatural effects. Perhaps, the more distorted and grotesque it appears, the better the outcome…

Fifteen minutes later, Lumian alighted from the carriage ahead of schedule and located a shop specializing in oil painting supplies.

Upon hearing the price, he couldn’t help but inquire, “What? 160 verl d’or? A single canvas costs 160 verl d’or?”

Chapter 184 - 184 Painting

184 Painting

When Lumian stepped back into the Auberge du Coq Doré, his mind was still filled with the exorbitant cost of painting supplies.

Among his colleagues at the Salle de Bal Brise, Charlie's monthly salary as a waiter was considered decent. However, it would take him two months of forgoing food and drink just to afford a single roll of canvas!

Lumian couldn't help but view painters as a destitute lot. How could they ever afford canvases, brushes, paints, wooden frames, human models, and all the other expenses that came with their craft?

Perhaps they relied on financial support from their families just to get by. Shaking off these thoughts, Lumian closed the door behind him and carefully placed the stack of items on the wooden table.

Eventually, he resigned himself to the fact that he couldn't afford proper canvases. Instead, he settled for the cheapest brushes, paints, paper, and other necessities. The truth was, Lumian didn't aspire to be a painter or have his work displayed in an exhibition. He simply needed a medium to imbue the supernatural power, obtained from the Mystery Prying Glasses. The quality of the paint, the possibility of cracking, the fading over time, or even his painting skills were all inconsequential matters.

And so, Lumian spent a total of 30 verl d'or, acquiring his modest supplies.

Mixing a palette of vibrant colors and unfurling a flexible sheet of white paper, Lumian prepared himself for the ritual ahead. With the sanctified silver dagger in hand, he crafted a wall of spirituality within Room 207.

His intention was to explore what he could draw and observe the effects it would yield.

Based on the reaction of Madam Magician's messenger at Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian surmised that there was nothing particularly abnormal about this place. The only notable issue seemed to be the abundance of bedbugs. Susanna Mattise's predicament most likely had its origins in Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons or perhaps even an underground cavern.

Taking a slow breath, Lumian retrieved the brown glasses with golden rims and carefully placed them upon the bridge of his nose.

In an instant, the world around him seemed to spin, as if he had plummeted from the sky into the depths of the earth.

During this disorienting journey, Lumian beheld the inverted motel with its occupants moving about in a similar fashion, an underground bar, roots of trees and soil extending beneath the surface, rats lurking in the corners, and vermin scurrying about.

Deeper and deeper he fell, enduring the nauseating sensation of weightlessness.

And then, he caught sight of an immense network of brownish-green roots stretching in all directions, reaching into the distance and vanishing into the void.

"Ugh…" Lumian nearly expelled the contents of his stomach. The remnants of his unfinished dinner rose to his throat, threatening to escape.

Swiftly, he removed the Mystery Prying Glasses and fought the urge to vomit. Fueled by an insatiable desire to draw, Lumian picked up a paintbrush, dipped it into the paint, and began sketching upon the blank canvas. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Unbeknownst to him, his spirituality infused the brush with an increasing vigor.

After a few minutes, Lumian halted his strokes and gazed upon his creation.

What in the world have I drawn? The question echoed in his mind.

Upon careful observation, he managed to discern the subject of his artwork: a triangular house with a grayish-blue hue, its roof adorned with green trees, and rain resembling mud.

Lumian stared at the painting for a moment and suddenly felt an itching sensation on the back of his hand. Unable to resist, he scratched it, only to witness his skin turning red and swollen, accompanied by an all-over itchiness.

Could this be the Beyonder influence of the painting? Lumian's heart stirred as he looked away, attempting to soothe the irritation through the friction of his clothes. But his efforts were in vain, and he couldn't help but scratch a few more times.

As he averted his gaze from the child-like graffiti of an "oil painting," the itching gradually subsided and eventually vanished.

The urge to paint had vanished as well.

He turned around and contemplated the details.

I have to stare at the painting for at least three seconds before my body itches…

It's challenging to use it in battle. I can't just stick it on my face, can I?

If I use it as a trap, it might have some utility…

I wonder if there are any paintings that can be used without drawing the target's attention?

After careful consideration, Lumian resolved to make another attempt.

He donned the Mystery Prying Glasses once more, and the experience was nearly identical.

However, this time he also glimpsed deep darkness and shadowy figures moving within it.

Amidst the waves of nausea, Lumian removed his brown gold-rimmed glasses, retrieved a fresh sheet of paper, and took up a paintbrush.

This time, he didn't surrender to impulsive strokes but instead focused on visualizing what he desired and endeavored to bring the drawing closer to the image in his mind.

With this approach, Lumian crafted a golden-red sun, surrounded by a vibrant circle of colors—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

As he finished, Room 207 suddenly warmed, and the chill in the air dissipated.

It seems to have a simple exorcism effect… Lumian wasn't entirely certain.

He sat on the edge of the bed, carefully observing the changes.

Over time, the warmth, which initially evoked restlessness and unease, began to fade.

Lumian attempted to fold the painting, keeping its back facing outward. The warmth promptly vanished, and the loss of spiritual essence within the painting slowed to a barely noticeable pace.

I should be able to preserve it for about two months… When unfurled, it can only be used for three days at most… Yes, this is akin to an alternative method of creating Beyonder weapons. Lumian estimated, recalling his previous experiences.

Drawing two paintings in quick succession had placed a considerable burden on his spirituality.

After taking a short break, Lumian proceeded with his third experiment.

This time, he switched to using makeup-related painting tools.

Putting on the Mystery Prying Glasses once again, he braced himself for the sensation of spiraling into the depths. In the midst of it,

Lumian caught sight of several indistinct figures lurking in the shadows. Removing the mystical item, he began smearing various substances on his face, carefully tracing lines with the aid of the glass window, which was illuminated by the light of the carbide lamp.

Similar to his previous attempt, Lumian made an effort to maintain control over his makeup, but occasionally, his instincts took over.

Reflecting on the "mirror," he saw his appearance becoming worn and haggard. His eyebrows appeared disheveled, his cheekbones slightly more pronounced, and his lips a touch fuller.

It felt as if he were looking at a stranger. Hastily averting his gaze, he drew the curtain to conceal the result of his "painting."

Having packed away the Itchiness and Sun paintings along with the various tools, Lumian decided it was time to venture out and verify the effects.

As he made his way to Salle de Bal Brise, he noticed Jenna engaging in flamboyant gestures while singing at the top of her lungs, and Charlie, who had just delivered some drinks to the outskirts of the dance floor.

The thugs paid no attention to Lumian, and none of them addressed him as their boss. Feeling a sense of relief, Lumian walked over to Charlie's side, gave his shoulder a friendly pat, and smiled. "Good evening!"

Charlie, clad in a white shirt and black vest, turned around, returning the smile as he asked,

"Good evening, Monsieur. Would you like something to drink?"

Deliberately, Lumian inquired, "Don't you recognize me?"

Caught off guard, Charlie's eyes widened, and for a few seconds, he gazed at the distant gas wall lamp.

Suddenly, a smile spread across his face, and he exclaimed in astonishment, "It's you! Praise the Sun. How long has it been since we last met? Just wait a moment. I'll come to you as soon as I'm not

so busy!”

Charlie pointed towards the bar counter and bid Lumian farewell.

“This kid’s acting skills are quite impressive,” Lumian chuckled with satisfaction. “He didn’t even recognize his own boss, me!”

Shifting his gaze, Lumian approached Jenna’s stage, patiently waiting for her to finish singing a song filled with vulgar lyrics.

As soon as Jenna finished collecting the copper and silver coins from the stage and descended, Lumian eagerly greeted her and exclaimed, “You sang magnificently! Can I treat you to a drink?”

Jenna immediately put on a cautious expression.

Ever since the incident with that perverted Hedsey, she couldn’t afford to be careless around any audience member who approached her. She worried about encountering another unpleasant situation.

For a few seconds, she examined Lumian’s face and forced a smile to conceal her wariness.

“I must preserve my voice for my next song! Help me out by having another drink!”

With a wink, Jenna approached the two mobsters guarding the stage, seeking their assistance.

The mobsters didn’t dare offend Showy Diva, who was rumored to be their boss and Red Boots’ lover. Stepping forward, they positioned themselves between Lumian and Jenna.

Seizing the opportunity, Jenna made her way to the lounge near the bar counter.

Before leaving, she glanced at Lumian’s hair color and scrutinized his face intently for a moment. She muttered to herself, “Bloody hell, is this some sort of fashion trend now?”

Lumian happily averted his gaze and turned toward the staircase leading to the café. The two vigilant mobsters guarding the area

stopped him.

Very dutiful… Lumian smiled and replied, “Just going for a cup of coffee!”

After observing Lumian closely for a few seconds, the two mobsters stepped aside.

Entering the café and noticing that Louis and Sarkota had nothing to do, Lumian made his way to the washroom.

He didn’t dare look at himself in the mirror. Instead, he splashed tap water on his face and rubbed it a few times, gradually removing his makeup.

When he was done, he looked at the mirror and saw his pale and weary reflection staring back at him.

It drains my spirituality quite a bit… I even painted two artworks earlier, Lumian thought to himself, regaining his composure before leaving the washroom.

Louis glanced around and stood up in surprise.

“Boss! When did you return?”

“Just now,” Lumian replied, pointing towards the corridor. “I’m going to get some rest.”

“Understood, Boss,” Louis and Sarkota responded obediently, refraining from questioning further.

Lumian entered his room, compelled himself to freshen up, and settled down on the bed, drifting into sleep.

In his dream, he experienced the unbearable sensation of freefalling from midair towards the ground. As he plummeted, the earth beneath him unexpectedly cracked open, revealing a sea of raging flames. Lumian felt a searing and piercing pain in his mind. He snapped his eyes open, sitting up and gasping for breath.

In that moment, the room was enveloped in darkness and silence.

Only a faint glow of crimson moonlight filtered through the curtains, casting a dim light upon the desk beside the window.

Chapter 185 - 185 Missing Goods

185 Missing Goods

Why did I have such a dream? It felt eerily real… Lumian collected himself and assessed his condition, but found nothing amiss.

Yet, in his dream, he felt as though he was once again wearing the Mystery Prying Glasses, and they revealed even more.

After pondering for a while, Lumian suspected that the negative effects of wearing the Mystery Prying Glasses three times in a row still lingered. They seemed to have seeped into his subconscious, manifesting in his dream within the confines of Salle de Bal Brise, an ancient burial ground.

It appears that something is truly amiss beneath the surface here… Lumian sighed inwardly. He rose from his bed, donned his coat, and resolved to spend the night elsewhere to test his hypothesis.

Under the cover of darkness, with Salle de Bal Brise devoid of any illumination, Lumian followed the shadows along the roadside and returned to Auberge du Coq Doré, its main entrance locked.

For Lumian, this posed no obstacle. He didn't try rousing the irritable Madame Fels by knocking on the door. Instead, he circled around to the side, traced the pipe, and climbed onto the balcony on the second floor.

In Room 207, Lumian slept until six in the morning. He experienced only two sporadic, ordinary dreams.

So, it was indeed the ancient bones buried deep beneath Salle de Bal Brise that triggered the residual powers of the Mystery Prying Glasses

within me… Lumian sat up, a mixture of delight and disappointment washing over him.

His original plan was to use the Mystery Prying Glasses to create one or two supernatural paintings each day, accumulating them for future needs. However, it seemed that frequent use of the glasses was ill-advised. He would have to wait until the lingering negative effects dissipated before attempting further experiments. Otherwise, he risked something dreadful and bizarre happening over time, possibly leading to a strange demise akin to the Lawyer who had left the glasses behind, leaving behind only an eerie oil painting with enduring abnormal effects.

Tonight, I shall sleep within Salle de Bal Brise and ascertain whether the negative effects have dissipated… In the future, I must refrain from wearing the glasses more than twice in a brief span of time… These are the details Mr. K neglected to mention. Yes, I must experience them firsthand. Only through firsthand experience can I truly comprehend… Lumian rose energetically and made his way to the washroom to freshen up.

It being still early, many of the tenants were still abed, and the morning remained tranquil, devoid of the usual clamor over access to the washroom.

From time to time, Madame Fels would ascend the stairs to inspect the water meters on each floor, ensuring no one wasted the precious resource.

A contract had been inked between Auberge du Coq Doré and the Imperial Water Supply Company, stipulating a daily allowance of no less than 250 liters and no more than 500 liters of water. The cost amounted to 100 verl d'or per year.

Leisurely, Lumian strolled to the café on Rue des Blouses Blanches. He indulged in delectable treats like sablé cookies and brioche, a softer variation of croissants. Afterwards, he sought out a place for exercise.

Upon returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, he spotted Charlie, sporting a linen shirt and black trousers, seated on the steps outside the

entrance, relishing a mouthful of meatloaf accompanied by an Apple Whiskey Sour.

“So early?” Lumian inquired, a smile playing on his lips.

Salle de Bal Brise closed its doors at 2 a.m., and the morning had yet to reach 8:30 a.m.

Uncertain whether to hastily rise and greet his employer or engage in the usual casual conversation, Charlie hesitated for a moment before standing up, a sheepish smile on his face.

“I think I’ll catch a bit more sleep before heading back to the dance hall. I don’t think I can keep doing this. I reckon there ought to be some time when we don’t have to sleep or work. Otherwise, it feels, feels…”

Salle de Bal Brise opened at 10:30 a.m.

“Feels like we’re mere machines built for work, devoid of a life to call our own?” Lumian finished Charlie’s sentence, lending him a helping hand.

“Exactly! That’s spot on!” Charlie agreed. “You’re quite the refined individual, you know? Sometimes, you don’t seem like a mobster at all. I mean, not like the leader of the Savoie Mob. You come across as more… civilized!” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Had everything gone according to plan, I would have been studying at a university in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. I would be spending time chatting with my classmates and exploring the depths of Underground Trier… Lumian’s heart sank as he focused his attention on Charlie.

This was the method he used to observe whether Susanna Mattise’s issue still lingered and when it would rear its head.

“W-What are you staring at?” Charlie stammered nervously. “Do you see something amiss?”

Lumian eased his worry. His luck appears to be relatively normal and stable. He smiled, raising his right hand and giving a wave behind

Charlie's back.

"Good morning, Susanna!"

Charlie spun around, eyes wide open, scrutinizing every detail.

A few seconds later, he exhaled and turned back, forcing a smile. He addressed Lumian, "You're just messing with me again."

That name remained a haunting nightmare he couldn't shake off anytime soon.

"I'm strengthening your mental endurance. This way, if something truly occurs, you won't panic and find yourself unable to devise a solution." Lumian earnestly patted Charlie's shoulder.

Moments before 10:30 a.m., Lumian made his way back to Salle de Bal Brise.

Upon his arrival, Louis and Sarkota approached simultaneously, their voices merging into one as they spoke. "Boss, something's up!"

"What's the matter?" Lumian inquired with a smile, seemingly oblivious to the anxiety and unease radiating from his two subordinates.

Louis glanced towards the staircase, lowering his voice. "Red Boots, Giant, and Rat are all here. It must be something serious."

Every leader present? Lumian pondered his recent actions and found it hard to believe that he hadn't offended all the leaders of the Savoie Mob.

I've been on my best behavior these past few days!

"Indeed," Louis confirmed with a solemn nod.

Lumian ascended the second-floor stairs nonchalantly, where Franca and the others awaited.

Franca had swapped her footwear for darker red boots. She sported light-colored pants and a trendy dark skirt that had gained popularity

in Trier recently. Completing her ensemble was a more masculine formal attire.

With her right leg crossed over her left, Franca grinned at Lumian as he approached.

To her right was Baron Brignais, donned in a formal suit and top hat. On her left was a slender-faced man, barely reaching a height of 1.6 meters, boasting a pair of rat-like whiskers. He wore a dark brown shirt that fell short, and his thick, grayish-black hair framed his countenance. His dark blue eyes revealed a trace of anxiety.

"'Rat' Christo," Baron Brignais courteously introduced Lumian to the thin-faced man.

Baron Brignais then gestured towards the man seated opposite him. "'Blood Palm' Black."

Black possessed brown hair, blue eyes, and a round face. He appeared to be in his early thirties and had a warm smile that hardly resembled that of a mob leader.

Clad in attire leaning more towards formality, his hands were large, with clearly defined bones beneath the surface. He held a slowly smoldering cigar.

"Good morning, everyone." Lumian dragged an armchair closer and settled in, positioning himself nearly a meter away from the table, assuming the air of someone in control.

"Giant" Simon glanced at him, took a drag from his cigarette, and exhaled a cloud of grayish-blue smoke.

"Christo met with some trouble and requires our assistance."

"What sort of trouble?" Lumian directed his gaze towards "Rat" Christo.

Christo played a vital role in Salle de Bal Brise's lucrative business.

Despite the premium he charged for the smuggled liquor he peddled, its lack of taxation made it significantly cheaper than the wholesale

liquor stores in Trier. Moreover, a substantial portion of the alcohol Christo dealt with was moonshine, cleverly adorned with labels from relatively renowned brands and origins.

Gritting his teeth, Christo, who bore a striking resemblance to a rat, spoke up.

“I’ve lost a shipment underground. The delivery men and escorts have vanished. Damn it, my younger brother was among them. His wife and child are in tears at my place!”

Something has transpired in Underground Trier? Smuggling operations are divided into carriers and armed protection? That’s right. Osta Trul had mentioned helping others transport illicit books. Horse-drawn carriages are useless in Underground Trier; they rely solely on manual labor… Lumian nodded subtly and inquired, “What kind of goods?”

“A batch of red wine and brandy, along with some Blackfish.” “Rat” Christo couldn’t help but slam the table. “Damn it, we’ve taken that route countless times. Nothing ever happened, nor did we encounter those hyenas.”

The term “hyenas” referred to the quarry police, who specialized in cracking down on smuggling activities and maintained order in the underground.

Observing Lumian’s confusion, Baron Brignais casually explained, “‘Blackfish’ refers to firearms.”

Among the mob’s top five lucrative ventures, the bootleg alcohol supply chain ranked second. Firearms, due to low demand, brought in the least profit. The casino business, which was the most lucrative, wasn’t particularly favored in the market district, given the modest incomes of the local population. The money one could extract from the patrons was rather limited. Compared to gambling, which required wit, those who toiled all day preferred indulging in cheap liquor, gyrating their bodies, and seeking solace in the company of captivating dancers.

Regarding the sale of psychotropic drugs, the police department in

Trier cracked down heavily on it. Following repeated warnings from the market district's police headquarters, Salle de Bal Brise had put an end to such incidents. However, Rue du Rossignol, overseen by "Giant" Simon, occasionally experienced a few cases.

Lumian turned to "Rat" Christo and spoke, "Any suspects?"

"None," Christo lamented. "Damn it, that route is incredibly well-concealed. Apart from me and my men, no one in the market district is aware of it."

He paused for a moment before sharing his intentions.

"I need your help to search for clues along that route, using your expertise. I've gone through it myself, but found nothing."

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Franca nodded and suggested, "Let's form pairs to ensure safety during the investigation.

"Right, I'll team up with Ciel. There's something I need to discuss with him."

"Giant" Simon's gaze flickered between Franca and Ciel a few times before he recalled that Ciel was suspected of sleeping with Franca's mistress, thus cuckolding her.

Seizing the opportunity to teach Ciel a lesson, "Giant" Simon nodded imperceptibly and said to "Blood Palm" Black, "You and I will be a team."

Baron Brignais then turned to "Rat" Christo. "I'll accompany you for your second trip."

After Baron Brignais and "Giant" Simon scoured the underground route to no avail, Lumian and Franca followed a smuggler into Underground Trier.

Chapter 186 - 186 Strange Footprints

186 Strange Footprints

Holding an iron-black carbide lamp, Franca glanced at the path between stone pillars and asked the smuggler, Fernandez, who was leading the way, in a state of confusion, “Doesn’t this lead to Quartier de l’Observatoire?”

Though Underground Trier was a complex maze, the tunnels on this level had street names corresponding to the surface. After pondering for a moment, Franca realized they were going in the wrong direction.

Smuggling operations certainly entailed entering the city from its outskirts, and Quartier de l’Observatoire was positioned closer to the center of Trier compared to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. The district stood on the other side of the Srenzo River, effectively separating it from Avenue du Boulevard.

Fernandez, a smuggler associated with “Rat” Christo, turned around with a smile and explained, “The hidden route we’re taking leads to Quartier de l’Observatoire. We always deliver the goods to the warehouse there.”

“Is that so?” Franca slowed down and increased the distance between herself and Fernandez, who wore a brown felt hat.

Since they hadn’t entered the smuggling route yet, she lowered her voice and conversed with Lumian.

“I remember you traded your Pugilist Beyonder characteristic for 18,000 verl d’or with Gardner. You know it’s a Beyonder characteristic, right? Or rather, do you grasp a Beyonder

characteristic's true meaning?"

"My sister mentioned it before." Lumian attributed his knowledge to Aurore.

Franca was tall and had long legs, making it effortless for her to keep up with Lumian.

Overwhelmed with emotion, she sighed and commented, "It's fortunate to have someone to guide you. In the past, we were stumbling around like blind mice, relying on ourselves to figure things out. Otherwise, I wouldn't have made the choice…"

Her voice trailed off, ending with a long sigh.

This reminded Lumian of a saying, either spoken by Aurore herself or relayed from Emperor Roselle's famous words: "Once you make a grave mistake, it will haunt you for a lifetime."

Franca quickly regained her composure and whispered to Lumian, "You've just entered the field of mysticism. Apart from knowledge, you're lacking much more.

"It's best not to be frugal with that sum of money. Use it to purchase a mystical item or a Beyonder weapon to compensate for a Hunter's limitations in mysticism. Otherwise, if 'Black Scorpion' Roger truly seeks revenge against you, he won't need to go through much trouble. He can simply summon a few undead to hunt you down. If you have such intentions, I'll keep an eye out for you."

Lumian chuckled.

"I've already made a purchase."

"So quickly?" Franca nearly lost control of her voice, causing smuggler Fernandez to glance back.

The carbide lamps cast intersecting shadows, obstructing Lumian's view of Fernandez's expression. He couldn't discern what thoughts they triggered.

Lumian replied "honestly," "Before joining the Savoie Mob, I

discovered a circle of Beyonders through Psychic's gathering of mysticism enthusiasts. There, I exchanged the verl d'or that the Boss gave me for a mystical item."

"No wonder…" Franca revealed a knowing expression and praised Lumian. "Your mind is even sharper than I imagined. Hmm, is it an item that enhances your mysticism abilities?"

Lumian spoke frankly, "A pair of Lawyer glasses, but they seem to have been tainted by some strange power."

Franca's brow furrowed ever so slightly as she interrupted Lumian. "That's highly dangerous."

"I know," Lumian explained with a smile. "But as long as I choose the right environment and take precautions, it won't be too risky. Besides, it offers excellent disguises and mysticism techniques…"

Lumian briefly recounted his urge to paint after donning the Mystery Prying Glasses.

Franca's ponytail bobbed behind her head.

"It's certainly useful. If I were in your shoes, I'd make the same choice.

"Only the leaders and thugs of the Poison Spur Mob haven't really interacted with you. They only know you by your peculiar hair color. Otherwise, they would have recognized your true identity by now. They wouldn't have needed to act themselves. They could have sought revenge by sharing your information and wanted posters with the police headquarters and the two cathedrals."

Lumian chuckled.

"That's right. I can already set up a coffee meeting with Officer Everett."

Franca's vibrant lake-like eyes sparkled as she said, "You've shared so much with me about the mysticism gathering and your trump cards. Jenna even kept telling me how cunning and deceptive you are. Yet, you're truly sincere and straightforward! Of course, our relationship

is different from others. I knew it. Muggle's brother isn't that kind of person!"

For a moment, Lumian felt a twinge of guilt. He spoke sincerely, "Yes, she completely misunderstood me."

After chatting for a while, they finally reached the outskirts of Quartier de l'Observatoire's underground area and turned into a southward tunnel.

Soon, Fernandez halted in front of a secondary well belonging to an abandoned quarry.

He positioned the carbide lamp at the mouth of the well and gestured downward.

"Let's go in."

With the aid of the blue light, Lumian peered down into the depths of the well. It had been neglected for a long time and appeared to be completely blocked by gravel.

Using the recess in the well wall, ropes concealed in the shadows, and a basic iron ladder fastened to the moss, the three of them descended and swiftly reached the well's bottom.

Fernandez moved a few seemingly heavy rocks, revealing a narrow tunnel at the well's edge, wide enough for one person.

As they traversed the tunnel, which emitted a foul stench, the passageway ahead widened, as if they had entered another section of the quarry cave.

The air grew eerily still and darkness enveloped them. The cave ceiling was damp, with scarce traces of moss.

Lumian and Franca, each holding a carbide lamp, slowed their pace and meticulously examined the various signs along the smuggling route.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Fernandez pointed to a nearby tunnel.

“Our boss and Baron Brignais weren’t entirely fruitless. They discovered that the caravan’s tracks vanished into thin air over there.”

It was a tunnel connecting two sections of the quarry cave. The path was strewn with rubble and potholes. In the distance, darkness prevailed, devoid of any light.

Lumian and Franca swiftly located the relatively fresh footprints that had abruptly vanished. They squatted down, closely examining them.

“Only footprints going in. The ones coming back end right here. Most people returning carry heavy loads. Their footprints are deeper, distinctly different from when they came… We can rule out the possibility of them turning around and retracing their steps…” Lumian swiftly made a series of deductions.

Franca averted her gaze from her surroundings and stood up.

“No signs of a struggle. It’s incredibly peculiar!”

She then motioned for Fernandez to move further away and wait in the quarry cave.

As Fernandez’s carbide lamp glow faded into the distance, Franca produced a small makeup box and a white handkerchief with a blue checkered pattern.

The handkerchief belonged to “Rat” Christo’s brother, Erkin, who had also gone missing during the smuggling operation.

Franca placed the carbide lamp down, opened the light-gold box, and ran her fingers over the mirror inside.

Meanwhile, holding the handkerchief, she repeated in a whisper, “Erkin’s current whereabouts, Erkin’s current whereabouts…”

The already dim tunnel grew even more stifling. The light from the two carbide lamps was pushed back by an invisible force, and the palm-sized mirror emitted a watery glow, as though revealing the depths of a dark river.

Before Lumian could count to three, a scene materialized on the mirror's surface.

Laborers lugging wooden crates and smugglers armed with revolvers and rifles trudged through the tunnel. As they progressed, the darkness behind them engulfed the space where the light had receded. Eventually, the carbide lamp's glow vanished from view, and the mirror's surface turned pitch-black.

"They did vanish in this area." Franca ended her divination, her thin red lips pressed together. "But I can't discern anything further."

Lumian didn't suggest trying the Mystery Prying Glasses. From his perspective, Trier's underground was a treacherous place, concealing all manner of secrets. There were ruins from the Fourth Epoch, foul-smelling old bones, catacombs with specific rules to follow, and the lingering Montsouris ghost that had defied eradication for years. They were all elements that instilled fear in those seeking the truth. If he were to use the Mystery Prying Glasses to survey the surroundings, there was a high chance he would explode on the spot.

In due time, Trier's underground would boast another legend entwined with the power of an evil god.

Therefore, Lumian would lend a hand out of consideration for the Savoie Mob's boss, but he wouldn't go all out and take unnecessary risks.

After all, it was "Rat" Christo who suffered the loss. What did it have to do with him, "Lion" Ciel?

Salle de Bal Brise still had an abundant supply of alcohol!

Franca glanced at him, not intending to make things difficult.

Red Boots stowed away the makeup box and Erkin's handkerchief, picked up the carbide lamp, and said to Lumian,

"Let's return and find Fernandez. Let him guide us forward. Perhaps there are other clues left behind."

"Alright." Lumian felt that Franca was merely fulfilling her duty as a

member of the Savoie Mob.

The two turned around, carrying their carbide lamps, and ventured back toward the original quarry cave, plunging into the ever-deepening darkness.

After taking a dozen steps, Lumian abruptly halted, his expression growing grave. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“What’s the matter?” Franca asked, perplexed.

Lumian’s voice resonated with gravity as he directed her attention to the scattered rubble and pockmarked ground.

“No more footprints. The smugglers’ tracks from their departure and our own as we crossed have vanished! But there’s a trail of footprints carrying a heavy load leading forward!”

Franca’s heart skipped a beat. She peered ahead, coming to the realization that the ground lay in disarray. The footprints left by her, Lumian, and Fernandez in the tunnel had vanished, replaced by the sudden reappearance of the missing caravan’s tracks out of thin air!

Chapter 187 - 187 Shadow

187 Shadow

“Dammit!” Franca exclaimed with frustration, her voice filled with intensity.

She scanned her surroundings, her mind racing as she pondered and speculated.

“Did we stumble upon the same thing that the missing caravan encountered? Entering that tunnel transported us to another world, erasing the original footprints? Did we vanish into thin air in Fernandez’s eyes?”

Lumian had never faced such a situation before, nor had his sister Aurore written about anything similar in her novels. He couldn’t make sense of what was happening.

Lost in thought, his brows furrowed, Lumian suddenly heard Franca’s conjecture.

How imaginative… Lumian’s initial reaction was a deep sigh before he contemplated the possibilities.

The more he considered it, the more he realized that Franca’s words were eerily similar to their current predicament. He knelt down and examined the footprints once again.

“Indeed, the footprints suddenly appear with the weight of something heavy,” Lumian said, gesturing to a dozen steps behind him.

That was the same spot they had previously traversed, yet there were no traces of their passage.

Franca clenched her teeth and spoke up.

“It seems we truly have entered another world. Or rather, an underground realm…

“Dammit it! Why did this happen to us? Christo, Brignais, Simon, and Black encountered nothing and safely returned to the surface!”

Uh… Lumian suddenly felt a twinge of guilt at Red Boots’s questioning of destiny.

Crouched on the ground, he instinctively raised his hand and touched his left chest.

Was this somehow inevitable?

Yes, I can’t dismiss the possibility that it’s Franca’s doing. Her Sequence is higher than mine, and she carries a mystical item that may hold some secrets… Lumian quickly gathered himself.

Franca looked down at her companion and muttered to herself, “Could it be linked to one of our Sequences? Alternatively, it might be the adverse effect of your glasses.”

Lumian replied thoughtfully, “Hunter and Demoness are neighboring pathways.”

In other words, if this problem stemmed from the convergence of Beyonder attributes, the two of them couldn’t escape responsibility.

Of course, at Lumian and Franca’s level, the convergence of Beyonder attributes wouldn’t have such obvious effects. However, Lumian recalled encountering two Demonesses less than two weeks after arriving in Trier, and he was only a Sequence 8. He suspected that the power of Inevitability had transformed convergence into something fated to occur.

Hmm… Franca fell into deep thought.

After a few seconds, she clenched her teeth and spoke.

“Perhaps this encounter is truly a problem with our pathway, but why did Christo’s smuggling caravan enter this space and mysteriously vanish in reality? They’ve traversed this route countless

times without any issues. Why is it different now? Dammit! That blasted rat must not have spilled all the beans! He wasn't just smuggling alcohol and firearms this time. There's something else, something linked to mysticism?"

Franca was reluctantly swayed. She exhaled and said, "Now is not the time to dissect the cause. What matters is finding a way out. Sigh, why is Underground Trier intertwined with the abnormalities of the Hunter and Demoness pathways? Uh…"

Franca fell silent abruptly, as if recalling something.

"Have you figured something out?" Lumian stood up.

Franca pondered before responding.

"I don't know if your sister ever mentioned anything about the Fourth Epoch. Uh, she might not even be aware. In short, Trier during the Fourth Epoch served as the capital of the Tudor Dynasty, and the Blood Emperor who ruled the empire was likely a High Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway. Furthermore, the Demoness family of that era shared a certain connection with one or several prominent nobles of the Tudor Dynasty. It's reasonable for them to have left something behind in Trier."

"Demoness family?" Lumian was taken aback by the term.

Franca pursed her lips.

"In the Fourth Epoch, the Demoness pathway was under the control of a specific family. Sigh, since I chose the Assassin pathway, I could only do my best to gather relevant information, but I still lack substantial knowledge."

Lumian steered the conversation back on track.

"Do you suspect that this space is linked to the sunken Fourth Epoch Trier?"

"Yes," Franca replied vaguely, not ruling out the possibility. She contemplated for a moment before adding, "The two Churches must have dealt with the ruins to some extent. If we can find the

corresponding node, we should be able to escape."

Carrying the carbide lamp, Lumian once again examined the ground.

"Should we press on or turn back?

"Christo's smuggling caravan doesn't seem to have noticed anything amiss. They're still moving forward."

Franca pondered for a few seconds and said, "Let's go back to the spot where we entered this space and investigate. It's just a few steps away. We won't waste much time."

"Alright." Lumian walked toward the center of the tunnel.

Soon, he and Franca stood at the place where the smuggling caravan's tracks had materialized out of thin air, attempting to take a step forward.

There was no trace of footprints ahead.

After walking another dozen steps, the darkness deepened. Only Lumian's and Franca's footprints remained on the path.

They had not returned to reality.

"Wait." Franca raised her right hand, signaling to halt. "Let's turn back and head to the quarry cave we came from. We need to see if Fernandez has entered this space."

Lumian didn't object.

It could help them further determine the nature of the problem.

Guided by the bluish glow of their carbide lamps, Lumian and Franca followed the tracks left by the smuggling caravan.

Before long, they reached the quarry cave.

A figure stood at the boundary of light and darkness, with its back turned towards them.

Franca exclaimed with delight, "Fernandez!"

It seemed that the smuggler had also entered this space. Perhaps the problem didn't lie with her or Ciel!

However, Franca's expression tightened as soon as she finished speaking.

Simultaneously, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "Something's off."

Fernandez, the smuggler, had been carrying a carbide lamp. There was no way he would just stand there in the darkness!

In the next moment, the figure turned around.

Under the illumination of Lumian and Franca's carbide lamps, a bloodied face came into view.

The man had short flaxen hair, thick brown eyebrows, and lake-blue eyes.

His lips were thin, and his appearance was unremarkable. Yet, his eyes radiated indescribable malice and hatred.

At that moment, sticky blood stained the man's face, as if it might drip at any moment.

It's not Fernandez! Why does he look familiar… Lumian assessed the situation as he reached for the black revolver concealed under his arm.

With a clang, Franca's carbide lamp fell to the ground.

Startled by the noise and the flickering light, the figure darted into the darkness and disappeared into a tunnel connecting to the cavern.

"What's wrong?" Lumian turned to Franca.

As a Sequence 7 Beyonder, a member of a secret organization, and an experienced combatant, she shouldn't be displaying such abnormal behavior and exaggerated reactions!

Franca gazed into the darkness for a few seconds before speaking, "That… that was my past self…"

Your past self, when you were still a man? Lumian was alarmed.

An unsettling feeling crept over him as he asked in a low voice, “You mean, before you drank the Witch potion?”

“Yes.” Franca bent down and retrieved her carbide lamp, confusion and fear etched on her face. “I thought no one in this world would remember that face except for me… Why? Why am I seeing it here? Is it generated from my memories? Can’t our memories be kept secret in this space?”

Wouldn’t that be a good thing? Lumian’s initial reaction was one of excitement.

If this space could reveal the hidden memories of his subconscious, he could begin piecing together the truth of the Cordu disaster!

As for whether this space might intrude on something it shouldn’t and risk severe corruption and damage, he paid it no mind.

With his carbide lamp and revolver in hand, Lumian cautiously circled the empty quarry. He found no other figures or anything related to his past.

Disheartened, he expressed his disappointment to Franca, “I couldn’t find my past self.”

“Could it be that it’s not a memory from the past, but rather something from the future?” Franca suggested returning to the secondary well that had brought them to this level. By searching for more anomalies along the way, they might be able to infer the nature of this space and find a way to leave.

Side by side, they traversed the quarry cave, following the footprints left by the smuggling caravan, heading towards the edge of Quartier de l’Observatoire.

As time went on, Lumian and Franca noticed something on the ground almost simultaneously.

They were scattered droplets of blood, mingled with the disordered footprints of the smuggling caravan.

“Are the abnormalities starting to manifest?” Franca whispered.

Lumian nodded. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

“If we proceed further, we might encounter those people.” He glanced at Franca and added, “Although they may no longer be human.”

Franca scoffed.

“Are you trying to frighten me? Do you think that will scare me? Whether they’re corpses or monsters, it’s within my expectations.

“Remember, the most terrifying thing in this world is the unknown.”

Just as Franca finished speaking, Lumian’s expression froze, illuminated by the glow of the carbide lamp.

“You’re still trying to frighten me…” Before Franca could finish her sentence, she felt something warm sliding from her nose and falling to the ground.

It was a drop of bright red blood.

Chapter 188 - 188 Confidence

188 Confidence

“Dammit!”

Franca couldn’t help but blurt out her usual modal particle. With a quick swipe of her index finger across her nose, her hand revealed a bright red stain. The sight alone sent a shiver down her spine.

Franca snorted.

In an instant, black flames flickered in her nostrils, fingers, and the blood on the ground, swiftly vanishing into thin air.

Catching Lumian’s gaze, Franca, slightly contorted from the pain, forced herself to enlighten him.

“We can’t leave our blood in this unknown place. Otherwise, unimaginable horrors may unfold. Hey, why are you unharmed?”

From Franca’s perspective, she surpassed Ciel in terms of Sequence and experience. There was no reason for him to emerge unscathed while she suffered!

“Perhaps I’m fine for now,” Lumian patronizingly responded, pondering thoughtfully. “Maybe the shadow we encountered represented the old you, not the old me.”

“So why did we come across the old me and not the old you?” Franca eyed Lumian suspiciously.

Could this bloke be hiding another secret?

Lumian pondered for a moment before answering.

“Perhaps this space is more intertwined with Demonesses.”

“Could be…” Franca fell into deep contemplation.

After a few seconds, she pointed towards the footprints and blood droplets on the ground and suggested, “Let’s catch up and investigate. The current condition of those people could reveal our future and help us prepare in advance.”

Lumian responded with action, walking into the darkness that swallowed the footprints and blood droplets.

The yellowish-blue light of the carbide lamp quietly resisted the encroaching darkness.

As they tracked further, the abnormalities on their bodies became increasingly apparent. Warm blood began to trickle from Lumian’s nose, while crimson liquid seeped from Franca’s eyes, gums, skin, and ears.

With her black flames, not a drop of blood remained.

Finally, they “returned” to the secondary well, where the tracks of the smuggling caravan and the slowly congealing blood abruptly vanished.

Whether it was the tunnel leading to the secondary well or the path to other areas, there were no traces left.

“They vanished again?” Franca, her face enveloped in black flames, frowned.

Lumian, his nose sealed by the black flames, took a deep breath and smiled.

“This might be our end. When the blood reaches a certain point, our bodies will gradually fade away.”

Lumian chuckled.

“So what if I do? Too many negative emotions will only cloud my thinking.”

“Sometimes, I reckon you’re more mature than me.” Franca sighed.

“Did you just figure that out?” Lumian naturally wouldn’t mention that he was both sincerely pondering the issue and confident.

Compared to Cordu, trapped in an endless loop, at least there was no sign of terrifying power in this place!

Moreover, Lumian didn’t need to rack his brain to come up with several escape strategies.

The first option was to take a risky move by using the Mystery Prying Glasses to explore the surroundings from different angles and locate an exit.

Secondly, he could try throwing out Mr. K’s finger to establish a connection, hoping it would create a passageway.

Thirdly, summoning Madame Hela or the messenger of Madam Magician was another possibility. If it succeeded, it would mean that this place wasn’t entirely cut off from the spirit world. The two ladies might have a way to forcefully extract Lumian and Franca.

Fourthly, if all else failed, he could set up an altar and offer prayers to the mysterious ruler beyond the gray fog. Such a bizarre space couldn’t restrict a great entity. Even the cycle of fate orchestrated by the evil god couldn’t shield them from His watchful eye, let alone this place. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lastly, if the great entity remained unresponsive, Lumian could perform a ritual and beseech for a boon. He could activate the black thorn symbol on his chest, allowing the sealed evil god’s corruption to amplify. This disruption might create a vulnerability in the workings of this space.

You can be as calm and composed as me when you have numerous untried methods and believe there’s a high chance of escaping this place… Lumian criticized inwardly, feeling somewhat perplexed.

It felt like he had forgotten something important, but it eluded his memory momentarily.

Franca retrieved a light-gold makeup box, opened it, and placed it on the ground.

Her form swiftly faded away, leaving no trace behind.

The aqueous light within the palm-sized mirror flickered, illuminating Franca's figure.

How magical… Lumian sighed, marveling at the sight.

Franca glanced around within the mirror for a few seconds before vanishing.

She reappeared across from Lumian, shaking her head, and uttered, "I can't find a way out by relying on the mirror…"

Without awaiting Lumian's response, the Witch attempted several more methods, but all proved futile.

Finally, she caressed the mirror inside the makeup box, seeking guidance from her spirituality.

In such a place, she hesitated to perform Magic mirror divination, fearing a perilous and dreadful connection.

"The way out… The way out…" Franca repeated the divination phrase in Hermes several times, and the mirror darkened, resembling a moonlit lake.

The shimmering aqueous light reflected a figure.

It was Lumian—wearing a wide-brimmed round hat, a white shirt, a brown jacket, and dark pants. Black flames flickered subtly at his nose.

"Uh…" Franca turned around, looking at her companion by her side.

She furrowed her brow slightly and stated, "Finding the exit with your glasses? Isn't that too dangerous?"

Congratulations on finally uncovering the simplest among my five solutions… Lumian pondered and remarked, "This is no longer the true Underground Trier, nor does it seem to be directly linked to the ruins of the Fourth Epoch. As long as we protect ourselves, we should be able to endure any peril."

“Protect…” Franca repeated the word with a smile. “I happen to excel at that!”

With a swift motion of her right hand, she extinguished the black flames on Lumian’s nose.

After a few seconds, a drop of bright red liquid trickled down, caught by Franca’s open palm.

Then, she conjured fresh black flames, sealing Lumian’s nostrils once again.

The mild burning sensation was tolerable for Alms Monk Lumian. He asked cautiously, “What are you doing with my blood, a curse?”

Franca chuckled.

“Do I need to go through all this trouble just to kill you? I’ll perform a Mirror Substitution to shield you from the danger of using those glasses.”

As she spoke, she retrieved a palm-sized mirror and smeared Lumian’s blood upon it.

She has so many mirrors… Are they the essence of a Witch’s spells? Lumian observed Franca’s busy movements, enlightened and slightly envious.

Franca turned her head and addressed him, “Give me two strands of your hair.”

Without hesitation, Lumian plucked two strands and handed them over.

A black flame appeared in Franca’s hand, incinerating the golden strands.

She sprinkled the ashes onto the mirror’s surface and stroked it with her black-flamed palm while murmuring an inaudible incantation.

When the black flames suddenly receded into the mirror, the traces of blood and hair vanished.

“Do not stray more than 30 meters away from me,” Franca cautioned, holding the seemingly ordinary mirror.

Lumian nodded and retrieved the Mystery Prying Glasses from his pocket.

He placed the brown gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose, but his right hand remained gripping the mirror holder, ready to remove the glasses at a moment’s notice.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian beheld a multitude of scenes:

Faces concealed in darkness, pallid and ferocious, drenched in blood.

A mass of dark hair floated amidst the shadows, comprised of hundreds or perhaps thousands of strands, extending in various directions.

Lingering figures, rock walls shimmering with aqueous light, and an impenetrable darkness.

In the pond-like puddle, a colossal, swollen, and pallid face lurked beneath the lightless surface, peering outward.

There was a glistening cave…

Light… Cave… Lumian’s intuition instantaneously struck, compelling his dizzy mind to focus on the edge of the scene.

The luminous-filled cave rapidly enlarged, revealing a dimly lit passage beyond.

As the cave drew nearer, Lumian realized it was merely a reflection in a mirror. Its surface was solid and inaccessible.

The mirror sank to the depths of the lightless pool.

Suddenly, the colossal, swollen, and pallid face swiftly expanded before Lumian’s eyes, consuming his field of vision.

Lumian’s sight darkened, and he nearly lost consciousness.

Vaguely, he “saw” his flesh attempting to depart from his skeleton.

Whack!

Lumian heard a crisp shattering sound, and his mind cleared.

He swiftly removed the Mystery Prying Glasses and retched.

After he regained his composure, Franca inquired with concern, “Are you alright?”

At some point, the mirror in her hand had shattered into countless fragments, scattered across the ground.

Lumian took a deep breath and replied, “I’m fine now.”

He extended his finger, indicating a specific direction.

“Over a hundred meters from the tunnel, there lies a massive puddle. And at the puddle’s depths, you’ll find a mirror. That mirror reflects a cave, which leads to a path of light.

“However, be warned, for within that puddle lurks a perilous monster. I nearly died when I beheld its visage.”

Franca listened in silence, her mutterings a mixture of confusion and frustration.

“Goddammit, could this place truly be connected to a Demoness?”

Chapter 189 - 189 Cooperation

189 Cooperation

Observing Lumian's perplexed gaze, Franca provided a succinct explanation, "One of the core abilities of the Demoness pathway revolves around mirrors and manipulating the world within them.

"When I suspected that this place might be connected to the Demoness or Hunter pathway, I pondered whether we inadvertently stepped into a certain location within the mirror world. Thus, I attempted to use the makeup mirror to see if I could escape through it. As you witnessed, it proved fruitless.

"Because of this, I have tentatively dismissed the notion of being in a mirror world or encountering a relic belonging to a Demoness. However, now we have stumbled upon a submerged mirror that likely conceals an exit…"

"So, you suspect that this is a specific place within the mirror world, restricted to certain mirrors?" Lumian attempted to grasp Franca's line of thinking.

"Exactly," Franca replied with a gentle nod. "But what perplexes me is how we found ourselves here without encountering anything resembling a mirror. Perhaps my conjecture is incorrect, or only partially true…"

Lumian pondered for a moment, hoping to glean some knowledge. He posed a sincere question: "What exactly is a mirror world?"

Franca grabbed the ponytail at the back of her head.

"Explaining it to you is a challenge since I am not entirely certain myself.

“Allow me to elucidate based on my understanding. In mysticism, mirrors possess distinct symbolic meanings, such as one’s reflection or an entrance to another realm. The former suggests that we can use mirrors to create substitutes, while the latter alludes to a mirror world.

“It is often associated with terror, mystery, horror, and the bizarre. I cannot ascertain whether there are hidden elements or if it truly represents an alternate dimension. However, I do know that the mirror world connects to various mirror-like entities. It could potentially point to spaces that are typically inaccessible. As my Sequence progresses, I should be capable of utilizing the mirror world to swiftly traverse different locations.”

Lumian recalled the recent events and allowed his imagination to run wild.

“Could the version of you we saw be a reflection left behind in the mirror world from a previous encounter, before you became a Witch? That would explain why I have never encountered my past self.”

“That is a plausible explanation, but I haven’t come across anything peculiar…” Franca deliberated for a moment. “If that is the case, we must hurry to the puddle immediately. The exit is most likely there! We can no longer afford to proceed cautiously or wait any longer. As I mentioned earlier, the mirror world harbors eerie and terrifying phenomena. If we linger here any further, I dread to imagine what might befall us!”

“Very well.” Lumian maintained his composure.

Franca turned and sprinted, with Lumian closely following her.

As the Witch ran, it appeared as though she employed some form of ability. Small patches of frost materialized beneath her feet, causing a sharp reduction in friction. Her body seemed weightless as she gracefully glided through the dim quarry cave and into the depths of the underground tunnel.

Utilizing all his strength as a Hunter and Dancer, Lumian struggled to keep pace with Franca and avoid being left behind.

In the wintry chill, a thin layer of ice gradually formed on the walls of the surrounding rocks.

Upon the icy surface, visages stained with blood emerged. Their countenances contorted, eyes brimming with hatred, resembling vengeful specters emerging from the depths of hell.

Among them was the previous incarnation of Franca, when she still appeared as a man!

After sprinting for a while, Lumian and Franca caught sight of the puddle.

As the light from the carbide lamp cast its glow, the puddle's surface shimmered with a tinge of yellowish-blue.

"Is this it?" Franca halted abruptly.

In that moment, every fiber of his being throbbed with pain, as if his body was on the brink of bursting, save for the fiery sensation in his nasal cavity.

Holding the carbide lamp tightly, Franca cautiously approached the puddle.

"The challenge now is how to elude the monster you encountered and locate the mirror. Regrettably, I cannot yet traverse between mirrors. I can only remain inside for a few fleeting seconds…

"I will divert its attention and keep it occupied for a while. Why don't you dive underwater and retrieve the mirror?"

Lumian spoke plainly, "I don't believe you stand a chance against it. It nearly overwhelmed me when I caught a glimpse of it."

"…" Though Franca felt a twinge of annoyance and frustration, she had to acknowledge that Lumian spoke the truth.

With her Sequence and mystical item, she could still hold her ground even against a Beyonder one rank higher. However, judging by the monster's display, it far surpassed her by more than a single rank!

After a brief pause, Franca clenched her teeth and uttered,

“Even if I am outmatched, my skills in escape and self-preservation are formidable. I should be able to hold out against it for more than ten seconds. If you can retrieve the mirror within that timeframe, we can make our escape!”

Lumian let out a chuckle.

“We shouldn’t risk our lives just yet.

“I have a plan to stall that monster for ten to twenty seconds without taking excessive risks. And I trust you can locate that mirror, correct?”

“I’m capable. I have a unique method of detecting mirrors,” Franca eyed Lumian skeptically. “Are you truly up to the task? Is there genuinely no danger involved?”

“In theory, the risks are minimal,” Lumian replied calmly.

Simultaneously, he silently added, If the risks prove too great, I’ll find an alternative. Mr. K, Madame Hela, Madam Magician, the great being, and the power of Inevitability are all viable options.

Franca wasted no time and pursed her lips as she spoke, “Alright, just to be safe, I’ll create a Mirror Substitute for you.”

Naturally, Lumian had no objections to something that could effectively reduce the risk.

After Franca produced a small mirror and crafted the corresponding substitute, Lumian gripped the ritual silver dagger and encircled the pond-like puddle, creating a spiritual barrier.

Throughout the process, he maintained a distance of four to five meters from the water’s edge, fearing the monster would drag him under.

Putting away the ritual silver dagger, Lumian turned to Franca with a genuine smile.

“What comes next involves one of my secrets. Could you turn around?”

“Very well.” Franca was content with his straightforwardness.

She inwardly sighed once more.

Does Jenna misunderstand Ciel?

As Franca turned around, Lumian placed the carbide lamp aside and began the Summoning Dance.

He intended to summon the monster, but he wouldn’t allow it to possess him!

Lumian believed that the higher the level of a peculiar creature, the more aware it would be of the corruption within his body. This made it less inclined to attach itself to him.

In other words, as long as he refrained from issuing commands that would influence the monster, it was likely to observe the Summoning Dance eagerly, waiting for an opportunity to attack. However, it was intimidated by the seal and the corruption and dared not act upon its thoughts. It would only truly engage him once the dance concluded.

The Summoning Dance lasted for 20 to 30 seconds, ample time for Franca to submerge herself and locate the mirror.

As long as Lumian could escape this world before the monster attacked, there would be no further issues!

Of course, if he couldn’t harness the corresponding powers of nature in this place and allow the Summoning Dance to take effect, he could always employ an alternative method.

Amidst the contorted and frenzied dance, Lumian’s spirituality stirred the forces of nature, forming a connection that dissipated into the surroundings, only to be obstructed by the spiritual barrier.

After a few seconds, ripples appeared on the surface of the puddle, and a pallid figure emerged, floating above the water.

It bore a resemblance to a human, with an inflated body and a gargantuan face occupying half its form.

The monster floated toward Lumian and came to a stop in close proximity.

Lumian dared not gaze directly at it. With his eyes half-shut, he called out, “Hurry!”

Without hesitation, Franca discarded the carbide lamp, took two steps, and leaped into the water.

With a splash, water splattered around.

A cold, damp sensation penetrated Franca’s skin as near darkness enveloped her vision.

Guided by the faint glow of the carbide lamp seeping through the water, Franca swiftly descended to the depths.

Suddenly, dark creatures resembling seaweed extended their hair-like tendrils, slithering around Franca as if alive.

Franca paid them no mind and continued her descent.

Just as the “seaweed” was about to touch her, it unexpectedly burst into black flames.

The black flames burned silently underwater, showing no signs of extinguishing. The “seaweed” didn’t turn to ash, but their consciousness was snuffed out.

They floated in the water, swaying with the currents.

Farther away, a multitude of seaweed continued to surge forward, obstructed by layers of condensed frost.

Beside the puddle, Lumian, engrossed in the Summoning Dance, did not look at the monster. However, he heard a sound akin to a bubble popping. A putrid odor wafted towards him, accompanied by an enveloping chill.

An image flashed across Lumian's mind:

The bloated monster with its enormous face was less than a step away from him, almost clinging to his back. He could even perceive its "breath"!

Hiss… Lumian instinctively gasped, refusing to interrupt the Summoning Dance.

In the water, Franca, having dived deeper, finally sensed the presence of the mirror!

Her form suddenly faded, vanishing from her original position.

Franca's figure swiftly materialized on the ancient silver mirror resting silently on the seabed.

She retrieved the artifact and swam towards the surface, a look of joy adorning her face.

She had just confirmed that this mirror truly led to the underground tunnel in the outside world!

Beside the puddle, Lumian was filled with anxiety as he kept his gaze fixed on the water's surface. The Summoning Dance was nearing its end, and the bloated monster drew closer, its flesh almost brushing against his skin.

If Franca did not emerge soon, he would resort to using Mr. K's finger!

Just then, Franca reached the shore, holding the mirror, and leapt up amidst the splashing water.

Avoiding eye contact with the monster, she lowered her head and hurried to Lumian's side, gripping his wrist.

Simultaneously, both of them turned ethereal, while the ancient mirror clattered to the ground.

A scene unfolded upon the mirror's surface: Franca grasping Lumian's hand and leading him through a short, dark tunnel to an illuminated

“cave” before leaping out.

Amidst flickering lights and shadows, Lumian realized he stood upon a dim path, with distant light seeping in.

Franca retrieved the mirror that had served as his substitute and noticed countless cracks marring its surface, on the verge of shattering.

“That was a close call.” She sighed sincerely.nove(l)bi(n.)com

Chapter 190 - 190 Unexpected Development

190 Unexpected Development

Lumian glanced at the shattered mirror in Franca's hand, relief and confusion evident on his face.

"But I don't feel like I was being attacked."

His Summoning Dance still had five to six seconds left before Franca grabbed his wrist.

Franca cleared her throat and assumed the stance of a teacher.

"Some mysticism techniques are undetectable. The moment you feel attacked is the moment of your death."

Could it be that the monster secretly influenced me when I paused the Summoning Dance to enter the mirror for those brief seconds? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes, the bleeding in that space caught us by surprise. We had no idea how to prevent it."

As he spoke, he looked at Franca's face and noticed her smooth skin, devoid of any scars. It was impossible to tell that blood had seeped out from multiple places.

Franca touched her face and pondered before saying, "It's indeed very bizarre. But we did lose some blood. As a Witch, I have a mystical perception of the amount of my blood. In other words, the damage we suffered in the special mirror world isn't fake. It's just that we didn't leave any wounds. Damn it, I didn't bring the carbide lamp!"

As she spoke, she turned around and searched through a pile of gravel on the side of the dim tunnel.

Lumian didn't have time to retrieve his carbide lamp either. He could only observe Franca's every move with the help of the distant light.

In less than ten seconds, Franca pulled out a mirror from the rubble.

The mirror appeared to be made of pure silver. The patterns on both sides were mysterious and sinister, and its surface was dark and lifeless, as if time had eroded it.

"As expected, there's a corresponding mirror in reality." Franca did her best to avoid being reflected in the silver mirror with its classic design. She also instructed Lumian, "In unsafe places or when encountering strange occurrences, try not to look into the mirror if you can. Otherwise, something terrifying might happen. We mustn't touch such mysterious and evil objects of unknown origin!"

Lumian, who hadn't mentioned to Franca that he couldn't look in the mirror after using the Mystery Prying Glasses to disguise himself, nodded.

"I understand that the exit is a mirror. What I can't figure out is how we entered that space without noticing. We didn't come across anything along the way."

"That baffles me too." Franca covered the surface of the classic-styled silver mirror with a handkerchief and other items. She stood up and said, "This thing seems to be closely related to the Demoness pathway. How about you give it to me? I'll find something valuable to compensate you later."

"No problem," Lumian chuckled. "You don't have to ask. I can't beat you."

Franca clicked her tongue and said, "No, the spoils of war must be distributed fairly. Otherwise, there will surely be conflicts within the team. I used to be taken advantage of like this in the past. If it weren't for my good nature and not holding grudges, I would have sought revenge long ago."

Why does it sound like you're cussing me, Madame… Lumian silently muttered.

If someone took his spoils and exploited him for no reason, and his strength was inferior to the other party, although he wouldn't say anything on the spot, he would definitely find a way to seek revenge later. He wouldn't simply "forgive" the other party so easily.

Stowing away the classic-styled silver mirror, Franca gestured toward the source of light.

"Let's go and have a look over there. We might come across the quarry police or other smugglers. We can ask for directions.

That's right… Lumian agreed wholeheartedly.

If it weren't for that, the Montsouris ghost would have been eradicated long ago by the official Beyonders.

The two of them proceeded through the tunnel, guided by the faint glow, staying alert for any potential attacks.

Before long, they reached a quarry cave. In the center of the cave stood a figure wearing a felt hat. The light emanated from the carbide lamp he held in his hand.

"Uh…" Franca recognized him and called out, "Fernandez!"

She realized that the figure was Fernandez, the smuggler who had been leading the way for them.

This appeared to be the quarry cave where they had arranged to meet him.

Fernandez turned around, surprised, and asked, "How did you come from there? I've been waiting for nearly half an hour, but you didn't show up. I even went to the spot where the footprints vanished to search for you, but you were nowhere to be found."

Lumian and Franca exchanged glances and nodded.

Indeed, they had spent nearly half an hour in the special mirror

world.

Franca approached Fernandez and casually explained, “We stumbled upon some clues and pursued them. However, we ended up circling back here and encountered an ambush on the way. We lost our carbide lamps.”

“What clues?” Fernandez asked, pleasantly surprised.

Franca smiled.

“We’ll discuss it with Christo directly.”

Fernandez knew his place well and didn’t pry any further. He led the two of them back along the same path they had taken before.

They ascended the secondary well and entered the underground section corresponding to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, finally arriving at the exit on Rue Anarchie.

Only when Lumian and Franca laid eyes on street peddlers, children picking up fruit peels, homeless people huddling in corners, and the bustling crowd, did they truly feel as though they had escaped from that strange realm and returned to the real world.

After boarding the carriage that “Rat” Christo had sent for them, Lumian glanced at Franca and asked in a low voice,

“What should we say later?”

Fernandez knew the carriage driver and had taken a seat beside him, so he wasn’t in the carriage.

Franca chuckled.

“We’ll simply say that we entered an unknown space, discovered some traces, and managed to escape using my mirror magic.

“The rest has nothing to do with Christo.” nove(l)bi(n.)com

Lumian didn’t say another word. He closed his eyes and recalled his encounters in the special mirror world.

The four-wheeled carriage swiftly turned onto Avenue du Marché, hurtling toward Suhit's steam locomotive. It veered into the alley that led to the depot.

"Rat" Christo awaited them in the nearby warehouse.

Before long, Lumian and Franca caught sight of the rat-like smuggler.

Christo approached them with a grin and exclaimed, "Thank you, by Steam! Erkin and the others are back!"

Erkin… Franca's eyes narrowed as she blurted out, "The missing caravan has returned?"

Erkin, Christo's younger brother responsible for the smuggling caravan, had vanished previously, and Franca still had his divination handkerchief.

And now he's back?

What the f*ck was going on?

Christo nodded, still smiling.

"Indeed, the goods have returned as well!

"They arrived over an hour ago."

Over an hour ago? Wasn't that the same time when we discovered the spot where the footprints vanished and entered that peculiar mirror world? Lumian frowned, a hint of confusion stirring within him.

It was only because he had already experienced unbelievable phenomena like the time loop and the vivid dream that Lumian managed to keep his composure, unlike Franca.

Observing the surprised and perplexed expressions of Franca and Ciel, Christo smiled and stated, "I'll let Erkin explain it himself."

He turned and headed a few steps toward the entrance of the warehouse, calling out, "Erkin, come out for a moment!"

Seizing the opportunity, Franca tilted her head slightly and whispered to Lumian, “This is highly unusual…”

Lumian’s lips curled into a smile as he lowered his voice and replied, “I even suspect that Rat and the others conspired to set a trap for us. They used the disappearance of the goods as bait to lure us underground into that perilous realm.”

Franca studied him, amusement in her eyes, and remarked, “You don’t have much trust in others, do you?”

Lumian spoke candidly, “The dancers’ salaries make Giant and Baron Brignais resentful, and I possess the coveted Salle de Bal Brise. Only ‘Rat’ has no conflict of interest with us, so he was made to intervene.”

Franca fell into deep thought, seriously considering the possibility of being deceived.

In that moment, Lumian grinned.

“This is merely a conjecture. It doesn’t account for the footprints and other traces in the mirror world.”

As soon as he finished speaking, a man who appeared to be under 30 years old emerged from the warehouse.

He was not particularly tall, standing at about 1.6 meters. Apart from the absence of rat-like whiskers, he bore a striking resemblance to Christo.

“It is indeed Erkin,” Franca whispered to Lumian.

Then, she turned her gaze to Christo and Erkin, who were approaching together, and inquired, “Erkin, what happened?”

Erkin’s dark-blue eyes revealed a blend of fear and joy.

“We entered a peculiar world within a section of the tunnel and couldn’t find a way out. In the afternoon, while we were searching in all directions, we suddenly found ourselves back on our original path.”

Did our entry provide them an opportunity to escape? Franca had a suspicion.

Lumian stared at Erkin, his expression devoid of any emotion, as if assessing an adversary who might bring him calamity.

In his mind, he recalled the droplets of blood left behind on the ground of the mirror world. Gradually, they coalesced, staining a whole area crimson.

Could someone who had lost so much blood truly return alive?

Franca had evidently pondered this as well. She regarded Erkin and asked, “What happened to you there?”

Erkin couldn’t help but tremble.

“We started bleeding inexplicably. Towards the end, many were on the verge of death.

“By Steam, we managed to find the exit in time. As soon as we emerged, we recovered.”

Is that so? Franca felt that Erkin, adorned with the Sacred Emblem, was relaying his account in line with her own experience and could be explained. Thus, she could only temporarily set aside her doubts.

Beside them, “Rat” Christo cast a glance their way and invited them with a smile,

“Regardless of the circumstances, I must express my gratitude. Would you like to sample the most authentic Savoie roast chicken?”

“Alright,” Lumian responded on Franca’s behalf.

Christo produced a set of keys and tossed them to his brother, Erkin.

“Go to my office and bring all the spices to the kitchen.”

“Alright.” Erkin received the key and ascended the iron stairs embedded in the outer wall of the warehouse. With his left hand, he inserted one of the keys into the door of Christo’s office and turned it

to unlock it.

Franca was momentarily taken aback before muttering to herself, “I recall that Erkin habitually uses his right hand…”

Why would he awkwardly open the door with his left hand when he wasn’t holding anything?

Hearing Franca’s remark, Christo nodded and replied, “Indeed, he is right-handed.”

Chapter 191 - 191 Suspicions

191 Suspicions

Right hand… Franca's body jolted with a sudden shudder.

As a Witch, she was well-acquainted with the intricacies of mirrors, attuned to their peculiarities. And one thing she knew for certain was this: when a person gazed into a mirror, their reflection would be inverted from left to right.

The situation at hand was baffling. After Erkin, who habitually favored his right hand, had ventured into the enigmatic mirror world and returned, he had inexplicably switched to using his left hand. Franca and Lumian, however, had not experienced such a change.

What could this mean? Franca trembled with unease.

Just then, Christo reappeared at the warehouse's bottom floor, bellowing instructions to Erkin on the upper level. He demanded that Erkin retrieve his prized White Elixir wine. Seizing the opportunity, Lumian leaned in close to Franca and whispered into her ear,

"Have you noticed any connections?"

"You've thought of it too?" Franca replied, taken aback.

It was a challenge to detect Erkin's abnormality and grasp the underlying possibilities without extensive knowledge of mysticism and encounters with the Beyonder world.

Lumian continued in a hushed tone, "Judging by the amount of blood present in that space, I find it hard to believe that a regular person could have survived. From the start, I suspected something was amiss with Erkin and the other members of the caravan.

“Furthermore, you mentioned that the peculiar mirror world contains your past self—the reflection of who you once were.

“A mirrored image is left-right reversed in reality.

“Do you think the Erkin in the mirror has replaced the original Erkin?”

Franca fell into silence, pondering the implications.

“I dread to consider such a horrifying possibility, but the circumstances align more and more with your theory.

“I need to be certain.”

As they conversed, Erkin descended from the warehouse’s upper level, clutching a sack filled with various spices and two bottles of White Elixir wine. He made his way towards a nearby grayish-white, two-story building.

The structure served as a dining room and kitchen for “Rat” Christo’s subordinates.

On the surface, Christo presented himself as a merchant. He owned multiple companies specializing in trade and providing storage facilities.

Franca approached Christo with a solemn expression and asked, “Are you absolutely sure that is truly Erkin?”

Christo blurted out in surprise, “Why are you asking such a peculiar question? Of course, it’s Erkin. By Steam, how could I not recognize my own brother?

“My kids are also quite fond of him. They find nothing unfamiliar about him.”

Franca pondered for a moment before smiling faintly.

“I can’t help but feel that something might go awry after venturing into that bizarre realm.”

Franca chuckled.

“You’re not a Beyonder yet. Before you took over this smuggling business, didn’t you anticipate that those above you would follow certain customs and pay extra for particular matters?”

Christo fell silent, uncertain of how to respond.

Franca then said, “I’ll help you confirm whether anything is amiss with those individuals.”

Franca retrieved her makeup box and Erkin’s handkerchief, preparing to perform a divination in front of “Rat” Christo.

“Erkin’s whereabouts. Erkin’s whereabouts…”

As Franca chanted in Hermes, her eyes darkened, and she gently caressed the surface of the makeup mirror.

Lumian observed as the mirror shimmered with watery ripples of light.

Soon, a scene materialized within its depths: Erkin, dressed in a blue shirt, stood near the kitchen, engaged in conversation with the chef.

“I knew everything would go smoothly.” “Rat” Christo chuckled.

He then gestured towards the warehouse.

“I have some matters to attend to. You can explore the area on your own or wait for me in the dining room.”

Once the short-statured leader of the smugglers had entered the warehouse, Lumian turned to Franca.

“It appears that the real Erkin might be dead.”

Thus, the divination results indicated the person who originally belonged to the mirror world.

“Do you still think something is amiss with Erkin and the others?” Franca furrowed her brow.

“And if not?” Lumian laughed. “Should we cover our eyes and ears and pretend we didn’t see, hear, or discover anything?”

Franca pondered for a moment before responding, “Perhaps, because I’m using mirror divination, it will be easier to pinpoint the individual within the mirror. I shall attempt another method.”

Surveying the warehouse area, she picked up a short wooden stick and held it before her, pressing down from the top.

After uttering a similar divination statement, the wooden stick snapped, pointing directly at the grayish-white, two-story building that housed the kitchen and dining room.

Erkin was there.

Franca fell silent momentarily before declaring, “Let me see if that mirror can be of any assistance.”

She referred to the classic-styled silver mirror that served as a gateway to the peculiar realm, hoping to employ it in banishing all the monsters that had emerged from within.

Lumian eagerly trailed behind Franca as they entered the dining room.

Their eyes were immediately drawn to a woman wearing a grayish-green dress. She appeared to be in her late twenties, holding the hands of a boy and a girl. Tears of joy streamed down her face as she embraced Erkin, who had just emerged from the kitchen.

“You’re finally back!”

“Pépé!”

“Pépé, play with me!”

Amidst the clamor of excited voices, Erkin’s face radiated sheer happiness. His brows and eyes reflected pure joy.

“…” Franca paused in her steps, silently observing the heartwarming family reunion for a long while.

Eventually, she let out a sigh and remarked, “Let’s give it a little more time.”

Lumian maintained his smile.

“Are you finding it hard to bear?”

Franca sighed.

“The real Erkin might already be dead. After all, this is his reflection.

“If I were to expose his true nature now, kill him, or force him back into the mirror, not only would his wife and children fail to show gratitude, but they would also despise me.”

“You’re right.” Lumian chuckled. “In any case, if anything untoward happens in the future, whether someone lives or dies is not our concern. We simply need to exercise caution. Why should we appear as the ‘villains’? No one will thank you for it. Yes, let’s avoid ‘Rat’ Christo and the others for the time being. If we don’t encounter them, it’s as if nothing has occurred.”

Franca’s inner conflict grew.

She didn’t know what the mirror’s reflection would do after replacing the person in reality.

What if his kindness morphed into cruelty, and his affection transformed into hatred?

Franca, unable to reach a decision, could only gaze at Lumian and sigh. “Your words are rather cold-hearted…” Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

She began to think that Jenna’s assessment of Ciel held some truth.

“Madame, am I not merely following your inclinations to help you convince yourself?” Lumian responded, a mix of annoyance and amusement evident in his tone.

Franca offered a sheepish smile.

“How do you propose we handle this situation?”

Lumian glanced at Erkin, who was recounting his strange encounter to his wife and children as if it were someone else’s story.

“We should have someone write a letter and report this matter to the police headquarters or a cathedral.

“The letter should merely state that ‘Rat’ Christo’s brother, Erkin, ventured into an underground realm with a group of individuals and remained absent for the majority of the day. Upon resurfacing, their dominant hand had changed.

“Official Beyonders have encountered numerous anomalies, so they should be familiar with the underground. They will likely deduce what has befallen Erkin and his companions.

“As for how they handle it, that’s their responsibility. We need not worry. If they refrain from harming Erkin and the others, the mirror person poses no threat. They can serve as replacements for the deceased originals. And if those monsters are eliminated, we won’t have to confront pain and animosity, let alone compensate anyone.

“In short, we must trust the officials and the Church.

“Emperor Roselle once mentioned that a gentleman wouldn’t feel inclined to dine on an animal they were familiar with after it had been slaughtered. However, if they remained unaware, it wouldn’t be an issue. They could enjoy their meal blissfully. The same principle applies in this case.”

Lumian couldn’t recall the exact words, so he did his best to convey the sentiment in his own words.

Franca pondered deeply for a few moments before being convinced.

“You’re right…”

She glanced at Lumian.

“You don’t sound like a mob leader at all.”

“A true mob leader knows how to manipulate the authorities.” Lumian grinned.

Franca chuckled and remarked, “Do I have to address you as ‘Godfather’ from now on?”

Without giving Lumian a chance to inquire further, she swiftly added, “A mob’s godfather. Yes, for now, you don’t have the means. I’ll take responsibility for leaking the information to the officials.”

Mob’s godfather… Lumian had heard his sister mention this as the subject of her next book. He grasped the general idea, but couldn’t help feeling a tad disheartened.

In the ensuing hours, he and Franca joyously attended a banquet hosted by “Rat” Christo, engaging in lively conversations with Erkin and the other smugglers.

Lumian couldn’t stop raving about the delectable Savoie roasted chicken. It was seasoned with an array of spices, its surface glistening with a similar concoction. The golden skin boasted juiciness, tenderness, and an aromatic essence.

He sliced a piece of the crispy skin-covered meat and let it soak in the succulent juices for a moment before savoring it. The experience was pure bliss, rendering it impossible for him to cease indulging.

As the banquet drew to a close, Franca noticed only a handful of people remained at the dining table. She turned to “Rat” Christo, a smile playing on her lips.

“Come closer. I have something to ask you.”

Christo, momentarily taken aback, shifted his chair nearer to Franca and responded with a smile, “And what’s the matter?”

Franca smiled and whispered, “In truth, Ciel and I also ventured into that peculiar world. Fortunately, we managed to escape…”

With that, she swiftly produced the roast chicken’s knife and drove it into the table in front of “Rat” Christo. Her voice turned icy as she interrogated him, “What’s concealed within that shipment? You

nearly got us killed!”

“I-I don’t know!” Christo glanced around, beads of cold sweat forming on his forehead.

Realizing that only he, Franca, and Cield remained at the table, he hastily explained, “I genuinely don’t know. The boss instructed me to bring it to Trier!”

Chapter 192 - 192 Verification

192 Verification

Boss? Lumian was alarmed. He hadn't anticipated the connection to Gardner Martin, but now things were starting to make sense.

Why did the smuggling caravan vanish on a known route that had been used before?

And why was "Rat" Christo so eager to seek their help? If he had only lost a shipment, he would have made more confirmations. It would have taken time for him to reveal his vulnerabilities and mistakes to his peers, who might be eyeing his position.

Lumian's mind raced with thoughts.

Gardner Martin might be a Sequence 6 or 5 on the Hunter pathway.

Both Franca and I entered the special mirror world, and we're a Hunter and a Demoness, respectively, on similar and neighboring paths.

Mr. K instructed me to approach Gardner Martin and gain his trust.

Franca, as a member of the secret organization Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, has quite a high Sequence. It's surprising that she's willing to be the mistress of a mob boss like Gardner Martin.

The boss of the Savoie Mob must be hiding a major secret or involved in something significant…

Why does he want Christo to smuggle an item related to the Hunter or Demoness pathway into Trier? And why go through the risks of underground smuggling? Is he afraid of the tax collectors? Instead, why doesn't the boss retrieve the item himself outside the city and

have Christo get a smuggler lead the way? It would be safer and more discreet. Could it be that he knows the item might cause trouble and wants to avoid the risk? Lumian shifted his gaze from “Rat” Christo to Franca’s face.

To Lumian’s surprise, the Witch seemed unprepared for such an answer. Her initial shock was swiftly followed by a hint of excitement and joy.

She stared intently at “Rat” Christo and sneered, “Are you trying to f*cking deceive me? How come I haven’t heard about Gardner asking you to bring something into Trier? Where is that thing?”

Excitement… Joy… Lumian grew increasingly certain that Franca had ulterior motives for joining the Savoie Mob and approaching Gardner Martin.

Christo forced a smile and responded, “It’s in an iron box. I’ve already sent it to Rue des Fontaines. Perhaps the boss hasn’t informed you yet.”

As a seasoned member of the Savoie Mob, he knew the power Franca possessed. She could easily dispatch him, especially since he wasn’t prepared and hadn’t brought any assistance. Moreover, she excelled in divination and could detect falsehoods.

“You better not be lying to me!” Franca recoiled, produced her makeup mirror, and began performing a divination in front of “Rat” Christo.

Lumian cooperatively stood up and walked to Christo’s side. He reached out and firmly grasped Christo’s shoulder.

Once Franca confirmed the truth through her divination, Lumian patted the “Rat” on the back with a smile.

“If anything similar happens in the future, make sure to remind me of any potential issues with the merchandise. I must be prepared for any unexpected incidents.

“Otherwise, I might just chop you into pieces and feed you to your beloved kids.”

He had heard from Louis that “Rat” Christo had numerous pets and had a special fondness for dogs.

Fueled by the threat, Christo grew angry.

Franca may be the boss’s mistress, and she’s stronger than me. I can tolerate her treatment, but what right does a newbie like you have?

“The boss asked me to keep it a secret this time.”

Franca stowed away her makeup box and cursed, “You son of a bitch! You could have at least given us a clue!”

Christo sheepishly smiled and replied, “Alright, alright.”

Surprisingly, he wasn’t at all offended by the insults. To him, dogs were cherished family members, so how could their mention be taken as an offense?

He often warned his lecherous subordinates that laying a hand on his wife was akin to touching his dog! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Observing Franca and Ciel’s softened attitudes, Christo curiously asked, “Is that strange world really as Erkin described?”

Before Franca could respond, Lumian patted Christo’s shoulder with a smile.

“Haven’t you figured it out yet? Has a dog eaten your brain? We were just bluffing you!

“We didn’t enter any strange world at all. We simply suspected something was amiss with your goods, considering the previous smooth smuggling operations and the sudden involvement of a Beyonder incident. So, we decided to deceive you!”

“…” “Rat” Christo couldn’t help but feel vexed.

Indeed, if Franca and Ciel had truly entered a strange world, they wouldn’t have returned so swiftly!

Erkin and the others had been missing for hours!

How could he have been so foolish?

Why did he fall for their ruse?

Suppressing his emotions, Christo looked at Franca with a fawning smile.

“Please don’t tell the boss that I revealed the existence of that item. He will not be pleased with me.”

Franca cast a strange glance at Lumian and said to “Rat” Christo, “Fine. From now on, you owe me a favor.”

“Alright!” Christo hastily agreed.

After bidding farewell to the leader of the smuggling operation, Lumian and Franca exited the warehouse and turned onto the narrow street of Avenue du Marché.

“I realized today that Christo is a complete fool. He’s incredibly gullible,” Franca remarked, breaking the silence as she glanced at Lumian beside her. There was a hint of a smile on her face, but it didn’t quite reach her eyes. “You’re quite skilled at deceiving others.”

Lumian assumed a composed demeanor.

“In Cordu, you must have heard about Cordu, right? They call me the Prankster King.”

Franca, familiar with Cordu due to the wanted poster, smiled at Lumian and responded,

“Did you lie to me earlier then? Heh heh, Jenna’s assessment of you wasn’t entirely off. You possess cunning and trickery.”

“You’re my sister’s companion. I’ve been telling you the truth,” Lumian said sincerely, maintaining an honest expression.

However, he didn’t divulge the complete truth. Even if Franca were to confirm it through divination, she wouldn’t detect any signs of

deception.

Franca observed his expression and nodded in satisfaction.

“I am willing to trust Muggle’s brother. Hmm… Let’s pretend you don’t know about Gardner’s item. There are certain things that can be harmful if you were to uncover the truth. I won’t inquire about it either.”

“Alright,” Lumian acquiesced, obediently playing the role he had assumed in front of Aurore.

The two then went their separate ways on Avenue du Marché. One headed towards Salle de Bal Brise, while the other turned onto Rue des Blouses Blanches.

It was already past 8 p.m., and the sky had darkened. Gas wall lamps embedded in the walls illuminated the dance hall, casting a yellowish glow on the entire first floor. As they approached the dance floor, the ambiance grew dimmer.

Amidst greetings, Lumian took a seat at the bar counter and ordered a glass of fennel and mint absinthe, known as Parrot.

The drink was rather invigorating, and with just one sip, it cleared his mind as if he had been slapped awake.

Lumian sat for a while, enjoying Jenna’s risqué songs. Eventually, he noticed Charlie approaching the bar counter with a tray in hand.

“Ciel… Boss!” Charlie swiftly altered the way he addressed Lumian upon realizing it was the bartender looking at him.

Lumian took a sip of the psychedelic green liquid and asked with a smile,

“Do you prefer the dance hall or the underground bar in the motel?”

Charlie glanced at the bartender and the other waiters before lowering his voice.

“I still prefer the motel bar. Over there, I’m the center of attention!”

I can tell… Lumian chuckled and nodded towards the young female singer who had taken over from Jenna.

“Is she your friend’s daughter?”

Charlie had previously mentioned a friend who had fallen victim to a loan shark. Pressured by Baron Brignais, the friend tragically committed suicide by jumping off a building, and now his daughter was forced to sing at Salle de Bal Brise.

“Yes,” Charlie replied with a sorrowful expression.

The female singer, dressed glamorously in a revealing blouse and skirt, was around Jenna’s age but lacked the same allure.

Upon closer observation, Lumian noticed the key distinction between the two:

Jenna’s eyes radiated a certain spark, whereas despite her fake smile, the light in the other singer’s eyes was absent.

Charlie opened his mouth, seemingly hesitant to ask for something, but in the end, he decided against it and remained silent.

Lumian took another sip of the Parrot and immersed himself in deep thought, the song playing in the background.

Approaching 10:30 p.m., he stood up and made his way back upstairs. He changed into a worn linen shirt, an old jacket, brown pants, and topped it off with a dark blue cap.

With this appearance, he resembled a vagabond.

Without hesitation, Lumian pushed open the window and leaped into the alley behind the dance hall.

His intention was to pay a visit to Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

His Prophecy Spell had revealed that Monsieur Ive, the landlord of Auberge du Coq Doré, would be present at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons between 11 p.m. and 12 p.m. this Friday, i.e., tonight.

Lumian wasn't expecting to confront the matter involving the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire, single-handedly. He had no intention of facing them head-on. Instead, he aimed to gather valuable information and uncover more problems through observation.

To him, the most crucial objective was to utilize Monsieur Ive and the others to locate the place where Susanna Mattise had resided during her lifetime and obtain an item she had carried for a significant period. This would lay the groundwork for the Exorcism Spell when she eventually launched an attack.

Although completing the ritualistic magic in time might prove challenging, being prepared was preferable to being caught off guard.

After taking a few detours, Lumian arrived outside Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Since it was not yet 11 p.m., he saw no need to rush inside. Instead, he found a corner and settled down, observing Monsieur Ive's beige six-story apartment with the demeanor of a genuine tramp.

Before long, Lumian spotted the landlord.

Monsieur Ive returned from Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, holding a black cane. He wore a faded dark suit, chestnut pants, and an aged half top hat.

A few minutes later, a dim light emanated from one of the windows of his apartment.

Lumian patiently waited.

As he waited, his brow gradually furrowed.

Why hasn't Monsieur Ive made his way to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons? It's already past 11 p.m.

The window continued to emit a yellowish glow, and occasional figures passed by.

Fifteen minutes elapsed, yet Monsieur Ive had not left his apartment, crossed Avenue du Marché, and entered Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à

Pigeons.

Lumian couldn’t help but mutter to himself, Could there be an error in my Prophecy Spell?

Chapter 193 - 193 Luck Enhancement

193 Luck Enhancement

Lumian waited patiently until midnight drew near. As the clock struck 11:30 p.m., the light in Ive's room went out, yet no one emerged from the apartment. It seemed the miser had decided to save on gas bills and retired for the night. The final act of the play at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons concluded as midnight approached. The audience trickled out one by one, but no one entered the theater.

Lumian muttered to himself, his thoughts racing: Could it be that the Prophecy Spell's answer isn't precise enough? After all, the ritualistic magic was cast by me. It's understandable that its effect isn't perfect. Yes, that's a possibility. But what if the Prophecy Spell is accurate?

Alarmed amidst his thoughts, Lumian's head snapped in the direction of the door adorned with theater posters.

If the Prophecy Spell was correct, it meant that Monsieur Ive had indeed been at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons between 11 p.m. and midnight.

And if Monsieur Ive truly had been there, who was the identical figure who had entered the apartment and never left?

There was a strong chance it was a decoy!

A decoy!

No way… Lumian couldn't fathom his own suspicion.

How could he be deceived by such a trick, especially after meeting

and conversing with Monsieur Ive before?

He was more inclined to believe that the Prophecy Spell was flawed.

Perhaps there's a tunnel beneath the apartment leading to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons? Lumian pondered, searching for a plausible explanation.

Trier was a city where establishing a tunnel was easier than in other places. It only required a short excavation to connect to underground passageways and sewers. However, such tunnels were also prone to discovery. The Underground Trier teemed with people—quarry police patrolled the area, smugglers traveled through, and planters passed by. Unless the tunnel went deeper or had a cleverly hidden entrance, it wouldn't take long for it to be found.

If Monsieur Ive's apartment did have a similar tunnel, he wouldn't have needed to venture out to the nearby Underground Trier entrance at night.

In the midst of these thoughts, Lumian recalled two important details.

Firstly, he had "witnessed" a change in Monsieur Ive's luck when they first met. The next day, he realized that luck had inexplicably altered.

Secondly, Monsieur Ive possessed Beyonder powers and had a high likelihood of being a believer in the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire. Despite having a low Sequence, when the official Beyonders brought him in for questioning, they found nothing amiss.

Combining these perplexing facts with the disparity between the Prophecy Spell and reality, Lumian's pupils contracted as he muttered to himself:

A decoy, could it be real?

Was the person residing in the opposite apartment all this time after the robbery a mere decoy?

Is that why his luck changed and the official Beyonders failed to

detect anything wrong?

How is it possible for him to resemble Monsieur Ive so perfectly? Did he employ a mystical item akin to the Mystery Prying Glasses or some other method? And where is the real Monsieur Ive hiding in Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons? The more Lumian pondered, the more unnerved he became.

No one had discovered the substitution that took place.

At the very least, Christo's men showed signs of mirror-like reversal.

From the assortment of the pervert's abilities, Lumian had already deduced that Monsieur Ive had sensed something awry after being "robbed." After all, even a single verl d'or held value as money. No robber would willingly discard it. And if it had truly been discarded, it meant that the robbery was not the true objective. It was understandable, then, that Monsieur Ive had prepared himself to conceal his secrets from the official Beyonders. Lumian simply hadn't anticipated such a bizarre method.

He had actually fashioned a doppelg?nger identical to Monsieur Ive!

For a moment, Lumian couldn't ascertain whether the decoy in the apartment was an ordinary person adorned with Beyonder cosmetics or a devotee of the evil god with extraordinary powers.

If it was the former, Lumian desired to seize the opportunity in the dead of night, apprehend the decoy, administer a thorough thrashing, and extract the truth. Then, he would deliver the decoy to the police headquarters or a cathedral, leaving the official Beyonders to conclude matters.

If it was the latter, he dared not act impulsively. No one knew the decoy's Sequence level or the breadth of its abilities.

Lumian turned his head once more, casting a glance at the brick-red, three-story building housing Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. He noted that no more patrons emerged from its entrance, dispelling his idea of venturing inside for another look.

The final performance of the day had concluded!

After contemplating for a while, Lumian resolved to make some preparations.

He rose slowly to his feet and proceeded toward Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, skulking in the shadows untouched by the glow of the gas street lamps.

Along the way, he scrutinized the vagabonds slumbering in the corners of the roadside, his gaze deep and earnest.

Finally, he found a suitable target.

Huddled beneath a makeshift barricade in the alley, the vagabond's clothing was tattered and stained with mud. His legs bore the marks of dog bites, festering wounds oozing yellow pus.

In Lumian's eyes, this individual was plagued by misfortune. He would face a series of calamities in the next two or three days, with his very life potentially at stake.

This made him the ideal "material" for the Luck Enhancement Spell!

Yes, Lumian intended to employ the ritualistic magic of the Alms Monk—the Luck Enhancement Spell—to fashion an item capable of transmitting ill fortune.

If the fake Monsieur Ive were to be plagued by misfortune, continually beset by various predicaments, there was a high likelihood that he would reveal his predicament to the official Beyonders!

With this in mind, Lumian had been on the lookout for the most hapless vagabonds. This particular group belonged to the realm of ill-fated individuals.

With his cap pulled low, Lumian approached the vagabond, positioning himself so the gas lamps on the street cast his face in shadows.

He crouched down, black-gloved hands ready, and gently prodded the tramp.

“You…” The tramp stirred, his voice filled with pain and confusion.

“I need your assistance with something. Willing to lend a hand?” Lumian produced a silver coin, worth one verl d’or, adorned with cherubs and intricate lines. Updated from nov*e*lbIn.(c)om

The tramp’s eyes were immediately drawn to the gleaming coin. Without hesitation, he nodded and replied, “No problem!”

As he spoke, he extended his hand, already imagining the aroma of Apple Whiskey Sour and hearty meatloaf.

Once the silver coin was in his palm, the tramp’s eyes widened suddenly, fixated on something behind Lumian. He blurted out in shock, “That’s…”

Seizing the moment Lumian turned his head, the tramp swiftly pushed himself up, attempting to vault over the barricade and sprint down the alley.

It was evident that giving money to a vagabond and enlisting his cooperation in something posed a clear danger!

For an ordinary tramp, the logical choice was to accept the money and make a run for it!

Whack!

Lumian swiftly withdrew his right hand, calmly observing as the tramp slumped against the barricade, unconscious.

From the start, Lumian had no intention of allowing the tramp to witness everything while awake. Even if he were blindfolded and his ears blocked, there was still a risk of danger. Moreover, there was the potential for revealing Lumian’s identity and the sinister ritualistic magic known as the Luck Enhancement Spell.

Hence, his plan had been to seek the tramp’s consent and then render him unconscious.

Lumian assisted the tramp to his feet, as if supporting a drunken companion, and guided him to the nearest entrance to Underground

Trier. Finding a concealed spot nearby, he secured the tramp, binding his hands and feet, blindfolding him, and muffling his ears.

Once everything was in place, he stealthily returned to Salle de Bal Brise, retrieving a carbide lamp and the necessary tools.

Without delay, he went back to the entrance, carefully lifting the unconscious tramp and making his way to the quarry cave where he had previously performed the Prophecy Spell.

This time, however, the ritual had undergone a change. While it remained a dualistic ceremony, the orange candle representing a deity and other supplicants had been replaced with one of a grayish-white hue.

It still contained Lumian's blood.

To enhance his chances of success, Lumian intended to utilize the ritualistic magic to "pray" to the corruption sealed within his chest, mobilizing a fragment of its power.

After constructing the altar and erecting a wall of spirituality, he plunged Hedsey's tainted dagger into the tramp, allowing his blood to flow into a metal vial.

The tramp stirred, only to be swiftly rendered unconscious once again.

Lumian disinfected and bandaged the wound, blending the blood with ash from his own hair to create an ink-like substance. Using the thinnest paintbrush at his disposal, he meticulously outlined a series of intricate and enigmatic symbols on faux goatskin parchment.

The design consisted of interwoven black thorns forming a ring, snakes with entwined heads and tails, a river composed of these serpentine figures, distorted lines, a peculiar eye, and more.

By the time he completed a fraction of the intricate work, Lumian's forehead was drenched in a sheen of cold sweat.

He positioned the tramp and the faux goatskin adorned with symbols upon the boulder that served as the altar. Dripping perfume into the

flames and sprinkling powder, Lumian took two steps back, fixing his gaze upon the gently flickering yellow candle flame, and uttered ancient Hermes words:

“Power of Inevitability!

“You are the past, the present, and the future;

“You are the cause, the effect, and the process.”

As before, the flame of the deity’s candle compressed to its utmost limits before expanding, swelling to the size of a clenched fist. Its hue transformed to a silvery-black shade, distorting everything in its vicinity. Gray mist filled the air, and a tempest of darkness whirled about.

Lumian, his ears assailed by frenzied murmurs, endured the vertigo and switched to the Hermes tongue.

“I implore you,

“I implore you to alter this destitute man’s fate.

“I pray that you will take away his misfortune.”

At this juncture, Lumian took a step forward and ignited the faux goatskin adorned with mysterious symbols using the silver-black candle flame. Placing it within a natural crevice on the altar’s surface, he observed as the parchment began to smolder.

In the next instant, he produced a gold coin worth five verl d’or, engraved with the Sunbird, and positioned it near the tramp’s outstretched hand.

To those gripped by greed, money was an irresistible lure. It served as the optimal conduit!

Lumian, burdened by a sensation akin to carrying a weight of over five hundred kilograms, retreated a step, awaiting the consumption of the smoldering faux goatskin before commencing the final incantation.

“Gray amber, a herb that belongs to inevitability, please pass your powers to my incantation…”

The entire altar abruptly ignited, assuming an ethereal semblance. Before Lumian, an illusory, intricate, and chilling river of mercury silently coursed its way.

It enshrouded the tramp and the gold coin, amplifying the murmurs in Lumian’s ears and causing the cyan veins upon his face to bulge.

Instinctively, Lumian recoiled from the agony of supplicating for a boon. Suddenly, the illusory image shrank, descending upon the surface of the gold coin resting upon the altar.

Everything returned to its former state, except for the gold coin, which now appeared dimmer under the silver-black illumination.

Chapter 194 - 194 Triggered

194 Triggered

At the sight of this, Lumian hastily concluded the ritual and extinguished the candles in the proper sequence.

The frenzied ravings that had filled his ears vanished, and the searing pain abruptly ceased before it could overwhelm him.

Once he tidied up the altar in a rough manner, Lumian shifted his gaze to the 5 verl d'or coin.

It no longer appeared peculiar. Bathed in the glow of the carbide lamp, it shimmered with a captivating golden sheen, indistinguishable from any other coin.

Lumian's eyes darkened suddenly, as if he were observing a living being, examining its fortune.

Normally, he couldn't "see" an object's fate, but this time was different. After focusing, he realized that the gold coin was enveloped in black vapor tinged with a hint of blood-red glow. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

The former symbolized ill fortune, while the latter indicated a degree of impending catastrophe.

Phew… Lumian let out a sigh of relief.

This meant that the Luck Enhancement Spell had succeeded. The tramp's streak of misfortune for the next few days had been transferred to the gold coin!

However, if Lumian didn't find another person to bear this fate within three days, it would revert to the tramp, permanently

untransferable.

Lumian continued to gaze at the tramp for a few more seconds, confirming that his luck had temporarily returned to normal, neither good nor bad.

Satisfied, Lumian, already positioned at the edge of the altar, reached out and picked up the 5 verl d'or, which served as the medium for luck transference.

He wasn't concerned that this act would transfer the misfortune attached to the item onto himself. That's because activating the Luck Enhancement Spell required specific conditions:

Firstly, the recipient had to willingly accept the gold coin and subjectively desire to possess it.

Secondly, throughout the entire process, the recipient had to exploit a situation they shouldn't have.

In other words, if Lumian used the gold coin to make a purchase, the shopkeeper wouldn't suffer any ill luck merely because they accepted the item—unless they sold Lumian something counterfeit or dishonestly manipulated the transaction for illicit gain.

Likewise, if Lumian discreetly slipped the gold coin into Charlie's pocket without his immediate awareness, Charlie wouldn't encounter misfortune when he eventually used it.

As the original owner of the coin, Lumian naturally remained unaffected by the Luck Enhancement Spell when he retrieved it.

The two straightforward methods to trigger the Luck Enhancement Spell were to keep the coin in his pocket and allow the target to steal it. He could also feign leaving it behind so the target could pick it up.

Lumian believed that unless individuals like Monsieur Ive, who had acquired a miserly habit, underwent a significant transformation, they would still harbor an enduring fondness for money. Falling into such a trap would be easy for them.

After erasing various traces on the altar, he hoisted the tramp onto

his back and ascended to the surface. He dumped him back into the alley where he had been found, removing the ropes binding his hands and feet, along with the cloth covering his eyes and ears.

The tramp stirred slowly, uttering pleas of desperate fear, “Please, let me go!”

He blinked his eyes open, instinctively scanning his surroundings. To his realization, there was no one in sight, and he found himself still slumbering in his usual spot.

“…” The tramp fell silent.

As his senses gradually returned, his initial reaction was to delve into his pocket.

A chill seeped into his mind, and with a gleeful expression, he retrieved a silver coin worth 1 verl d’or.

It’s still here!

It’s really still there!

It wasn’t a dream!

Under the faint crimson moonlight casting its glow from above and the street lamps illuminating the vicinity, the tramp fiddled with the silver coin repeatedly, assuring himself that it wasn’t a counterfeit.

Only then did he recall to examine his body.

Soon, he noticed that his arm was bandaged, and a sharp ache assaulted his mind.

Apart from that, there was nothing out of the ordinary.

The tramp stumbled to his feet, rubbing his backside as he muttered to himself, “It’s not that kind of pervert…”

Having witnessed the world prior to his bankruptcy, he was aware that Trier housed its fair share of peculiar individuals. Consequently, various private organizations had sprung up. Some advocated that

men and women existed solely for reproduction, while others believed that true love only blossomed between men. Gatherings even catered to those who believed that women alone held the secret to loving their own kind.

The tramp had initially suspected he had fallen victim to men with a peculiar fixation on foul, unwashed men. However, it seemed that wasn't the case.

After pondering for a moment, he conjectured that someone had taken an interest in his blood and extracted some. The 1 verl d'or was his reward.

He had heard tales before of influential figures relying on continual blood transfusions to sustain their lives.

"At least there's 1 verl d'or." The tramp instantly rejoiced, no longer dwelling on the loss of blood.

He even entertained the hope that the other party would seek him out once more. When the time came, he would willingly inquire about their desired price.

…

Lumian relied on a copper coin toss to decide that he would spend the night at Auberge du Coq Doré. Consequently, he returned to Room 207 and slept until 6 a.m.

After having breakfast and engaging in some outdoor exercises, then returning to the motel, changing his attire, and disguising himself, Lumian prepared to set off for Avenue du Marché to find the two cleaning ladies already hard at work.

Lumian caught sight of a cleaning lady in her fifties, sporting a vibrant golden wig and makeup, as she diligently cleared the trash in the lobby. Lumian halted his steps and asked contemplatively, "You're Elodie, aren't you?"

He recalled Charlie mentioning her name.

"Yes, Monsieur Ciel." Elodie straightened her posture.

She wore an old yet clean grayish-white dress and stood at an average height of 1.65 meters. From her facial features, it was evident that she had been quite attractive in her youth.

“You know me?” Lumian inquired nonchalantly.

Elodie answered truthfully, “Monsieur Charlie Collent spoke of you before. He mentioned that you’re the hotel’s guardian.”

Heh heh, just as expected of Charlie… That’s the right attitude. No trace of inferiority or fear… Lumian started to feel that Elodie, the cleaning lady, wasn’t a former street girl as Charlie had speculated.

He casually asked, “I heard from Charlie that you used to be a theater actress?”

“Yes.” A smile graced Elodie’s face. “I performed in two theaters, taking on supporting roles. However, one of them went bankrupt, and the other stopped hiring me for some reason. I was already quite old by then.”

As she reminisced about the past, a hint of melancholy appeared in her demeanor.

Lumian nodded and glanced towards the motel door.

“Have you heard of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons?”

This was the question he was truly interested in.

This cleaning lady named Elodie was originally a theater actress, but she had been hired by Monsieur Ive, the motel landlord who had a close relationship with Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. It was a little suspicious.

Elodie’s expression became animated.

“I know that their plays are splendid. The actors possess remarkable acting skills. It’s worth saving up for a month just to purchase tickets to their shows.

“When I attended a performance at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à

Pigeons, I discovered that they were in need of a cleaning lady for half a day. That's why I ended up here."

I see… It seems unrelated to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons or Monsieur Ive… Lumian refrained from further probing to avoid raising any suspicions. He smiled and remarked, "Seems like you have other jobs?"

Elodie believed that Monsieur Ciel sought to ascertain the cleaning lady's background to protect the motel's interests, so she responded honestly, "Every day from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m., I work at a factory south of the market district. It's called the Goodville Chemical Factory, situated on Rue Saint-Hilaire."

Rue Saint-Hilaire ran alongside Trier's city walls and neighbored the factories in Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

Trier's factories had preserved a practice from the era of Roselle. If production continued around the clock, the workers were divided into three shifts: one for the morning to noon, another for the afternoon to evening, and the final one for the night.

"That sounds demanding." Lumian sighed.

Elodie smiled and spoke gently, "I have two children who are nearly grown. Once they secure their own jobs, I won't have to toil so relentlessly."

"What about your husband?" Lumian casually inquired.

Elodie's expression darkened.

"He died in a factory accident a few years ago."

Lumian didn't pry further. Instead, he engaged in conversation with another cleaning lady, faithfully fulfilling his duties as the protector of Auberge du Coq Doré.

Exiting Rue Anarchie, Lumian stepped onto Avenue du Marché, making his way towards Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

He wasn't intentionally waiting for Monsieur Ive, who was suspected

of being a decoy. His intention was simply to observe. His primary objective was to keep a close watch on the individuals heading to 126 Avenue du Marché.

The Prophecy Spell had revealed to him that he would cross paths with Louis Lund on Avenue du Marché. “Hammer” Ait had mentioned that Louis Lund would once again seek out the boss of the Poison Spur Mob, “Black Scorpion” Roger, this Saturday or Sunday, and “Black Scorpion” Roger resided at 126 Avenue du Marché.

With this combination of information, Lumian had decided to become a “permanent resident” on Avenue du Marché on Monday and wander about in hopes of encountering his target.

As Lumian neared Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons and Monsieur Ive’s apartment, he slowed his pace. Sometimes, he sat among the tramps, while other times, he visited a nearby café for a drink.

Since he was already there, it was only natural for him to keep an eye out for Monsieur Ive. After all, this was Avenue du Marché as well.

After nearly 45 minutes, Lumian finally spotted the landlord of the motel.

Clad in a faded formal suit, a worn-out top hat, and a black cane that was on the verge of losing its paint, Monsieur Ive emerged from the apartment and made his way towards the Suhit steam locomotive station.

Lumian gradually stood up and glanced behind him. He feigned terror and jogged, as if he were being pursued by an enemy.

In his attempt to overtake Monsieur Ive from behind, he accidentally collided with him.

A clatter ensued as a golden coin fell to the ground, yet Lumian seemed oblivious to it. He lowered his head and fled in a panic.

Monsieur Ive grumbled, his gaze suddenly drawn to the golden coin on the pavement.

Subconsciously, he wanted to call out to the impolite individual, but as he extended his hand, no words escaped his lips.

Swiftly scanning his surroundings, he swiftly squatted down and retrieved the 5-verl d'or coin. Nonchalantly, he slipped it into his pocket, as if nothing out of the ordinary had transpired.

Chapter 195 - 195 Candidate

195 Candidate

Hidden behind the shadow of an ebony street lamp, a mere twenty meters away from Monsieur Ive, Lumian leaned discreetly, tugging his cap lower amidst the bustling crowd. He watched intently as his mark retrieved the glistening gold coin, secretively stashing it away.

Only then did Lumian release a sigh of relief. With one hand nonchalantly tucked inside his pocket, he strolled towards 126 Avenue du Marché, paying no further heed to the dubious decoy, for the Luck Enhancement Spell had been officially set in motion, impervious to interruption.

However, the spell required time to manifest its effects. Within half a day or, at most, a full day, misfortune would incessantly plague the false Monsieur Ive. Lumian need only orchestrate a small incident when the opportune moment arrived, and the chances were high that Monsieur Ive would inadvertently unveil his peculiar nature to the legitimate Beyonders.

As Lumian ventured forth, he soon realized that 126 Avenue du Marché was none other than the abode of “Black Scorpion” Roger, the very nerve center of the Poison Spur Mob. Consequently, he dared not approach too closely, wary of exposing himself. Settling himself near a café window, diagonally positioned at a distance of over ten meters, he ordered a Fermo coffee and a dariole.

While awaiting his refreshments, Lumian attentively scanned the passersby on Avenue du Marché, his gaze lingering upon the promotional posters adorning the café’s walls.

A prevalent theme among them was the impending National Convention elections scheduled to commence on Sunday.

There were three contenders vying for the position: Matthew Boulanger, representing the National Party; Hugues Artois, championing the Enlightenment Party; and Jacques Sanson, hailing from the Revolutionary Party.

As Lumian observed the fervor surrounding the approach to 126 Avenue du Marché, he found himself engrossed in the manifestos of the candidates.

Matthew Boulanger, the incumbent parliament member for the Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman district, advocated for the restoration of Intis's former glory. His rallying cry was "Make Intis Glorious Again." Boulanger attributed the nation's current predicaments to its defeat in the recent war against the Loen Kingdom. His proposed solution entailed reorganizing the Intis army with a renewed focus on prioritizing Intis's interests. He sought to regain the advantages relinquished in the Southern Continent, bolster the economy, and transform the marketplace district.

Boulanger believed that the process of "Making Intis Glorious Again" would bestow upon the denizens of the marketplace district an abundance of employment opportunities, enabling them to amass wealth, whether through venturing into the Southern Continent, enlisting in the army, or capitalizing on foreign trade.

Hugues Artois, a candidate gaining considerable popularity of late, advocated for "More Jobs, For A Fairer Society." His pledge was to invigorate the economy, constructing additional factories in the southern region of the marketplace district, while simultaneously dismantling the shackles that bound factory owners, bankers, financiers, and merchants. However, his intentions also encompassed challenging the privileges enjoyed by the Church and the affluent, imposing heavier taxes upon them.

Jacques Sanson, a member of the Revolutionary Party, shared Hugues Artois's conviction that societal privileges had no place in the modern world. Regardless of one's affiliation with the Church or financial benefits, Sanson believed that everyone should pay equal taxes.

He boldly asserted that the current tariff policies hindered Intis's progress, particularly the city walls and the 54 checkpoints

surrounding Trier. Sanson advocated for the free circulation of goods and the establishment of a liberated market, which would lead to the proliferation of factories and a significant increase in tax revenue. By taxing the privileged class alongside these reforms, the national treasury would swiftly recover from any initial setbacks.

When the time came, Sanson planned to explore the implementation of Emperor Roselle's envisioned annuity guarantee system, providing essential protection to the workers in the marketplace district.

His slogan resounded, "Take Down Those Damned Walls!"

Having finished reading the candidates' platforms, Lumian couldn't help but feel inclined to vote for Jacques Sanson.

While it remained uncertain whether Sanson possessed the capability to realize his ideas, cheaper alcohol and goods would bring tangible benefits and security to the people in the marketplace district.

As for taxing the privileged, they weren't overly concerned, as long as the burden didn't exceed a coppet.

Yet, it was evident that Jacques Sanson faced discrimination. His campaign posters were relegated to the farthest corners, barely visible. This treatment stemmed from the Revolutionary Party's perennial status as a minority within the National Convention.

As the Poison Spur Mob rallied behind Hugues Artois of the Enlightenment Party, Lumian directed his utmost attention towards this candidate. He not only perused Artois's election platform but also scrutinized his color photographs.

Artois, a man in his thirties, possessed a luxuriant head of black, fluffy hair with hints of gray at his temples. His nose stood tall and proud, complemented by deep blue eyes. His height commanded attention, and he exuded an air of refinement when dressed formally.

I can't allow this man to be elected… Unless I dismantle the Poison Spur Mob before that happens. However, the Mob still enjoys the mysterious support of Madame Moon. Even if one Black Scorpion falls, another Red Scorpion will emerge… Yes, the elections are set to

commence this Sunday. The police headquarters, military police, and official Beyonders will be mobilized to vigilantly monitor each constituency. Causing trouble won't be easy… Should I involve the laborers, porters, and waiters of the Savoie Mob? Lumian contemplated how to secure the National Convention seat for both Matthew Boulanger and Jacques Sanson.

Lost in thought, he maintained a watchful eye on the window, hoping to catch sight of Louis Lund.

After a considerable time had passed, the golden sun ascended into the sky. Lumian realized that waiting was not a viable option.

Firstly, his identity posed a problem. He remained under the intense scrutiny of the Poison Spur Mob, preventing him from waiting in a building opposite "Black Scorpion" Roger's residence. Such a vantage point would limit his view and increase the risk of overlooking crucial details.

Secondly, as the leader of the Savoie Mob, he had numerous responsibilities to fulfill and required moments of respite. Waiting 24 hours a day for two straight days was simply unfeasible.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian was struck by an idea.

Why should I do it myself when I have so many subordinates and even hired Anthony Reid with my own money?

With that thought, Lumian rose from his seat and left the café, making his way towards Salle de Bal Brise.

As he reached the middle of Avenue du Marché, Lumian's attention was drawn to a gathering by the roadside. At the outskirts of the crowd stood a circle of black-uniformed police officers, while two rows of mounted officers observed the passersby.

Amidst the 200 to 300 people, there stood a makeshift wooden platform. A man in a black suit, sans bow tie, commanded the stage.

A massive poster displaying his photo adorned the outer wall of the house behind him. His resounding voice resonated through the

streets.

“We need jobs. We need better income…

“I will construct more factories on Rue Saint-Hilaire…

“I pledge tax concessions for these factories…”

Ah, isn’t that Monsieur Hugues Artois? Lumian, utilizing his above-average Intis height, could clearly see the speaker on the wooden stage. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

It was the elegant, black-haired, blue-eyed Hugues Artois, a candidate supported by the Poison Spur Mob!

Lumian listened for several seconds, his gaze instinctively scanning the upper levels of the building opposite Hugues Artois, examining the windows and roof.

As expected, he detected signs of police officers or individuals who clearly did not belong to the household.

He’s well-protected indeed… I cannot shoot Hugues Artois in the head or chest from those positions using a rifle… Lumian averted his gaze, a tinge of regret washing over him.

There was another way to ensure Hugues Artois’s defeat in the election, and that was to prevent him from participating altogether.

Those who perished would automatically forfeit their right to run!

Lumian had seriously contemplated the feasibility of this plan while at the café, but he concluded that it would stir up too much chaos. The market district mobs would likely be mobilized and used as scapegoats. He himself would fall into that category. If that happened, his true identity would likely be exposed, compelling him to flee the market district, if not Trier altogether. He would lose the opportunity to track down Madame Pualis and the padre.

Assassinating the candidate appeared to be quite a challenge. Even if he were fortunate enough to succeed, escape might not be guaranteed.

Lumian shifted his gaze to the people standing behind the wooden platform. They were most likely members of Hugues Artois's campaign—a trio of men and two women.

Among them, there was a woman with fiery red hair, rumored to possess noble lineage. Her features were striking, with chiseled lines on her face, yet there was an overall air of neutrality to her beauty.

Tall and attired in a white and brown hunting suit, she was accompanied by four other individuals.

Fearful of missing Louis Lund, Lumian paid no heed to Hugues Artois's oration. He withdrew from the throng and made his way back to Salle de Bal Brise.

Noontime brought few patrons to the establishment. Some waiters and bartenders took a break, while others busied themselves with tidying up.

Addressing Louis and Sarkota, Lumian spoke up. "Dispatch four men to keep watch at 126 Avenue du Marché."

"126…" Louis repeated, his voice filled with astonishment. "Isn't that 'Black Scorpion' Roger's residence?"

Is the boss planning to stir up trouble for the Poison Spur Mob once again?

Lumian nodded, his expression candid.

"You've got it. Don't get too close and ensure you remain undetected. Stand guard from different vantage points and observe whether he appears among the passersby."

Lumian gestured toward the wanted posters adorning the wall, as well as Louis Lund, who stood nearby.

Since joining the Savoie Mob, Louis's own wanted poster had been discreetly moved to an even more inconspicuous spot.

Louis and Sarkota turned their attention to the wanted poster, carefully examining its contents. Words like "Cordu Village" caught

their eye.

They grasped the general idea and readily agreed.

“Yes, Boss.”

Once the four mobsters departed Salle de Bal Brise with the wanted poster in tow, Lumian turned to Louis and Sarkota.

“For the next few days, your task will be to maintain order on the first-floor dance hall.”

Having issued his instructions, Lumian added nonchalantly, “I just caught snippets of Hugues Artois’s speech. Not bad. Hmm… Whom does our Savoie Mob support as the market district’s member of parliament?”

Louis cast a quick glance around and lowered his voice.

“The baron mentioned that he intends to vote for Monsieur Artois.”

Chapter 196 - 196 Elimination

196 Elimination

Hugues Artois? Lumian never anticipated such a response.

Did the competing Savoie Mob and the Poison Spur Mob really endorse the same candidate?

If Hugues Artois succeeded, would he assist the Poison Spur Mob in dealing with the Savoie Mob? Or would he aid the Savoie Mob in completely overthrowing the Poison Spur Mob? Or would he demand peace between the two factions?

The more Lumian pondered it, the more he sensed that something was amiss.

If the influential figure behind both the Savoie Mob and the Poison Spur Mob was none other than Hugues Artois, then the two sides wouldn't have become bitter enemies to this extent!

Though Lumian played his part, wasn't he acting under the blessings of the Boss and Baron Brignais?

Furthermore, Hugues Artois wasn't an elected member of parliament. What authority did he have to protect both the Savoie Mob and the Poison Spur Mob?

The only plausible explanation was the machinations of the Enlightenment Party, but it made no sense for them to incite two rival mobs to fight each other to the death.

Lumian, lacking experience in this area, failed to find an answer even after considerable thought. All he could do was sigh with regret.

I can't employ the Savoie Mob's men to secretly intimidate voters

into not supporting Hugues Artois!

He glanced at Louis, his confusion evident as he asked, “Why was I unaware that our Savoie Mob is backing Hugues Artois?”

Louis immediately grew tense.

“I assumed the baron had apprised you, Boss.”

Wasn’t that the purpose of the handover?

Baron Brignais was in a foul mood after losing the Salle de Bal Brise, so he couldn’t be bothered to inform me about many things. In any case, I’ll find out when I need to know? Lumian mumbled inwardly as he departed from Salle de Bal Brise and returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

He proceeded directly to the third floor and made his way to Room 5, the dwelling of Anthony Reid, the information broker. Extending his hand, Lumian knocked on the wooden door.

Knocks reverberated, yet no response came.

He must not be present… That makes sense. How can an information broker stay holed up at home all the time… Lumian retrieved a note and fountain pen he carried with him and wrote on the note, using Anthony Reid’s door as a surface:

“I’ve received intel that Louis Lund will be seen on Avenue du Marché from Saturday to Sunday. Keep a close watch on him. As soon as you spot him, notify me without delay. You can find me either in Room 207 at the motel or at Salle de Bal Brise. The agreed payment will be made promptly when the time comes.

“Ciel.”

After sliding the note through the crevice of Room 305’s door, Lumian returned to Salle de Bal Brise and settled in the café, patiently awaiting feedback.

Has Louis Lund been discovered? Lumian rose from his seat, eyeing his subordinate.

The mobster appeared inexplicably anxious, as if a famished lion had set its sights on him.

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire, he stammered in haste, “Boss, th-this is bad! I saw, I saw a group of police officers heading toward the depot!”

The depot? Isn’t that under the boss’s ownership? Ah, near the depot lies the warehouse belonging to “Rat” Christo… Could Franca’s “report” have taken effect? Lumian swiftly contemplated a possibility.

This left him disheartened.

In his eyes, the mirror people and any potential harm they might bring couldn’t hold a candle to a single strand of Louis Lund’s hair!

Suppressing his emotions and residual excitement, Lumian spoke to his subordinate, “Understood. I’ll handle it. Return to your original post and remain vigilant for the person depicted in the wanted poster. In half an hour, I’ll send four others to relieve you.”

“Yes, Boss.” The gangster heaved a sigh of relief and made his way downstairs.

As Lumian watched him disappear, he gazed down at his trembling hands.

They still quivered slightly.

It was a result of the sudden surge of exhilaration he experienced when he thought his subordinate had brought news of Louis Lund.

At times, my emotional stability wavers… Fortunately, I have another psychiatric session scheduled for this Sunday… Lumian sighed inwardly, taking a seat and savoring his coffee.

In order to welcome Louis Lund in his finest state, he had refrained from ordering alcohol.

…

Outside the warehouses belonging to “Rat” Christo.

He, along with his subordinates and the porters, had gathered together, encircled by 20 to 30 armed police officers donning black uniforms.

Christo forced a fawning smile and addressed Superintendent Travis Everett, saying, “Monsieur Superintendent, why have you suddenly surrounded the warehouses? I’m a legitimate businessman!”

Everett, a man in his thirties with black-framed glasses and a broad chin, regarded Christo and spoke in a deep voice, “Do not assume that we are unaware of your usual dealings. We are not dealing with you because you abide by the rules and know what is permissible. Your only choice now is to cooperate with us and aid us in unraveling this as swiftly as possible.”

Christo detected a glimmer of hope in Superintendent Everett’s words and nodded.

“Alright, alright, no problem!”

He had already distributed the batch of goods from yesterday. As long as the genuine account books were not discovered, there was no concrete evidence to accuse him.

With his short black hair, Everett turned to the man standing beside him and said, “Monsieur Deputy Assistant Commissioner, you may proceed.”

The man had a rugged appearance, sporting fluffy blond hair, golden eyebrows, and a beard. He wore a slightly smaller black police uniform, but his buttons were crafted from gold.

Adorning his epaulet was a silver-white seven-petal scented iris, accompanied by an off-white diamond square.

This emblem indicated the rank of Deputy Assistant Commissioner.

The police department in Trier had four ranks, in ascending order: Chief Superintendent, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, and Deputy Commissioner.

Of these, there was only one Deputy Commissioner—the head of Trier's police department. Across the entire Intis Republic, the minister of the National Police Department, a Commissioner, held a higher rank.

The Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Assistant Commissioner served as Trier's Police Department's Deputy Minister and Police Committee members. Their epaulets displayed off-white diamond squares beside the seven-petaled irises. There were four Commissioners, three Deputy Commissioners, two Assistant Commissioners, and one Deputy Assistant Commissioner, with no Chief Superintendents.

In other words, this uncouth man with blond hair and a golden beard held an equal rank to Aymerck, the Police Committee member in charge of the entire Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. However, Christo was entirely unfamiliar with him.

"Just call me Angoulême," the rugged Deputy Assistant Commissioner replied succinctly.

His gaze swept across Christo, Erkin, and the others, inexplicably making them feel as if they were staring at the blinding sun, forcing them to lower their heads.

Angoulême averted his gaze and instructed the plain-clothes team behind him, "You may bring that object forward now."

Two team members approached the nearby four-wheeled carriage and unveiled a wide, flat, and sizable object covered in a black velvet curtain.

They positioned the object beside Angoulême.

Angoulême locked eyes with "Rat" Christo and the others, subtly raising his chin, and uttered,

"Line up in front of me, one by one."

Christo sensed the kid in his pocket trembling visibly. He surmised that Angoulême was an official Beyonder, someone of considerable power.

After a few moments of contemplation, he approached Angoulême fearfully, not daring to resist.

Suddenly, Angoulême pulled open the black velvet curtain, revealing the complete appearance of the object beside him.

It was a full-body mirror, simple and unadorned, mounted on a stand of rusted iron-black.

Christo's reflection appeared instantly in the mirror, capturing every detail.

Christo remained unaware of anything amiss, but Erkin's expression underwent a drastic change behind him.

Erkin abruptly turned to the left, attempting to escape.

Almost 20 others followed suit, including laborers and porters. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Angoulême's team had already prepared, raising their arms and squeezing the triggers.

Bullets struck those fleeing, but it was as if they struck an illusion, passing through them and landing in the distance.

Angoulême calmly extended his left hand and adjusted the position of the full-body mirror beside him.

The mirror reflected Erkin's figure against a dark background.

Erkin froze in place, maintaining his running posture.

In an instant, he was drawn towards the full-body mirror, a look of horror etched on his face.

As soon as the two collided, Erkin's body vanished.

In the blink of an eye, he reappeared in the mirror, his face stained with blood. His expression turned sinister, consumed by hatred and

resentment.

He opened his mouth as if to scream, but an invisible force pulled him into the unnaturally dark backdrop of the mirror, and he vanished.

Witnessing this, Christo stood dumbfounded, forgetting to aid his brother.

One thought echoed in his mind: There's something terribly wrong with them…

Meanwhile, Angoulême's subordinates worked to control the fleeing individuals. The ordinary people caught in the midst of the chaos cowered on the ground, heads lowered, trembling with fear.

…

In Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian sat at the bar counter, listening to Jenna's captivating singing. Two hours ago, he had received news that "Rat" Christo was unharmed, but a group of his subordinates had perished.

Quite efficient… Lumian inwardly commended the official Beyonders in the market district.

As the risqué song came to an end, a woman who had been waiting on the sidelines took the stage and hurriedly approached a young band member. She sobbed and cried out twice.

It seemed she was delivering news of someone's death.

The band member stood frozen, shocked by the news, unable to react for a moment.

After a few seconds, he flung aside the six-string zither strapped to him and dashed off the stage.

However, he only managed a few steps before he stumbled and fell heavily to the ground. He struggled to rise but failed.

In the next moment, tears streamed down his face.

Jenna, adorned in a shimmering red dress, observed him for a few seconds before pressing her lips together. Eventually, she didn't offer consolation, allowing the band member and the grieving woman to weep.

She quietly stepped down from the stage and crossed paths with Lumian, who had left the bar counter.

"What happened?" Lumian inquired.

Jenna let out a soft sigh and replied, "His father passed away in an accident a few hours ago. I know him. Learning to play a musical instrument hasn't been easy for him. His father works as a porter, and his mother is a dishwasher. Without their unwavering support, he would be limited to manual labor…"

An accident a few hours ago… A porter… Lumian roughly pieced together the cause.

He gazed silently at the stage.

Chapter 197 - 197 Helper

197 Helper

After the band member and his mother got time off from René, Salle de Bal Brise's manager, the drumbeats reverberated through the air, signaling the start of a new round of dancing.

Lumian turned his gaze to Jenna, who stood by his side, and spoke in a casual tone.

"I thought you would offer him some comfort. After all, you know him well and often collaborate with their band."

Jenna, dressed in a stunning red sequined dress that revealed a generous amount of her chest, pressed her lips together and responded calmly.

"In that moment just now, what he needed wasn't comforting words but a release. Offering condolences would only worsen his pain."

Lumian scrutinized Jenna for a few moments.

"You seem to understand it quite well. Why do I have a feeling that you've experienced something similar yourself?"

Jenna lowered her gaze to her toes and smiled softly.

"A few years ago, I went through the same thing when my father passed away.

"One day, before dawn, my mother took me to the rooftop of our apartment and stayed with me until the sunrise. I witnessed the gradual brightening of the sky, from pitch black to a deep blue. It grew lighter and lighter, and I saw the clouds adorned with shades of bright gold and other colors.

“In that moment, she told me that darkness would eventually pass, and the sun would rise. Light would always find its way to illuminate the land.

“When he returns to the band, I’ll find an opportunity to share something similar with him.”

Lumian listened in silence, letting out a sigh. “You have a wonderful mother.”

“Yes.” Jenna accepted the compliment with pride.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “You managed to say so much without resorting to curses. That’s unlike you.”

Moreover, she appeared rather refined.

“Damnit! Do you think I’m the type of person who curses incessantly?” Jenna cursed indignantly and made her way to the break room to prepare for the next song.

Lumian settled back at the bar counter, his mind preoccupied with another matter.

He had therapy scheduled for tomorrow afternoon, and there was a possibility of Louis Lund showing up on Sunday.

What if he missed it?

Lumian’s initial impulse was to write a letter to Madam Magician and request her to check with his psychiatrist, Madam Susie, about the possibility of rescheduling the treatment by a day. However, he couldn’t shake off the feeling of his condition being unstable for the past two days. If he didn’t act promptly, he might face severe consequences when tracking down Louis Lund.

Even though Madame Pualis wasn’t exactly Madame Night, Lumian couldn’t confront her directly. His primary objective was to locate the survivor from Cordu and engage in a friendly conversation with her.

Lumian didn’t hold much animosity towards Madame Pualis. While she believed in an evil god and had involvement in Cordu, it

appeared that she wasn't responsible for the disaster. She had departed before the ritual took place under some compulsion.

Hence, if he allowed himself to become unstable and reacted impulsively, escalating the conflict with Madame Pualis and making her his enemy, matters would become exceedingly troublesome, and he might even lose his life.

As for the dispute with the Poison Spur Mob, a problem with Madame Moon didn't equate to matters involving Madame Night.

After careful consideration, Lumian devised a plan to find someone who could track Louis Lund on his behalf and follow him to his residence in Trier.

There's no need to consider individuals without Beyonder powers. They simply wouldn't be able to keep up with him.

There are two viable options. The first is Anthony Reid, an information broker suspected of being a Beyonder from the Psychiatrist pathway. He possesses excellent tracking abilities and has already accepted my commission, receiving a deposit. Since the task involves locating Louis Lund, it naturally falls within the scope of the mission. If Anthony proves difficult, I'm prepared to offer more money.

The second option is Franca. She, along with Aurore, belongs to the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Franca knows my true identity and displays a certain level of concern for me. She is trustworthy to some extent, not to mention that she still owes me a favor. Franca possesses enough power to tail Louis Lund and even intercept him if necessary. As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, he rose from his seat, making his way to the bedroom on the second floor and leaving Salle de Bal Brise through the window.

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 305.

Lumian knocked on the wooden door.

"Please come in," Anthony Reid responded in a West Midseashire

Coast accent.

The door slowly swung open.

The information broker stood before Lumian once more.

His plump face, once slick with oiliness, appeared freshly scrubbed, enhancing his air of honesty.

Wearing a grayish-blue worker's uniform, he seemed to have spent the entire day in the southern part of the market district and Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

"I've read your note," Anthony Reid said, running a hand through his receding light-yellow hairline. "I've been keeping an eye on Avenue du Marché."

Lumian felt a slight unease, but he surveyed the room and spoke directly.

"I have other matters to attend to between 2:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. tomorrow. If you happen to spot the target during that time, don't inform me. Simply follow him and ascertain his place of residence."

Anthony Reid locked his dark brown eyes onto Lumian's for a few seconds.

"Very well."

He made no mention of an additional fee, and Lumian was content not to broach the subject either.

…

3 Rue des Blouses Blanches housed a relatively new apartment building. Its beige facade boasted a charming curvature, featuring numerous irregular walls adorned with a variety of statues. Angels, animals, celebrities, and legendary objects found their place amidst the architecture. The building boasted an abundance of large windows, wall pillars, and scroll art, creating an atmosphere of grandeur.

Lumian stood before Room 601 and pressed the doorbell.

With a jingling sound, Franca swung open the dark-red door.

Her flaxen hair cascaded naturally and voluminously, while she wore a loose white silk nightgown that gracefully reached her knees. The wide-open collar revealed a fair expanse of skin.

Observing that the other party showed no signs of wariness and wasn't even wearing a bra, Lumian made a conscious effort to keep his gaze focused.

Before opening the door, Franca seemed to already know the identity of the visitor. She greeted him with a smile.

"Coming to seek knowledge in mysticism?

"After all our discussions, you've finally arrived."

"No, it's something else," Lumian responded, gesturing towards the room, indicating that they should speak inside.

Franca turned and walked towards the sofa, Lumian following closely behind. As he entered, he instinctively scanned his surroundings.

This apartment consisted of two bedrooms, a bathroom, a living room, and a kitchen. The furnishings in the living room, such as the sofa, coffee table, dining table, chairs, and cupboards, were predominantly beige, iron-black, silver-white, or light gray. The colors were muted and lacked vibrancy. The overall aesthetic was one of simplicity and cleanliness, but it also exuded a touch of coldness. It stood in stark contrast to the living room styles found in most households.

Lumian took a seat on the edge of the divan while Franca curled her legs and reclined on the adjacent armchair, revealing her alluring curves.

"What brings you here?" Franca inquired.

Lumian pointed towards her.

“Aren’t you considering changing your clothes?”

Franca glanced down at her nightgown and came to a realization.

“Perhaps it’s because you know my original gender. When I’m around you, I always have this illusion that I’m still a man and forget to pay attention to such details.”

A smile played on her lips. Rather than changing her attire, she shifted her sitting posture, accentuating her allure even further.

After a few moments, she even left her recliner and settled beside Lumian.

Sensing Lumian’s perplexed gaze, she chuckled and remarked, “Since you won’t peek, why should I bother changing?”

She made a playful gesture, unreservedly teasing him.

“Madame, you have a wicked sense of humor.” Lumian sighed.

Franca grinned and replied, “Life is already tough. I need to seek some amusement for myself.

“But I’m considered fine. There’s a group of individuals in the Research Society who harbor little hope for the future and have made it their life goal to pursue enjoyment. They’ve formed a group called April Fools’ Day. Your sister must have mentioned it, right?”

“She did,” Lumian confirmed, recalling reading about it in Aurore’s grimoires.

Franca refrained from elaborating and fixed her gaze upon Lumian, her eyes resembling calm lakes, awaiting an explanation for his visit.

Lumian spoke directly, his words carrying a certain bluntness.

“I require a favor.”

“Oh?” Franca responded cooperatively, her tone laced with curiosity.

Lumian took a moment to contemplate before continuing.

“Considering you’ve seen my wanted poster, you must possess some knowledge regarding it.

“I’ve received information that one of the individuals depicted, a man by the name of Louis Lund, will make an appearance on Avenue du Marché tomorrow. He maintains close ties with the masterminds behind the Poison Spur Mob.

“My intention is to apprehend him and unveil the truth behind the catastrophe in Cordu. However, I’ll be preoccupied with crucial matters tomorrow afternoon, so I can’t personally await his arrival. I hope you could lend me your assistance. Should he show, tail him and ascertain his whereabouts. If you feel confident, aid me in capturing him. He once possessed Beyonder powers equivalent to a Sequence 8 and is likely a Gardener, though I cannot say for certain at present.

“After acquiring the mirror, you did promise to compensate me. This would be it.”

Franca retorted angrily, “This concerns Muggle’s death. I will most certainly help. Compensation is not an appropriate term in this context.”

“Tailing him doesn’t count. But attacking him counts?” Lumian proposed.

Discerning the underlying polite and detached nature of his request, Franca did not insist and simply nodded.

“That works too.” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Curiosity danced across her countenance as she posed another query.

“What could be more pressing than apprehending this individual named Louis Lund?

“I expected you to be more concerned about uncovering the truth behind Cordu.”

Lumian pondered briefly before speaking candidly, “The Cordu disaster has left me grappling with certain psychological issues. I am

presently undergoing regular treatment. I fear that without timely follow-up, I will lose control of my emotions, thus jeopardizing my quest for the truth."

Franca nodded sympathetically, displaying her understanding.

Taking the initiative, she offered a suggestion.

"Would you like me to find a genuine psychiatrist—one with Beyonder powers—for you?"

"My psychiatrist already possesses them," Lumian revealed, withholding nothing.

Franca refrained from prying further, recalling that Muggle's brother participated in other mystical gatherings.

Lumian mentioned the attributes of a Villain and a Gardener, as well as the existence of Anthony Reid. He provided a detailed description of Reid's appearance to ensure Franca wouldn't mistake him for a companion of Louis Lund, potentially leading to unnecessary conflict.

With that, Lumian rose from his seat, signaling his intention to depart.

Franca stood up, amused. "You've come all this way. Aren't you interested in delving into the mysteries of mysticism?"

"Louise Lund may make an appearance tonight as well," Lumian remarked, eager to return to Salle de Bal Brise as swiftly as possible.

At that precise moment, both he and Franca directed their attention toward the door.

Light footfalls resonated from the stairs before halting nearby.

Franca glanced at the peephole from a distance, her expression suddenly morphing into one of peculiarity.

In hushed tones, she addressed Lumian, "Jenna!"

Chapter 198 - 198 Conciliation

198 Conciliation

Beneath the open window of Room 601, Lumian scaled the wall with his bare hands, aided by the protrusions, statues, and pipes. His descent was swift and steady, story after story, until he made a final leap and landed gracefully on the edge of Rue des Blouses Blanches. He grumbled under his breath, “Why am I forced to climb down from the sixth floor? I haven’t done anything!”

Lumian slipped into the shadows and made his way towards Avenue du Marché.

In Room 601.

Franca cast a fleeting glance at the swaying window, adjusting her silk nightgown before approaching the slowly opening door, wearing a smile.

Dressed in a sequined red dress, Jenna stored away the spare key Franca had entrusted to her and entered the apartment.

“Why are you here so early today?” Franca inquired, blocking Jenna’s path to the window, her brow furrowed in confusion.

Jenna let out a sigh and replied, “Something happened to the band’s six-stringed zither player. While it didn’t affect my singing, it put everyone in a foul mood. The dance hall manager, René, asked me to end the performance early and switch tonight’s theme to cheek-to-cheek dancing.”

The cheek-to-cheek dance in the market district differed from the usual version. It involved intimate embraces and provocative movements between men and women on the dance floor. It was an exhilarating experience, but dance halls needed enough female

dancers to organize it.

Attempting to find a topic of conversation, Franca asked, “What happened exactly?” She discreetly calculated the time it would take for Lumian to descend to the first floor, all the while grumbling internally, Why is Muggle’s brother a Hunter instead of an Assassin? Assassins can effortlessly leap from the sixth floor and land as light as a feather!

Jenna recounted the band member’s unfortunate incident and concluded, “Dammit, why do unlucky people always attract more misfortune?”

“Yes, even though the performance ended earlier than usual, it’s still late. Going home would be quite troublesome. I’ll sleep at your place.”

Given that Jenna lived far away from Avenue du Marché, she often sought refuge at Franca’s whenever she performed late into the night at the dance hall. She even had a spare key.

Warehouse… porter… Recalling the information provided by her subordinate, Franca surmised that it must be related to the matter involving “Rat” Christo.

As she let out a sigh, contemplating how the innocent had lost their kin, Franca inwardly expressed her sorrow.

Brother 007 is incredibly efficient. I only informed him about the mirror people late last night, and the official Beyonders have already dealt with the anomaly before this evening.

Brother 007 was the code name of a man from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, a member of an official organization in Trier. His rank seemed quite high, and Franca had secret connections with many fellow researchers in Trier, often organizing private gatherings with them.

However, Franca knew that the matters involving the mirror people wouldn’t end there. The special mirror world still existed, the mystery artifact that Gardner Martin smuggled into Trier remained,

and the classic silver mirror in her possession persisted. If these elements weren't eliminated entirely, it would only solve the problem temporarily. Franca couldn't predict when similar anomalies would arise in the future.

Franca approached the classic-styled silver mirror, which allowed entry into the special mirror world, with caution and seriousness. She believed it held a secret related to the Demoness pathway.

"Why are you so quiet?" Jenna asked, extending her right hand and waving it in front of Franca.

Franca snapped back to reality and let out a sigh.

"I feel a bit sad upon hearing about their misfortune."

It was precisely because she didn't want to face the pain of countless innocents that she followed Lumian's suggestion and "handed over" the matter to the officials.

Jenna bypassed Franca and made her way to the guest room, intending to change into more comfortable attire.

"It was a bit stuffy," Franca quickly explained.

Jenna regarded her with suspicion.

"Why did you feel the need to explain?"

Ahem… Franca nearly choked on her own saliva.

Thankfully, Jenna didn't dwell on it too much. She entered the guest room and headed towards the washroom, carrying her nightgown and pajamas.

…

Once Lumian returned to Avenue du Marché, he began his rounds, starting with Unit 126, where "Black Scorpion" Roger resided. He approached the four mobsters disguised as beggars stationed at different entrances, far from their intended target. Lumian made a promise to each of them, guaranteeing 100 verl d'or by Monday.

That night, he struggled to find rest in Salle de Bal Brise. Occasionally, he would wake up, straining his ears for any signs of movement outside the window, hoping to catch the sound of hurried footsteps.

At dawn, while enjoying breakfast at the café and skimming through a newspaper, Louis ascended from the first floor and whispered in Lumian's ear, "Boss, Superintendent Everett requests your presence at the Valiant café, opposite the police headquarters, for a cup of coffee precisely at 10 a.m."

Superintendent Everett wants to meet me, the newly appointed leader of the Savoie Mob? Lumian remained relatively composed with the Mystery Prying Glasses in his possession. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

He asked Louis, "Who else will be there?"

"Many," Louis responded in a hushed tone. "They say all the mob leaders from the market district will gather. The official voting begins today."

The voting would extend over three days.

Is that so… So they won't let us disrupt the National Convention election, it seems. I wonder if the Poison Spur Mob will attend? Lumian nodded and left Salle de Bal Brise at 9:15 a.m., making his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré.

In Room 207, he put on the Mystery Prying Glasses, experiencing the disorienting sensation of descending from great heights and burrowing into the ground.

Suppressing the urge to retch, Lumian retrieved a mirror and all his cosmetics, busying himself with preparations.

He opted for subtle alterations, focusing on thickening his eyebrows, accentuating his cheekbones, and enhancing shadowy areas. The adjustments created an impression that it was indeed Ciel and not someone else.

As soon as he finished his makeup, Lumian hastily set the mirror

aside, unwilling to catch a glimpse of his reflection.

Shortly before 10 a.m., he arrived at the Valiant café and was promptly escorted to a private room by a waiter.

Upon entering, he immediately recognized several familiar faces—Baron Brignais, adorned in formal attire with a top hat and pipe; Franca, sporting trousers, red boots, and a blouse; the towering "Giant" Simon; and the merchant-like figure of "Blood Palm" Black.

Seated in an armchair at the head of the table, Travis Everett, donning a black uniform, rose with a smile upon seeing Lumian enter.

"You must be Ciel, am I right?"

"Yes, Superintendent Everett," Lumian responded respectfully.

Franca, Baron Brignais, and the others, who had risen alongside Travis Everett, exchanged puzzled glances as they observed Lumian.

Franca's gaze averted in enlightenment as she recognized the golden-black hair. Baron Brignais, Giant Simon, and the rest gradually "realized" that it was Ciel.

Adjusting his black-framed glasses, Superintendent Everett's blue eyes gleamed as he half-praised Lumian and patted the recliner beside him.

"You've only been in the market district for less than three weeks, but you've already taken over Salle de Bal Brise. And you're so young. You're really outstanding.

"Sigh, the market district hasn't been peaceful for the past month."

He half-praised Lumian and patted a recliner beside him.

"Come, have a seat here.

"Let me introduce you to the others."

When Lumian stood by Everett's side, the superintendent gestured

toward a middle-aged man seated across the coffee table and spoke, “Roger, you’re acquainted with him, aren’t you?”

“Black Scorpion” Roger? Lumian directed his gaze at the middle-aged man.

Roger, dressed in formal attire with neatly combed black hair, had a slightly chubby face, and his deep-blue eyes resembled the vast sea.

“We’re meeting for the first time,” Lumian replied with a smile. He noticed a chilling gaze emanating from Black Scorpion.

Everett proceeded to introduce the individuals sitting beside Roger.

“Harman, Castina.”

Upon entering the private room, Lumian had noticed only Harman among the few members of the Savoie Mob. The bald man’s shining head was so eye-drawing that Lumian almost looked away, fearing that it might reflect his disguised appearance.

Upon closer inspection, Lumian recognized Harman’s unique features —a prominent brow, a high nose bridge, and deep-set lips. He possessed the allure of a ruggedly handsome individual. Even in a seated position, his imposing height was evident, complementing his dark breeches shirt splendidly.

Castina, petite and likely under 1.55 meters tall, appeared to be around 30 years old. She possessed curly auburn hair, brown eyes, a curvaceous figure that turned heads, and full lips.

“You should be familiar with Ciel from the Savoie Mob, right?” Everett introduced Ciel to Roger and the others.

Roger flashed a cold smile.

“Indeed, Superintendent. The impression he made on me will never fade.”

“Baldy” Harman’s eyes brimmed with hatred and cruelty.

Everett sighed and said, “We all reside in the market district. Only by

coexisting peacefully can we secure a better future and greater wealth.

“If any conflicts arise, come to me. I’ll mediate and arbitrate.

“Ciel, take this cup of coffee to Roger and hand over Salle de Bal Brise’s profits for the next six months. The issue between Margot and Ait ends here. If anyone troubles you regarding these matters again, feel free to inform me directly.”

Lumian observed Roger, Harman, and Castina with a sense of amusement, realizing that their eyes held no mercy, only restrained coldness and malevolence.

Baron Brignais and the others remained silent, watching the scene unfold as though it were a spectacle. Franca shook her head at Lumian, signaling him not to act recklessly.

Lumian bent down and picked up the cup of coffee from the table.

Suddenly, he raised his hands and flung the contents of the cup at “Black Scorpion” Roger.

Reacting swiftly, Roger evaded the liquid, colliding with the coffee table. Harman and Castina sprang to their feet.

Simultaneously, Lumian pointed at “Black Scorpion” Roger and cursed, “F*ck you! Are you disregarding the Superintendent’s words? Playing dumb, are we? If you don’t desire peace, speak up. I, Ciel, shall await you at Salle de Bal Brise!

“The look in your eyes tells me vengeance is on your mind!”

How brazen… Franca had not anticipated Lumian’s audacity.

Chapter 199 - 199 “Unruly”

199 “Unruly”

Travis Everett concealed his emotions behind the black-framed glasses, rendering them inscrutable.

Nevertheless, he made no attempt to halt Lumian’s actions. It was as though he had transformed into a mere observer.

Baron Brignais, “Blood Palm” Black, and the rest were taken aback by Lumian’s reaction. They couldn’t fathom his audacity to splash coffee at “Black Scorpion” Roger in front of the superintendent and sabotage the mediation.

In particular, Baron Brignais felt as though he was encountering his former subordinate, now colleague, for the very first time.

Is he far more unruly and reckless than I had anticipated?

Does he refuse to accept any grievances and is unwilling to pay any price?

Although he attempted to shift the blame onto “Black Scorpion” Roger and the others, it was evident to anyone with a modicum of sense and perception that Lumian was the instigator of the conflict, driven by a strong will of his own.

Clearly, he had no intention of reconciliation. He sought only an excuse to undermine Superintendent Everett’s proposal.

Is this not a blatant slap in Superintendent Everett’s face?

The superintendent wielded considerable influence in the market district. A slight embellishment in reporting to higher authorities, or rather, stating the unvarnished truth, would draw the attention of

official Beyonders and dismantle all our enterprises, including the leaders of the Savoie Mob!

Incensed, “Baldy” Harman denied Lumian the opportunity to shatter the coffee cup on his boss. He lunged forward, stooped down, grasped the coffee table’s edge, hoisted it, and flung it at the detestable individual.

Cups clattered to the ground, splintering into shards. Lumian deftly evaded the projectiles, swiftly drawing his black revolver from beneath his arm. He trained it on Harman amid the cacophonous crash of objects and the ensuing chaos.

“Baldy” Harman chuckled, a product of his extreme rage.

“You country hog, do you spurn Superintendent Everett’s gracious offer of mediation?

“Very well then, our Poison Spur Mob shall entertain you until one of us is vanquished from this game!

“Go ahead, fire away. Your audacity and lack of respect towards Superintendent Everett know no bounds. If you possess such ability, then pull the trigger!”

Were it not for the impending election and the stringent surveillance imposed by officials, the Poison Spur Mob would have long seized an opportunity to assassinate Ciel!

In that instant, “Black Scorpion” Roger rose once more. Black flames materialized within his clenched fists, only to dissipate swiftly.

He was reluctant to unveil his Beyonder powers in the presence of Superintendent Everett.

“Short-legged Candlestick” Castina also fixed her gaze on Lumian, poised to strike if he refused to relent.

Upon hearing “Baldy” Harman’s retort and provocation, Lumian chuckled.

Bang!

Lumian squeezed the trigger, unleashing a yellow bullet hurtling directly towards “Baldy” Harman’s skull.

His reflexes barely saved him. Harman crouched down just in time, his eyes widening in alarm.

The bullet grazed his glistening scalp and careened off, ricocheting into the adjacent washroom with a metallic clang.

In an instant, all the mob leaders sprang to their feet. “Black Scorpion” Roger and “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina fixated on Lumian, preparing to retaliate.

Undeterred, Lumian remained resolute. He lowered his gun and aimed it once more at “Baldy” Harman, his gaze devoid of any emotion.

“Enough!”

At that very moment, Superintendent Everett, who had been calmly seated, spoke up.

The indescribable authority emanating from him, combined with his esteemed position, compelled Lumian to instinctively halt his finger from pulling the trigger.

Seizing the opportunity, “Baldy” Harman shifted his position and rose to his feet.

Though the others maintained their combative stance, the palpable tension that had lingered dissipated.

Lamenting his missed chance, Lumian reluctantly holstered his revolver and turned to face Everett.

“Superintendent, I am willing to comply with your request, but they don’t seem inclined to do so.”

Everett’s eyes flickered behind his black-framed spectacles. Standing up, he surveyed the room.

“We will address your conflict after the election.

“For the next three days, I expect all of you to conduct yourselves properly. Fail to do so, and you shall make an enemy out of me. Trust me, that’s a predicament you won’t be able to handle.”

Although Everett’s voice carried depth, his tone remained calm, devoid of anger or arrogance. Instead, a hint of sincerity permeated his words.

Yet, those who had resided in the market district for more than two years recalled a term: the “Valiant Mob.” nove(l)bi(n.)com

Two years prior, the Valiant Mob held a similar status to the Savoie Mob in the market district. However, due to their repeated defiance and disrespect towards Superintendent Everett, they were ruthlessly eradicated in a joint operation conducted by the authorities. The subsequent rise of the Poison Spur Mob was partly due to the power vacuum left behind in the district’s underworld.

Now, only the Valiant café stood as a testament to the existence of such a mob.

The leaders of the Savoie Mob, the Poison Spur Mob, and the other two medium-sized gangs fell into silence for a few seconds before responding to Superintendent Everett’s words. They expressed their commitment to restrain their subordinates and ensure that the election proceeded without disruption.

Superintendent Everett’s gaze swept across their faces. Without uttering another word, he strode towards the exit of the private room.

As he disappeared beyond the door, “Black Scorpion” Roger, “Baldy” Harman, and “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina cast Lumian cold glances before departing from the café.

The remaining gang leaders didn’t linger, leaving only the Savoie Mob in the confines of the private room.

Baron Brignais took a leisurely puff from his pipe and addressed Lumian, “You acted too impulsively back there.”

Lumian offered a faint smile in response and replied, “I have been

awaiting an opportunity like that. Unfortunately, I couldn't seize it to incite the conflict."

Observing the puzzled expressions on the faces of "Giant" Simon, "Blood Palm" Black, and the others, Lumian calmly elaborated, "We have already made two attempts, and the Poison Spur Mob chose to endure. Baron, as you have rightly pointed out, they harbor a significant problem, and they await their chance. I believe that opportunity will present itself soon.

"If we fail to incapacitate the Poison Spur Mob before then, we shall face their unhinged retaliation. And when that moment arrives, none of you will be able to escape.

"Just a moment ago, there were only three members of the Poison Spur Mob present, while we numbered five. Red Boots, your strength is comparable to that of Black Scorpion. With my assistance, you can surely overpower him. Baron, Simon, Black, is it conceivable that you cannot handle Baldy and Short-legged Candlestick? One of you might even be able to impede Superintendent Everett.

"As long as the Poison Spur Mob dares to strike back, we shall eliminate them all right here!"

"Rat" Christo had received instructions from Superintendent Everett the previous night that he was not to be invited today.

Baron Brignais, "Blood Palm" Black, and their comrades found Ciel's words reasonable, yet a deep-seated fear for this individual arose within their hearts.

He wasn't bluffing. He genuinely desired to eliminate "Baldy" Harman and the others!

He was too crazy and extreme!

He possessed the audacity to commit any act without hesitation!

"But this is tantamount to slapping Superintendent Everett in the face. The repercussions will be exceedingly troublesome." "Blood Palm" Black shook his head.

Franca shared the same concern. She wished to caution Lumian that such a course of action would render him unwelcome in the market district. He might even end up with another wanted poster.

However, recognizing that the other leaders were present and unable to reveal her true friendship with Lumian, Franca sealed her lips.

A quizzical smile played on Lumian's lips as he inquired, "Wasn't Superintendent Everett killed by the Poison Spur Mob?"

Lunatic… This notion raced through everyone's minds.

Baron Brignais, gently stroking his mahogany-colored pipe, chimed in, "It's nearly impossible to conceal that from official Beyonders. It's merely an excuse."

"In that case, let it go. Blame everything on a lunatic like me. At worst, I'll depart from the market district. I trust the Boss will arrange another task for me once this storm blows over," Lumian calmly remarked, a serene smile gracing his face.

This was indeed a fragment of his genuine thoughts.

Mr. K's mission revolved around earning Gardner Martin's trust, not running Salle de Bal Brise or establishing a foothold in the market district!

If his provocation had genuinely enraged "Black Scorpion" Roger and his accomplices, Lumian believed that Franca would surely come to his aid. With one of the Savoie Mob's leaders on his side, the others wouldn't hesitate to act. When the time came, united in strength, they stood a high chance of eliminating the remaining three leaders of the Poison Spur Mob.

Once he unraveled the Poison Spur Mob's scheme, Gardner Martin would undoubtedly appreciate Lumian's daring and unorthodox approach in eradicating hidden threats. Even if he lost Salle de Bal Brise and was compelled to "escape" once more, he would merely find sanctuary elsewhere in Trier and continue serving Gardner Martin until he gained his complete approval.

Furthermore, it was advantageous for Lumian. If the Poison Spur Mob

finalized their preparations, he would be their primary target for revenge. Failing to address the issue beforehand would only heighten the danger he faced. In the future, even if Madame Moon birthed another group, Lumian wouldn't fret. Today, Louis Lund would likely be present in the market district. By temporarily suppressing the deaths of "Black Scorpion" Roger and his cronies, creating a fa?ade of tranquility, Lumian could patiently await his target at 126 Avenue du Marché.

These individuals weren't parliamentary candidates whose demise would incite an uproar.

After a few moments of silence, Baron Brignais approached the door and issued a reminder, "Superintendent Everett has probably marked you. There will be considerable trouble after the election."

Lumian responded with a smile, "Perhaps he will mysteriously vanish one day."

Having said that, Lumian calmly endured the mildly apprehensive gazes of "Giant" Simon and his comrades.

You see, having laid the groundwork, anything I utter now will convince them all.

…

At 3:15 p.m., Lumian arrived at Quartier du Jardin Botanique in a public carriage. Once again, he beheld Mason Café, housed in a beige four-story building adorned with lush green plants entwined on its outer walls.

Passing through a sheltered walkway upheld by pillars, he entered the interior, enveloped by dark-green walls and expansive windows. Settling into the familiar Booth D, he removed his wide-brimmed round hat.

"A cup of Intis coffee," he instructed the waitress and patiently waited.

Chapter 200 - 200 Spectator

200 Spectator

The titular coffee was rich and aromatic, a perfect match for the creamy cupcake. Though Lumian's focus was elsewhere, he still appreciated their beauty.

The moment the clock struck 3:30 p.m., a familiar soft female voice reached him from the booth behind.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Lumian Lee."

"Good afternoon, Madame Susie," Lumian responded, concealing his surprise.

While Lumian didn't intentionally observe the customers entering Mason Café, his Hunter instincts allowed him to maintain awareness of his surroundings.

When he had arrived at the café at 3:18 p.m., Cabin D had been deserted. No one entered from 3:15 to 3:30 p.m.

And yet, here was Madame Susie, appearing silently behind him, in the very spot behind Booth D!

How mystical and bizarre was this!

Susie's voice gently inquired once more, "How did you feel after your last treatment?"

Lumian didn't hold back and responded simply, "I felt much better than before. At least I could release my emotions."

"That's a good thing. Suppressing your feelings and bottling up your emotions will only exacerbate your mental problems and lead you down a self-destructive path until your innate will to live is

completely overwhelmed," Susie commented in a calm and soothing tone, confirming Lumian's transformation.

A hint of a smile laced her words.

"Let's have a conversation first. We'll discuss all the things you've encountered in the past two weeks. Feel free to choose what you believe you can and are willing to share."

Lumian knew he needed to calm himself and undergo further psychiatric treatment as a foundation for unlocking more memories later. Hence, he offered no resistance. He chuckled wryly and said, "There's nothing I can't tell you. I've even shared that dream with you. Everything else can only be classified as minor secrets."

He paused for a moment and began with Charlie.

"There's an unlucky and dim-witted fellow at the motel I'm staying at…"

Lumian casually recounted the events of the past two weeks.

Gradually, his mind relaxed, as if he had returned to a time before Cordu's destruction.

Aurore, who rarely ventured outside, would hear about everything that transpired in Cordu from him. He delighted in sharing it with his sister, even boasting about the successful pranks he had orchestrated.

As time trickled away, Lumian's rigid posture softened as he sank into the plush sofa.

He refrained from delving into further details. Time was limited, and he couldn't afford to waste it. He didn't touch upon the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Franca's true gender, or his suspicions regarding her motives for joining the Savoie Mob. He merely mentioned his encounter with a pen pal of Aurore's—a Sequence 7 Witch of the Demoness pathway, who happened to be in the same mob.

Likewise, he provided only a brief mention of performing a ritual and receiving an additional boon, without going into the specifics.

After recounting his experiences from the past two weeks, Lumian spoke in a self-deprecating tone, “I can’t help but wonder if it’s my own fault for stumbling upon so many Beyonder events in such a short span of time. Sometimes, I question why every human and dog in Trier seems to possess Beyonder powers.”

For once, Susie didn’t respond immediately. After a few moments, she smiled and replied, “I can perceive that your mental state has indeed improved compared to before.”

“How can you tell?” Lumian didn’t mention the details of his tearful carriage ride upon seeing Aurore’s obituary. He didn’t believe that describing all of that was an accurate reflection of his mental state.

Susie spoke in a gentle tone, “I can sense that you’re reconstructing your social connections and beginning to form friendships.”

“Friends?” Lumian asked, slightly amused. “Charlie, Jenna, Franca? Can they truly be called friends?”

They are mere acquaintances!

Susie responded with a smile, “Friendship comes in various forms. Not all require deep connections. You simply need to ask yourself—when they face challenges that lie within your capabilities to solve, would you be willing to offer assistance? That will reveal if they can be considered your friends.”

“It depends on the specific circumstances and the price I must pay. I’m not the type to go out of my way to help just anyone,” Lumian muttered.

Susie didn’t press further and explained, “For someone prone to self-destruction, a sign of their emergence from the quagmire is their willingness to forge new social bonds.

“Emperor Roselle—assuming he truly said it—once remarked that humans are the sum of their social relationships. When you no longer resist forming new connections, it signifies that you’re no longer opposed to your own future. nove(l)bi(n.)com

“Of course, this is just one aspect. It’s not everything.”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before speaking again, “Madame Susie, there’s something I’d like to ask you. I mentioned a series of coincidences that have befallen me. Are they truly as Madam Magician suggested? Could they be partially influenced by Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Spectator pathway?”

In contrast to the previous session, Susie appeared more at ease. She chuckled and remarked, “Are you attempting to divert the topic? Are you still resistant to such matters?

“Actually, one can discern it from certain details. You took the initiative to request the ‘Red Boots’ lady to enlighten you on mystical matters whenever she was available, but you never followed through. The sole visit you made was on the pretext of her repaying a favor. It suggests that you remain unwilling to establish a closer bond with her.

“That’s natural. How can a patient recover after just one treatment? You need not burden yourself…”

Susie tirelessly voiced her observations, gently pinpointing some of Lumian’s current psychological issues.

“If it were the last time, I wouldn’t have been so forthright. It would have only bred resistance, causing you to close yourself off further. However, now you exhibit certain inclinations toward forging new social connections. This will allow you to gain clearer insights into your true self and facilitate your progress.”

Having his underlying thoughts laid bare by Susie, Lumian’s initial reaction was wariness, vigilance, and denial. Yet, Susie’s composed demeanor, non-aggressive analysis, and accurate understanding of the situation gradually eased his tension, enabling him to confront his deep-seated problems.

His body and mind gradually settled.

Susie refrained from prying further and addressed Lumian’s inquiry.

“Madam Magician’s explanation is not entirely incorrect, but it lacks specificity.

“For a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Spectator pathway to engineer a coincidence, they must employ face-to-face psychological cues or hypnosis. In other words, they need to be present around you, Baron Brignais, and his associates.

“The reason you didn’t notice it and Baron Brignais remained oblivious is that Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Spectator pathway possess an additional Beyonder power—Psychological Invisibility.”

“Psychological Invisibility? How does it differ from regular invisibility?” Lumian inquired, perplexed.

Susie calmly elucidated, “Psychological Invisibility is not true invisibility. It merely prevents you from perceiving me, even when I am standing right before you and numerous others have already witnessed my presence.”

“Sounds very magical…” Lumian sighed with a sense of wonder. For some inexplicable reason, he felt as though Psychiatrists were all around him, yet he remained oblivious to their presence.

“This won’t change even if you employ Spirit Vision. Your intuition for danger will not react until I am prepared to strike,” Susie continued. “By comparison, a Shadow Ascetic’s concealment within shadows occasionally evokes the sensation of being watched by the darkness.”

Lumian pressed, “Which pathway does Shadow Ascetic belong to?”

“Secrets Suppliant,” Susie replied simply.

Secrets Suppliant pathway? Above Listener and below Shepherd, there’s a Sequence known as Shadow Ascetic? This belongs to Mr. K’s pathway… Occasionally, I sense someone observing me in the surrounding darkness because of him or his subordinates. Combining this with Aurore’s grimoires and Madam Magician’s clues, Lumian felt a wave of enlightenment.

For the Secrets Suppliant pathway, Aurore had only noted down Sequence 9 Secrets Suppliant and Sequence 8 Listener.

Madam Magician appears to write a substantial amount, but it’s

actually just an outline without much detail. It's not as comprehensive as Madame Susie's explanation… Lumian mumbled curiously and asked, "Aren't you concerned that revealing your pathway's Beyonder powers to me might harm you?"

Susie brushed off the question and continued, "If you're a High-Sequence Beyonder of the Spectator pathway, there's no need for such elaborate measures. Even if they're far away from you, they can subtly influence you, causing you to unknowingly follow their arrangements and create various coincidences.

"Though I too am a Spectator, I must still caution you, 'Beware of the Spectator!'"

High-Sequence Beyonder… Lumian was alarmed.

"So, you 'arranged' for the paperboy to deliver an outdated newspaper to me?"

Madame Susie is a High-Sequence Beyonder, a true demigod?

"It wasn't me," Susie said, feeling a tad embarrassed. "It was my companion."

Companion? Lumian recalled Madam Magician's initial suggestion and guessed, "The other Psychiatrist? He was here last time too?"

"Yes," Susie candidly admitted. "Your condition is more serious, and I wasn't too confident, so I invited her along to assist me. Yes, as a precautionary measure.

"In fact, she's here today as well. She's sitting across from you."

Across from me? Lumian glanced in surprise at the empty seat across the coffee table. Not only was there no one present, but there wasn't even an indentation from someone sitting there!

In the next instant, he heard a gentle female voice with a hint of a smile and a slightly brisk tone.

"Hello."

Chapter 201 - 201 Recalling

201 Recalling

Lumian was taken aback, his eyes widening in surprise as he glanced at the vacant seat across from him. With a polite tone, he mustered, “Hello.”

In that instant, a memory from his sister Aurore flashed through his mind. She had once mentioned an intriguing phrase: Expert consultation!

Although I’m not entirely surrounded by invisible Psychiatrists, there are two of them, and I can’t detect them either… Lumian muttered inwardly.

The woman sitting opposite him fell silent, while Susie’s voice assumed a more relaxed and lighthearted tone.

“It seems the newspaper has left a lasting impression on you. Does that mean it had a positive impact?”

“Yes,” Lumian replied candidly.

He had reached a point where he could confront the emotional turmoil within him instead of burying it deep down. Otherwise, he would have tried to avoid any encounters with “Red Boots” Franca, as she invariably brought up Aurore.

Naturally, this evoked intense waves of emotion.

Susie skillfully redirected the conversation back to its original path.

“If you wish to further investigate any unusual coincidences that have occurred during this period and identify their underlying sources, I can assist you.”

“I won’t delve directly into your memories, but I can awaken them all and present them chronologically before your eyes. Of course, this excludes those hidden deep within the recesses of your subconscious. They pose too great a risk,” Susie explained.

“Are you willing to give it a try?”

Lumian didn’t hesitate for a moment.

“Yes.”

Whenever he noticed any coincidences around him, he would occasionally recall his recent experiences and meticulously scrutinize the corresponding details. Now, he was merely shifting to a more effective approach.

“Lean back fully against the sofa, relax, and close your eyes…” Susie’s gentle voice reached Lumian’s ears unhurriedly.

Just as he adjusted his sitting position and prepared to calm his mind and close his eyes, a sudden “volcanic eruption” erupted within his thoughts.

This unexpected “attack” caught him off guard, leaving his subconscious unable to effectively shield him.

Magma and smoke burst forth like luminous specks, each containing a distinct scene.

The multitude of glowing dots arranged themselves chronologically, giving Lumian the sensation of watching a play with himself as the central character.

It unfolded in a blur, yet every detail remained vivid and complete.

As the temperature soared, Lumian’s mind raced, threatening to release wisps of white smoke.

He witnessed each scene and recalled every detail, skillfully connecting them and searching for any abnormalities.

Lumian’s eyes widened, and his facial features contorted in visible

distress.

The memory that should have been present was now a void!

In that moment, a gentle female voice resonated within his mind.

“Has it truly vanished, or have you forgotten or overlooked it?” spoke the lady seated across from him, her tone devoid of its previous cheerfulness.

Like a lightning bolt, it illuminated Lumian’s mind, casting light into the darkest recesses beyond his subconscious.

Lumian’s expression grew increasingly pained, and he couldn’t help but bow his head as he struggled to say, “I-I see it, I see it…

“I was in conversation with the angel sealed within me!

“H—His name is Termiboros!”

At last, Lumian recollected something that had slipped his memory.

The corruption contained within his left chest was, in essence, an angel who believed in Inevitability—Termiboros!

Initially, he had intended to seek guidance from Madam Magician on how to harness the angel’s powers and avert any potential negative consequences, but he had completely forgotten about it.

“Is this the corruption sealed within your body?” Susie’s reaction appeared unsurprised, her voice maintaining a calm demeanor.

Lumian instinctively exhaled, his fingertips reaching his forehead, already dampened with cold sweat.

He truthfully replied, “Yes, He attempted to entice me into aiding His escape from the seal, but I refused. And then, I simply forgot.

“This is truly… truly bizarre…”

Termiboros is undeniably sealed within my body and can’t break free, yet I was unwittingly affected by Him!

“That’s to be expected. One mustn’t underestimate any angel, even when sealed,” Susie offered an explanation to allay Lumian’s immediate apprehension.

The unknown was always the most terrifying.

She continued, “In ancient times, angels were also referred to as subsidiary gods. This implies that They possess the essence of a deity. Even when sealed, They can exert a certain influence upon the external world through various means.

“Did you, perhaps, believe that with the seal of the great entity, the corruption upon your chest was more akin to a boon? As long as you follow the correct procedures at the appropriate stages, you shouldn’t encounter any issues apart from enduring greater pain and assuming a certain risk of losing control.”

Lumian fell into silence, recognizing that he had entertained similar thoughts of late.

“You must remember that in such matters, the potency of a curse is no less than that of a boon, if not stronger,” warned Susie. “I don’t know how Termiboros has influenced you, but given His belief in Inevitability, I suspect His primary aim is to induce a deviation in your destiny.

“However, you needn’t worry excessively. He is, after all, sealed, and His capacity for influence is considerably limited. Moving forward, as long as you continuously assess your condition and consistently seek guidance on your actions, you can largely circumvent this predicament.”

“Alright.” Lumian retrieved a pen and paper and hastily jotted down a memo.

The note pertained to consulting Madam Magician regarding Termiboros.

He feared succumbing to the angel’s influence from the realm of Inevitability and forgetting these pertinent matters once the treatment concluded.

Lumian carefully stored away his pen and paper, releasing a slow exhale.

“Now that I’ve recollected the events involving Termiboros, I feel considerably more at ease. It appears that my spirituality had detected something.”

“I can perceive an improvement in your mental state,” affirmed Susie, echoing Lumian’s sentiments.

Taking advantage of the moment, Lumian posed a question, “Ladies, do you believe that Susanna Mattise has been fully eradicated by the official Beyonders? Or should I continue searching for clues at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons to prevent her from launching another attack?”

Taking note of the time, Monsieur Ive, the landlord of Auberge du Coq Doré, should soon find himself in dire straits.

Susie offered a gentle smile as she replied, “The Spectator path isn’t well-versed in divination.”

Seated across from Lumian, the “invisible” lady smiled and added, “Madam Magician is a divination expert. Did she not provide you with an answer? Or perhaps her hidden message eluded your understanding?”

She didn’t say anything… Lumian pondered for a moment, recalling Madam Magician’s response regarding Susanna Mattise.

Suddenly, he froze.

Madam Magician had continuously guided him on how to resolve the issue with Susanna Mattise, subtly hinting that he should seek assistance from Mr. K.

From a different perspective, she had never once considered the possibility that Susanna Mattise had been entirely eliminated!

In her view, this predicament would undoubtedly resurface!

Isn’t it too ambiguous? Or does she assume it’s self-evident and fails

to emphasize it? Lumian mumbled to himself, nodding in realization.

“I know the answer.”

As Lumian spoke, he made a connection based on the manner and demeanor exhibited by the Psychiatrist seated opposite him when addressing Madam Magician.

Could they also be members of the secretive organization that employs tarot cards as their code names?

To which cards do they correspond?

After making some adjustments, Lumian sought clarification about his mental state.

“The mere thought of meeting Louis Lund fills me with anxiety, excitement, and adrenaline. I can’t seem to control my emotions. Is this a severe psychological issue?”

Susie responded in a soothing voice, “That’s actually quite normal. People often exhibit similar behavior when it comes to matters they deeply care about. You’re just a bit more intense than usual.

“If you didn’t react this way, I would have been concerned that you were facing a more severe psychological problem and had repressed all your emotions.

“What you need to focus on now is not being fearful or overwhelmed, but rather learning to manage those emotions.”

Normal… Lumian felt reassured by Susie’s explanation, and his concern regarding the matter at hand subsided, allowing his mental state to stabilize.

He pondered and asked, “Manage them?”

How do I do that?

Susie replied, “The simplest method is to always remind yourself not to overreact. Whenever you feel a similar surge of emotions, take deep breaths and find your calm.

“It may sound easy, but in reality, it’s quite challenging. When emotions flare up, it’s difficult for humans to maintain rationality. They rarely think about controlling themselves. By the time they regain their composure, they often find that they’ve already made a mistake.

“I can set up a trigger for you. Once your emotional reactions exceed a certain threshold, it will remind you of my words and assist you in regaining your rationality, allowing you to attempt to regain control.

“This is a temporary solution. In the long run, it will depend on your own efforts. However, once you become accustomed to self-reflection during times of heightened emotion, the issue will become more manageable.

“Are you willing to give it a try?”

“Alright.” Lumian had no qualms about accepting external assistance.

At some point, Susie’s voice took on an otherworldly and elusive quality. It felt as though she had said a great deal, yet Lumian couldn’t recall a single word. The only thing he could remember was her concluding statement: “The trigger has been set. If all goes well, it will last for two weeks, perfectly timed for your next session. At that point, we can decide whether to make any adjustments.”

Lumian briefly acknowledged her words and assessed his mental state. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

After more than ten seconds, filled with both fear and anticipation, he inquired, “Is it possible for me to attempt to awaken more buried memories from my subconscious?”

Chapter 202 - 202 Analysis

202 Analysis New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Of course,” came Susie’s gentle voice, reaching Lumian’s ears.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt a weight pulling at his consciousness, dragging him down swiftly into deeper depths.

Within a matter of seconds, his eyelids grew heavy, and he could not resist the urge to close them. His thoughts became muddled and indistinct.

In his dazed state, Lumian appeared to transform into a spectral figure, floating through the familiar village of Cordu in the cloak of night.

After an unknown duration, he caught sight of the onion-shaped cathedral, though his perception remained hazy. A concentrated beam of light emerged near its main entrance, while the rest of the darkness loomed like an ominous shadow.

Lumian meandered aimlessly toward the adjacent cemetery.

In the darkness, tombstones stood in silent formation, and trees assumed an eerie presence.

A group of men were hauling a lifeless body toward a deep pit, preparing to cast it down.

Beneath the faint glow of the crimson moon, one of the men lifted his head and surveyed his surroundings.

His face, with black hair and piercing blue eyes, bore deep creases, as if shrouded in shadows.

Pons Bénet!

Lumian snapped out of his reverie.

The distance between them diminished instantly. Lumian lowered his gaze and beheld the corpse.

The face of the lifeless body appeared swollen from water, drained of color. The brown hair clung damply to the head, while the brown eyes remained wide open, reflecting agony, indignation, and resentment.

Reimund!

A surge of intense hatred filled Lumian's heart as he hurled accusations at Pons Bénet and his companions, giving vent to his emotions.

It felt as if he had unleashed a torrent of curses, as if he had pounced on Pons Bénet, the villain. It felt as if he was digging a profound pit with his bare hands.

Dirt pierced his nails, uncovering another corpse at the pit's bottom.

The girl's eyes, a shade of lake-blue, bulged fiercely. Her face bore a bluish-purple hue, her mouth agape, and her neck showed evident signs of strangulation. She wore an expression of excruciating pain.

Ava!

Lumian shot up from his seat, propelled by intense emotions, and his eyes flew open.

Huff. Puff. Lumian stared at the vacant sofa opposite him in the booth, gasping heavily.

The intense anger and hatred from his dream lingered, causing him to tremble uncontrollably.

Lumian's face twisted slightly as he replied, his voice filled with pain.

"I saw them. I saw Reimund and Ava's bodies. One of them drowned, and the other appeared to have been strangled to death… Pons Bénet and his gang were burying their bodies in the cemetery next to the

cathedral… I shouted at them, wanted to do something… and then I woke up."

Susie listened attentively and spoke calmly.

"This time, I didn't allow you to have a lucid dream. Instead, I let you experience certain subconscious scenes in the form of a dream.

"While it may not present the complete truth, it combines fragments of what actually happened. There might be overlaps in time or space, but the essential details remain intact. It provides us with a basis for interpretation."

Lumian asked, his voice filled with anguish, "So you're saying that I really witnessed Pons Bénet and the others burying Reimund and Ava's bodies in the cemetery?"

"I'm not entirely certain," Susie analyzed. "What we can conclude so far is that Reimund was drowned by Pons Bénet and his companions, and Ava was strangled to death by them. Their bodies were eventually buried somewhere in the cemetery, and you may or may not have been present at the scene. It's possible that you discovered it later and attempted to unearth their corpses as well as seek revenge on Pons Bénet and his gang, but the outcome wasn't favorable. Otherwise, your recent dream would have reflected some of that content."

Lumian fell silent for a moment before speaking again.

"So that's what happened… I was wondering why Pons Bénet and the others didn't kill me and toss me into the deep pit if I was truly there…"

Part of his anguish stemmed from a fear deep within him—a suspicion that he might have been in league with Pons and his gang.

"We cannot dismiss the possibility that you were present at the scene and witnessed the entire incident, but there are numerous explanations. It may not be as you imagine it to be. They spared your life because they needed a vessel with exceptional physical attributes." Susie understood Lumian's doubts and resistance. Her

words aimed to soothe him gently. “What I can affirm is that the anger, hatred, and desire for revenge you experienced in your dream were genuine. Those were your true emotions at that time. In other words, regardless of the circumstances, the deaths of Ava and Reimund have nothing to do with you.”

Upon hearing Susie’s words, Lumian felt as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He slumped against the sofa, his strength draining away.

His mind was now much calmer than before, and he no longer needed to maintain a facade of bravery.

In the blink of an eye, an invisible warm breeze swept through his body and mind, soothing him completely.

Susie’s encouraging voice filled the air, her smile evident.

“Compared to our last session, you’re in a much better state now. You showed courage sooner than I anticipated, facing the doubts and questions you were reluctant to confront.

“In the realm of psychology, this is a crucial indication that you’re breaking free from the puzzle. Only by directly confronting the problem can you find a resolution.

“Alright, that concludes today’s treatment. You’re ready to face Louis Lund, Madame Pualis, and the others.”

In that very instant, the composed Lumian pondered the words of Madam Magician, recalling her earnest advice.

“There is yet another matter.

“I may be compelled to believe in another entity at some point, but ordinarily, I am forbidden to recollect His honorific name. Do you—either of you—possess a means to prevent such recollection?”

The cheerful female voice responded, her words carrying a gentle smile, “That is quite simple. I shall provide you with a psychological trigger. When your spiritual intuition feels devoid of protection, your subconscious will replace the honorific name with ‘That Being’ to

safeguard against its impact.

“While under protection, you may freely remember and speak His name in its entirety…”

Lumian’s mind turned adrift briefly upon hearing the other person declare, “The psychological cue has been planted.”

“Thank you, Madam. And thank you too, Madam Susie,” Lumian nodded toward the empty space across from the booth.

“You’re welcome. See you in two weeks,” the gentle female voice replied, and Susie added, “See you in two weeks.”

Lumian wasn’t sure when they departed, but the area around Booth D grew still. Only the chirping of birds in the botanical garden, the clopping of hooves on the road, and the distant hum of machinery resonated.

He lifted his cup, finishing the remainder of his Intis coffee in one gulp, adjusting his mental state.

Seizing the moment, he replayed the entire treatment process in his mind, and an inexplicable feeling settled upon him. Madam Susie’s last statement seemed somewhat peculiar.

She said I can face Louis Lund, Madame Pualis, and the others now… Does that imply that the answers I might receive from Madame Pualis could shatter me?

It’s understandable, but what if my condition doesn’t improve as expected? Will she advise me to give up the opportunity to meet Louis Lund? But what if Louis Lund emerged yesterday? Wouldn’t it be a major problem if I hadn’t had my follow up?

If that’s the case, shouldn’t Madam Susie have warned me against approaching Madame Pualis or confronting the padre before the follow-up session?

How can she be so certain that I won’t encounter Louis Lund in the past two weeks, or that he’ll elude capture if I do?

Spectator…

Lumian's senses snapped back to full alertness. He exited Booth D and hailed a public carriage back to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Lumian didn't rush to send a messenger to Auberge du Coq Doré or the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches to inform Madam Magician about Termiboros. Instead, he made his way straight to 126 Avenue du Marché to check if his subordinates, Anthony Reid, or Franca had discovered anything.

With a dark brown wide-brimmed hat atop his head, Lumian strolled to a spot diagonally across from "Black Scorpion" Roger's house, roughly 20 meters away. He settled into a gap between two buildings, leaning against the wall.

Several vagrants occupied the area.

One of them shuffled closer to Lumian and whispered, "Nothing yet."

Lumian nodded and directed his gaze toward the three-story building with a garden, keeping an eye on passersby.

As time ticked by, the sun descended on the horizon, casting a dwindling light. The lamplighters commenced their task, igniting the gas lamps one by one.

At that moment, Lumian spotted a man clad in a grayish-blue worker's uniform.

Underneath his cap, light-yellow hair peeked out, and his slightly chubby face exuded an air of simplicity and honesty.

Anthony Reid? Why is he out and about? Lumian recognized the information broker, perplexed by his actions.

Resembling a worker finishing his shift, Anthony Reid hurried toward the end of Avenue du Marché.

Lumian's pupils contracted when he realized that Anthony Reid wasn't merely passing by; he was approaching someone.

The man sported a blue gown adorned with yellow buttons, a waxed hat, a white tie, and a red vest. He sat inside a rental carriage bearing a yellow plate, clearly a driver affiliated with the Empire Carriage Company. Carriage drivers from different companies donned distinct uniforms.

The carriage driver tipped his hat, keeping his head lowered as if waiting for a customer.

Lumian's heart stirred. He rose to his feet, taking a few steps in that direction.

As Anthony Reid brushed past the carriage, he stumbled and collided with the horse pulling it.

Startled, the horse attempted to raise its forelegs, but the carriage driver swiftly tugged on the reins, firmly restraining the animal.

Yet, as the carriage driver lifted his head, his face was revealed.

In his forties, with black hair, Lumian couldn't discern his features clearly due to the distance. Nonetheless, a faint sense of familiarity washed over him.

Lumian narrowed his eyes as he profusely apologized to Anthony Reid and left the carriage behind. A valet emerged from 126 Avenue du Marché.

Approaching the carriage, the valet addressed the driver,

"My master wishes to hire your carriage. Proceed inside and assist with moving some items."

The carriage driver nodded, replying in a deep voice, "Okay."

Following the valet, he entered the residence belonging to "Black Scorpion" Roger.

Lumian, who had witnessed the entire sequence of events without catching their conversation, smirked.

He was now utterly certain that the carriage driver was Louis Lund!

At long last, you've arrived!

Chapter 203 - 203 Cooperation

203 Cooperation

Lumian retreated to the cluster of tramps, patiently awaiting the emergence of Louis Lund.

Soon enough, Anthony Reid, the information broker, returned after changing his attire, seemingly determined to fulfill his promise and seize an opportunity to tail Louis Lund.

At that moment, he sported a yellowish-white shirt and a brown formal coat. There was no bow tie around his neck, but he wore a round hat, resembling a clerk fresh out of the office.

Had Lumian not possessed a certain knowledge of Reid's build, temperament, and gait, he might have failed to recognize him.

After considering his options, Lumian stepped out from the crevice between the two buildings and confronted Anthony Reid.

Having discarded his disguise upon departing the Valiant Café, he now donned a simple ensemble consisting of black-framed glasses and a broad brown hat. Those familiar with him could effortlessly discern his identity.

Noticing the shift in Anthony Reid's gaze, Lumian whispered as they brushed past each other, "I'm back. Await me at the rear entrance."

Although the Prophecy Spell indicated a reunion with Louis Lund on Avenue du Marché, Lumian aimed to avert any potential mishaps.

On one hand, the Prophetic Concoction derived from his body's response, rendering it somewhat unreliable. There might be omissions within the prophecy. On the other hand, the manifestation of a prophecy could assume various forms, deviating entirely from his

anticipated sequence of events.

Anthony Reid withdrew his gaze and nodded, signifying his comprehension.

He advanced onward, passing by the residence of “Black Scorpion” Roger, and disappearing into the distance down an alley.

Lumian did not immediately turn around. Beneath the glow of street lamps, he pressed onward.

Just as he reached a dimly lit section, a figure emerged from the shadows beneath a dilapidated, iron-black street lamp in the alley ahead.

The towering individual, garbed in a form-fitting black robe with a hood that nearly concealed the face, beckoned to Lumian.

Franca? Lumian instantly formed a conjecture and hastened towards her.

The conspicuously dressed character was indeed “Red Boots” Franca.

This time, she had forgone her trademark red boots in favor of black ones.

“Aren’t you concerned about being discovered?” Lumian couldn’t help but inquire.

While Trieriens had a high tolerance for eccentric attire and even actively pursued fashion trends, loitering in secrecy while dressed in such a manner would undoubtedly draw the attention of “Black Scorpion” Roger and the Poison Spur Mob—even the passing laborers!

Franca grinned nonchalantly and retorted, “You don’t understand. This is all part of the procedure! Didn’t your sister teach you?”

Indeed, she did teach me, but she never mentioned employing it in such a place or situation… Before Lumian could utter another word, Franca waved her hand dismissively.

“Fret not, I won’t be discovered.”

As her words faded, she took a step backward, merging seamlessly with the shadow and vanishing from Lumian’s sight.

If it weren’t for the inevitable gender change at Sequence 7, he would have considered this path more to his liking than that of the Hunter.

Emerging from the shadows once more, Franca pointed toward 126 Avenue du Marché in the distance.

“That carriage driver should be the Louis Lund you seek. Shall I assist you in tailing him later? New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“I understand that Hunters possess a hound’s nose and eagle’s eyes, making them adept at tracking, but you struggle with concealment. Staying too far away risks losing the target, while staying too close risks discovery. It’s safer if I handle it.

“Don’t forget, Louis Lund is also a Beyonder, and he worships an evil god. It’s possible he possesses unique abilities.”

This time, Lumian didn’t resist or reject the offer. He nodded and replied, “Very well.”

At present, he couldn’t mark Louis Lund with a distinct scent, and darkness was swiftly descending. The crowded streets, filled with pedestrians and carriages, would muddle any traces. Tailing from 20 to 30 meters away could easily result in losing the target with the slightest misstep.

Franca’s thin, red lips curled into a visible smile, free from the confines of the hooded shadow, as she spoke,”Your afternoon therapy session was quite effective. A man should be more open-minded, untroubled by trivial matters.”

She lightly tapped her chest as she spoke.

From her possession emerged a glass bottle.

The surface of the small bottle had been intricately etched into small squares, reflecting the nearby streetlamp’s light and shimmering with

psychedelic colors.

“When I lived as a man, I found these perfume bottles to be beautifully crafted, but I felt too self-conscious to buy them or carry them with me. Now, I have no such concerns. Sometimes, changing your gender can open the door to a new world,” Franca said with emotion.

The door to a new world refers to sleeping with men? If it weren’t for the crucial task of tracking Louis Lund, Lumian would definitely have provided such a rejoinder.

Opening the lid, she brought the pressed glass bottle to Lumian’s nose.

“Remember its scent.”

The perfume was refreshing and natural, akin to strolling through a forest on a summer’s day.

“Got it.” Lumian nodded slightly.

Franca proceeded to spray it on herself.

“It has distinct top, middle, and base notes, but the differences are subtle. There’s no need to discern them specifically. You’ll know it by the scent alone.

“I’ll position myself three to four meters away from Louis Lund. Without a hound’s nose, he won’t detect this fragrance that clearly doesn’t belong to the market district.”

Lumian added thoughtfully, “So, I am to track your perfume from a distance of ten to twenty meters?”

It was indeed a clever strategy.

“That’s correct.” Franca produced a handful of fluorescent powder, sprinkling it over herself, and recited a deep incantation.

It appeared to be a fusion of the Hermes words for “hidden” and “body.”

Almost instantaneously, Lumian witnessed Franca's form gradually fading away, as if an eraser were obliterating a pencil drawing.

Apart from the lingering fragrance in his nostrils, he had completely lost track of the Witch.

Once again, Lumian marveled at the Demoness path's performance as a Low- to Mid-Sequence Beyonder.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian felt the fragrance's source receding, drawing closer to the three-story building with a garden at 126 Avenue du Marché.

Lumian made his way in that direction, slipping into the shadows and pressing himself against the wall.

After nearly half an hour, a man named Louis Lund emerged, dressed in a red vest, blue uniform, white tie, and waxed hat. Accompanying him was "Black Scorpion" Roger, impeccably attired in a formal suit with neatly combed black hair.

One of them took the reins of the carriage, while the other entered inside.

Why is "Black Scorpion" Roger following him? Is he planning to meet Madame Pualis in person? Lumian furrowed his brow in slight confusion.

This introduced new variables to his plan.

Originally, Lumian intended to find an opportune moment during Louis Lund's return journey. With his current strength, he could easily overpower his target, even if they were both Sequence 8s. Plus, he had the assistance of Witch Franca.

However, if "Black Scorpion" Roger joined the equation, things would become considerably more troublesome.

From the midwife's performance in his dream, Lumian deduced that a Heretic Spellmaster possessed numerous mystical techniques and considerable power. They were fully capable of matching a Witch from the Assassin pathway.

While Lumian could have Franca distract “Black Scorpion” Roger while he dealt with Louis Lund, the battle between two Mid-Sequence Beyonders wouldn’t be swift, thus increasing the risk of discovery.

Hmm… If “Black Scorpion” Roger truly intends to meet Madame Pualis, I’ll follow him instead of attacking. My objective is to locate Madame Pualis and establish contact with her. Lumian swiftly revised his plan and devised a new strategy.

The rental carriage began its journey toward the opposite end of Avenue du Marché, and the refreshing, natural fragrance faded away.

Lumian hurried along beside the gas street lamps, maintaining a distance of nearly 20 meters.

After a while, he sensed the perfume come to a halt. Advancing another ten meters, he witnessed the rental carriage pulling over by the roadside. “Black Scorpion” Roger disembarked, carrying a wooden box.

Not far away stood Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Within a matter of seconds, Louis Lund directed the carriage toward a fork in the road, bypassing the bustling area. Meanwhile, “Black Scorpion” Roger ventured into the market alone.

Is Madame Pualis at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman? Or is “Black Scorpion” Roger merely escorting Louis Lund for a distance, concerned about potential targeting? Lumian speculated as he hastened forward.

Regardless, capturing Louis Lund took precedence!

Behind Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, there were only a few pedestrians. Under the pitch-black sky, occasionally, one could spot a lone figure.

Several street lamps here were out of order, leaving the road engulfed in darkness. It was wide enough for several carriages to pass side by side.

Lumian surveyed the surroundings, wasting no time. He removed his

black-framed glasses and sprinted forward.

Before long, he caught up with the slowly moving carriage. As Louis Lund sensed the anomaly, he pushed down on the carriage with his left hand and lunged toward the driver's seat.

From this distance, Lumian could clearly see the black-haired, blue-eyed face.

Though the other party had employed some disguise, Lumian was certain it was Louis Lund!

Reacting swiftly, Louis Lund, without bothering to ascertain the assailant's identity or motives, seized the reins with his left hand and balled his right hand into a fist. Like a speeding cannonball, he launched an attack at Lumian, who was suspended in midair with no leverage to defend himself.

In that very moment, Louis Lund caught sight of Lumian's unmasked face, his eyes widening in sheer shock.

Undeterred, Lumian didn't evade the blow. Instead, he extended his right arm and caught hold of Louis Lund's fist.

Just as the impending collision seemed inevitable, Lumian retracted his arm, lessening the force behind the strike. Then, with a swift motion, he intertwined Louis Lund's fists, wrists, and forearms as though he had boneless limbs. As a result, Louis Lund was sent flying backward but remained within the confines of the carriage.

In the blink of an eye, Louis Lund saw a smile on Lumian's face.

Whack!

Franca materialized on the opposite side of the carriage driver's seat, her palm poised to strike Louis Lund's ear.

Under the formidable Beyonder powers unleashed by an Assassin's full-strength blow, Louis Lund succumbed to unconsciousness without uttering a single sound.

Chapter 204 - 204 Interrogation

204 Interrogation

With a swift movement, Lumian used the force of Louis Lund's fall to gracefully land in the spot where the carriage driver had been stationed.

Franca had already taken over from Louis Lund, expertly maneuvering the horse and bringing the carriage to a halt by the darkened roadside.

Their coordination was flawless, even without prior communication. One focused on the front while the other ambushed from behind. In a matter of seconds, they managed to overpower Louis Lund, a powerful Beyonder at Sequence 8.

"Carry him into the carriage," Franca instructed, her experience evident as she contemplated the subsequent course of action.

Lumian didn't object and lifted Louis Lund into the rented four-wheeled carriage.

Franca followed suit, closing the carriage door behind her. Then, she removed her hood and black robe, seemingly preparing to change into more comfortable attire upon returning home.

Halfway through her task, she caught Lumian's puzzled gaze and snapped out of her reverie. Awkwardly, she instructed, "Turn around."

Lumian could deduce Franca's intentions and quickly obliged, diverting his gaze out the window to allow her the privacy she required.

A rustling sound continued for over a minute behind him.

“I’m done,” Franca’s clear voice reached his ears.

The rental carriage wasn’t particularly spacious. Lumian, standing at over 1.8 meters tall, hunched over slightly and turned back.

Franca now wore a red vest, a white tie, and a blue gown adorned with a row of yellow buttons. Holding a waxed hat and a horsewhip, she presented an unusual blend of mismatched elements—an absurd and peculiar beauty—with her sharp nose, slightly flamboyant brown eyebrows, thin red lips, and vivid lake-colored eyes.

“Quite swift, Miss Franca,” Lumian praised, acknowledging her as the “new” driver for the Empire Carriage Company.

“That’s professionalism for you! If these buttons hadn’t been so time-consuming, I could have been even faster,” Franca muttered as she tucked her flaxen-colored hair beneath the waxed hat.

With her disguise complete, she retrieved an eyebrow pencil and other items she carried and quickly applied some simple makeup. Her complexion darkened, and her eyebrows were made to appear untidy, successfully transforming her into an ordinary-looking man who wouldn’t attract undue attention in the dimly lit streets illuminated by the crimson moon and streetlamps.

“I’ll be the carriage driver. You interrogate him,” Franca declared, opening the door and hopping out to assume Louis Lund’s former seat.

She took hold of the reins and guided the horse to turn slowly.

Satisfied that the rental carriage was moving steadily, Lumian assisted Louis Lund to the opposite seat. Extracting a bottle of truth serum he had obtained from the unscrupulous Hedsey, he compelled Louis to consume a third of it.

As the drug began to take effect, Lumian resisted the urge to wake the unconscious Louis Lund with the ritual silver dagger. Instead, he gently prodded the area between the bridge of the nose and lips, tugged at a strand of his hair, and lightly tickled his nostrils with the strand. Gradually, Louis Lund stirred from his slumber.

Throughout this process, Lumian maintained a friendly and non-threatening posture, refraining from dislocating his captive's joints or binding his hands and feet.

Achoo!

Louis Lund sneezed and abruptly awakened from his slumber.

He glanced across at Lumian, who sat at ease with a smile playing on his lips.

"Stay calm," Lumian reassured, his smile unwavering as he pressed his right palm down. "If I intended you harm, stray dogs would have already feasted upon you."

Louis Lund's immediate impulse was to employ his powers and make a swift escape. Yet, as he recalled being attacked from behind, he cautiously peered out of the carriage window.

The distant light merged with the surrounding shadows, amplifying the hushed whispers of wheels and hooves upon the road.

Reluctant to gamble on mounting a counterattack, Louis Lund inquired in a low, grave voice, "What is it that you want?"

From his vantage point, Lumian hadn't taken any measures to restrain him, confident in the belief that escape was futile.

The other party may have been careless or vulnerable, presenting an opportunity for Louis Lund to exploit. But such an advantage would never manifest in a direct confrontation.

And the aid accompanying Lumian could strike from the shadows undetected—a force to be reckoned with!

Lumian smiled. "I merely seek to reunite with an old friend."

Louis Lund, dressed only in a linen shirt and shorts, replied with a dark expression, "I won't succumb to your threats again. Madame is already aware of my past transgressions and has granted me forgiveness."

So I really possessed incriminating information about you? Lumian's mind momentarily swirled with confusion.

Recollections from his dream emerged—a revelation of Louis Lund engaging in an illicit affair with a woman from the village, clandestinely selling portions of the administrator's castle collection in a bid to blackmail him for knowledge of Madame Pualis's involvement with the padre.

In retrospect, those accounts might have been fallacious.

If the padre truly harbored desires for Madame Pualis, it made little sense for him to forsake belief in the evil god symbolizing bountiful harvests, or to forgo birthing several children with her.

Lumian suspected that his dream had crafted an R-rated adaptation of the concealed conflict between the two factions. After all, both the padre and Madame Pualis had numerous lovers, making it easy for his subconscious to forge connections.

Compared to the secrets housed within Madame Pualis's castle, Louis Lund's affair and the pilfering of collections appeared as innocuous as mundane meals thrice daily. There was no ground for him to be subjected to blackmail.

Yet here stood Louis Lund, insisting that he had indeed erred and fallen victim to Lumian's coercion.

"Is that so?" Lumian adopted his Cordu Prankster King persona. "I merely assisted you in concealing your missteps. How can that be construed as a threat?"

Louis Lund erupted in a bitter laugh, a mix of anger and disbelief.

"You are the most shameless individual I have ever encountered.

"I am aware that you uncovered certain irregularities and sought to discern their origins, but you did indeed threaten me and extract information about Madame." The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"That's correct. In those days, I entertained the thought of betraying

Madame and seeking the padre's assistance. However, that was because I hadn't comprehended the greatness of Mother. I was still a follower of the false god, the Eternal Blazing Sun. Now, my life stems from Mother, and my future belongs to Mother."

Ah, so that's how it is… I must thank this truth serum. You've spilled all that needed to be said, both the necessary and the unnecessary. I didn't have to wrack my brain to gather information… In reality, I sensed something amiss in the village and embarked on a certain investigation? Lumian nodded, satisfied, and smiled. "When did you come to realize the greatness of Mother? Was it after you gave birth to that child?"

Louis Lund looked utterly stunned, his reaction almost causing him to jolt upright and bang his head. "How did you know about me birthing a child? How could you possibly know?"

Hmm… So I wasn't involved in the padre's raid on the administrator's castle? Otherwise, Louis Lund wouldn't be posing such a question… Lumian felt a surge of delight and jestingly responded, "When I undressed you earlier, I noticed stretch marks and a C-section scar on your stomach."

"Impossible!" Louis Lund fiercely objected. "Madame has already erased them!"

Lumian swiftly changed the course of their conversation and inquired with curiosity,

"I'm curious to know how Madame Pualis managed to impregnate you."

Louis Lund, though initially hesitant to answer, couldn't resist the urge to divulge the secret.

"Whether it's a man or a woman, as long as you engage in intimate relations with her and exchange bodily fluids, she can conceive a child according to her desires."

I see… Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

His greatest concern had been the possibility of Madame Pualis

employing her Beyonder abilities to remotely impregnate him.

“So, both men and women will do, but what about animals?” Lumian pressed on.

Louis Lund was taken aback by the question. After a few moments, he responded, “That should work too…”

“And what about plants? Or rocks?” Lumian’s inquiry turned scholarly.

“I… I don’t know,” Louis Lund admitted, unable to provide a definitive answer.

Madame has never contemplated such possibilities. Why does this youngster possess such a vivid imagination?

Regretfully, Lumian changed the subject.

“Since you conceived through the exchange of bodily fluids, how did you end up with that bird’s nest-like thing in your stomach?”

“How do you know about it? When did you see it?” Louis Lund asked, astonished.

“I’ll tell you later,” Lumian swiftly lied, maintaining his composure without a flicker of hesitation.

Louis Lund wore a perplexed expression as he muttered, his face clouded with confusion, “It came along with the conception of the child. It’s like a fruit. The outer layer is the epidermis, and the fetus is the pulp. They were once joined together and only split open when ripe.”

“Sounds quite magical. That bird’s nest seems to possess great spiritual value. Can it be utilized in the realm of mysticism?” Lumian deliberately rambled, skillfully diverting the conversation away from his true intentions.

“It serves as a key ingredient in a certain healing potion,” Louis Lund continued, speaking without pause. “It has various other uses as well, like enhancing the condition of human skin and providing power to

spells…”

After he finished, Lumian let out a nonchalant sigh.

“Did your first child perish in the padre’s assault on the castle?”

“Yes, he was still so young,” Louis Lund lamented the loss of life. “During that time, the padre had many followers with him. We kept retreating, and a few Gardeners and a Heretic Spellmaster lost their lives. If Madam hadn’t returned in time, we wouldn’t have escaped. Sigh, all those children were killed.”

“How many people did the padre bring?” Lumian casually inquired, concealing his true concerns.

Louis Lund recollected and replied, “Some were shepherds originally, like Pierre Berry, Niort Best, and the others. Some were the padre’s mistresses, such as Sybil Berry, Madonna Bénet, and Philippa Guillaume. The rest were Pons Bénet and his gang. We managed to kill a few of them, including the rather formidable Niort Best…”

In my dream, Niort Best was slain by the three sheep… So in reality, he died during the raid on the administrator’s castle? And I wasn’t among the individuals mentioned by Louis Lund… In other words, the battle scenes I witnessed were derived from a fragment of my soul? Thus, they are incomplete and unable to reveal the full picture and all the participants… Lumian felt a sense of relief and smiled as he asked, “Where did Madame Pualis go?”

Chapter 205 - 205 Banshee

205 Banshee

Louis Lund shook his head.

“I’ve got no idea, but when Madame came back, she wasn’t well either.”

“Then she saw the castle in ruins and the important items destroyed. She gathered the remaining ones and prepared to leave Cordu.” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Based on what I witnessed, it seems that Madame Pualis had indeed been engaged in a fight with someone else. Lumian asked with curiosity, “Why didn’t Madame Pualis try to bring the dead back to life?”

Louis Lund looked at Lumian, surprised.

“I never told you any of that…”

In other words, he wanted to know how Lumian had this knowledge.

Lumian smiled but offered no explanation.

Louis Lund couldn’t contain his urge to spill the secret.

“Madame can resurrect the dead and restore their bodies, but it’s far from perfect. The resurrected ones aren’t quite human anymore. They’re part corpse, part monster. They only retain fragments of their original memories and can only exist for seven days.”

Madame Pualis’s resurrection ability is severely flawed at this level… Lumian was disappointed.

He diverted the topic.

“What did Madame Pualis want in Cordu?”

Louis Lund looked puzzled. “Didn’t I already tell you?”

Lumian was prepared and smiled as he replied, “Given what happened afterward, I believe you might have a different perspective now.”

Louis Lund felt the need to share the information, so he sighed and said, “Back then, I couldn’t comprehend it. I was even scared. That’s why I dropped hints to the padre during Mass, hoping for assistance.”

“Yes… I later discovered that Madame wanted to create an entirely new world in Cordu. In this world, when humans die, their souls return to the earth and roam the wilderness. On special occasions, they can return home and experience the joy of reunion. By redeeming their sins, they can be reborn, emerging from the Mother’s womb as human fetuses.”

“Paramita?” Lumian remembered the term from his dream.

“Yes!” Louis Lund replied, fear evident in his eyes.

He suspected that Lumian had asked the question to gauge his reaction.

Lumian knew the correct answer and sought to determine if Louis Lund was lying or how much of his story was false.

He could only inquire about it from Louis Lund, not Madame Pualis.

Louis Lund shook his head slowly.

“Madame briefly mentioned it, but it was very vague.

“She said she had only established a small, caricature Paramita, a part of the complete Paramita. She also mentioned that by creating her own Paramita, she could please the Mother and bear more.”

A part? What would happen if those Madames managed to create a complete Paramita? Lumian wondered if constructing a miniature Paramita was a prerequisite for their unusual path towards godhood.

He gazed at Louis Lund, attempting to inquire, “What is Madame Pualis’s Sequence now?”

“Madame’s condition is rather peculiar. It might be related to the destruction of her Paramita or something else she possesses,” Louis Lund replied, catching himself mid-sentence.

Why can’t I control my words? Why did I say what I shouldn’t have?

Louis Lund realized that his behavior had likely been influenced by one of Lumian Lee’s Beyonder powers.

Now understanding the cause, he no longer blamed himself or felt anxious. He felt a sense of relief and relaxation.

“Madame should be somewhere between Sequence 5 and Sequence 4. At times, she exudes an imposing aura that makes people afraid to meet her gaze. Other times, she lacks such grandeur.”

It’s reminiscent of the state Madame Pualis displayed in my dream… Lumian recalled and stated, “Sequence 9 Villain, Sequence 8 Gardener, Sequence 7 Heretic Spellmaster, Sequence 6 Sower… What comes after Sequence 5? And what about Sequence 4? What lies beyond that?”

He knows more than I anticipated… Witnessing Lumian Lee divulge so much information about the pathway’s Sequences in one go, Louis Lund didn’t dare take any risks. Yielding to his desire to confide in him, he responded, “Banshee is Sequence 5, and Evil Overlord, also known as Benevolent Overlord or Madame, is Sequence 4. I don’t know what lies beyond that. I’m merely a Gardener. I don’t possess the right to receive any further boons and advance to become a Heretic Spellmaster.”

Banshee… The name implies a change in gender… Pulitt became Pualis… Titles like Madame Moon and Madame Night symbolize godhood and demigods, but Madame Pualis doesn’t precisely fit the role of Madame Night… Lumian pondered for a moment before steering the conversation back to Cordu.

“Were Madame Pualis’s initial followers in the village mostly lovers

and the elderly?"

"That's correct," Louis Lund affirmed, nodding. "People like Naroka, who were quite old, yearned deeply for their departed loved ones. They longed to see them again and worry about what awaits them after death. They experience both fear and longing. That's the aid Madame can provide them. Unfortunately, Naroka passed away suddenly before fully embracing Paramita. Madame suspects that she discovered the padre's scheme and was killed by her youngest son, who follows the padre."

That explains it… Lumian gained new insight into Naroka's death from his dream.

Her demise was the result of being silenced.

Ava and Reimund likely met the same fate.

Sighing, Lumian changed the subject.

"When did you realize something was amiss with the padre?"

Louis Lund contemplated for a moment and replied, "In early January, I caught sight of the children in the castle tower. You can't fathom what it was like. To put it briefly, it terrified me and nearly drove me insane. I was desperate to leave Madame.

"Initially, I believed she was just like those mystical fanatics who enjoy purchasing magazines like Psychic and Lotus and engaging in futile practices. I didn't think there was anything wrong. However, as time went on, I noticed that the other residents of the castle were becoming increasingly peculiar. The administrator locked himself and Madame in their rooms on two separate occasions, coinciding with the birth of a child each time. My valets and maids often did the same, and Madame was remarkably understanding of their behavior.

"From time to time, the distant cries of a baby reached my ears, causing deep suspicion to well up within me. Seizing the opportunity presented by Madame's absence and the others' lack of vigilance, I stealthily slipped into the tower. Oh, Mother, the sight that greeted me was utterly terrifying!"

Louis Lund, originally intending to speak of Guillaume Bénet's abnormal behavior, found himself unable to contain his thoughts on the castle tower incident, and he began to ramble.

Lumian could vividly imagine the scene, for he had witnessed it in his dream: human children with bird-like claws, sprawled against the walls, densely packed and scattered throughout.

Louis Lund gulped nervously and continued his account, "I initially dropped hints to the padre during Mass. Later, I took the opportunity to reveal Madame's abnormality to him. I suspected she might be a follower of an evil deity. He instructed me to keep it hidden and not expose myself, assuring me that he would handle the situation.

"It was around mid-January when things took a turn for the worse. The padre continued his normal routine as if nothing was amiss. Despite my repeated urging, you eventually discovered the truth and threatened me.

"After that, Sewell, the carriage driver, and I received a revelation. We repented and wholeheartedly pledged ourselves to Madame.

"Then, in March, the padre suddenly launched an attack on the castle with a group of people."

Louis Lund has limited knowledge about the padre's situation. When Lumian inquired further about what had transpired in Cordu, Louis Lund seemed unfamiliar with the village's circumstances. This aligned with his role as the castle's butler, primarily tending to matters in Darième and other cities.

He only mentioned that since January, the villagers of Cordu had been frequently discussing horoscopes, believing that it would bring them glory and alter their destinies. Prior to that, they merely followed certain folk traditions to ward off any changes in their fate. Specific discussions regarding these matters were rare.

With the understanding that former administrator Béost and Madame Pualis's lady's maid, Cathy, were now Heretic Spellmasters, and that Madame Pualis had left Cordu before Lent, Lumian realized he wouldn't glean any more information from Louis Lund.

Knowing when to stop, Lumian posed a direct question, “Where does Madame Pualis reside now?”

“In Quartier de No?l…” Louis Lund instinctively moved to cover his mouth but added another detail. “Rue de Scotch Broom…”

Rue de Scotch Broom in Quartier de No?l… A map of Trier from a magazine article flashed through Lumian’s mind.

Quartier de No?l lay northeast of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, divided by the Srenzo River. It was renowned for its numerous hospitals, including the Veterans’ Home and Wounded Soldiers’ Hospital. Additionally, being situated in the suburbs, it boasted a fair share of farmland.

Lumian refrained from pressuring Louis Lund or intensifying his desire to extract more information. Instead, he smiled and said, “I bear no ill intentions towards Madame. I merely wish to speak with her about the events in Cordu.

“I will allow you to depart. Please inform Madame Pualis that if she is willing to meet with me, she can choose the time and place. Ah, please send your response to Room 302, 9 Rue des Pavés, Quartier du Jardin Botanique, before tomorrow night.”

It was a safe house Lumian had prepared in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, and now it would finally serve its purpose.

Louis Lund let out a sigh of relief before responding cautiously, “Got it.”

Anxious thoughts plagued him, fearing that Lumian might allow him to depart only to trail behind him. Yet, considering Lumian’s evident capability to uncover Madame’s precise whereabouts without pressing the issue, Louis Lund found himself compelled to place his trust in Lumian’s amicability.

He then gestured towards his shorts and remarked, “I cannot leave dressed like this.”

Chapter 206 - 206 Communication

206 Communication

Lumian's head pounded at the mere thought of Franca coming in and undressing. He scrutinized Louis Lund, who was left in a linen shirt and white shorts, and offered a genuine suggestion.

"I can ask my companion to return the money from your coat. Leave the carriage as it is and find a clothing store. Tell them you encountered a twisted robber. I'm certain everyone in Trier will understand."

Louis Lund's expression froze for a moment as he pointed downwards from Lumian's current position. "I have spare clothes."

Lumian bent down and retrieved a black formal suit with a vest and bow tie.

It seemed to be Louis Lund's usual attire as a butler.

"Is this rental carriage truly yours?" Lumian inquired curiously as he tossed the formal suit to Louis Lund.

"I rented the clothes and the carriage." Louis Lund hurriedly put on his pants.

Lumian sat there, patiently waiting for him to dress before calling out to Franca to stop the carriage by the roadside.

He opened the door, turned around, and waved at Louis Lund.

"Hope to see you again." New n***o***vel chapters are published on

If not, I'll find you on Rue de Scotch Broom in Quartier de No?l. And

if you've already vanished, I'll continue my investigation, ensuring you'll never find peace.

Lumian would have trailed Louis Lund until he tracked down Madame Pualis if it weren't for his caution regarding her abilities and characteristics, as well as his intention to engage in a friendly conversation with her.

Franca placed the waxed hat and whip on the driver's seat of the carriage, picked up the black robe beside her, and put it on. Then, she pulled up her hood and leaped into the shadows by the road.

Once Louis Lund steered the carriage away from the street, she emerged from the shadows and approached Lumian. She gazed in his direction and spoke. "Not following him?"

"No need. For now, we're not enemies." Lumian averted his gaze and headed towards Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Franca followed, a smile gracing her lips.

"Aren't you concerned that Madame Pualis might refuse to see you and disappear overnight?"

Lumian and Louis Lund didn't purposely lower their voices during their exchange. An assassin possessed sharp ears and eyes, so she caught most of their conversation. While she couldn't fully grasp the Cordu-related details due to her lack of prior knowledge, she gleaned plenty about other topics.

For instance, Lumian sought an audience with Madame Pualis. For instance, a certain evil god's pathway would transform into a Banshee at Sequence 5…

Lumian took two deep breaths to calm his lingering, trembling emotions.

"I simply believe it's more likely to meet Madame Pualis if I display friendliness rather than tailing Louis Lund.

"She knows full well whom I seek revenge against. Her own castle was damaged by the padre and she was driven out of Cordu. I refuse

to believe she bears no grudge.

“Heh heh, I did kill two leaders of the Poison Spur Mob and tamper with ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger’s coffee, but they don’t know Lumian Lee was behind it. There’s no conflict between hating Ciel and meeting Lumian Lee.”

Franca couldn’t help but chuckle.

“You’re right. What does their vendetta against Ciel have to do with you, Lumian?”

She murmured to herself, lost in thought, “What’s Madame Pualis’s connection to the Poison Spur Mob? Which evil deity does the Banshee pathway belong to? Are ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger, ‘Baldy’ Harman, and ‘Short-legged Candlestick’ Castina associated with this pathway? One Spellmaster Heretic and two Gardeners?”

She speculated based on her understanding of the Poison Spur Mob.

Lumian didn’t hold back any information.

“The mastermind behind the Poison Spur Mob is Madame Moon, but it seems she has recently made further progress. She and Madame Night, whom Pualis represents, are part of a secret organization called the Nightstalkers. They worship the Great Mother. I don’t know the precise name, nor do I dare to utter it.”

The concealed entity known as Inevitability could corrupt people merely by knowing about it. The Great Mother, even more sinister and fearsome than Inevitability, had her followers locked in a prolonged conflict against the Blessed of Inevitability in Cordu. So, she was certainly capable of doing the same.

Lumian suspected that if he were to learn the Great Mother’s complete and honorific name, there was a high chance he would become pregnant on the spot.

Franca found herself deeply intrigued.

“Indeed, it’s best not to seek knowledge beyond one’s boundaries.

“There was once a member of our research society who enjoyed delving into secrets and acquiring all kinds of mystical knowledge. Eventually, he vanished and was never seen again.”

Franca pragmatically shifted the topic to “Black Scorpion” Roger and the others, along with their respective abilities. Lumian provided detailed explanations. After all, he still had to rely on Madame Hidden Blade to combat the Poison Spur Mob.

When Lumian speculated that one of the abilities of a Sower was to impregnate others, Franca felt a momentary envy and eagerly exclaimed, “If Gardner were to become pregnant, it would be quite interesting…”

“Madame, your thoughts are perilous. I truly worry that you might embrace the mantra of ‘Life is short, why not give it a try?’ and end up choosing to believe in that Great Mother, praying for Her to bestow upon you the power of a Sower,” Lumian mockingly warned.

The combination of a Demoness and a Sower was too wicked. Trier would undoubtedly witness a large number of victims.

Franca was taken aback.

“I’ve already consumed a potion and become a Beyonder. I can’t accept any more boons, can I…?”

You don’t know? That’s fortunate! Lumian sincerely replied, “I don’t believe so.”

“Don’t worry. I possess extensive knowledge of mysticism and understand that every evil deity harbors malicious intentions.” Franca sighed softly, setting an example for herself.

She glanced over at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman nearby and casually remarked, “When I was waiting for Louis Lund earlier today, I witnessed an unlucky fellow.”

Unlucky fellow? Lumian’s heart stirred as he recollected.

“Was he a slender man in his fifties with blond hair and blue eyes?”

“How did you know?” Franca was taken aback. “He was strolling along the street when a vase suddenly dropped from the balcony above and struck his head. He reacted swiftly, managing to dodge to the side of the road. However, he stumbled on the edge of the curb and lost his balance. At that very moment, a public carriage was about to collide with him. Heh heh, he’s certainly no ordinary person. Despite the circumstances, he evaded it with a remarkably nimble move. And then, guess what? He collided with a gas street lamp pole, causing his nose to bleed.”

After recounting the humorous scene she had witnessed that afternoon, Franca turned her gaze to Lumian, awaiting his response to her inquiry.

Lumian paused, contemplating her question.

“That individual should be Monsieur Ive, the landlord of Auberge du Coq Doré. He is in cahoots with the pervert known as Hedsey, who attacked Jenna.

“I suspect he is a Beyonder. I had previously informed the Eternal Blazing Sun Church of the anomaly through intermediaries, but they found nothing amiss. Recently, I acquired a Bad Luck charm and seized an opportunity to use it on him. I intended for him to experience frequent misfortunes and thereby expose his abnormality.

“Unfortunately, his performance went unnoticed by official Beyonders.”

But given that tramp’s luck, Monsieur Ive would likely suffer from misfortune for another two or three days.

Franca’s expression darkened as she stated, “Indeed, it’s clear that he is a Beyonder.

“So, it’s the group that attacked Jenna… You should have informed me earlier! I could have found someone to help draw greater attention from the authorities to this fellow named Ive!”

Recalling the eradicated mirror people, Lumian focused on the depraved Hedsey, Monsieur Ive, Susanna Mattise, and Théatre de

l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

"The abilities of their pathway are quite intriguing…" Franca couldn't help but sigh. "When I first delved into mysticism, everyone told me that there were only twenty-two divine pathways. However, in the past two to three years, peculiar Sequences have occasionally emerged. Do evil gods fall outside the realm of divine pathways?"

After a brief pause, Franca said to Lumian, "I will report this to the authorities through my contacts, but we mustn't be careless. Remember, always remain vigilant and be prepared for any unforeseen circumstances. Indeed, when the time comes, we may have to collaborate and take action. I will inform you once we have communicated.

"Not bad. Now you know how to seek assistance from me. Don't fret; when I find myself in trouble, I will come to you."

"Okay." Lumian nodded gently.

…

After bidding Franca farewell, Lumian made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré.

He still remembered the issue with Termiboros. Once inside Room 207, he retrieved the memo and read it carefully before composing a letter to Madam Magician.

In the letter, he primarily addressed two concerns. Firstly, he detailed the temptation and subsequent influence of Termiboros upon receiving the Alms Monk boon. Secondly, he informed Madam Magician that he had sought assistance from the Psychiatrist and could now avoid reciting the corresponding honorific name.

Thanks to Monsieur Ive hiring a regular cleaning lady, the motel had become less infested with bedbugs. Lumian swiftly tidied up the surroundings, arranged the altar, and summoned the doll-like blond messenger.

The messenger surveyed the room and seemed satisfied with Lumian's decision to change the summoning location.

Approximately thirty minutes later, she materialized in Room 207 and placed the reply on the wooden table. Tilting her chin slightly, she addressed Lumian, “You should be grateful. I helped remind Madam Magician and ensured she read your letter promptly.”

“Thank you,” Lumian replied reflexively, momentarily caught off guard.

It was only after the messenger had departed that Lumian snapped out of his daze. He picked up the neatly folded square letter and unfolded it.

“I am pleased to hear that your treatment is proving effective. I did not expect that entity to dispatch an angel. What a significant investment.

“In recent years, evil gods have indeed been infiltrating more frequently, but it remains challenging for higher-level powers to enter our world. The number of angels can be counted on one hand. Three of them were destroyed in transit, causing only a small area of corruption. While one succeeded, an orthodox god intervened and rectified the situation.

“In other words, you are the only unfortunate individual in the entire world.”

Chapter 207 - 207 Organization

207 Organization

Lumian paid no mind to Madam Magician's usual playful jabs and instead focused on her account of the evil god's infiltration.

It aligned with the information shared by the late "Hammer" Ait.

For unrecognized evil gods hailing from other realms, providing godhood boons proved to be an arduous task. Numerous obstacles hindered Their progress. They had to rely on covert followers to perform elaborate rituals on a grand scale, which often drew attention and resulted in swift annihilation before they could infiltrate.

Madam Magician painstakingly detailed various examples, showcasing the immense difficulty angelic entities faced when descending into the mortal plane. In recent years, there had been only five instances, with four failures and one partial success. While gaining a measure of godhood without reaching angelic status seemed somewhat easier, such cases were rare and generally unsuccessful.

Though Madam Magician didn't explicitly mention it, Lumian suspected that the Great Mother, the Mother Tree of Desire, and the enigmatic fog possessed extraordinary infiltration capabilities, surpassing other entities based on "Hammer" Ait. It seemed likely that these three were responsible for most successful instances involving the acquisition of godhood powers.

Does Madam Magician remain unaware or does she deem it unnecessary for me to know at this stage? Lumian pondered momentarily, inclined to believe the latter.

He continued perusing Madam Magician's response.

“This actually bodes well. Dealing with an angel who serves a hidden entity is much simpler than confronting angelic powers derived from said hidden entity. The associated risks are also significantly reduced.

“Once you ascend to the rank of an angel and extract powers of equal magnitude from that fellow with the long name, thereby rendering Him exceedingly vulnerable, you can implore my Lord to undo the seal and set Him free. Then, you can give Him a thorough thrashing and either transform Him into a Sealed Artifact or restore Him to His original Beyonder characteristics.

“Naturally, this hinges upon Him truly being an angelic entity and not a puppet blessed with a boon. Puppets are easier to handle. Once you extract a certain measure of His power, He will crumble. However, the remaining power bearing the mark of the hidden entity is what presents a greater challenge. You must maintain the seal and gradually absorb it until it reaches a level manageable by an angel.

“Doesn’t it all seem to be progressing smoothly with a high likelihood of success? Ah, but the most vexing and formidable step lies in becoming an angel.

“In your present state, I lack confidence. Were it not for the uniqueness of the current era, 99% or more of the Beyonders would never come close to touching godhood.

“I believe your Psychiatrist has already enlightened you on how to evade the negative effects of Termiboros. No further elaboration is necessary.

“I simply wish to remind you that should you undertake any critical or perilous endeavors in the future, do write to me beforehand and apprise me of the situation.

“Why do I suggest you write before exploiting that lengthy-named fellow? Because you might be clandestinely influenced and neglect the corresponding dangers, forgetting to notify me. As for Termiboros, He will not let you forget my warning, for it would mean you engaging in numerous hazardous exploits and facing a high risk of losing your life. That is clearly not what He desires or strives for.

“If you were to perish, the seal would be affected, but my lord would be alerted. In that event, I shall gather a team to reinforce the seal and eliminate Him.

“With such a skilled angel of fate sealed within you, your future is destined to be quite ‘exciting.’ Praise the lord. You are akin to bait for the followers of evil gods, Hunters, and Demonesses. You shall embark on a multitude of experiences. If you find the time and inclination, do consider writing a lengthy letter to share with me. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

“And now, with the assistance of the two Psychiatrists, you can express your desire to alter your faith to Mr. K during a forthcoming gathering. Remember, before you set off to attend the event, offer prayers to my lord for the angel’s protection.”

Lumian read the note patiently, finding Madam Magician’s words both abundant and yet empty.

The most valuable part was her guidance on evading Termiboros’s influence and the reminder to seek her opinion before utilizing the angel’s power. Additionally, she provided a beautifully drawn blueprint that offered a chance to address the corruption within his body at the angelic level.

Lumian burned the note by rubbing his spirituality. He then reached into his pockets, touching the hidden banknotes and coins, before leaving Room 207 and making his way to Room 305.

Anthony Reid had already returned to his lodgings and sat by the bedside, dressed as a clerk.

Lumian produced 400 verl d’or worth of banknotes and handed them over to Anthony Reid.

At the same time, he nodded slightly and stated, “The commission is over.”

“It seems you’ve already encountered the target,” Anthony Reid chuckled.

Taking a moment to consider, he inquired, “Can I report the target’s

information to the authorities?"

"Wait for a week," Lumian replied. He had initially planned to offer Anthony Reid more money to delay claiming the reward from the wanted poster. However, since he sought his opinion, Lumian took advantage of the situation by setting a time limit.

He worried that any investigation or arrest related to Louis Lund might alert Madame Pualis, potentially jeopardizing their meeting.

Anthony Reid did not object and let out a sigh. "You're more suited for the market district than I initially thought."

He had never witnessed a wanted criminal rise to become a leader of a sizable mob so swiftly without being detected by the authorities.

"Competent individuals can thrive anywhere, just like you," Lumian advised Anthony Reid, casting a casual glance around Room 305.

His eyes fell upon a few folded papers on the wooden table near the window. They appeared thicker and smoother, larger than ordinary oil paintings.

What could they be? Lumian focused his gaze for a moment, realizing that the folded papers had a faint bluish hue and a printed texture.

Instantly, the pieces fell into place.

The posters on the wall!

Posters of parliamentary candidates had been plastered all over the place recently!

"You seem particularly invested in the National Convention election," Lumian didn't hold back his speculation as he taunted Anthony Reid. "Do you have a legitimate occupation?"

One of the fundamental eligibility criteria for the elections.

Anthony Reid calmly smiled and replied, "No."

He did not elaborate on his reasons for collecting the parliamentary

candidates' posters.

Another commission? Lumian decided not to delve further. He waved his hand dismissively and left Room 305.

Amidst the lunatic's piercing cries, Lumian descended the stairs, left Auberge du Coq Doré, returned to Salle de Bal Brise, and settled at the bar counter.

"Good evening, Boss," the bartender greeted with deference, straightening his posture.

Lumian nodded.

"Give me a glass of absinthe."

Having thought about Cordu too often that day, he needed a dose of psychedelic bitterness to jolt his senses awake.

On the stage, Jenna performed with exaggerated flair, belting out flashy songs. Leaning against the bar counter, Lumian let his gaze wander as he absorbed every note.

Now and then, he would take a sip of the dreamy green liquid, allowing its bitterness to awaken his nerves.

Once he regained composure, he organized the recent matters he had to attend to.

First, there was Mr. K's mission; second, the looming threat from the Poison Spur Mob; third, Susanna Mattise's second assault; and fourth, his upcoming meeting with Madame Pualis.

Regarding the election, Lumian didn't pay it much mind after confirming from Franca that the Savoie Mob also backed Hugues Artois. This meant that even if the opposing party won, it wouldn't entirely suppress the Savoie Mob or impede his mission.

Susanna Mattise's resurgence had been a cause for concern, but thanks to the psychiatric treatment, Lumian wouldn't hesitate to seek assistance from Franca. Resolving this matter had become relatively manageable.

Once official Beyonders committed to the task, they wouldn't be inferior to Lumian, a Sequence 8, in effectiveness. They would undoubtedly uncover Monsieur Ive's issues and the troubles at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, purging Susanna Mattise's evil spirit completely.

This would be accomplished within the next few days. Lumian simply needed to remain vigilant.

Mr. K's mission was rather complex, relying on Gardner Martin. Lumian, not being a Spectator Beyonder, could only attempt to gain the target's approval through repeated efforts. There were no shortcuts for the time being, so rushing was unnecessary.

Similarly, he had to await Madame Pualis's response. Lumian couldn't rush the matter even if he desired to.

Upon analyzing the situation, Lumian concluded that he needed to prioritize dealing with the Poison Spur Mob's threat.

After the election, "Black Scorpion" Roger would receive an additional boon from Madame Moon, ascending to the rank of a Sower. "Baldy" Harman and "Short-legged Candlestick" Castina might even advance to the level of Heretic Spellmasters. At that point, Lumian, their primary target, would be defenseless against them. Even with the support of Franca, Baron Brignais, and his allies, the situation would be perilous.

Should I join forces with Franca before the election concludes and infiltrate 126 Avenue du Marché under the cover of darkness to eliminate the remaining leaders of the Poison Spur Mob? Even if Madame Moon sends reinforcements later, by the time they stabilize the situation, I would have earned the Boss's trust and gained a chance to partially withdraw from the market district…

The problem lies in facing a Heretic Spellmaster on their home turf. Even with Franca and me united, defeating him would be a daunting task, not to mention his potential allies…

Perhaps an opportunity will arise to strike at "Baldy" Harman and "Short-legged Candlestick" Castina when they are outside? Lumian

pondered as he spotted Charlie, attired as a waiter, approaching the bar counter with a tray.

Nodding in greeting, Lumian instinctively honed in on Charlie's luck.

In an instant, his grasp on the absinthe glass tightened, and his pupils dilated.

He "saw" Charlie's luck stained with blood, a swirling blend of crimson and ebony that sent a shiver down his spine.

This could only mean that Charlie was on the brink of a life-threatening catastrophe within the next two to three days, or perhaps even within the next 24 hours!

Chapter 208 - 208 Countermeasure

208 Countermeasure

Could Susanna Mattise's attack be imminent? Lumian pondered this question, considering that Charlie had no known enemies and had recently worked as a waiter at Salle de Bal Brise.

Though it was possible that Charlie had simply experienced a string of unfortunate accidents, Lumian wasn't willing to take any chances.

As Charlie carefully placed the tray down and waited, he grew uneasy under Lumian's gaze.

Recalling the other's mystical prophetic ability, Charlie leaned in and whispered, "Did you see something?"

A smile spread across Lumian's face.

"I foresee a romantic encounter in your future. You'll form a relationship that goes beyond friendship with a beautiful woman."

"Is that true?" Charlie asked, surprised and delighted.

The woman's name is Susanna Mattise… Lumian chuckled, suppressing his words. "You're quite gullible, aren't you? How can you believe that?"

"I knew it…" Charlie looked disappointed.

The presence of the Idiot Instrument had already revealed to him Ciel's knack for deception.

Lumian's smile faded as he watched Charlie make his way to the edge of the dance floor, carrying a tray filled with glasses.

Thoughts raced through Lumian's mind.

Am I simply unlucky, or is my fate predetermined? The official Beyonders will soon keep a close watch on Monsieur Ive and the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. They'll arrest all the cultists who believe in the Mother Tree of Desire and locate the evil spirit, Susanna Mattise, to purge her completely. Yet, here I am, facing the possibility of Susanna Mattise launching an attack on me and Charlie today…

Dammit, Termiboros, that pig's son. He must be behind this!

Based on my observations of luck, the problem will likely arise late tonight or perhaps even at midnight the day after tomorrow…

I can't solely rely on Susanna Mattise coming to Charlie and me the day after tomorrow. I must prepare for the worst-case scenario…

Gradually regaining composure, Lumian, influenced by Franca and Jenna's vulgarities, forced himself to remain calm and assess the situation.

Simultaneously, he devised an initial plan of action. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

First, he would discreetly alert Charlie, assuming a hidden identity, and instruct him to seek refuge in the nearest Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral for the next three days.

Second, Lumian would go to Rue des Blouses Blanches and enlist Franca's aid.

With Franca and Mr. K's finger acting as his protectors, Lumian believed he stood a strong chance of surviving Susanna Mattise's initial onslaught. Furthermore, she would not have another opportunity in the future. Whether it was Franca's message to the official Beyonders through her secret channels or Charlie's presence at the cathedral seeking sanctuary, it would be enough to inform the Eternal Blazing Sun Church of Susanna Mattise's reappearance!

Although Lumian could likely handle Susanna Mattise on his own with Mr. K's assistance, since he already owed Franca a favor, why

not accrue a little more debt to ensure greater security?

Without hesitation, Lumian finished his absinthe and departed from Salle de Bal Brise.

Once again, the world spun, and he descended to the ground. He found himself surrounded by a vast network of brownish-green roots, insects scurrying about, and rats hiding in various corners…

Just as Lumian was about to remove his glasses and begin applying his disguise, his eyes caught sight of a clump of turquoise hair entwined with vines and branches.

Bang!

Lumian's head spun, as if he had been hit, and golden stars danced before his eyes.

In haste, he removed the Mystery Prying Glasses, bent down, and retched for a few moments.

Once the wave of nausea subsided, Lumian seized the opportunity while the urge to draw still lingered. He reached for his makeup tools and began applying various substances to his face.

Gazing into the dimly lit windowpane, Lumian found himself increasingly unrecognizable. He resembled one of the unkempt drunkards commonly found in dance halls.

When he finished, he averted his gaze, afraid of the disorienting effects that might follow.

Phew… Lumian put away his makeup tools, exhaled deeply, and filtered through the images he had witnessed while wearing the Mystery Prying Glasses.

One image stood out in particular—an image of turquoise hair entwined with branches and vines. It struck a chord of familiarity within him, and he quickly made a connection.

Susanna Mattise also possessed long, turquoise hair interwoven with branches and vines that seemed to materialize from nowhere!

Susanna Mattise's territory likely lies somewhere underground in the market district? Lumian made a preliminary judgment.

He couldn't help but grumble, Why does it have to be underground once again? Isn't the underground of Trier already bustling enough?

However, this also explained why the official Beyonders had been unable to fully cleanse Susanna Mattise during their previous encounter. Underground monsters were always challenging to eliminate, just like the Montsouris ghost.

Lumian recollected the real Monsieur Ive's clandestine visit to Underground Trier late at night. He remembered the perverted Hedsey, who had drugged Jenna and led her to an underground cavern. Hedsey seemed familiar with the area and felt at ease there.

This convinced Lumian that Susanna Mattise was indeed hiding somewhere in Underground Trier, not far from the location chosen by Hedsey.

Deeper into the depths of the underground path, all the way to the end perhaps? Lumian speculated as he changed into simple cargo pants, incongruous with his formal top, and left Room 207.

Inside Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian surveyed the surroundings until he spotted Charlie, serving drinks to guests near the periphery of the dance floor.

Leaning closer, Lumian discreetly brushed past Charlie and whispered, "Susanna Mattise."

Amidst Jenna's singing, booming music, and clamorous voices, the name resonated clearly. Charlie froze in place, as if struck by lightning.

Only then did Lumian gently remind him in a hushed tone, "I have received information that Susanna Mattise will reemerge within the next three days. If you wish to avoid a grim fate, seek refuge in the cathedral tonight and remain there for three days."

Charlie's initial reaction was one of horror. His second was to search for Ciel. And his third was to inquire anxiously whether he would be

fired for taking three days off.

A lump formed in Charlie's throat as he searched in vain for Ciel. He mustered the courage to ask in a hushed voice, "Really?"

You can choose not to believe it… Lumian managed to restrain his instinctual reaction to prevent Charlie from making any connection.

With a deliberate effort to keep his voice low, he continued, "If you go to the cathedral tonight, someone will confirm the truth for you."

Charlie's fear became too overwhelming to contain. He scrutinized the unfamiliar face before him and asked with a tremor in his voice, "Who are you?"

And why did you come specifically to warn me?

"Just someone who wishes you well," Lumian responded, borrowing a phrase his sister often used in jest.

Without further explanation, he walked past Charlie, squeezing his way onto the dance floor and swiftly disappearing from view.

Charlie felt as though he had been plunged into winter, his body shivering uncontrollably.

During moments like this, memories of Susanna Mattise's beauty, tenderness, and passion would occasionally flash through his dreams. But every time, those memories would be overshadowed by grotesque images of tree-like warts, blooming flowers, and slimy substances, extinguishing any desire within him. And now, that monster was making a comeback!

I should make my way to église Saint-Robert! Charlie took a few steps toward the exit with the tray in hand, then halted.

He recalled that it was already late at night, and Avenue du Marché would undoubtedly have very few pedestrians at this hour.

Such an environment posed greater danger than the bustling Salle de Bal Brise!

Susanna Mattise always invades my dreams, or it's in the dead of night when everyone is fast asleep. But here, in the dance hall, with so many eyes upon us, she surely won't dare to appear… Once Ciel returns, I'll ask him to escort me to église Saint-Robert… Charlie withdrew his gaze from the door and decided to wait a little longer.

The dance hall, teeming with various sounds and aromas, offered him a sense of security.

…

3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Having wiped off his makeup, Lumian rapped on Franca's door.

Franca's ponytail had come undone, allowing her flaxen hair to cascade naturally. However, instead of a nightgown, she sported a cotton two-piece pajama set.

Donning summer slippers, she turned to admit Lumian into the room and asked in bewilderment, "Are you here for some mystical knowledge tonight?"

Considering the short time they had been apart—less than two hours—she couldn't think of any other reason.

After Franca closed the door, Lumian spoke with gravity,"Something's happening with Charlie. I suspect Susanna Mattise will make a reappearance within the next two days, possibly even tonight."

"So soon?" Franca couldn't hide her surprise.

She still hadn't relayed the issues with Susanna Mattise, Monsieur Ive, and Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons to 007!

Lumian nodded.

"Although it's hard to accept, all signs point to my guess being correct."

"What's your plan?" Franca wasted no time discussing the

possibilities.

Lumian shared his two courses of action with Franca but refrained from mentioning Mr. K's finger.

Franca regarded him with a smile.

"You're remarkably composed.

"Didn't you tell me before that Susanna Mattise is suspected to be a Sequence 5 malevolent spirit? Even if we join forces, we might not be able to defeat her.

"Tsk, are you placing too much confidence in me, or perhaps too much confidence in yourself?"

Lumian smiled. "Both."

"To have survived the calamity in Cordu, you're undoubtedly extraordinary." Franca sighed and glanced at the wall clock in the house. "If we can make it through the night, there shouldn't be any issues. I'll inform the authorities swiftly through my connections. Wait for me in the living room."

She retreated into her master bedroom and busied herself with something.

Lumian settled on the sofa and directed his gaze at the cuckoo wall clock beside him, silently ticking away the minutes.

Nearly half an hour elapsed before Franca emerged from her room. She had changed into a black robe adorned with leather armor and a hood.

"It's settled. They'll likely launch the operation tomorrow," she informed Lumian, then inquired, "Aren't you concerned that Charlie might encounter trouble on his way to église Saint-Robert? Even ordinary people can stumble upon malevolent spirits along the roadside in the dead of night."

église Saint-Robert served as the primary cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, near the

Suhit steam locomotive station. The attached cemetery had once occupied the space now occupied by Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian had already considered this.

“I plan to discreetly follow him to the cathedral after Salle de Bal Brise closes.”

“I’ll accompany you.” Franca furrowed her brow and scrutinized Lumian. “Won’t Charlie be at risk in the dance hall? Some evil spirits pay no heed to the presence of others or their numbers.”

Given that Susanna Mattise’s previous appearances hadn’t affected anyone else, Lumian subconsciously believed that she would avoid crowded places. The dance hall was far more crowded than the motel.

Jolted by Franca’s reminder, he exclaimed in a deep voice, “Let’s hurry back to the dance hall!”

Chapter 209 - 209 Bad Luck

209 Bad Luck

Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian scanned the dim-lit dance hall, searching for Charlie, but to no avail. His heart sank. Hastily, he motioned for Louis and Sarkota to come closer.

“What’s the matter, Boss?” Louis asked, his voice filled with anxiety.

He assumed that Lumian was dissatisfied with the current state of affairs in the dance hall.

Lumian’s eyes wandered across the waiters, all dressed in vests and bow ties. He casually inquired, “Where’s Charlie? I need to discuss something with him.”

Louis’s eyes widened in shock. “Boss, didn’t Charlie follow you out just now?”

Charlie followed me? Lumian’s pupils contracted, as if he had been struck by a sudden burst of light.

He asked in a deep voice, “When?”

Louis pondered for a moment, confusion evident on his face as he looked at Lumian.

“Less than five minutes ago.”

Lumian’s gaze shifted to Sarkota, his taciturn and reliable subordinate, who also appeared puzzled.

Five minutes ago? I’ve been at Rue des Blouses Blanches for over half an hour. Moreover, the last time I left the dance hall, I was disguised

as a drunkard. There's no way Charlie could have left with me… Lumian swiftly dismissed the possibility of Charlie leaving the dance hall with him unnoticed.

The situation was growing increasingly bizarre!

Considering Charlie's black ill-fated luck, tinged with crimson red, the probability of him encountering danger was almost 100%!

Suppressing the myriad of thoughts racing through his mind, Lumian said to Louis and Sarkota, "Perhaps someone is impersonating me, but I'm unsure why they would be searching for Charlie."

"Impossible…" Louis blurted out.

A few minutes ago, he and Sarkota had greeted the boss. It couldn't have been a fake!

Before Louis could finish his thought, Lumian shot him a cold glare. Immediately, Louis changed his tune and stammered, "Maybe, maybe it's a fake."

Lumian didn't dwell on the question and inquired, "Did Charlie change his clothes when he left the ballroom?"

According to the rules of Salle de Bal Brise, every waiter, bartender, chef, and kitchen helper had two sets of uniforms. However, they were not allowed to take them outside of the dance hall; they could only be kept in the changing room on the first floor. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

This was due to the cultural environment in the market district. Bartenders and waiters were prone to bankruptcy caused by gambling, alcoholism, illness, and other issues. If they were allowed to take their uniforms home, they would surely pawn them for cash before disappearing. They wouldn't care if Salle de Bal Brise was owned by the mob.

Similarly, in Trier's inexpensive cafés frequented by scavengers, laborers, tramps, and low-level workers, tin utensils and iron chains were used to secure them to the tables. This ensured only a limited range of movement for the customers, preventing them from secretly

taking the utensils and selling them.

The more upscale cafés had their own set of troubles. In order to maintain an air of sophistication, they preferred using silver or porcelain utensils. Consequently, the boss had to painstakingly count the utensils after closing each day to check for any missing ones. The waiters were repeatedly instructed to be vigilant about such matters.

He had intended to prevent Charlie from leaving the dance hall in a waiter's attire, but since Charlie had already departed with the boss, he wisely kept his mouth shut.

Most of the dance hall's rules applied to waiters, dancers, bartenders, chefs, bouncers, cleaners, and even managers. The boss was exempt from such restrictions!

Lumian nodded slightly and calmly said, "You guys carry on with your tasks."

With that, he made his way toward the changing room near the kitchen.

He suspected that Charlie's disappearance had something to do with Susanna Mattise!

The small changing room was empty. Lumian glanced around and spotted the locker labeled with Charlie's name.

Franca, donned in a black robe and hood, materialized beside Lumian and praised, "You acted swiftly. You knew to seek out a divination medium for me."

"I'm not a fool," Lumian simply replied. He retrieved a piece of wire he always carried and manipulated it a few times before opening Charlie's locker where his clothes were kept.

Franca pondered for a couple of seconds before reaching for Charlie's linen shirt.

She then used a broom that was leaning against the wall outside the changing room to conduct the divination.

“Charlie’s current whereabouts…

“Charlie’s current whereabouts…

“…”

Franca held Charlie’s clothes in her left hand and pressed her right hand against the top of the broom, murmuring to herself.

Eventually, she released her right hand, but the broom remained motionless. It stood as still as if someone were still holding it.

After a few seconds, it crashed to the ground with a thud.

“Was it interfered with?” Lumian probed.

Franca slowly shook her head.

“Doesn’t appear so…”

She swiftly walked over to the full-length mirror in the changing room and stroked its surface a few times.

Holding Charlie’s clothes, she commenced another round of divination.

After a few seconds, the mirror darkened, as if reflecting the darkness itself.

In the next moment, two figures materialized, moving in a hazy yellowish light.

One of them vaguely resembled Charlie, dressed as a waiter, while the other bore a resemblance to Lumian from behind.

Apart from that, they couldn’t discern any further details.

Franca scrutinized the vision for a few seconds before confidently deducing, “They’re underground! That’s why the previous divination couldn’t provide a clear answer. A broom can’t jump and stand on its head, can it?”

Lumian nodded and exited the changing room. He proceeded upstairs

to retrieve a carbide lamp and any other useful items he might need later. Then, he swiftly left the dance hall.

He already had a rough idea!

Witnessing the scene, Franca retrieved a glimmering powder from her pocket and combined it with an incantation to conceal herself from view.

On Avenue du Marché, bathed in the eerie glow of the crimson moonlight and gas street lamps, Lumian hastened his pace, scouring the area for any trace or clue.

His destination was the entrance to the underground located in the middle of Avenue du Marché.

Suddenly, amidst the encompassing darkness, Lumian abruptly halted.

He observed that the grills in the drainage ditch had been displaced, and there were disheveled footprints along the roadside. Near the height of an average person's head, there were signs of impact.

Franca revealed herself once more and reconstructed the sequence of events. "It seems like he slipped and stumbled while trying to maintain his balance along the gutter. Eventually, he collided with a street lamp… There should have been blood, but it was cleaned up…"

Perplexed, she muttered to herself,

"It bears a resemblance to the unlucky incident I witnessed earlier today…"

At that moment, Franca experienced a sudden realization. "Could that unlucky imposter, Ive, be the one who took Charlie?"

Lumian had long harbored suspicions, but now he was even more convinced.

"If he can masquerade as Monsieur Ive, it follows that he can also assume my identity.

“This ability is quite remarkable…”

At that instant, all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place within Lumian’s mind.

Susanna Mattise was on the verge of recovering, yet she remained concerned about the official Beyonders’ continued surveillance of Charlie. Thus, she enlisted the fake Monsieur Ive to pose as Ciel and discreetly escort Charlie underground, making it appear like an ordinary occurrence. Once they reached Underground Trier, it would prove challenging for the official Beyonders to locate them.

If they lingered any longer, even divination might be thwarted!

“Evading the official Beyonders during their initial investigation would require impressive skills,” Franca responded. Foregoing her invisibility, she trailed Lumian to the entrance of underground Trier in the middle of Avenue du Marché.

As the yellowish-blue light from the carbide lamp illuminated the staircase below, Lumian noticed two sets of footprints.

One set was familiar—it belonged to Charlie.

Examining the footprints, it was evident that Charlie was apprehensive about descending into the underground in the dead of night. He treaded cautiously, yet ultimately chose to place his trust in Ciel.

For the time being, there were no signs of him being restrained.

“Idiot…” Lumian cursed under his breath.

It was understandable that he couldn’t discern the deception. After all, one was a Beyonder, while the other was an ordinary individual. Nevertheless, they had walked together for quite a distance. Didn’t he sense anything awry during their conversation?

Is it truly so effortless to impersonate me, Lumian Lee?

“Thankfully, we have these footprints,” Franca sighed with relief.

The simplified dowsing rod divination proved challenging to utilize underground. While it might point in the right direction, there might not be a viable path to follow. It often necessitated lengthy detours, increasing the risk of losing their way in the labyrinthine darkness.

The Witch had not brought any tools to illuminate their path. It was unclear whether she was confident in her ability to remain with Lumian or if she simply disregarded the hindrance of darkness on her vision.

Lumian held the carbide lamp and ascended the stairs, reaching the level where the street and square names were indicated.

He moved swiftly, sometimes choosing a direction before Franca could discern the footprints. Soon enough, they discovered Charlie and the imposter Ive's footprints once again.

Franca felt perplexed. After a brief pause, she couldn't help but inquire, "It seems you know where the imposter Ive is headed?"

"After that pervert knocked Jenna unconscious, he followed the same path," Lumian calmly replied.

This was the route familiar to those individuals, a route that evoked a sense of security. Moreover, it was likely that the imposter Ive was leading Charlie to Susanna Mattise. Susanna might very well be waiting at the end of this path!

Franca refrained from further comment. She utilized the shroud of darkness to partially conceal herself. At times, she scouted ahead, while at others, she watched Lumian's back and flanks.

After several minutes of walking, Lumian and Franca came to a halt.

The area displayed signs of partial collapse. Debris littered the vicinity, and the trails meandered in disarray. Eventually, they led to a small cavity obstructed by rubble.

"The target encountered a minor cave-in and became trapped?" Franca whispered with a hiss. "Is this not excessively unlucky?"

Her gaze then shifted to Lumian.

“Where did you acquire that unlucky charm? Its efficacy seems way too potent.”

“I’ll procure one for you the next time I come across such misfortune,” Lumian responded, uncertain if he would encounter another individual as luckless as the tramp.

As soon as he finished speaking, gravel cascaded from the heap of stones barricading the cave entrance, clattering upon the ground.

In a short while, a passageway was cleared, and a figure emerged cautiously.

With golden-black hair and brilliant light-blue eyes, he possessed a striking handsomeness—yet another Lumian.

Chapter 210 - 210 Performance

210 Performance

Upon glimpsing the two figures lurking in the shadows, the impostor Ive was taken aback. He raised his right hand and pointed accusingly at Lumian, his voice filled with inquiry.

“Who are you? Why are you pretending to be me?”

As he berated, he hastened his pace, pulling himself out of the tunnel and leaping onto level ground.

In the past, Lumian would have charged forward, ready for close combat or drawing his revolver to unleash a barrage of bullets at his foe. He would have granted no opportunity for words. But this time, for some inexplicable reason, he yearned to put on a show. He desired to witness the other party’s abilities before seizing the perfect moment to display his own.

Without an adversary, there would be no performance!

Franca shared the same sentiment. She eagerly longed to stand in for Lumian, refraining from an immediate attack.

Behind the impostor Ive stood Charlie, disguised as a waiter. As he crawled through the debris, he caught sight of a figure beneath the dual glow of a carbide lamp and a lantern.

He froze in shock at the confrontation between the two Ciels. For a moment, it felt as though he was trapped in a dream. He couldn’t discern who was genuine and who was counterfeit, who aimed to harm him, and who sought to aid him.

The only certainty he held was that danger loomed over him once more!

The impostor Ive assessed Lumian and turned to Franca, his voice laced with anxiety and anger.

“Wake up! You’ve been deceived by this impostor! When have I ever worn such attire?”

After Lumian warned Charlie, he wiped away his makeup but made no change to his clothing. He still sported an unusual combination of a simple formal top and cargo pants. In comparison, the impostor Ive’s white shirt, black vest, brown pants, and laceless leather boots seemed more in line with his usual style.

Franca couldn’t resist putting on a performance.

“Is that so? Then enlighten me, what is my code name?” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The impostor Ive asked in exasperation and amusement, “Madame Red Boots, have you forgotten your moniker?”

Franca couldn’t help but chuckle.

She took a couple of steps backward, blending into the shadows at the periphery of the carbide lamp’s illumination.

The underground, where darkness held sway, was an ideal setting for Demoness combat!

As the fake Ive beheld the scene, a sense of unease swelled within his heart. He knew all too well that his attempt to masquerade as the genuine article had likely been exposed, leaving him unable to maintain his charade. Instantly, he altered his approach.

Discarding the lantern, he lifted his gaze to meet Lumian’s, his countenance growing frigidly cold.

The corners of his mouth curled into a chilling smirk.

“I can’t decide whether to pity or congratulate you for seeing through my guise, but this definitely isn’t advantageous for you.”

With lantern in hand, the fake Ive’s aura surged, transforming into a

fearsome volcano teetering on the brink of eruption.

Quivering, he lowered his head, unable to meet the other's gaze directly. However, his longing to perform and his unwavering resolve compelled him to raise his head, struggling to fix his gaze upon the fake Ive's face.

Simultaneously, the darkness beyond the light seemed cloaked in an eerie green glow. Vines and branches sprouted from the abyss, entwining the ceiling and rocky walls.

Franca, concealed within the shadows, succumbed to intimidation in the face of the fake Ive's aura, rendering her unable to maintain her abilities. Her form materialized less than two meters away from the impostor.

Meanwhile, Charlie, still sprawled within the passageway, trembled even more violently. He buried his face in the gravel and earth, his mind blank.

With a disdainful glance toward Lumian and Franca, the fake Ive spoke. "You dare to pursue me, utterly ignorant? The only fortunate aspect is your considerable attractiveness. I find it hard to dispose of you outright."

His words entered Lumian and Franca's ears, instilling them with fear, compelling them to turn and flee.

This sensation prompted Lumian to realize something profound.

A demigod!

The fake Ive was a demigod, possessing godhood!

Gritting his teeth and summoning his courage, Lumian delved into his pocket, hopeful that Mr. K's finger could serve as a temporary deterrent, buying him and Franca an opportunity to escape the Underground Trier.

So what if you're a demigod? I've encountered demigods before. Fear won't break my spirit or halt my resistance!

Just as Lumian's right palm was poised to make contact with Mr. K's finger, and Franca was on the verge of fleeing, unable to contain herself, a cracking noise resounded from above.

A rock the size of a fist descended, mirroring the former descent of its brethren, hurtling toward the fake Ive, who had been arrogantly observing Lumian and Franca's reactions.

Caught off guard, the impostor Ive managed only to lower his head, barely evading the projectile. The gravel struck his left shoulder, fracturing bone and causing the flesh to sink inward.

He emitted a brief cry, nearly toppling to the ground.

This unexpected turn of events dispersed the menacing aura and godlike presence, leaving behind a scant few turquoise vines and brownish-green branches as testament to the recent occurrence.

Snapping out of his shock, Lumian, driven by his desire to perform and seizing the opportunity to provoke,

discarded the carbide lamp, clutched his stomach, and erupted in laughter.

"A fake? Is everything about you nothing but fake? Don't tell me that thing of yours is a mere piece of wood?"

The fake Ive, who had just recovered from the pain, was overcome with emotion. His gaze fixated upon Lumian, his eyes tinged with an otherworldly green hue.

Unbeknownst to him, Franca had already sprinkled herself with fluorescent powder, vanishing into thin air with a hushed whisper.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian found himself consumed by an intense yearning for the pleasures of the opposite sex.

If Franca hadn't rendered herself invisible, he would have been utterly powerless against the impulse. However, he wasn't entirely bereft of reason. It was just that his actions had become burdensome, both physically and mentally.

Struggling, Lumian extracted the revolver from its holster, endeavoring to take aim at the fake Ive.

In his current state, he inexplicably found the other's visage profoundly alluring.

Bang!

Lumian squeezed the trigger, but his shot missed the impostor Ive.

Fury ignited within the fake Ive's eyes. With agile grace, he closed in on his target, his hand rising to deliver a resounding slap across Lumian's face.

Instantly, his appearance underwent a subtle alteration, as if he possessed limited control over his image. He softened Lumian's masculine features, lending them a touch of femininity.

Lumian gasped for breath, his finger squeezing the trigger once more.

A tumultuous surge of desire threatened to consume him. He yearned to embrace the female rendition of the fake Ive and indulge in unspeakable acts.

Amidst the maelstrom of his intense emotions, he instinctively recalled the words of the psychiatrist, Madam Susie, and promptly began taking deep, steadying breaths.

Bang!

Lumian found a measure of tranquility, successfully discharging another shot from the revolver.

The fake Ive hadn't anticipated the unwavering fortitude of his adversary, who managed to retain his sanity. Narrowly evading the bullet that grazed his arm, rending his garments and scorching his flesh, he couldn't suppress a pained grunt. In that moment, Lumian, warily mindful of the opponent's abilities, ceased his pretense, seizing the opportunity to grip the ritual silver dagger and plunge it into his own ribs, refraining from extracting it.

The pain jolted his senses, quelling much of his desire.

Likewise, the fake Ive shook off the lingering effects of Provocation, regaining a measure of clarity.

He understood that the current circumstances were ill-suited for an extended confrontation. Swiftly producing a golden coin, he hurled it toward the crevice obstructed by debris.

Lumian, overcome by an uncontrollable avarice, lunged toward the gleaming coin with the ritual silver dagger, eager to claim it as his own.

Seizing the opportunity, the fake Ive sprinted deeper into the underground, displaying swiftness surpassing that of ordinary mortals.

Suddenly, his feet skidded, and a slick swoosh echoed through the air.

Unbeknownst to him, the path had been encased in a layer of frost!

Struggling to regain his footing, the fake Ive endeavored to restore his balance.

However, in that very moment, a towering figure clad in a black robe and hood materialized behind him.

With a swift motion, Franca extended her right hand, revealing a hidden blade enveloped in black flames. She aimed to plunge it into the fake Ive's back, employing the full force of an Assassin's strike.

With a pfft, despite the fake Ive's best efforts to evade and rely on some kind of performance to toughen his skin and muscles like stone, the blade managed to pierce his body.

His eyes widened, and he twisted his body forcefully, capturing a glimpse of Franca through his ghostly green gaze.

Having successfully executed her attack, Franca intended to take a step back and utilize the shadows to create distance before triggering the detonation of the black flames coursing within the target's body. However, her limbs suddenly grew weak, and she bent over.

She clenched her legs together, a watery light flickering in her eyes resembling a serene lake.

Having anticipated the deep connection between the fake Ive she was tailing and the deviant Hedsey, Franca was prepared for the current circumstances. Without hesitation, she reached into her concealed pocket, aiming to retrieve the smelling salts she had acquired earlier.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian, having secured the golden coin, discharged three shots at the severely wounded fake Ive.

Desperately attempting to evade, the fake Ive's precarious footing on the icy surface undermined his ability to maintain even basic balance. Eventually, he plummeted to the ground with a resounding thud, one of the bullets piercing his abdomen.

With a chance to catch her breath, Franca inhaled the scent of the salts, the invigorating aroma jolting her senses awake. Suppressing her desires, she clenched her left hand.

Black flames erupted from the fake Ive's body, devouring his soul and eliciting a mournful cry.

Lumian aimed once more and pulled the trigger.

The final bullet erupted forth, instantaneously puncturing the fake Ive's forehead.

With a deafening bang, the fake Ive's head split open, spilling forth crimson and white.

Observing Franca bend over once again, Lumian hurriedly made his way to her side, circling around the frost-covered area.

Franca raised her gaze, her eyes moist as she softly gasped for air.

Suddenly, she embraced Lumian, but her nostrils detected the presence of a metal canister with an open lid pressed against her nose.

The indescribably potent scent compelled her to sneeze repeatedly, diminishing much of her desire.

“Dammit, this stuff is far more potent than smelling salts!” Franca blurted out as soon as she regained consciousness.

Lumian quickly took a sniff himself and let out a sneeze.

Chapter 211 - 211 Spirit Channeling

211 Spirit Channeling

While Lumian sneezed, Franca swiftly took two steps forward and crouched beside the fake Ive's lifeless body.

With a delicate grip, she extinguished the flickering black flames that still clung to it.

"Thank goodness it hasn't burned too far, or the soul would have dissipated," Franca breathed a sigh of relief, straightening up. She reached into her pocket and retrieved a handful of powder that resembled the pitch-blackness of night.

Lumian stowed away the canister of stimulating gas and glanced at Franca, curiosity etched on his face.

"Are you planning to channel his spirit?"

In the recent battle, the fake Ive had displayed the strength of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder and wielded peculiar abilities. Lumian couldn't hold back, or the situation would have taken a perilous turn.

Franca nodded subtly, responding, "Indeed. Channeling a spirit now will yield significant results."

"And which entity do you intend to invoke?" Lumian asked casually.

Franca chuckled before answering, "None. I've merged the principles of Magic Mirror Divination and devised a spirit-summoning spell. While it may not rival the most professional methods, it suffices. Moreover, it won't attract the attention of deities from the corresponding domain."

“You’re quite clever,” Lumian praised, his words laced with a hint of mockery.

Exasperated yet amused, Franca retorted, “It’s called having an academic spirit. We—uh, your sister—have conducted similar research and experiments. Usually, I can’t be bothered to overthink things. Not because I lack intelligence, but because the burden of endless calculations is tiresome. The key to life is to remain relaxed and not get entangled in every intricate detail.”

Her gaze swept over Charlie, still sprawled amidst the rubble in the tunnel. Franca refrained from mentioning Gandalf, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Is this why you’ve adapted so well after becoming a woman? Lumian observed Franca building a wall of spirituality in the vicinity as he approached Charlie.

Witnessing Ciel’s approach, Charlie snapped out of his daze and crawled out of the debris on all fours.

Lumian gazed at him, his expression devoid of emotion.

What he was thinking was: Charlie has just witnessed the battle between Franca, me, and the imposter Ive. If he seeks refuge at the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral, there’s a high probability that he won’t be able to conceal it when questioned by official Beyonders utilizing their powers. This situation differs from the previous one, where the official Beyonders believed everything was under their control. They were prone to carelessness and had blind spots in their minds…

Charlie’s initial elation waned as Lumian continued to scrutinize him in silence. His heart began pounding like a jazz band’s drumbeat.

Fear and confusion evident in his voice, Charlie finally mustered the courage to ask, “What’s the matter?”

Lumian observed that Charlie’s luck remained a blend of red and black, although it had slightly improved since before.

This indicated that Susanna Mattise’s threat had not been completely resolved.

He fell silent for a few seconds before speaking up, “Remember to head to église Saint-Robert later.”

Having already contacted Madame Pualis, Lumian no longer needed to stay at Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman or manage Salle de Bal Brise. As long as he remained with the Savoie Mob, he still had a chance to fulfill Mr. K’s mission.

Furthermore, Franca was now involved. With her vouching for him while in the Boss’s good graces, Lumian could be assigned other profitable ventures even without Salle de Bal Brise. However, the earnings might not be as substantial.

“Alright, alright!” Charlie heaved a sigh of relief.

Having experienced many things, Charlie possessed an open-minded personality. He belonged to the kind of people who grew more excited as the number of individuals increased. Soon enough, his curiosity got the better of him. Pointing at the lifeless imposter Ive lying on the ground, he asked,

“Who’s that? Why does he look exactly like you…”

Before Charlie could finish his question, he paused. As the fake Ive met his demise, the facial muscles relaxed, no longer resembling Ciel. The corpse appeared unfamiliar.

“That’s someone who believed in an evil god and gained strange powers,” Lumian explained simply, tailoring his response to Charlie’s comprehension. “He has a certain connection to Susanna Mattise.”

Charlie felt a lingering fear.

“No wonder he kept leading me underground…”

Unable to hold back, Lumian cursed, “You imbecile! You’ve been with him for so long, and yet you didn’t sense anything was off about him? Does having my face mean he’s me?”

Charlie replied sheepishly, “When I entered Underground Trier, I sensed something was wrong.

“He was very quiet. He only mentioned taking me underground to completely resolve the Susanna Mattise problem. He’s not like you, always cracking jokes and teasing.

“I thought it was because the situation was urgent and you weren’t in the mood…”

Lumian sighed and shifted his gaze to Franca, realizing that Charlie, being an ordinary person, couldn’t see through the Beyonder disguise that could fool even official Beyonders, no matter how astute he was.

The Witch had finished preparing for her own spirit-channeling spell. Standing before the fake Ive’s lifeless body, she held two white candles and chanted a series of incantations in Hermes.

Due to the wall of spirituality, Lumian could only catch fragments of the chant. Franca described herself and the imposter Ive, with the former being the source of spirituality and the foundation for maintaining the ritual, and the latter being the object of prayer—the Magic Mirror that provided answers to questions.

As for Charlie, he heard even less and couldn’t make sense of it all.

A faint light emerged on the makeup mirror in Franca’s hand, and its interior turned into an abyss of deep darkness, as if it had sunk to the river’s depths.

A hazy, pale-white face swiftly appeared in the mirror, bearing a resemblance of 50 to 60% to the deceased fake Ive.

Switching to Intis, Franca inquired, “Who are you and which organization do you belong to?”

The imposter Ive, replied in a dazed manner, “Rentas, a member of the Bliss Society.”

Rentas… Lumian suddenly recalled the name.

The word “Rentas” often appeared on the posters outside Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. He was a prominent male supporting actor.

Franca pressed on with her questioning, “What kind of organization is the Bliss Society? And how is it connected to Susanna Mattise?”

The imposter Ive, Rentas, spoke with an otherworldly voice, “The Bliss Society was originally a secret society for women who love women. Susanna was one of them. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“She grew weary of being involved with members of parliament, high-ranking officials, bankers, newspaper moguls, and other men. She sought solace among fellow ladies and madams who shared her love for women. Eventually, she received divine enlightenment and a boon, becoming a priestess of my lord. She transformed the small Bliss Society into a secret organization that worships my lord.

“In today’s society, it’s inconvenient for women to be openly involved in many affairs. Therefore, the Bliss Society has admitted some male members who can also receive boons, but they lack the privilege to partake in core matters or possess knowledge of the most confidential aspects.”

“Remarkable!” Franca applauded.

She knew that Rentas was referring to the evil god known as the Mother Tree of Desire. Delving into such matters made her apprehensive, fearing that she might stumble upon mystical knowledge she shouldn’t acquire.

A secret society for women who love women… Male members excluded from core matters… Lumian suddenly grasped something.

He stood by the wall of spirituality and gazed at the makeup mirror in Franca’s hand.

“So, Hedsey frequently seeks out street girls and hunts for prey because his desires cannot be fulfilled within the Bliss Society?”

“Yes,” Rentas replied. “Women love women exclusively. When I was a Sex Addict, I had to satisfy my desires on my own. Fortunately, I was more attractive than him and had female audience members who admired me. There were plenty of street girls in the market district,

so I didn't need to take the risk of pursuing excitement."

"That's lit!" Franca expressed her feelings with peculiar words. She clicked her tongue and sighed. "Isn't there a regular secret group for women who love women?"

"Yes," Rentas firmly responded. "To my knowledge, there's the Moment Society and the Narcissus Society. They often organize women orgies at Trocadéro's Red House Café. We have been attempting to establish contact with them and convert them into believers of my lord[1]."

Trocadéro was situated in Quartier 16 on the north bank of the Srenzo River, in the square district. Known as the Triumph Square established by Emperor Roselle, it was a small town surrounded by a vast suburban forest. It was renowned for its exceptional wine production. Trocadéro Wine stood second only to Aurmir red wine in the world.

Fascinated, Franca listened and repeated the terms, "Trocadéro… Red House Café… Women orgies…"

Lumian couldn't help but feel more concerned about the term "Sex Addict." It seemed to perfectly suit the twisted state of Hedsey. It likely corresponded to Sequence 8 of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway. However, he feared that time was running out for the spirit channeling, so he didn't rush to delve into the matter. Instead, he redirected his focus to Susanna Mattise.

"How did Susanna Mattise transform into an evil spirit? And why did you bring Charlie underground?"

Rentas's pale-white face contorted in distortion.

"She died while receiving a boon and transformed into an evil spirit.

"She told us that because her name was still on the lips of many Trieriens and her portrait was used by numerous men to satisfy themselves, she didn't completely dissipate. She retained a certain level of rationality, albeit warped. She became more consumed by her own affairs, neglecting all else.

“She was gravely injured by official Beyonders during her last encounter and spent time recuperating at the altar. We were worried that once she fully recovered, she would seek out Charlie and attract the attention of the authorities. So, we took advantage of the election and brought Charlie to the altar in advance, handing him over to her for handling.”

Charlie had already moved to Lumian’s side. His face turned ashen as he listened, feeling as if he had stepped into the depths of hell.

Franca nodded subtly and spoke, “Where is this altar? How much time until Susanna Mattise fully recovers?”

“The altar…” The surface of the makeup mirror revealed a fading blurry face, unveiling an underground tunnel.

The tunnel stretched endlessly, branching off in multiple directions before leading to a small quarry cave engulfed by vines and branches.

There, a colossal brownish-green tree stump emerged abruptly from the ground. Its form consisted of thick branches, with roots originating from an unknown place.

As the image of the tree stump grew clearer, Franca hastily interrupted the manifestation, fearing any potential disturbances.

Rentas continued, “Susanna will regain her full strength in two days and depart from the altar.”

[1] Such things did exist in the real world during that era. Parisians were experts in this regard. For further details, refer to Histoire insolite des cafés parisiens.

Chapter 212 - 212 Actor

212 Actor

Franca carefully calculated the time and inquired with meticulous detail, “What perils lie at the altar? How much progress has Susanna Mattise made in her recovery today?”

Upon hearing Franca’s question, Lumian made a rough conjecture about her thoughts.

If it was possible, they could seize the opportunity to destroy the altar and eliminate Susanna Mattise, who was now weakened, once and for all!

Before departing from Salle de Bal Brise to track down the imposter Ive, Lumian had contemplated a similar issue. Since Rentas had taken Charlie underground, he believed their destination was Susanna Mattise’s hiding place. Consequently, when he retrieved the carbide lamp, he also retrieved a few bundles of detonators from the safe, hoping to utilize the unique environment to blast those intruders to their demise.

Rentas’s hazy, pale face took on a hint of sanctity.

!!

“The altar is the altar. Only the light of my lord exists. There is no danger.”

Lumian muttered to himself, standing by the wall of spirituality, By stating it that way, it only heightens the danger.

Rentas continued, “I do not know the exact condition of Susanna. All I know is that two weeks ago, we could not see her, but she would occasionally make sounds. Last week, she could communicate with us

normally, and we could perceive her when we activated our Spirit Visions. Today, she remains the same as before, but she appears extremely feeble."

Based on Rentas's account, Lumian made a preliminary estimation. Susanna, who was originally a Fallen Tree Spirit equivalent to Sequence 5, is now nearing Sequence 6?

If Susanna had not been hiding at the Mother Tree of Desire's altar, Lumian would have considered it worth the risk.

Franca pondered for a moment and spoke, "Do you typically offer prayers at the altar and receive boons?"

"Yes," Rentas replied with a nostalgic tone. "Susanna is our priestess. She enables us to experience the Lord's love for the world and unveils everyone's true desires, allowing us to truly understand ourselves."

Upon hearing this, Franca decided to forego further inquiries and seek the truth in the details.

"Is the altar usually protected?"

"Susanna is always there," Rentas's blurred, pale face swayed gently in the mirror.

Franca gazed at the makeup mirror in her hand and queried, "Was the altar under anyone's protection during the two weeks that Susanna was severely injured?" Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Rentas's spirit responded truthfully, "No."

Franca couldn't help but turn her head and glance at Lumian. She realized that he too appeared disappointed and regretful.

From Rentas's answer, they both discerned a crucial fact: the altar possessed a concealed and formidable protective mechanism!

Otherwise, regardless of its underground concealment and the difficulties in locating it, they would need to consider guarding against bounty hunters or cave adventurers fond of searching for

treasure in Underground Trier. Simultaneously, they would have to be cautious of smugglers who might have temporarily altered their routes or wandering university students.

Franca let out a sigh, deciding that it would be best to leave the altar and Susanna Mattise in the hands of the authorities.

Franca shifted her focus and inquired about something else.

“How many members are there in the Bliss Society at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons?”

“Not many,” Rentas’s blurry face with flickering dark green eyes responded. “But I only know a few. Ive, Hedsey, and I report to Maipú Meyer. He is the theater manager and represents Susanna in the core affairs of the Bliss Society since she became an evil spirit.”

“Why choose a man? Isn’t it believed that women only love women? It would be easier to communicate with the other core members of the Bliss Society if it were a woman,” Franca objected.

Are you certain there’s no hidden significance in this conversation? Lumian sensed Madame Hidden Blade’s curiosity piqued.

Rentas’s voice drifted as he replied, “Maipú Meyer used to be Susanna’s lover.”

Franca clicked her tongue and sighed.

“So, we have the high priestess going against the principles of the organization, loving both men and women.”

As she spoke, she cast a glance at Charlie, who appeared bewildered and terrified.

Rentas didn’t shy away from revealing the truth about Maipú Meyer.

“Before Susanna joined the Bliss Society, they were lovers. Furthermore, he was the only one who could make Susanna feel at ease and relaxed. After her divine awakening and embracing her faith in my lord, she transformed the Bliss Society and recruited Maipú Meyer. However, their intimate relationship ceased. When she

became an evil spirit, she no longer limited her affections to women and resumed her connection with Maipú Meyer. Meanwhile, she sought out other targets, infiltrating their dreams and draining their energy. She would fall in love with them before killing them."

Charlie's face grew paler with each passing word, as if he had fallen into an inescapable nightmare that would only end in death.

Franca, who had seriously contemplated having her lover Gardner bear her child, commented, "This is all rather twisted."

She then smiled and remarked, "Does Maipú Meyer enjoy wearing green hats?"

"No, he now exclusively wears a black top hat. He even meticulously grooms the tips of his beard," Rentas dismissed Franca's speculation.

Lumian recalled the mention of a woman's death in Aunett Town during Mr. K's Gathering.

If Maipú Meyer receives a boon and becomes a male Fallen Tree Spirit, could he enter women's dreams and induce erotic fantasies to drain their energy, gradually weakening them until they perish?

The Bliss Society consists of women as its core members, emphasizing that they only love women. It is unlikely for male members to attain such high levels of power. Those incidents are not a result of the Bliss Society, but they too believe in the Mother Tree of Desire? Or could it be due to women loving women?

Franca pressed on with her questioning.

"Why don't you even know the number of members in the Bliss Society at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons? So, other than Susanna, there are no female members among the Bliss Society members you're familiar with?"

Rentas's pale, blurry face seemed to contort.

"Only Maipú Meyer interacts with the female members."

"While I'm uncertain about the current status of female members at

Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, I can speculate on who they were in the past."

"How?" Franca inquired curiously.

Rentas replied, "Those who joined our theater started as supporting actresses. Through honing their acting skills, they eventually became the leading ladies before they left. They were the core members of the Bliss Society.

"The theater was established as a safe and dependable venue for them to fulfill their inner desires until they could gain initial control."

"Why must they act?" Lumian recalled Rentas's various performances.

Rentas struggled for a moment before explaining, "We were blessed with a boon equivalent to a Sequence 7 called Actor.

"This gift enables us to evoke a deep yearning for attention and a desire to perform in our targets. It also awakens our own hidden desire to showcase ourselves and perform. Before we fully master the power of this boon, we cannot restrain this impulse. Therefore, we require a proper stage to satiate our desires without arousing suspicion.

"Every applause from the audience is a validation for us."

A peculiar Sequence… Instead of immediately attacking Rentas, I confronted him. I failed to utilize the ritual silver dagger in time to suppress my explosive desires because unknowingly, my own desire to perform was awakened… Lumian came to a realization.

Franca clapped her hands, exclaiming, "That explains it. No wonder I was so immersed in acting today!"

She smiled and inquired, "Does your ability to disguise as Ive and Ciel also come from Actor?"

Rentas's face nodded slightly.

“We can manipulate our muscles, skin, and bones to a certain extent. We possess all the necessary skills for disguise, including makeup techniques and prop production. Moreover, Actors have the talent for ‘imitation.’ They can convincingly portray anything. If they act as an ordinary person, their Astral Projection will appear ordinary as well. If they portray a soldier, they’ll display remarkable combat and marksmanship.”

“What if they act as a woman?”

“What about acting as a Beyonder?”

Franca and Lumian raised their questions.

Finally, the two of them understood how the fake Ive could deceive official Beyonders and why the theater performers at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons excelled in their craft.

Working with real Actors every day, it was no wonder their acting skills were top-notch.

Rentas’s spirit spoke in a dazed manner, “To portray a woman, you need to prepare props in advance, such as fake breasts and long hair.

“When acting as other Beyonders, if I have observed them beforehand, I can replicate their corresponding abilities, but they won’t have tangible effects. They are more like illusions. However, if I were given the opportunity to closely observe and learn from a Beyonder over several months, I could perform similar but significantly weakened abilities.”

Impressive indeed… Lumian sighed, then asked in a deep voice, “Who were you impersonating when you emanated that powerful aura?”

“None other than Susanna, as she connects with the altar’s aura while conducting the boon ritual.” Rentas revealed a trace of piety and reverence.

Franca and Lumian exchanged glances, grateful that they had abandoned the idea of heading to the altar to eliminate future troubles.

Based on Rentas's response, it appeared that when Susanna merged with the altar, she could exhibit power at a demigod level!

"Do Actors possess any other abilities?" Franca inquired.

Rentas shook his head. "No. However, Maipú Meyer once cautioned me against becoming too engrossed in my roles while acting."

Lumian seized the opportunity to ask, "What are the names of the other Sequences corresponding to Actor?"

Rentas's voice took on a sinister tone. "Sequence 9 Scrooge, Sequence 8 Sex Addict, Sequence 6 Recipient, and Sequence 5 Baby Cupid. Beyond that, I am unaware."

Quite fitting… Lumian, who was acquainted with the abilities of Scrooge and Sex Addict, questioned further, "What does 'Recipient' entail?"

"It involves craving success and recognition from high society or the public," Rentas explained.

Curiosity piqued, Franca asked, "It seems that you Actors aren't able to fully control your corresponding desires at every Sequence. At Sequence 5, won't your desires explode upon encountering anything?"

"In truth, as they progress through the Sequences, individuals can gradually gain control over their corresponding desires," Rentas clarified. "For Actors, their primary desire is acting. Their desires for wealth and the opposite sex are only slightly stronger than usual. They won't appear pathological or completely uncontrollable as a result."

Lumian found himself perplexed.

"Then why were you so miserly when you portrayed Monsieur Ive?"

He chose to pick up a gold coin of unknown origin.

Rentas responded naturally, "Because the real Ive is like that. I must stay true to the role."

Chapter 213 - 213 Correct Interpretation

213 Correct Interpretation

Upon hearing Rentas's response, Lumian found himself torn between laughter and rejoicing, grateful that he had achieved a satisfactory outcome through a mistaken train of thought.

Originally, Lumian believed that Beyonders, like the imposter Ive, who worshiped the Mother Tree of Desire, would struggle to control their insatiable hunger and carnal desires. That's why he decided to use a gold coin to carry the vagrant's bad luck. To his surprise, the followers of the evil god were primarily influenced by their specific desires at different stages. Once they mastered the power or received a new boon, they could break free and progress to the next state. While their desires remained potent, they were no longer uncontrollable.

In simpler terms, if Rentas hadn't been portraying Monsieur Ive and didn't feel the need to exhibit stinginess, there was a high probability that he wouldn't have picked up the ill-fated gold coin and would have approached the situation with greater caution.

Of course, if Rentas hadn't been attuned to changes in fate and failed to detect the issue with the gold coin, he would likely have claimed it for himself once he realized its owner was long gone and wouldn't return. After all, he possessed a touch more greed than the average person, and as the saying goes, "finders keepers" in the hearts of a certain percentage of ordinary individuals.

Lumian now grasped the full meaning behind Rentas's words.

Indeed, one mustn't become lost in the role when acting.

However, Rentas was in the midst of acting, so scrutinizing the details was not a concern for him. Otherwise, it would have been easy for others to discover his true identity as the impostor Ive…

Franca sensed that the spirit channeling was coming to an end and hurriedly asked, “Who are the suspected core members of the Bliss Society?”

Rentas’s pale, indistinct face twitched.

“Even if I were to tell you, you wouldn’t find them.

“They joined Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons after receiving boons and becoming actresses. They adopted false names and concealed their true faces. Once their acting skills reached maturity and they gained control over their corresponding desires, they would reclaim their real identities upon leaving the theater.

“If you wish to uncover their assumed identities, gather a list of all the female leads in Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons’ plays from the past two years. Look for those who performed most frequently.”

At the mention of the female lead at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Lumian’s mind recalled a name.

“Could Charlotte Calvino be one of the core members of the Bliss Society?”

She played the lead in the play Forest Fairy. The costumes in the promotional stills evoked memories of Susanna Mattise. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Rentas’s face grew increasingly elusive, and his voice became more ethereal.

“I don’t know. She rose through the ranks as an apprentice actress and only recently started taking the lead roles in the past few months. She’s not an outsider, but Maipú Meyer might promote her to a member of the Bliss Society.”

Franca was about to inquire about Maipú Meyer’s corresponding stages and abilities when Rentas’s spirit, consumed by black flames,

could no longer hold on and dissipated upon the surface of the makeup mirror.

With a tinge of regret, Franca concluded the ritual and dismissed the wall of spirituality.

As she squatted beside Rentas's lifeless body, rummaging through his pockets, she let out a sigh and remarked, "I didn't manage to get to Maipú Meyer. Forget it, I'll leave it to the authorities to handle it."

Lumian paused, pondering her question.

"I've heard from a playwright that Maipú Meyer is highly ambitious. He aims to make Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons the most renowned theater in Trier and receive the prestigious Intis Legion of Honor medal."

"Desire for success and recognition?" Franca recalled Rentas's depiction of a Sequence 6 recipient. "I suppose that's the limit for male members of the Bliss Society?"

Franca had already collected a stack of items.

Two metal canisters, a leather wallet, a peculiar dough that conformed to facial contours, thin skin-like pieces, eyebrow pencils, and various makeup tools…

"Give it a sniff." Franca tossed the two metal canisters to Lumian.

Lumian distinguished them for a moment before responding, "One canister contains the scent you just experienced, and the other should hold a matching sedative."

They appeared to be essential items for followers of the Mother Tree of Desire when venturing outside.

"Mysticism-branded smelling salts?" Franca mused, then added, "You can keep what's left of the canister you have. This is mine. I'll give you the sedative. Choose from these disguises and take the money from the wallet. Anything you don't want, I'll keep. Bloody hell, this pauper doesn't even possess materials, talismans, or weapons, let alone Beyonder characteristics or mystical items!"

“The sedative and mysticism smelling salts will prove useful,” Lumian, who had only obtained Beyonder abilities from “Hammer” Ait, didn’t show much concern.

Franca didn’t overlook any part of Rentas’s body—including his crotch and soles—yet she found nothing more.

She withdrew a folded cloth bag and opened it, carefully stashing away the collection from the ground. Then, she addressed Lumian, “We’ll divide this once we return.”

With that, she rose to her feet and glanced at the frightened Charlie. She muttered to herself thoughtfully, “He witnessed our clash with Rentas. What should we do?”

Charlie’s legs trembled, and as he leaned toward Lumian, he gritted his teeth and proclaimed, “I-I won’t betray you!”

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, Franca let out a sigh and declared, “Forget it. We’ll leave it to the official Beyonders.”

She deliberately introduced the topic before promptly reaching a conclusion. Lumian, finally freed from the grip of his acting impulses, regained his composure and rationality. After careful consideration, he suggested,

“I have alternative solutions.

“Charlie doesn’t need to seek refuge at église Saint-Robert, nor does he need to worry about Susanna Mattise finding him.”

He thought of his Luck Transference Spell!

Before, he refrained from using it as Susanna Mattise had yet to bother Charlie. There was no corresponding fate to alter. But now, Susanna Mattise was on the path to recovery, and Charlie was her primary target. His luck had taken a turn, and a life-threatening calamity loomed. His luck had indeed changed!

When the moment arrived, Lumian would “gift” the gold coin carrying the weight of the impending disaster to the real Ive, allowing them to face it on their own.

Naturally, this differed from the Substitution Spell and Fallen Mercury's Fate Exchange. It only diverted bloodshed temporarily. In other words, Charlie wouldn't be in Susanna Mattise's crosshairs for the next few days. However, in a few days' time, unless Susanna Mattise was wholly purified or had lost her memories, this external threat would still remain.

Nevertheless, the authorities would take action tomorrow, armed with sufficient intel!

When Lumian realized that Charlie's luck was in jeopardy, he refrained from intervening because he could only change Charlie's luck, not his own. Susanna would undoubtedly target him as well, the adversary who had provoked Charlie's betrayal. Therefore, he opted for the simplest approach—to disguise himself and urge Charlie to seek refuge at the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral, thus buying more time to guard against Susanna Mattise. They were now certain that Susanna had two days left to recuperate.

"Really?" Charlie's eyes brightened.

Lumian smiled and inquired, "Do you trust me or not?"

Charlie stammered, "I-I believe you! I believe you!

"You just like to tease people about trivial matters."

Curiosity piqued, Franca asked, "What way?"

A method you shouldn't be aware of… Lumian silently muttered, contemplating the specifics.

If I wish to alter Charlie's current luck, mere prayers won't suffice. I must harness the power sealed within me…

Poor Charlie; I'll have to render him unconscious. I can't expose the corruption within me or the suspicion of seeking aid from an evil god…

Just as Lumian was about to instruct Charlie to accompany him and prepare for his temporary incapacitation, a thought flashed across his mind.

Does utilizing the power within the seal constitute exploiting Termiboros?

Should I write to Madam Magician and seek her opinion?

Previously, the tramp's ill fortune bore no relation to mysticism or Beyonder abilities. The ritual required minimal power. However, the support needed to resist a Sequence 5 evil spirit atop an evil god's altar would likely be several times greater than before…

What would occur then?

Since Charlie's luck changed, everything had become urgent. The timing was impeccable. It seemed as though an opportunity had emerged without allowing me a chance to weigh my options…

If I hadn't just corresponded with Madam Magician and received her reminder, I might have already altered Charlie's luck…

Noticing Lumian's motionless state, Franca inquired, "What's the matter?"

Shaking off his stupor, Lumian contemplated for a moment.

"I just realized that the method I had prepared seems to have significant flaws."

"Ah," Charlie uttered, a mixture of disappointment and concern.

Franca ruminated for a few seconds before suggesting, "I have an idea as well.

"Charlie won't head to église Saint-Robert. He'll follow us to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"As long as we survive the night, we'll be fine by tomorrow.

"Think about it. Our original plan was to confront Susanna Mattise, and she still has two days remaining at the altar. Even if we face an attack tonight, it will likely come from Maipú Meyer and his lackeys. Even if he recruits other core members of the Bliss Society, as long as they are inferior to Susanna Mattise at the altar, we stand a good

chance of holding out until dawn. If things don't go as planned, we can create a commotion and attract the attention of official Beyonders. We can escape from the market district amidst the chaos.

"This is the worst-case scenario. However, if Charlie goes to église Saint-Robert, we must consider moving immediately. We could also become targets."

Lumian pondered for a few moments and found the idea quite feasible.

He nodded and stated, "I have no objections."

His gaze then fell upon Charlie, who eagerly replied, "I don't have any issues either."

Charlie held considerable confidence in Ciel and Franca.

Lumian refocused his attention and observed Charlie's luck.

To his surprise, Charlie's impending disaster had noticeably weakened and showed signs of improvement!

What… Charlie's true misfortune lies in participating in the luck transference ritual? Did his fate change when I abandoned that notion? Although a bloody calamity still awaits, it appears less severe… Bloody Termiboros! Lumian comprehended the situation in an instant and couldn't help but inwardly curse.

Chapter 214 - 214 Encounter

214 Encounter

After cursing Termiboros, Lumian caught sight of Franca securing the cloth bag with war spoils and fastening it to her person.

A thought struck him, triggering a recollection of one of Scrooge's abilities, and he reminded her, "Aren't you worried those Scrooges will track us down using lost possessions?"

He had previously informed Franca about the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, mentioning that the sinister cult possessed a peculiar knack for detecting the whereabouts of their lost belongings.

In contrast to the perverted Hedsey, Rentas carried out his orders dutifully. If anything happened to him, he might possess something from Maipú Meyer to determine his location and the saboteur's whereabouts.

Franca scoffed dismissively. "That ability surely has its limitations in terms of time and range. By the time the folks at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons realize Rentas is missing, it will prove exceedingly arduous for them to track us down.

"Besides, with Charlie here, they could find us if they truly desired. Whether we take these items or not, Charlie is akin to Susanna Mattise's lost possession—no, her lost lover."

Charlie stood dazed, bewildered by the conversation between Ciel and "Red Boots." It wasn't until Franca mentioned his name that he grasped his "situation" somewhat. Sporting a bitter expression, he retorted, "We're not lovers…"

Franca consoled Charlie, though her sincerity remained questionable. "Can't be helped. She's convinced of it on her own accord, and she's

strong enough."

Persuaded by Franca's argument, Lumian ceased dwelling on Scrooge's abilities. He pulled out the ritual silver dagger and promptly tended to his wound.

Bending down, he scooped up Rentas's lifeless body and carried it to the debris-blocked hole, shoving it into the passage the Actor had previously dug.

Charlie watched in horror, marveling at Ciel's skills as a ruthless mob leader who had struck fear into the Poison Spur Mob. His attention then shifted to Rentas's attire—shirt, vest, pants, and boots.

They seem relatively new. If they are stripped and pawned, I reckon they can fetch at least two verl d'or… Charlie's mouth gapped, but he refrained from voicing his thoughts.

Franca nodded approvingly. "Good job. Cleaning up the scene and stalling the enemy's detection."

"I worry that Maipú Meyer will exercise caution. Once Rentas fails to return by midnight, he'll lead his men here and stumble upon the corpse. Then, he might choose to abandon Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons and relocate with the remaining members of the Bliss Society. Maybe we don't even have to wait until midnight. Susanna Mattise will undoubtedly prod him if she can find a way to contact him."

Such a turn of events would thwart the forthcoming official Beyonders' raid and leave behind latent dangers.

Franca added, "Fortunately, Susanna won't be able to leave the altar in the next two days, and the altar itself can't sprout legs and flee. At the very least, the official Beyonders can address Charlie's predicament."

"Not necessarily," Lumian countered, "we shouldn't make assumptions about the evil god altar using conventional logic. It's akin to me never fathoming that a man could give birth."

"Huh?" Charlie's confusion escalated as he listened to Ciel and "Red

Boots," comprehending each word independently but failing to grasp their interconnected meaning. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Franca fell silent for two seconds before solemnly nodding.

"You're right. The true form of the altar is like a massive tree stump. It might possess life. When the time comes, it can uproot itself and transform into a treant, making its escape with Susanna."

With a clap of her hands, Franca exclaimed, "Exactly! How can it be called a tree spirit without a tree?"

Lumian sensed that Franca's conjecture could be close to the truth.

He recollected wearing the Mystery Prying Glasses at Auberge du Coq Doré, where he had witnessed an extensive underground network of brownish-green roots stretching in all directions.

Emerging from the hole, he retrieved the carbide lamp and the enemy's lantern. He scrutinized the structure of the tunnel's ceiling and the surrounding rock walls. Every now and then, he extended his palm, gently patted and knocked against them.

Confused by Lumian's actions, Franca, eager to leave Underground Trier as soon as possible, asked, "What are you doing?"

Calmly, Lumian replied, "I'm searching for a suitable spot to place a bundle of explosives and bury the corpse completely. We mustn't make too much noise to avoid alerting Susanna, who's deep underground, and Maipú Meyer, who's in Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons on the surface."

Simultaneously, he had to ensure that the ground wouldn't collapse, as it could endanger the buildings above.

Clearly, the municipal workers had diligently reinforced these areas when connecting the underground quarries, sewers, and various tunnels. Regular repairs were carried out, and minor cave-ins posed no threat to the surface's safety or its own integrity.

Using his Hunter powers, Lumian soon identified a depression on the

side of the hole and placed a bundle of detonators there.

“Unfortunately, we lack the proper tools and materials. Otherwise, we could set up a trigger for the explosives under the corpse. When Maipú Meyer arrives and tries to lift the body in his agitation, it would go boom,” Lumian said with regret, squatting down.

Since consuming the first potion, he hadn’t had the opportunity to execute a Hunter’s bomb trap and showcase his explosive finesse.

Charlie’s heart raced as he listened, confirming Ciel’s reputation as the most renowned mob leader of recent times.

“Indeed, a true Hunter,” Franca exclaimed, filled with admiration.

Lumian then took out a match, igniting the fuse.

He stood up and began walking toward Franca and Charlie at a steady pace. Passing by the pile of gravel, he tossed the lantern into the tunnel.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Charlie hurriedly warned Lumian as he noticed the fuse nearing its end.

His calf muscles tensed, preparing to leap behind the rock wall to avoid the impending explosion.

Dressed in a simple formal top and cargo pants, Lumian had only covered a distance of seven to eight meters when the detonator erupted behind him.

The tunnel trembled slightly, and the stone wall beside the hole collapsed, burying most of the already unstable opening.

Flames ignited, and gravel scattered, but they didn’t reach Lumian’s back. They only affected the area two to three meters away from him and in a different direction within the tunnel.

Lumian didn’t turn around or evade. He approached Franca, who wore a smile, and Charlie, who stood there dumbfounded.

Franca gave him a thumbs-up and clicked her tongue. “Let’s go.”

With that, she swiftly turned and headed towards the exit of Underground Trier, the same path they had used to enter.

Black flames silently flickered behind her, igniting the blood on the ground, filling the air with its scent, and engulfing the remnants of red and white.

Charlie's eyes widened, as if he had stepped into a surreal dream.

Only when Lumian patted him on the shoulder did he turn and follow, as if his spirit had abandoned him.

As they ascended towards the surface, Franca grinned and said, "Tomorrow and the day after, we'll discover whether Susanna Mattise and the altar have been completely eradicated, by observing Charlie's situation."

"Whether Susanna Mattise comes searching for him?" Lumian, carrying the carbide lamp, startled Charlie intentionally.

If that were the case, Franca would have said "two days later" instead of "tomorrow or the day after."

Charlie trembled and stammered, "H-h-how?"

Franca chuckled before replying, "If the official Beyonders don't come looking for you, it means you have truly escaped the nightmare called Susanna.

"If they do come and offer you a good position, congratulations. You will have hope entwined with danger."

"W-what do you mean?" Charlie didn't fully grasp the meaning.

Franca didn't explain further and instead inquired, "If you become a quarry policeman with a monthly salary of 300 verl d'or, you'll face conflicts with smugglers, cave explorers, and bounty hunters every day. There's a certain chance of sacrifice. Are you willing?"

"Of course!" Charlie blurted out.

Though being a quarry policeman was perilous, most of them

managed to survive!

If Susanna Mattise isn't completely purged, the official Beyonders would offer Charlie a job that would make it easier to protect him. And those positions often come with good pay. Lumian roughly understood Franca's meaning.

The three of them exited Underground Trier, maneuvered through an alley, and crossed a barricade. Taking a secluded route on Rue des Blouses Blanches, they arrived at Franca's sixth-floor apartment.

Franca removed her hood and casually tossed the bag containing their spoils of war beside the coffee table. She half-reclined on the armchair and gestured with a nod towards the sofa and another armchair.

"Now, we must endure until dawn."

After Lumian and Charlie took their seats, the living room fell into an eerie silence.

This made Charlie uneasy. He glanced at Ciel and spoke up, "You actually possess those mystical abilities."

"If not, how could I have slain Margot and Ait, becoming the guardian of Salle de Bal Brise and Auberge du Coq Doré?" Lumian chuckled.

"That's true." Charlie pondered for a moment and found this explanation more acceptable.

As the trio engaged in conversation, the needle of the cuckoo wall clock gradually approached midnight.

Outside the window, the darkness remained undisturbed.

At that moment, faint footsteps resonated from outside the door, approaching swiftly from below.

"Jenna… I forgot she was coming over tonight!" Franca exclaimed, sitting upright.

She glanced at Lumian, then at Charlie. After a brief moment of hesitation, she closed her eyes and waited for Jenna to open the door herself.

With a click, Jenna, dressed in a white blouse and a fluffy beige skirt, used the spare key to enter the apartment.

In an instant, she noticed Lumian and Charlie.

“What’s going on?” Jenna couldn’t hide her confusion, her gaze shifting between Lumian, Charlie, and Franca.

Franca mustered a forced smile and said, “We were getting bored. We thought of playing Fighting Evil. Want to join us? We have two decks of cards.”

Jenna peered suspiciously for a few seconds, sensing that Franca didn’t want to disclose the real reason in front of Ciel. She gestured towards the guest room and stated,

“Dammit, it’s already late. Why are you still playing cards? I have a packed day tomorrow. I need to get some sleep!”

She waved at Lumian and Charlie before heading towards the guest room.

Lumian gazed at Franca calmly and inquired, “Why didn’t you just tell her what we’re doing?”

Jenna, too, had fallen victim to the predicament at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. She had nearly been raped by the pervert named Hedsey.

Franca was caught off guard.

“You’re right. Why didn’t I just say it straightforwardly…”

There was no need to conceal it!

She glanced at the closed door of the guest room, intending to reveal the truth to Jenna later.

Casually, Lumian asked, “What does Jenna usually keep busy with?”

“Don’t you know?” Franca’s face gradually lit up with satisfaction. “She’s an apprentice in acting, studying drama. Sigh, it’s not like the old days. I heard in the previous era, apprentices could learn for free as long as they signed a long-term contract. They even received food and accommodation. Nowadays, not only do they have to pay tuition fees, but they also have to cover all expenses themselves.”

As Franca spoke, she noticed Lumian’s expression turning grave.

Lumian furrowed his brow and inquired, “At which theater is she doing her apprenticeship?”

“I never asked…” Franca murmured, making the connection.

In that instant, Jenna emerged from the guest room, carrying a stack of items as she made her way towards the restroom.

“What theater are you apprenticing at?” Franca stood up and inquired.

Jenna responded with confusion, “Why do you ask? You’ve never been curious before.”

Observing Lumian and Charlie’s focused gaze, she couldn’t help but curse, “Why the f*ck are you staring at me? Dogsh*t, what does my theater have to do with you?”

Realizing Franca and Lumian’s seriousness, she hesitated for a moment before muttering, “Dammit, there’s no need for me to hide anything! It’s the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.”

Chapter 215 - 215 Jenna's Worry

215 Jenna's Worry

As soon as Jenna revealed where she studied acting, a hush fell over the living room. Franca and Lumian exchanged inexplicable glances, causing Jenna to feel a pang of uncertainty. Charlie, the waiter, couldn't conceal his startled expression and the fear that gripped him was evident in his shrinking demeanor and fearful eyes.

"What's wrong? Is there a problem?" Jenna asked, her confidence wavering.

Lumian seized the moment and tossed a Louis d'or at Jenna's feet, his eyes intently following her every move, even the slightest flicker in her gaze.

"Dammit! What's the meaning of this?" Jenna looked down at the Louis d'or, her confusion turning into anger as she confronted Lumian.

Lumian's expression returned to normal, and he turned his head, grinning at Franca. "Not a Scrooge."

"Of course!" Franca responded, a mix of exasperation and amusement. "We meet often. She may be a bit frugal, but she's definitely not a Scrooge. Plus, she doesn't exhibit any signs of being a Sex Addict, and her acting skills leave much to be desired."

Franca couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret.

"What are you two talking about?" Jenna was utterly bewildered, forgetting her own penchant for profanity.

“You explain,” Lumian instructed Franca.

Franca rose and tried to allow Jenna to squeeze into the recliner with her, but realizing it was too cramped, Jenna opted for an armchair instead, resting a pile of ordinary clothes on her lap.

“Do you remember that creep Hedsey?” Franca slumped back disappointedly in the recliner.

Jenna responded without hesitation, “I remember. Damn it, he died too easily!”

It wasn’t exactly an easy demise… Lumian silently muttered, recalling the gruesome state of Hedsey’s lower body.

Using this as a starting point, Franca delved into the secrets of the Bliss Society, the dark Sequences tied to the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire, the connection between the Bliss Society and the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, and various details involving the true Ive, Rentas, Maipú Meyer, and Susanna Mattise.

Jenna, having absorbed Franca’s mystical knowledge, grew increasingly astonished with each revelation. It was as if a door had swung open, revealing a new world—a scene that was entirely different from what she had known before. It festered, exuded sinister vibes, terrified her, and made her stomach churn with disgust.

After Franca finished her account, she blurted out, “Did that creep target me at the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons?”

Considering that Hedsey was a subordinate of theater manager Maipú Meyer and associated with the Bliss Society, he likely frequented and surreptitiously entered the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.
New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Jenna suspected that the pervert often lurked in the shadows, observing the apprentice actresses during their classes.

“It’s possible,” Franca agreed, contemplating why the pervert Hedsey didn’t choose another underground singer but instead risked attacking Jenna.

Jenna was undeniably attractive. After her time at the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, where she honed her acting and makeup skills, her allure had gradually emerged. However, she wasn't a fully-fledged Witch yet, nor was she overwhelmingly captivating. In the bustling marketplace, there was no shortage of underground singers who were more alluring and could ignite the desires of men of lower standing. Besides, they lacked the distinction of being Red Boots's mistress.

Jenna glared at Lumian, her teeth grinding together in frustration.

Lumian chuckled softly. "I suddenly realized that since we met, you've never praised any orthodox god. I still don't know if you're a follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun or the God of Steam and Machinery. It's rather suspicious."

Jenna scoffed and replied, "Most of the time when I meet you, I'm dressed like this. I wear smoky makeup that symbolizes debauchery and sing, 'My dear, he's really good with his fingers.' If I were to praise the Sun in this state, I believe God would incinerate me."

As she spoke, she pointed to her chest, revealing a generous amount of alluring cleavage.

Without waiting for Lumian's response, she turned her finger towards Franca.

"And Franca never praises any deity either. Why aren't you suspecting her?"

"Who says I don't?" Franca declared solemnly, drawing a triangular Sacred Emblem on her chest. "By Steam!"

Your acting skills are mediocre… Aurore is the same. She rarely mentions her faith and doesn't attend Mass. She only praises the Sun when questioned… Lumian drew the triangular Sacred Emblem.

"By Steam!"

Caught up in their actions, Charlie instinctively spread his arms wide.

"Praise the Sun!"

An indescribable silence descended, as if no one knew how to proceed with the conversation.

After a few seconds, Lumian addressed Jenna, saying, “So, your true identity is an apprentice actress.”

Jenna couldn’t help but feel a twinge of satisfaction. She lifted her chin slightly and replied, “Well then, am I qualified to critique your acting skills? And let me clarify, I’m not some low-class hooligan with a vulgar mouth. I’m merely playing the role of an underground songstress. How did I do? Was it convincingly authentic? Can you find any faults?”

“No wonder I occasionally find you rather refined,” Lumian mocked, concurring with Jenna’s statement.

“What do you mean, ‘rather’?” Jenna expressed her dissatisfaction.

Charlie’s gaze darted between their faces, eventually landing on Franca, who sat in the recliner.

Franca pursed her lips and observed Lumian and Jenna as they bickered.

Lumian dismissed Jenna’s bragging and said, “Let’s discuss the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.”

After a few moments of contemplation, Jenna blurted out in frustration, “Dammit! My tuition fees!”

As soon as the words left her mouth, she noticed everyone giving her strange looks.

Jenna hurriedly clarified, “Didn’t you mention that Maipú Meyer might escape with the members of the Bliss Society? Won’t Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons shut down? Damn it, I’ve already paid a year’s worth of tuition fees to these damn heretics! I need to get that money back!”

Once Jenna regained her composure, Lumian’s lips twitched.

“Weren’t you claiming that your foul mouth and low morals were all

part of an act?"

"…" At first, Jenna was left speechless, but then she defended herself forcefully. "I am currently Jenna, the underground songstress! I am still in character and haven't broken free from it…"

Observing Lumian's skeptical expression, Jenna became enraged with embarrassment.

"Dammit, don't you understand? This is called method acting!"

"Yes, yes, yes," Franca chimed in, trying her best to change the subject. "Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons has a dedicated audience and talented actors. Even if the theater manager and a few leads leave, it won't shut down. At most, they might embezzle funds. It'll be a bit challenging for them. I believe there will be plenty of people willing to take over such valuable assets. Oh, by the way, who owns Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons?"

Jenna recollected and replied, "Maipú Meyer himself."

"Ah, I see…" Lumian glanced at Franca. "If Maipú Meyer truly intends to escape, we could acquire Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons at a low price. There are numerous dancers and singers under Brignais's control who don't want to sell themselves. We can give them an opportunity to earn a living at the theater."

"They will face fierce competition." Franca contemplated. "If we succeed, it could indeed be a viable path. The challenge lies in convincing Brignais… Haha, we can spin him a tale and sell him a promise. Let him know that no matter how much he squeezes a singer who moonlights as a street girl, he can only make a pittance. On the other hand, a renowned theater actress under the influence of our Savoie Mob will bring far greater returns."

Charlie's gaze shifted between Lumian and Franca before settling on Jenna, who sat in an armchair.

After discussing with Lumian, Franca assured Jenna, "Don't worry, your tuition fees won't be in vain."

Jenna, who had been listening intently to their conversation, let out a

sigh of relief and muttered,

“The tuition fees for Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons aren’t cheap at all.”

Franca redirected the conversation back to its original course.

“What’s your impression of the people from Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons? Who do you find suspicious?”

Jenna contemplated for a moment before responding, “Maipú Meyer enjoys watching our acting classes. His gaze can be a bit lecherous, but he has never harassed anyone. That’s something many men do, isn’t it? Yes, some apprentices might have a private relationship with him. After all, he’s the theater’s owner and manager.

“Rentas possesses remarkable acting skills. He is the most professional and exceptional among all the acting instructors. The characters he portrays in plays seem to come alive, each one distinct from the others…”

At this point, Jenna’s tone revealed a touch of envy, as if she desired to possess the abilities of an Actor. However, thoughts of Hedsey’s perversity and Susanna Mattise’s current predicament filled her with fear, preventing her from indulging in such fantasies.

“I haven’t really interacted with the Ive you mentioned. Perhaps he only appears in certain genres…

“I’m not well-acquainted with Charlotte. By the time I joined Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, she had already taken on lead roles, but she was my role model. Her acting skills are slightly inferior to Rentas’s. I’m uncertain if she’s an Actor. Dammit, it’s hard to say…”

Jenna struggled to restrain herself for a long while before finally cursing.

“The other acting instructors are probably not Actors. Their acting abilities pale in comparison to Rentas’s. They often praise me for my talent in acting. While I may not match Rentas or the previous female leads of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, I can hold my own against Charlotte when she was still an apprentice…” Jenna suddenly

fell silent.

“What’s the matter?” Franca inquired, concerned.

Charlie’s gaze shifted from Franca and Jenna to Ciel, who sat beside him.

Jenna furrowed her brow and said, “Tomorrow, the official Beyonders will conduct a thorough investigation of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. What… what should I do?”

She was a wild Beyonder, an Assassin.

“Abandon Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons and find another theater?” Lumian suggested.

Money was the least of her concerns.

Jenna pressed her lips together, her expression filled with dejection.

“B-but I used my true identity at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. What about my mother and brother…”

Chapter 216 - 216 Acting Guidance

216 Acting Guidance

Lumian wasn't sure if Jenna's bounty would have consequences for her family, so he turned to Franca, hoping she could use her connections to persuade the official Beyonders to overlook a mere apprentice actress. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Franca didn't hide her dilemma.

Helping to hide something was not an issue for someone like 007, but if they expected him to meticulously cover for someone during the operation, two conditions had to be met. First, he had to be involved in the operation and responsible for investigating the apprentice actresses. Second, he needed some information about Jenna to determine whom he should assist.

Franca didn't believe that 007 happened to be in the market district by chance. At best, he could pass on information. The chances of him being directly in charge of the operations were highly unlikely.

"I can try, but I can't make any promises," Franca replied, looking at Jenna with concern, trying to offer some comfort without making any definite commitments.

Jenna acknowledged her words briefly, feeling a bit relieved, but she still struggled to come up with another solution.

Lumian pondered for a moment and said teasingly, "You're just an apprentice actress. Why are you so anxious?

"Even if the official Beyonders investigate everyone in Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, they won't waste much effort on you.

Think about it. You've only been in the market district for a short time, and you haven't even become an apprentice actress yet. You don't even have a chance to play a minor supporting role. How could you be a female member of the Bliss Society?"

"That's right," Franca interjected. "You spend most of your time singing in bars and dance halls rather than interacting with the cult of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. You're in the least suspicious group. If you tell the investigators the truth, you might not have to undergo any further tests of your Beyonder powers."

Lumian added with a smile, "And even if they do test you, it will mainly be to determine if you believe in the Mother Tree of Desire, or if you're a Scrooge or a Sex Addict. And you definitely don't fall into any of those categories.

"This is a blind spot for the official Beyonders during their investigations, and you can take advantage of it.

"Didn't you mention your excellent acting skills? Now is the time to showcase them!"

"Yes… When the Sun rises, go to église Saint-Robert and pray. Get an accessory that reveals your identity as a believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, and wear it. When you enter Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, whether or not the official Beyonders arrive, praise the Sun frequently."

"Evil god believers rarely engage in such actions. It will effectively set you apart from them. If the official Beyonders notice these details, there's a good chance they'll consider you trustworthy."

Jenna's eyes sparkled as she listened.

"That's right.

"A devout apprentice actress who believes in the Eternal Blazing Sun and has only recently joined Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons won't switch to an evil god so easily. They only need to conduct a simple investigation…"

"As long as I lead them to search for Beyonder powers in connection

with the believers of the evil god, they probably won't suspect that I became a Beyonder due to other encounters…"

The more Jenna spoke, the more her excitement grew. She placed the stack of clothes on her lap and stood up.

She paced back and forth, making gestures as if she were embodying a devoted apprentice actress who believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun.

Madame, it appears you're not a true follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun. Otherwise, you wouldn't have needed to rehearse beforehand, Lumian clicked his tongue and criticized.

Charlie, who had been listening, was taken aback.

Is "Little Minx" Jenna also someone with magical powers?

Jenna's performance, even in the presence of imaginary official Beyonders, gradually bolstered her confidence.

Franca observed quietly, her eyes flickering, her mind filled with trivial thoughts.

If Jenna and I possessed the powers of an Actor, we would make perfect cosplayers, capable of becoming anything we desired. Tsk tsk… she thought to herself.

After some time, Jenna regained her composure and looked at Charlie warily.

"I've heard that you enjoy giving speeches in bars and twisting other people's secrets into stories.

"If you dare to f*cking reveal my Beyonder powers, I'll hand you over to a homosexual Sex Addict. Heh heh, just imagine the suffering you'll endure."

Charlie couldn't help but pause for a moment. He shuddered and raised his right hand.

"Praise the Sun. I swear in God's name that I won't divulge your secret!

“I just mentioned that you and Ciel became lovers…”

Charlie suddenly stopped, sensing the strange atmosphere in the living room once again.

Lumian shrugged at Franca, signaling that it was merely a rumor.

Jenna scoffed.

“Will you also spread the rumor that Franca joined Ciel and me to form a stable love triangle?”

“No,” Charlie quickly shook his head.

At the same time, he found the idea rather intriguing. It hadn’t occurred to him before.

Jenna settled back into the armchair and continued to recount her knowledge of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Lumian and Franca listened attentively, occasionally posing questions to guard against potential threats.

…

In Underground Trier.

A figure with a lantern in hand moved cautiously along a familiar path, searching for something.

This person, of average height, wore a black tailcoat, a matching bow tie, and a half top hat. His face had a square shape, with short and thick eyebrows. The lines on his face were etched deep, and he sported a well-groomed brownish-yellow beard, carefully waxed at the tips.

The lantern’s flickering light cast eerie shadows on his countenance, lending him an air of profound melancholy.

After walking for some time, the man halted, his gaze directed towards a section of the tunnel that had suffered a slight cave-in.

His dark brown eyes narrowed, focusing intently for a moment, before he suddenly dropped to all fours, his nose twitching.

The scent of gunpowder… and blood… The man rose solemnly to his feet and approached the collapsed area.

Through the layers of debris, he seemed to discern the glimpse of an incomplete corpse.

…

The atmosphere on Rue des Blouses Blanches was much quieter at night compared to Rue Anarchie. Except for the occasional clamor caused by passing carriages and the inebriated stumbling their way home, the night seemed to have fallen into a stillness.

From time to time, a distant gunshot would break the silence, its echo piercing through the night only to be swallowed by the darkness and moonlight.

Lumian and his companions engaged in intermittent conversation, their nerves on edge, apprehensive that shadows might suddenly emerge from the darkness beyond the window.

Time dragged on slowly. For Charlie, it felt like awaiting a verdict. He was restless, anxious, yet filled with a glimmer of hope.

Finally, the distant skyline began to be tinged with a golden-red hue. Before long, the entire night was bathed in the crimson light.

“We should be safe now,” Franca declared, sitting upright in her recliner.

Lumian glanced at Charlie and noticed that his luck was no longer drenched in blood-red. It had returned to its normal state, and there were even hints of prosperity.

The immediate crisis has been averted, but if Susanna Mattise manages to escape, will Charlie obtain a position with the authorities? Lumian pondered over it and nodded.

“For the time being, all I can say is that we should be fine.”

Through this encounter, he confirmed one thing: even without the Luck Transference Spell, human luck could change.

He felt that the future was shaped by multiple factors. Different choices could lead to diverse outcomes.

If Lumian had followed Osta Trul and provided protection instead of forewarning him of impending disaster, perhaps he wouldn't have suffered injuries. However, that didn't guarantee a turn for the better. Lumian's protection might have implicated Osta Trul, leading him to be dragged to the river's depths by another water ghost, losing his life.

Does inevitability imply that regardless of the choices one makes, a predetermined fate will inevitably manifest? Lumian turned his gaze towards Jenna, the underground songstress and apprentice actress.

Jenna possessed average luck—neither filled with fortuitous encounters nor beset by grave dangers.

In high spirits, Jenna furrowed her brow and asked, "Why are you staring at me?"

After a night of acclimatizing, she refrained from uttering vulgarities and put more thought into her words.

Lumian pointed to his eye sockets.

"Are you planning to go to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons looking like that?"

"Oh, right! I haven't taken off my makeup!" Jenna exclaimed, getting up and rushing into the washroom with a stack of clothes.

Franca stood up and stretched, paying no mind to her appearance.

She glanced at the washroom and whispered to Lumian, "Will the act be convincing?"

"Yes," Lumian replied with confidence.

Previously, he hadn't been entirely sure, but after observing Jenna's

current state of luck, he was more certain.

Franca chose to place her trust in Lumian.

“I’ll keep a close watch on her as well.”

She clicked her tongue and let out a sigh.

“You seem rather skilled at deceiving the official Beyonders. Just as I expected from a…”

She mouthed the final words silently—”wanted criminal.”

Not just deceiving the official Beyonders… Lumian whispered to himself, pointing at Charlie.

“I’ll take him back to Auberge du Coq Doré to rest, just in case the official Beyonders can’t locate him. I’ll leave Jenna in your care.”

“You make it sound like she’s truly your lover. Asking me to look after her,” Franca retorted with a sour tone.

By the time Jenna finished removing her makeup and changing her clothes, Lumian and Charlie had already departed. Franca had also informed 007 about the altar, the Actors, and the other information she had gathered.

At that moment, Jenna’s face was no longer adorned with smoky eyes, pronounced blush, and fiery lips. She appeared clean-faced, albeit a bit fatigued.

As Jenna braided her brownish-yellow hair, she glanced at the door and grinned at Franca.

“When did you become involved with Ciel? Aren’t you afraid the Boss will find out?”

Franca chuckled.

“Him? It’ll be far too sinful; I can’t bring myself to do it.”

“Why?” Jenna couldn’t comprehend.

To her understanding, Franca's moral boundaries weren't that strict. Ciel was only a few months away from adulthood.

Franca pondered her words and responded, "After getting to know him better, I discovered that he's the younger brother of one of my relatives."

"So you're related by blood." Jenna nodded in understanding.

However, her attention quickly shifted. After securing her braids, she pointed towards the door.

"I'm going to église Saint-Robert to offer my prayers."

"I'll follow you discreetly to ensure nothing untoward happens." Franca retrieved some fluorescent powder and, with an incantation, blended it in to conceal herself.

When will I become a Witch… Jenna averted her gaze enviously, opened the door, and stepped outside.

Chapter 217 - 217 Notarization

217 Notarization

église Saint-Robert stood proudly near the Suhit steam locomotive station, serving as the bishop cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Its distinctive onion-shaped dome was painted in shimmering gold, representing the radiant sun. Below it stood a white building with gilded edges and a monumental Sun Sacred Emblem.

Adjacent to the cathedral was a bell tower, crowned by a roof fashioned from a gleaming golden sphere.

Observing Jenna entering the cathedral amidst the morning prayer congregation, Franca opted to wait in close proximity.

Uncertain whether the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral possessed any peculiar enchantments that could render her invisibility ineffective, she remained cautious, unwilling to take any unnecessary risks.

église Saint-Robert, much like other cathedrals belonging to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, boasted a resplendent golden base and was adorned with gilded accents throughout. The ornate structure, adorned with vibrant stained glass windows and a vast mural depicting a saint in vivid hues of blue, green, and red, exuded an atmosphere of profound sanctity and grandeur. Every worshiper who entered its hallowed halls couldn’t help but bow their heads in reverence, enveloped by the sacred ambiance.

Jenna made her way to the front of the altar and settled into the second row of seats.

Closing her eyes, she inclined her head forward and crossed her arms, placing them reverently upon her chest.

Having been baptized and frequented the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral since her youth, Jenna was intimately familiar with this customary ritual, even though she could hardly be considered devout. She swiftly cleared her mind of any distracting thoughts, focusing her entire being on the act of prayer.

Time seemed to stand still as the bishop delivered his sermon.

After nearly fifteen minutes, Jenna opened her eyes and quietly rose to her feet. She proceeded towards a long table positioned along the side of the main hall.

This table spanned an impressive length of 20 to 30 meters, adorned with slender white candles flickering within golden lamps.

Devotees seeking to express their gratitude or admiration for a saint or angel could purchase a candle from the clergyman stationed beside the table, lighting it and placing it within an unoccupied lamp.

Jenna fixed her gaze upon the softly swaying flames for a few fleeting moments before redirecting her attention towards the clergyman dressed in a white robe interwoven with threads of gold.

Her eyes caught sight of a man engaging in the purchase of candles.

He appeared to be in his late twenties, his blond hair immaculately styled and subtly enhanced with cosmetics. His eyes resembled the vivid azure of a tranquil lake, albeit relatively small in size.

Adorned in a white shirt, a yellow vest, and a slim blue tweed coat adorned with two golden buttons, he bore a resemblance to the slightly distinguished gentlemen of Trier, with discernible traces of makeup enhancing his features.

As the man approached an unoccupied lamp with his acquired candle, Jenna moved closer to the clergyman in the resplendent white robe interwoven with golden threads, extending her arms in a welcoming gesture.

“Praise the Sun!”

“Praise the Sun!” the clergyman warmly replied, his smile radiating

genuine warmth.

Jenna hesitated briefly for a couple of seconds before uttering, “I seek a blessed necklace.”

Comparing it to the purchase of candles, this act was more devout.

But, naturally, it came with a higher price tag.

“Sister, how about this one?”

He produced a necklace adorned with a gold Sunbird pendant from among the unsold white candles.

Two rose-red rubies were nestled within the eyes of the Sunbird.

In the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, just as “Brother” was used to address men of the faith, female believers were affectionately called “Sisters.” Some nuns even formed an alliance known as the Nine Sisters Association, working hand in hand with the Brotherhood Minor. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Jenna couldn’t help but sense that this particular necklace must be quite expensive—she could almost hear her wallet crying in protest.

After careful consideration, she ultimately settled on a relatively simple amulet featuring a small Sun Sacred Emblem.

It set her back 30 verl d’or, causing her to wince at the cost.

As an underground singer in the market district, Jenna earned a decent income, especially since her recent rise in popularity. However, it had only been a month since she began gaining recognition. Previously, her earnings were barely sufficient to cover rent, food, performance attire, makeup supplies, and the like, without having to rely on her family for financial support.

Despite now earning nearly 300 verl d’or a month through part-time work, her financial situation still left her feeling uneasy. She had to save for next year’s tuition, ensure her mother wouldn’t worry, and even contribute to the family’s debts.

With the newly acquired amulet adorning her neck, Jenna took a deep breath and departed from église Saint-Robert, making her way to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons before 9 a.m.

The classroom for apprentice actresses was located on the second floor, and Jenna passed by the manager's office on her way.

The door remained tightly shut, indicating that Maipú Meyer hadn't arrived at the theater yet.

Could he have really fled? Jenna averted her gaze and continued forward.

Shortly thereafter, she walked past the locked door of the exclusive break room belonging to the popular leading actress, Charlotte Calvino.

The door was locked as well.

Jenna exhaled quietly, straightened her posture, and turned into the classroom.

She was late. Gaspar, the instructor for today's first acting class, had already arrived and was busy addressing a private question from one of the apprentices.

Gaspar, despite being a middle-aged man of dignified demeanor, had the ability to portray a charming playboy on stage.

…

Deep within Underground Trier, nestled within a hollow strewn with remnants of tree branches and vines…

The very center had collapsed, leaving the soil in a state of disarray. Faint marks, as if from hurried footsteps, led towards an unknown destination.

Angoulême de Fran?ois followed the path indicated by the cardinals and found himself standing at the precipice, his eyes fixed on the bewildering sight before him.

Those filthy rodents had relocated once more!

In response to the signal from the cardinals, Angoulême unsheathed a golden longsword that appeared to be forged from condensed light from a grayish-white mechanical doll.

With a swift motion, the sword plunged into the ground, causing the bluish-green and withered branches and vines to erupt into flames. Yet, no trace of black smoke ascended.

As the fiery shroud dissipated, the true nature of the ground, walls, and ceiling came into view for Angoulême and his companions.

A multitude of serpents, slimy and cold, writhed and entwined, engaging in frenzied mating rituals. Countless gray rats tore at each other relentlessly, refusing to retreat until death claimed them. Diverse insects devoured leaves and soil with such voracity that they burst open from overindulgence…

…

As the realization dawned upon Franca that the plainclothes police had covertly sealed off Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, she swiftly withdrew from the brick-red three-story edifice and sought refuge in a nearby side alley. From her concealed vantage point, she observed the situation unfolding on the second floor.

As the first acting lesson neared its end, Jenna couldn't help but notice the conspicuous absence of Maipú Meyer, who typically lingered by the classroom door.

Just then, a group of black-uniformed police officers entered, clutching lists in their hands.

The leader called for a momentary pause in the lecture and addressed the assembled individuals.

"Maipú Meyer has been confirmed as a heinous heretic. We must ascertain your faith."

Gasps and exclamations erupted, momentarily plunging the scene into disarray.

“Silence!” bellowed the leading officer. “I shall read out your names, and you will sign this pledge as a witness before God. No one shall deceive.”

Ascertaining of faith… Jenna’s racing heart found a measure of solace.

One by one, the teachers and apprentice actresses stepped forward, receiving a pledge form from one of the police officers. They diligently completed their declarations of faith, appending their signatures to solidify their commitment.

Before long, Jenna heard her own name being called.

“Celia Bello.”

She approached with composure, collecting a pledge form and a scarlet fountain pen.

The contents of the pledge were as follows:

“I solemnly swear that my faith in the ___ remains unyielding to this day.

“Affirmer: ___

“Notary: ___

Jenna filled in the first two blanks with “Eternal Blazing Sun” and “Celia Bello” respectively before returning the completed pledge and the fountain pen to the police.

Once all the actors and apprentices had signed the pledge, they were instructed to remain confined within the classroom, rehearsal room, and other designated areas until further notice, unable to venture beyond those confines.

…

Within the manager’s office that had previously been occupied by Maipú Meyer, a gathering took place to collect the signed pledges.

Several devout members of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, known as Beyonders, took turns wielding a fountain pen crafted from pure gold. With deliberate strokes, they inscribed the initials “D.E.” in the designated Notary space.

The ink they used appeared to be a vivid shade of crimson, reminiscent of fresh blood.

Upon the completion of each pledge, a shimmering golden aura would briefly envelop the document before dissipating back to its original state.

Every so often, a pledge would emit an ominous, blood-red glow, accompanied by piercing screams emanating from the same floor.

Even those actors and apprentices who employed aliases, long-established pseudonyms recognized by those in their midst, possessed mystical connections that were intricately intertwined.

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 504.

Charlie lay restless in bed, his weariness unable to lull him into sleep.

All of a sudden, a knock echoed through the room.

“Who’s there?” Charlie called out, startled, as he sat up in bed, resembling a startled bird.

“Angoulême de Fran?ois.” The voice from beyond the door was deep, yet carried a compelling warmth.

Charlie’s mind immediately conjured the image of the Monsieur who had interrogated him about Madame Alice’s demise. Hastily, he rose from his bed and swung the door open.

Standing before him were Angoulême, with his blond hair, golden brows, and beard, and Imre, whose brown skin and full lips bore the traces of Southern Continent heritage.

“What brings you here, Monsieur Fran?ois?” Charlie inquired

cautiously.

Simultaneously, a thought flashed across his mind.

Could these be the official Beyonders whom Ciel and Red Boots mentioned?

Angoulême did not immediately respond. He stepped into Charlie's room, gesturing for Imre to shut the wooden door behind them.

Casting a sweeping glance around, he finally spoke.

"I bring bad news. Susanna Mattise is not entirely deceased. She may appear before you at any time in the future."

Charlie couldn't conceal his disappointment, pain, confusion, and fear.

"What should I do?"

Angoulême nodded gently.

"But there is good news as well. We intend to offer you a clerical position within our ranks. This will provide you with enhanced protection.

"Your monthly salary will amount to 320 verl d'or, and there will be a confidentiality agreement in place as compensation. For the initial one or two months, you will need to undergo an Intisian improvement course. Consider it an internship period, with a stipend of 200 verl d'or. Once you successfully pass the assessment, you will become a full-time employee.

"Are you willing? We do not wish to force this proposal upon you."

320 verl d'or per month? And improved protection? These words echoed within Charlie's mind. He believed that no ordinary person could turn down such a remarkable opportunity.

He was satisfied even with his current job as an attendant, which earned him 80 verl d'or monthly!

Recalling the hints dropped by Lumian and Franca, Charlie responded with surprise and delight, “Absolutely no problem!”

…

By the window of Room 207, Lumian positioned himself in front of a wooden table, observing Charlie as he followed the two strangers towards Avenue du Marché.

He focused his attention, seeking any changes in Charlie’s luck, but found none.

This meant that the two individuals were not Actors manipulating the situation!

Lumian’s gaze then shifted to the blond man, intrigued to discover what kind of fortune the official Beyonder possessed.

Suddenly, an intense wave of danger washed over him. He instinctively crouched down, reducing his profile.

Angoulême turned his head, his eyes filled with confusion, as he looked at the Auberge du Coq Doré’s windows.

He sensed that someone was observing him.

Chapter 218 - 218 Promise

218 Promise

After Charlie and the two official Beyonders departed Rue Anarchie, Lumian settled back down at the wooden table, berating himself internally.

How could I forget? I mustn't gaze upon what I ought not to!

The same applied to observing luck!

Previously, he believed that scrutinizing one's luck was a subtle affair, unlikely to be detected. Neither Sequence 7 Franca nor the equivalent of a Sequence 7, "Black Scorpion" Roger, had noticed anything awry. However, the previous official Beyonder had displayed an unmistakable reaction.

Does his Sequence far exceed mine, or does he possess special abilities, or perhaps he wields a corresponding mystical item? Lumian struggled to determine.

He had never observed Beyonders beyond Sequence 7, lacking a point of comparison. Whether it was Gardner Martin or Mr. K, he exercised caution and refrained from examining their luck in their presence.

Having taken note of the lesson, Lumian, who didn't require sleep, perused the copied grimoire of Aurore.

The sunlight grew more intense, transforming the window into a radiant source. Even the bustling Rue Anarchie appeared like a golden oil painting.

In comparison to Backlund, the capital of the Loen Kingdom, Trier remained bathed in sunlight. Despite its pollution, the city's

industrial layout was relatively sensible, confining the impact to specific areas. Most of it lay to the south, where factories were abundant.

Knock, knock, knock!

Someone rapped on Room 207 once again, yet this time, Lumian failed to discern any footsteps.

Arching his right eyebrow, he stowed away the papers on the table and turned toward the door.

“Come in. It’s unlocked, Madame Red Boots.”

With a creak, the door swung open, and Franca stepped inside, donning a blouse, beige trousers, and red boots.

In surprise, she inquired, “How did you know it was me?”

Why ask the same question as Jenna? Should I praise her for being a worthy student of an Assassin like you? Lumian replied, amused, “Because I possess a brain.”

“Don’t make it sound like I lack one,” Franca responded calmly, settling herself on Lumian’s bed.

Lumian chortled.

“I can’t think of anyone else capable of approaching my room without my notice and knocking on the door politely.”

Naturally, he had to exclude Madam Magician first. She lacked such diligence. It was impressive enough that she managed to reply in time!

After a brief moment of contemplation, Lumian inquired, “Has Jenna’s predicament been resolved?”

Franca clicked her tongue. “You have an uncanny foresight, brat.”

She assumed the role of an elder sister.

If Jenna is still in danger, how could you, Hidden Blade, find the composure to seek me out?

Franca laughed dryly.

“I was referring to your astute guess that the authorized Beyonders would primarily investigate whether Jenna and the others are followers of evil gods.”

After all, I’m closer to an evil god than any evil god believer here… Lumian raised his right hand and gently patted his left chest.

With a smile, he responded, “Such insights stem from the ample experiences of a wanted criminal.”

“You seem quite proud,” Franca teased.

Curious, Lumian inquired, “How did the authorized Beyonders conduct their investigations?”

The more he learned, the more confident he would become in evading similar inquiries in the future.

Franca responded with an air of indifference, “Based on Jenna’s account, I reckon they utilized the powers of a Notary.”

“Each person had to sign a pledge of their faith, a pledge witnessed by a Notary. Heh heh, those who lied were engulfed in burning golden flames. They bled profusely and were dragged away.”

Aware that Lumian was still delving into the realm of mysticism, Franca proceeded to provide a detailed explanation,

“Notary-related abilities are quite common in Trier. They can be found in various places, disguised under different guises.

“Notaries have the ability to create contracts with mystical effects. Once the parties affix their signatures to a similar contract in the presence of a Notary, they are bound by it unless they are demigods. Even at the demigod level, breaking the contract requires a substantial price. For transactions involving millions, or even tens of millions, of verl d’or, both parties are willing to pay a hefty sum and

receive notarization in front of the God of Deeds' Sacred Emblem at a cathedral.

"The pledge is a special contract."

"The Eternal Blazing Sun is also known as the God of Deeds and the Guardian of Businesses."

It aligns with Aurore's grimoires… Lumian inquired, "Has Jenna returned home?"

Franca nodded subtly. "She needed to catch up on sleep."

Franca scrutinized Lumian. "You seem lively. I can't tell that you haven't slept all night."

"I'm accustomed to it." Lumian couldn't reveal that his condition would automatically restore itself at six in the morning. "You also appear quite energetic."

Franca smirked and replied, "I'm accustomed to it as well. For people like us, the night is the beginning of revelry."

If Aurore had made that statement, words like "inspiration," "drafts," and "tranquility of the night" would have crossed Lumian's mind. However, when Franca said it, he could only associate it with "orgies," "large beds," and "romping."

Unaware of his critical thoughts, Franca continued, "Apprentice training at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons will be suspended for three days. The theater will be temporarily occupied by the police headquarters. The daily performances will carry on as usual to avoid impacting the National Convention elections. However, the repertoire will be adjusted. Some plays have lost their female leads."

"Charlotte and Maipú Meyer are gone?" Lumian asked.

Though he had suspected that Susanna Mattise hadn't been completely purified when Charlie left with the official Beyonders, he still felt a tinge of disappointment upon hearing Franca's account.

Franca nodded.

“Apart from them, two others are missing: the real Ive and Lolth.”

“Among the remaining actors and apprentices, a total of seven have converted to the Mother Tree of Desire. They were exposed, but it seems none of them received any boons.”

So, those who received boons have fled, while the mere believers have been abandoned? Lumian scoffed inwardly as he relayed Charlie’s departure with the suspected official Beyonders to Franca.

Franca let out a soft sigh.

“This is the best outcome for him. We can’t protect him every single day.

“Though the official Beyonders can’t either, they can arrange for Charlie to stay in a relatively safe place until Susanna Mattise’s matter is truly resolved.

“In comparison, you’re in more danger. Didn’t you mention that Susanna Mattise holds a grudge against you? Evil spirits can be quite fixated.”

That will give me a good chance to test Mr. K’s finger… Lumian silently muttered, indicating that he would be cautious.

Something crossed his mind, and he inquired, “Do you know why our Savoie Mob supports Hugues Artois?”

Franca smiled. “If I had that figured out, I wouldn’t be part of the Savoie Mob anymore.”

Hmm… Is that her primary reason for joining the Savoie Mob? Lumian pondered.

Franca stretched, stood up, and addressed him, “We truly have a chance to acquire Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons at a low price, but we might have to face the enmity of those Scrooges. However, you have nothing to fear. Yes, I’ll go to Rue des Fontaines to discuss with Gardner and resolve my problem while there.”

“What problem?” Lumian was puzzled.

Franca responded with a smile, “Even though the desires Rentas evoked were suppressed by the mysticism smelling salts, my body still feels a bit restless. When I recall that sensation, I feel somewhat empty, longing for fulfillment and release. Since you can’t help me, I have no choice but to find my true lover. Why aren’t you affected at all?”

There were indeed residual effects, but I was fine after six in the morning… Lumian pursed his lips and replied, “My willpower is stronger than yours.”

Franca sneered, walked towards the door, and exited Room 207.

Lumian watched her leave, deep in thought.

Has Franca become the Boss’s mistress, or has the Boss become Franca’s lover?

Is Franca responsible for satisfying the Boss, or is the Boss responsible for satisfying Franca?

Just before noon, Charlie returned to Auberge du Coq Doré. He packed his meager belongings into his suitcase and descended the stairs with it.

Spotting Lumian on the second floor, he glanced around and lowered his voice.

“I have a new job and need to move elsewhere. After some time, I should be able to return to the basement bar for a drink.”

Lumian smirked once again. “Sounds good.”

If Susanna Mattise’s issue could truly be resolved, Charlie’s fate would change.

Charlie also seemed pleased. He pondered for a moment and stated, “There are many things I can’t tell you, but when the time comes, I’ll try to drop hints for you.”

In the Inquisition beneath église Saint-Robert, he had come across Ciel’s wanted poster and recognized his friend, yet he didn’t inform

Deacon Fran?ois.

What does that mean? Why does Charlie suddenly feel he can be useful? Does his new job have a close connection to the official Beyonders, allowing him to gather valuable information? Lumian swiftly formed a hypothesis.

With a mischievous grin, he remarked, “First, focus on staying alive before contemplating anything else! I might leave the market district in a few weeks.”

The implication of his words was, “Do your job well and don’t even think about leaking information. Don’t attempt it unless your life is truly at stake.”

Whether Charlie understood or not, Lumian wasn’t entirely certain. After all, this guy wasn’t very smart.

…

After spending the afternoon at Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian changed into a grayish-blue worker’s uniform and donned a dark-blue cap. He hailed a public carriage to take him to Rue des Pavés in Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

As per his arrangement with Louis Lund, Lumian anticipated a response from Madame Pualis regarding their meeting before the night fell. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Upon reaching the lobby of Apartment 9, Lumian opened the letterbox in Room 302, only to find a collection of fliers inside.

The letter hasn’t arrived? Lumian suppressed his anxiety and decided to wait across from Apartment 9.

Just as he exited the lobby and descended the stairs to the roadside, he noticed a brown four-wheeled carriage approaching from a distance. It came to a halt right in front of him.

The carriage driver had jet-black hair and piercing blue eyes. He sported dark red attire, yellow trousers, a polished hat, and a white cravat. It was Louis Lund!

In the next instant, the carriage door swung open noiselessly, revealing the figure of a woman seated within.

Chapter 219 - 219 Probing

219 Probing

Lumian's eyes locked with Louis Lund, who occupied the driver's seat of the carriage, and received a confirmation nod.

Drawing a deep breath, Lumian strode toward the four-wheeled carriage, crouched down, and entered it.

He grasped the gravity of the situation.

Madame Pualis, cautious and aware, refrained from responding through letters. Instead, she concealed herself near 9 Rue des Pavés, anticipating Lumian's arrival for the reply. This strategy effectively minimized the risk of being trailed and cornered.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian's attention was seized by a familiar figure.

Adorned in a meticulously tailored black corset dress and a slightly mischievous lady's round hat, she exuded an elusive allure. Her untamed brows, lively brown eyes, and moist lips radiated a sense of allure. A cascade of brown hair, half-up and half-down, graced her shoulders. Although informal, her elegance, immaculateness, and enchantment remained undeniable. She was none other than Pualis de Roquefort, the wife of Cordu's administrator.

"Long time no see," Madame Pualis greeted him with a smile, yet her eyes emitted a frigid glare, sending shivers down one's spine.

Simultaneously, Lumian observed a shift in his surroundings.

The carriage vanished, leaving him stranded in a desolate wilderness.

There was nothing before him, and Madame Pualis had vanished into

thin air.

Just as Lumian marveled at this bewildering turn of events, a colossal, irregular shadow emerged on the ground.

Instinctively, he raised his gaze, met by a reflection of brown feathers.

Each plume rivaled the size of his head, assembling into a pair of wings that seemed to obscure the heavens.

These wings belonged to Madame Pualis herself, who grew in stature, hovering in mid-air. Her feet transformed into avian talons, glistening with a chilling gleam.

A majestic, ethereal voice resounded.

“You should have been buried with Cordu!”

Lumian’s heart constricted. Gripping his revolver, he swiftly pivoted and sprinted toward the edge of the wilderness.

If the visions within this dream held even an ounce of truth, he could escape Paramita once he reached its limits!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian maneuvered in a curved path, firing rounds into the air. This constituted his sole means of long-range assault.

Despite her immense size, Madame Pualis displayed remarkable dexterity. The gusts generated by her flapping wings disrupted the bullets’ trajectory, enabling her to deftly reposition herself. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

An ear-splitting screech emanated from her throat.

Ahead of Lumian, the earth beneath the wilderness upheaved, soil cascading away, unveiling yet another monstrous entity.

A repugnant odor filled the air as the python’s entire body writhed with yellow pus and deformed worms.

Bloodshot eyes glared condescendingly at Lumian. Translucent silkworms squirmed in and out of its hollowed eye sockets.

The serpent's gaze landed condescendingly on Lumian before it lunged over, its maw open wide, its yellowed fangs aimed at the living prey.

Lumian's head spun from the putrid stench that permeated the air. With haste, he withdrew a sheet of drawing paper from his shirt and unfolded it.

A vibrant, golden-red sun adorned its surface.

Instantly, the surroundings grew warmer, and the sky, once obscured by Madame Pualis, brightened.

The long-deceased python averted its gaze from Lumian, seemingly unwilling to face the sun's brilliance.

Yet, its attacks merely slowed rather than ceased.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian pivoted, clutching the drawing, and darted off in another direction.

Hovering mid-air, Madame Pualis parted her lips, uttering a sinister phrase unintelligible to Lumian.

An immediate weakness washed over Lumian, diminishing his running speed, as if a grave illness had befallen him, leaving him yet to convalesce.

Right on the heels of that, Madame Pualis raised her head, emitting a sharp, pained howl.

At that moment, Lumian perceived an ethereal shattering sound.

It reverberated within his soul and body, casting a veil of darkness over his vision, propelling him toward the threshold of death.

Had it not been for Hunter, Provoker, Dancer, and Alms Monk fortifying his constitution from various angles, Lumian might have succumbed to his enfeebled state.

Clutching onto his last vestiges of reason, Lumian endured the agonizing pain, mustering his dwindling strength to reach into his pocket and brush Mr. K's finger.

In an instant, he felt the refreshing touch of raindrops nourishing his body and soul.

His injuries swiftly mended at a visible pace, while the surrounding wilderness gradually dissolved into illusion until it vanished entirely.

Lumian caught sight of Madame Pualis seated opposite him in the carriage.

The chill had evaporated from her gaze, replaced by a sneering mockery.

"With your feeble strength, you aspire to seek revenge against Guillaume Bénet?"

"When I departed Cordu Village, he gained a new boon after driving away us believers in the Great Mother. He now stands on par with a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator. In the future, he may even procure the corresponding potion for consumption."

Was her earlier attack merely a test of my capabilities? Lumian harbored no surprise at the padre's Sequence 5 status. After all, his contracted abilities far surpassed those of a Contractee, yet he clearly lacked godhood. That left only two possibilities: Sequence 6 or Sequence 5.

Considering Guillaume Bénet's performance in the dream and his clash against Ryan, Leah, and Valentine, Lumian had long suspected him to be a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator. Now, Madame Pualis had confirmed his suspicions.

What astonished him was that Recipients could consume potions to acquire additional abilities. However, they must choose the appropriate potion or a suitable alternative.

Lumian pondered for a moment, concluding that such occurrences were to be expected.

Beyonders themselves could receive boons; it was just that the process carried various complications.

Lumian met Madame Pualis's gaze and responded calmly, "I still have time to grow, and there's a chance for me to become stronger. However, Guillaume Bénet has little hope of attaining godhood. He doesn't believe in the three entities that the Great Mother is a part of. I'll catch up to him as soon as I can."

Unspoken by Lumian were his hopes of acquiring more formidable allies. Being an evil god's Blessed and having offended a follower of the Great Mother, Guillaume Bénet couldn't find many companions. They were likely wild Beyonders and Recipients who also believed in Inevitability.

Madame Pualis chuckled.

"Confidence is a good trait. I admire young people like you who are full of confidence. Would you like to join me and worship the Great Mother? By doing so, you can gain additional assistance. Apart from the power of the potion, you can also receive boons."

"I'd rather not become pregnant and have children," Lumian declined Madame Pualis's kind offer in a tactful manner.

Madame Pualis smiled and replied, "It seems you haven't yet experienced the holiness, preciousness, and joy of life and the wonders of new beginnings. It's something I only came to fully comprehend after giving birth.

"But there's no need for you to refuse now. When you come to understand the greatness of the Mother, you can approach me anytime."

Lumian didn't wish to dwell on matters concerning the Great Mother, so he changed the subject.

"I thought you got others to have children. I didn't expect you to have one yourself."

Madame Pualis's face glowed with a maternal radiance.

“After becoming a Banshee, I had to bear a child myself in order to draw closer to the Great Mother.”

It’s hard to believe that you were once a man… Lumian almost hesitated to meet Madame Pualis’s gaze. He swiftly redirected the conversation with a casual question.

“Did your child perish in the castle?”

“Yes,” Madame Pualis sighed. “His father killed him with his own hands. Regrettably, he was unaware that the child was his.”

“Who?” Lumian blurted out.

Madame Pualis smiled.

“Guillaume Bénet. Didn’t you witness our affair? He didn’t notice, but I knew you were hiding behind the altar. I even considered inviting you to join us.”

I assumed your affair was merely symbolic… Some of it was real? Lumian was taken aback as several images flickered in his mind:

Madame Pualis and the padre entangled in their nakedness.

Madame Pualis praising the padre’s audacity, forthrightness, and masculinity.

The padre having Saint Sith put up with the transgression…

Noticing Lumian’s change in expression, Madame Pualis smiled and continued, “After arriving in Cordu and familiarizing myself with the surroundings, the first thing I did was seduce Guillaume Bénet.

“He held true authority as a clergyman and was the only means for Cordu to connect with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. If I could bring him down and make him a believer of the Great Mother, combined with Béost’s identity, I could have truly established Cordu as my territory without arousing suspicion from the outside world.

“Coincidentally, I also needed a child. So, I decided to put him to the test. Within a week, I secured his bloodline as a contingency plan.

However, around July or August of last year, his attitude suddenly changed, and he lost interest in the Great Mother. Unfortunately, I didn't even have the opportunity to let him bear a child for me to experience the wonders of life."

"Last July or August?" Lumian repeated.

Every year, shepherds returned to the mountains during May and June.

"Yes, I remember it vividly," Madame Pualis chuckled. "Later, that fool Louis Lund even attempted to seek his assistance."

Lumian furrowed his brow and asked, "Why did the padre's attitude change all of a sudden?"

"I'm not entirely sure. All I know is that during that time, some villagers were spreading distorted ideas about horoscopes, and they were reported to Guillaume Bénet. After interrogating those individuals, Guillaume Bénet's demeanor gradually shifted." Madame Pualis's eyes seemed to reflect the sunlight dancing on a lake's surface.

"Who were they?" Lumian pressed.

Madame Pualis smiled in response. "Nazélie and the others—people you are familiar with."

Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before speaking again, "Where were you, and what were you doing when the padre and the others attacked the castle?"

Pualis let out a brisk laugh.

"So, you finally ask. You should have already guessed the answer, right?"

She gazed at Lumian with a pained and twisted smile.

"Aurore attacked me."

Chapter 220 - 220 Nightmare

220 Nightmare

“Aurore attacked me.”

The words echoed in Lumian’s ears, crashing through his mind like a burst dam. A surge of memories flooded in, washing away the hidden horrors buried beneath the surface. They were ghastly, painful, and pierced his very bones.

One by one, scenes played out before Lumian’s eyes. Guillaume Bénet, the padre, encircled by a horde of undead figures in the wilderness. Madame Pualis soaring through the air with her wings spread wide. And there, in her eyes, Lumian caught a glimpse of a familiar blond figure.

It was Aurore!

Lumian’s gaze shifted to the castle’s third-floor walls, covered in translucent faces of bluish-white hue. He witnessed Louis Lund giving birth, Sybil Berry being reborn within the body of a lady’s maid, Guillaume Bénet, Pierre Berry, Pons Bénet, and a group of believers of Inevitability engaged in a fierce battle against the midwife, Administrator Béost, and their companions.

All of this unfolded within Lumian’s own visions, emanating from a small bubble floating in the air.

White Paper…

White Paper!

Lumian’s face contorted in agony as he staggered backward.

Bluish-purple veins, densely packed, protruded from his body, each

representing a blood vessel.

Meanwhile, the words of Psychiatrist Susie flashed through his mind: "Always remind yourself not to overreact. Whenever you feel a similar surge of emotions, take deep breaths and find your calm…"

Lumian gasped heavily, feeling as though the world around him had turned into a vacuum.

In an act of sympathy, Madame Pualis spoke, "You have indeed forgotten many things. No, you've buried them deep in your heart, afraid to confront them.

"I, too, suffered. It was not pleasant for me. After becoming a Banshee, it was the first time I encountered a woman who truly touched my heart. She possessed charm, kindness, gentleness, and a vibrant spirit. I never imagined that she, as a follower of the evil god, would turn against me.

"Even then, she was already a Fate Appropriator, favored by Inevitability more than Guillaume Bénet."

Lumian couldn't help but bring his hands to his head, as if it might explode from the intense pressure within.

Taking deep breaths, he recalled Aurore, who brushed off his concerns about the village's peculiarities. He remembered her cautioning him against laying eyes on forbidden things. He thought of Aurore, who would often sit on the roof at night, gazing at the vastness of the cosmos. The dream of the diaphanous "lizard" crawling out of Aurore's mouth resurfaced in his mind. He remembered how Nazélie and the others, the initiators of the horoscope heresy, had close ties to Aurore.

Amidst these recollections, Lumian also recalled his failure to avenge Reimund and Ava's deaths, discovering himself captured by Pons Bénet instead. He endured torment before finally being set free. He recalled Aurore, who had cut the livre bleu and assembled a plea for help together with him. He remembered Aurore explaining the mystical knowledge she possessed. And above all, he remembered Aurore pushing him off the altar during the ritual, her eyes flickering

with a newfound liveliness…

Huff… Huff… Lumian gasped heavily, as if still trapped in the clutches of a never-ending nightmare.

A soft sigh escaped Madame Pualis's lips.

"I should have noticed her strangeness sooner. Although we didn't often cross paths, I always sensed something peculiar about her. The way she would gaze up at the night sky, speaking cryptic words about her hometown.

"Later on, I wished for her to embrace the Great Mother's teachings, but alas, it was too late…"

Lumian's trembling lips struggled to form the question. "When… did she… start behaving strangely?"

He had a vivid recollection of Aurore's habit of stargazing and reminiscing about her homeland, but there had been no signs of trouble in the early years.

Granted, Lumian acknowledged that Aurore had been fixated on the cosmos more frequently over the past year, but he couldn't pinpoint the exact moment when it all began.

Madame Pualis shook her head, suppressing her emotions, and spoke with a hint of amusement.

"That's a question you must answer for yourself. You spend every day with her, whereas I do not. Sometimes, I envy you deeply. Yet, at other times, I believe you have your own merits. Why should we be bound by the rules of a conventional society, denying ourselves the freedom and joys of life?"

Lumian seemed lost in his own thoughts, barely registering Madame Pualis's words. He continued to hunch over, pressing his head against the carriage floor. Muttering to himself, he questioned, "Who… who led her to embrace Inevitability?"

"Perhaps only she knows the answer. Unfortunately…" Madame Pualis sighed once more.

Lumian fell into silence, taking deep breaths to steady himself.

Once… twice… thrice… Time seemed to blur as he wrestled with his thoughts. Finally, he straightened his posture, lowered his hands, and turned his gaze towards Madame Pualis.

“Have you ever encountered an elf-like creature resembling a lizard in the village?”

“No.” Madame Pualis shook her head.

The diaphanous “lizard” from my dream was merely a symbol. Did it represent the influence of Inevitability? Or did it actually exist, concealed deep within reality? Lumian pondered incessantly, as if this were the only way to prevent the razor-sharp blades from piercing his shattered heart.

He posed a new question.

“Have you ever come across the legend of the Warlock? The one about nine bulls being the only ones capable of pulling the coffin.”

“No,” Madame Pualis replied once more, shaking her head.

Lumian continued to inquire, one question after another. Eventually, he lost track of what he was asking and whether Madame Pualis had even responded. In his mind, her face became hazy, as though she were standing dozens or hundreds of meters away.

At some undetermined point, the four-wheeled carriage came to a halt. Lumian found himself back on the roadside, moving forward without purpose or destination.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The cathedral bell tolled, signaling midnight.

Suddenly, Lumian snapped out of his daze, realizing he had returned to the Auberge du Coq Doré.

Almost instinctively, he ascended the steps and prepared to push open the door. But after a few seconds of shock, he retreated back

onto the street, wandering towards the end of Rue Anarchie like a lost soul.

He walked until he reached Avenue du Marché. The sky, perpetually gloomy throughout the night, now became shrouded in thick, dark clouds. There was no crimson moon or stars to be seen.

Finally, Lumian arrived at the entrance of Salle de Bal Brise, where a cacophony of voices and the rhythmic beat of drums emanated, creating an unusually vibrant atmosphere. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Feeling overwhelmed by the environment, he abruptly spun around, staggering to the side of the road. Finding a spot in the shadow, far away from the nearest gas street lamp, he sat on the ground.

Pitter. Patter. As time ticked by, raindrops began to fall, landing on the ground, his head, and before him.

The raindrops grew stronger, creating a steady patter.

Lumian remained motionless, as if he had transformed into a statue, allowing the rain to soak his hair, face, and clothes.

Suddenly, a shadow appeared above him, and the raindrops vanished.

Confused, Lumian looked up and saw a dark-blue umbrella, its metal frame supporting the fabric, held by Jenna.

He averted his gaze, staring blankly at the middle of the road where mist had started to rise. He made no effort to stop Jenna nor acknowledged her presence.

Jenna, wearing heavy smokey makeup and a sequined, low-cut red dress, draped a lightly-colored shawl with sizable holes over her shoulders to conceal some of her skin.

She observed Lumian for a few seconds, refraining from asking any questions. Standing beside him, she held the umbrella aloft.

The heavy rain persisted for an entire hour before gradually

subsiding. Only scattered droplets now dripped from the buildings on either side and the street lamps.

Lumian rose slowly, as if he had lost something.

Jenna folded her umbrella and muttered, her voice barely audible.

“The rain will cease eventually, just as darkness always gives way. The sun is destined to rise, and its light will surely illuminate the earth.”

Lumian remained silent for a moment, his gaze fixed on the darkened road ahead.

“How would you feel when you discover that someone you trust isn’t who you thought they were?”

Jenna didn’t respond directly. Instead, she countered with a question of her own, “Do you still trust him?”

Lumian pursed his lips, his answer unwavering, “Yes.”

“If you still trust him, then find out why he did it,” Jenna advised, her tone calm.

Lumian’s hands trembled slightly as he took a series of deep breaths.

Eventually, his body returned to normal, and he turned to face Jenna. “Why are you here?”

Jenna’s reply carried both frustration and amusement, “Dammit! This is just outside Salle de Bal Brise! I didn’t need to go to the theater tonight, so I came here to sing and make some cash. When I stepped out, I spotted you sitting by the roadside, completely drenched.”

Lumian averted his gaze and began walking forward, his expression devoid of emotion.

He splashed through puddles, striding toward Rue des Blouses Blanches.

“Where are you going?” Jenna asked, a hint of concern in her voice.

Lumian responded without looking back, “To find out the reason!”

He recalled Aurore’s words when she pushed him away from the altar: “My grimoires…”

Considering the current circumstances, Lumian suspected that his sister was trying to convey that he could uncover clues about the source of the abnormality within her grimoires!

Jenna followed Lumian, holding the umbrella, and probed, “Do you think you can find the reason in just one night?”

“Perhaps it will take a long time,” Lumian impatiently replied.

Jenna muttered under her breath, “Then why are you in such a hurry? Rest and clear your mind. It might help you uncover the reason more quickly.”

Lumian contemplated his limited understanding of the grimoires’ contents and his lack of mystical knowledge. He fell into silence.

Once again, he turned to Jenna. “Is Franca at home?”

“Why do you ask?” Jenna appeared perplexed. “She probably won’t return to Rue des Blouses Blanches today. She mentioned wanting to spend a pleasant evening with Gardner Martin.”

Phew… Lumian exhaled and redirected his steps toward Rue Anarchie.

Chapter 221 - 221 Venting

221 Venting

Jenna's gaze fixated on Lumian's retreating figure as she inquired, "Where are you off to?"

"Getting some shut-eye," Lumian replied without glancing back.

Pursing her lips, Jenna pondered for a brief moment before deciding to follow him.

She wanted to ascertain his final destination and see if he truly intended to return to the Auberge du Coq Doré to sleep. Otherwise, with his current state, she couldn't fathom the trouble he might stir up.

Ignoring Jenna's presence, Lumian ambled slowly back towards the Auberge du Coq Doré.

As he reached the motel's entrance, he discovered the main door firmly locked. Rather than scaling the pipes, he retrieved a small wire from his person and deftly inserted it into the brass keyhole, skillfully manipulating it.

The door swung open, revealing the murky interior. The only source of illumination emanated from the staircase leading down to the basement bar.

Lumian cast a fleeting glance and chose to descend in that direction.

Dammit! Didn't he claim he was going to bed? Jenna cursed inwardly and let out a resigned sigh. She trailed after him into the Auberge du Coq Doré's basement bar.

The bar wasn't bustling with patrons. Two or three inebriated men

occupied a small round table, sporadically bellowing, but they lacked any significant strength.

The sole customer at the bar counter happened to be Lumian's neighbor, Gabriel, the playwright residing in Room 206.

Garbed in a faded linen shirt, brown trousers, and oversized black-framed glasses, Gabriel's hair appeared unkempt and greasy.

"You're still drinking at this hour?" Lumian settled beside Gabriel, his gaze fixed upon the glass of green absinthe clasped in the playwright's hand, shimmering with a psychedelic allure. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Has he returned to normal? Jenna appraised Lumian, sensing that his condition wasn't as dire as before.

Suppressing a yawn with her hand, she pulled a barstool over and took a seat, resolute in her intent to observe for another thirty minutes.

Gabriel forced a bitter smile and responded, "I just finished a manuscript and came down for a drink."

"Are all authors the same? Do you prefer to toil at night and slumber during the day?" Lumian rapped on the bar counter, beckoning for a glass of absinthe.

Pausing for a moment, Gabriel replied, "Many authors are like that. Tranquil nights grant us greater inspiration.

"But that's not why I stay up late. I must visit various theaters during the day, persuading managers to peruse and accept my manuscript.

"Today, I went to the Théatre de la Renaissance in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. Their manager, Nathan Lopp, is renowned as the most astute theater manager. He possesses the highest likelihood of recognizing the value of my script. Yet, he refused to see me. I failed to meet him both at his office and during my visit to his apartment."

Upon hearing words like "theater" and "manager," Jenna inwardly

gasped, a vague sense of trepidation creeping over her.

The fact that many individuals around her worshiped an evil god had left a lasting scar on her psyche.

Furthermore, their abilities were repulsive and twisted, evoking deep-rooted revulsion within her.

“Do you happen to know where the theater manager lives?”

“Yes, I’ve visited him at his apartment before, along with other playwrights. He’s still unmarried and often changes mistresses,” Gabriel rambled on.

A grin crept across Lumian’s face.

“I have a way to get that fellow to read your script, but I can’t guarantee he will accept it.”

“Really?” Gabriel was taken aback and perplexed.

There’s actually a way? Jenna wondered, her mind filled with bewilderment.

Lumian swiftly finished his absinthe and rose to his feet.

“Let’s go at once. Bring your script!”

“…” Gabriel had never encountered such a man of action.

It was already midnight!

With no remaining hope, he resolved to give it a try. Downing the last of his absinthe, he ascended to the second floor to retrieve the script for his three-act play.

Standing at the entrance of Auberge du Coq Doré, Jenna studied Lumian with a mix of puzzlement and curiosity. “Do you truly have a solution?”

Lumian scoffed dismissively. “You need not believe me.”

“Heh!” Jenna expressed her disdain.

Uncertain if this was a consequence of his troubled state, she felt a twinge of curiosity and decided to follow Lumian to prevent him from engaging in any rash actions.

Before long, Gabriel returned to the ground floor.

He had changed into a clean and respectable formal suit, complete with a crimson bow tie.

“Address,” Lumian inquired calmly.

“Room 702, 15 Rue Defoe, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.” Gabriel gazed at the poorly lit Rue Anarchie, observing only a few inebriated individuals and wanderers.

He tentatively asked, “Shall we walk there?”

There were no public carriages available at this hour, and Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative was adjacent to the market district.

Lumian paid no attention to the query, instead strolling towards Avenue du Marché at a steady pace. He halted before a late-night-operating rental carriage, a four-wheeled two-seater, and addressed the driver, who sported the uniform of the Empire Carriage Company.

“To 15 Rue Defoe, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.”

The carriage driver, donning a waxed hat and a blue gown adorned with yellow buttons, scrutinized Lumian and his two companions before stating, “Two verl d’or.”

In Trier, daytime travel in a rental carriage lasting less than an hour cost 1.25 verl d’or, with an additional 1.75 verl d’or per hour. After midnight until 6 a.m., short journeys were priced at 2 verl d’or, while longer trips incurred a charge of 2.5 verl d’or per hour.

Lumian remained silent, producing two silver coins worth 1 verl d’or each and tossing them to the carriage driver.

Showing no courtesy, he boarded the carriage and took a seat.

This left Gabriel in a predicament. Unsure whether he should act chivalrously and jostle with Ciel or allow the singer, Jenna, to make her own choice.

Eventually, realizing she hadn't been invited, Jenna grumbled and settled herself beside Lumian, striving to secure some personal space.

The rental carriage set off, embarking on its journey towards Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

During the ride, Lumian maintained an unsettling silence, leaving Gabriel hesitant to inquire about his solution. The atmosphere inside the carriage grew somewhat uncomfortable.

Having grown accustomed to Lumian's peculiar state that night, Jenna cleared her mind and focused on her own thoughts.

After an indeterminate period, the rental carriage came to a halt at 15 Rue Defoe.

Lumian wasted no time and headed straight for the apartment building. Upon entering the lobby, he was intercepted by a vigilant guard.

"Which floor and room are you residing in?" the dutiful guard inquired. "If you're not a resident here, you need…"

Before the guard could finish his sentence, a chilling object was pressed against his temple.

Lumian had swiftly produced a revolver from under his armpit and pressed the barrel firmly against the guard's forehead.

"W-What do you think you're doing?" the guard, who appeared to be almost fifty, stammered.

Gabriel stood frozen, his mind filled with doubt regarding Ciel's supposed solution.

Amused and eager to witness the unfolding events, Jenna observed Lumian silently guide the guard to a secluded corner of the lobby. Using the rope and various items he had with him, he proceeded to

bind the guard's hands and feet, effectively rendering him immobile. A gag was placed over the guard's mouth to ensure his silence.

With the task completed, Lumian shut the apartment door behind him and secured the lock before ascending the staircase.

As if awakening from a dream, Gabriel hastened after him, his voice filled with anxiety.

"Is that really okay?"

"What do you think?" Lumian replied with a grin.

Gabriel faltered, lost for words. He hesitated, contemplating whether he should abandon his pursuit of having Nathan Lopp, the manager of Théatre de la Renaissance, read his script.

If I were to express my doubts and return now, would Ciel become furious and resort to violence? After all, he is a mob leader… Gabriel gaped, incapable of uttering anything that might dissuade Lumian.

Soon, the trio reached the top floor and stopped outside Room 702.

Gabriel, poised to knock, witnessed Lumian deftly employ the short wire to open the vermilion wooden door.

"…" Gabriel couldn't make sense of Lumian's intentions in the slightest.

Observing this, Jenna swiftly removed her light-colored shawl and draped it over her face, exposing only her forehead and eyes.

She harbored suspicions that Ciel was about to cause trouble. To avoid being implicated by him, it was prudent to conceal her identity. At the very least, she couldn't allow anyone to remember her appearance.

Lumian stepped into the living room, awash with the glow of the crimson moonlight. Producing a bandage, he wrapped it around his face, leaving only his eyes and nostrils visible.

"… " Though Gabriel failed to comprehend why Jenna and Ciel were

veiling their faces, he instinctively found a cloth and covered the lower portion of his own face.

Enveloped in a white bandage, Lumian surveyed the surroundings before proceeding towards the master bedroom. He turned the handle and gently pushed open the door.

The living room was bathed in the luminosity of the crimson moon, illuminating the figures reclining in the bed.

There lay a man and a woman. The man boasted disheveled black hair, appearing to be in his early forties. His countenance was gaunt, with a prominent nose bridge. The woman possessed curly blond hair, seemingly in her twenties. Her complexion was flawless, and her features were strikingly beautiful.

Beneath the velvet blanket, they appeared to be unclothed.

“He’s the theater manager?” Lumian didn’t restrain his voice at all.

Gabriel felt as though he were trapped in a surreal reverie.

“Yes, that’s him.”

Lumian advanced swiftly towards the grand bed. The manager of Théatre de la Renaissance, Nathan Lopp, stirred from his slumber upon hearing the commotion.

Before he could open his eyes, Lumian grasped his shoulder and hoisted him upright.

Nathan Lopp jolted awake, his eyes confronted with the sight of a head swathed in white bandages.

His heart seemed to skip a beat, rendering him speechless and devoid of protest.

In the next instant, a revolver was pressed against his temple.

Nathan Lopp sealed his lips shut and was propelled into the living room.

As he passed by Jenna, Lumian cast a sidelong glance towards the bed and whispered, “Keep an eye on that woman.”

Jenna found herself bewildered by the unfolding events, yet it did nothing to quell her exhilaration.

Without hesitation, she lowered herself into a crouch, drew her own revolver, and trained it upon the recently awakened blonde. With a touch of cold detachment, she issued a stern warning, “I don’t want to hear a word.”

The blonde wrapped her arms tightly around the blanket, trembling on the bed.

Lumian settled Nathan Lopp into a recliner, securing his hands and feet to the sofa and floor using garments.

Perplexed, Gabriel came over. Suddenly, a thought struck him: Are we here to rob Nathan Lopp, or are we here to present him with my script?

Jenna escorted the blonde, clad in a nightgown, to the living room. Lumian, who had illuminated the crystal chandelier, took a few steps back. He retrieved his revolver and seated himself on the divan opposite the recliner.

Nathan Lopp appeared freshly awakened and uttered anxiously, “How much do you want? I’ll give it to you, everything! There’s a total of 1,100 verl d’or and a diamond necklace here. I’ll surrender them all! Just promise not to harm me!”

Lumian, his face concealed by bandages, turned towards Gabriel and stated, “Read it.”

“Read what?” Gabriel responded, his mind blank.

Lumian let out a soft chuckle.

“Read your script. Monsieur Nathan Lopp is waiting.”

Wh… Gabriel stood dumbfounded.

Is this the solution to making Nathan Lopp read my script?

Is this how a rational person thinks?

Not only Gabriel pondered this, but Jenna couldn't help but mumble to herself.

Ciel's mind is truly unhinged!

Won't this result in Monsieur Playwright being taken to the police station?

Thank goodness I've concealed my face!

With a similar sense of relief, Gabriel approached Nathan Lopp apprehensively. He retrieved the script and began reading it aloud, as if compelled to do so.

Nathan Lopp listened in bewilderment, questioning whether he was trapped in a ludicrous dream.

Halfway through his slumber, a masked intruder invaded his abode, binding him to a chair merely to subject him to a script recital?

As he listened attentively, Nathan Lopp's professional instincts kicked in, drawing him further into the script.

After the main dialogue of the first scene concluded, Nathan Lopp interrupted Gabriel.

"Who wrote this?"

"Me," Gabriel replied subconsciously.

Nathan Lopp's voice resonated deeply as he stated, "Bring it to my office tomorrow at 10 a.m. We'll sign the contract."

"Alright, alright." Gabriel's emotions swirled with surprise, happiness, and fear.

Will I find the police waiting for me at Théatre de la Renaissance tomorrow?

Lumian chuckled, rising from his seat and making his way to the door with his revolver.

Jenna and Gabriel followed closely behind, allowing the blonde woman to free Nathan Lopp from his restraints.

As they descended the stairs, Jenna flashed a smile at Gabriel and inquired, “Monsieur Playwright, your script is exceptional. Your words are captivating. What is its title?”

“It’s called ‘Lightseeker,’” Gabriel responded instinctively, unable to comprehend why an underground singer held such interest in the script.

Jenna quickened her pace to catch up with Lumian. Lowering her voice, she asked, “Is this your solution? Aren’t you concerned that the theater manager may also be a devotee of an evil god?”

In her current state of mind, all theaters seemed suspect.

Lumian removed the bandages, his expression unwavering, as he replied, “Then we would have fought.”

I knew it… Jenna silently muttered to herself.

After retrieving their belongings and ropes from the guard, the trio boarded a rental carriage and returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

Once Gabriel expressed his gratitude and retreated to his room, a mix of worry and joy, Jenna observed Ciel as he freshened up and settled onto the bed. Finally, she breathed a sigh of relief.

She drew the curtains and carefully closed the wooden door before departing Auberge du Coq Doré.

In the nearly pitch-black darkness, Lumian’s eyes remained closed, unmoving.

Chapter 222 - 222 Fliers

222 Fliers

Clang! Clang! Clang!

At the stroke of six, Lumian sat upright and flung open the curtains, allowing a gentle light to stream into the room, breathing life into the once silent space. He rubbed his face, freshened up, and attended to his needs.

Once ready, he changed his clothes and departed from Auberge du Coq Doré. Making his way around Rue des Blouses Blanches, he entered the rented safe house.

With great anticipation, Lumian delved into Aurore's grimoires, hoping to uncover some hidden gems that had eluded him in his previous search.

Aurore's grimoires contained three distinct categories of knowledge.

Firstly, there were the common mystical understandings—the names of various pathways, the state of certain Sequences, the foundations of ritualistic magic, the significance of symbolic elements, and the pronunciation and meanings of several supernatural languages.

The second category focused on the practical application of mystical knowledge and personal abilities. It demanded deep contemplation, as it contained numerous recorded or purchased spells, as well as defenses against curses.

Lastly, there were fragments of peculiar and incomplete knowledge, along with intriguing anecdotes. Some were bestowed upon Aurore by the Hidden Sage, while others emerged from interactions within the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

These miscellaneous tidbits weren't organized into separate grimoires but appeared sporadically as Aurore acquired them.

For Lumian, the second category posed the greatest challenge. Warlock spells like Illumination, Weed Removal, Exorcism, Soul Summoning, Lightning, Wind Creation, and Force Field Hand proved to be perplexing. After all, he lacked the fundamental understanding of mysticism and the support of Beyonder powers required to cast spells.

On the other hand, Lumian had made significant progress in comprehending, learning, and mastering ritualistic magic since becoming an Alms Monk.

Lumian also noticed that his sister had omitted certain basic rules, such as the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation, from her grimoires.

However, this was to be expected. Such laws were scarce and easily remembered. They were ingrained in the mind and required no additional recording.

After an extensive morning of reading, Lumian found no signs of suspicion. Instead, he accumulated a myriad of questions that demanded consultation with others.

He let out a slow exhale, carefully folded the pages containing his inquiries, and tucked them into his pocket before departing the safe house.

On his way to Avenue du Marché, Lumian's attention was caught by several voting booths. Uniformed police officers and heavily armed military police were working diligently to maintain order, allowing long queues of people to deposit their votes into wooden boxes.

Despite having acquired a new identification from Gardner Martin and assuming the persona of Ciel Dubois, a resident of the market district for nearly two years with the right to vote, Lumian chose not to register at all. He had no desire to partake in the parliamentary election.

After some time, a newsboy rushed by and tossed a stack of white papers into the air.

Lumian observed as many pedestrians eagerly collected the floating papers and began reading them with great seriousness. He bent down and retrieved a copy lying at his feet.

The white paper featured several lines of text in the Intis script, printed in a simple and easily comprehensible syntax.

“Hugues Artois is a traitor!

“In the war against the Loen Kingdom several years ago, he deserted his troops and fled. Countless fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons never returned!

“He is participating in the parliamentary election with clandestine support from the Loen Kingdom!”

He vividly remembered Hugo Artois’s campaign posters emphasizing his military service. He had only retired from the army upon reaching the rank of major and ventured into politics, starting as an assistant secretary at the National Convention.

Could this be a desperate move from a candidate facing unsatisfactory early poll results? As Lumian pondered over the situation, a group of men, suspected to be mobsters, approached and forcibly confiscated the fliers from the pedestrians, resorting to physical violence and vulgar insults. Curiously, the nearby police officers seemed oblivious to the scene unfolding before them.

Lumian raised his gaze and recognized one of the men.

They were members of the Poison Spur Mob, the very individuals who had previously followed Margot and Wilson to Auberge du Coq Doré.

“You dare read something like that, you wretch?”

“You leper, hand me the thing in your hand!”

“Son of a bitch, do you want me to rough you up?”

The Poison Spur Mob members closed in on Lumian. Just as they were about to snatch the flier from his hand, their eyes fell upon his short blond hair with dark roots.

A mischievous grin crept across Lumian's face.

Ciel! The Poison Spur Mob members instinctively turned around, their intent to flee evident.

Lumian swiftly lifted his foot and delivered a forceful kick to one of the mobsters' rear, causing him to lose his balance and tumble to the ground.

"What's the matter? Can't recognize your pépé?" Lumian taunted, watching the disoriented Poison Spur Mob members scramble away in a disheveled state. He had no inclination to pursue them any further.

Lumian tossed aside the flier he held and strolled back to Salle de Bal Brise.

Immediately upon entering, Louis approached with Sarkota by his side.

"Boss, Charlie quit his job as a waiter last night and only asked for a week's worth of salary."

"I'm aware," Lumian responded calmly.

Louis recalled how the boss had taken Charlie away the previous night, returning without him. Shortly afterward, Charlie tendered his resignation and left. This sequence of events left Louis with a lingering suspicion that something secretive was at play, but he didn't dare inquire further.

Lumian cast a brief glance at Louis and casually inquired as he made his way towards the café on the second floor, "How old are you?"

"27," Louis answered, puzzled as to why the boss seemed interested in this particular detail.

Without much hesitation, Lumian continued, "Are you married? Do

you have any children?"

"Not yet," Louis replied with an awkward smile. "I plan to get married when I'm more mature.

Though he had managed to escape the life of a low-ranking mobster and now served as the leader's bodyguard, eliminating the constant fear of being beaten to death on the streets, Louis recognized the inherent dangers that still lurked.

He didn't wish to benefit another man shortly after entering married life and having a child.

Lumian nodded.

"It's important to consider your future. The other Louis I know already has several children."

Louis brushed off the remark, perceiving it as an attempt by the boss to force a conversation when there was little else to discuss, as if trying to prove a point.

…

Franca skipped her lunch with Gardner Martin and returned to 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches before noon.

Upon reaching the house, she noticed that the door to the guest bedroom was tightly shut. Perplexed, she turned the handle and pushed it open.

Inside, Jenna lay fast asleep in her pajamas, huddled under a blanket.

Stirred by the door's movement, she rubbed her eyes and slowly sat up, her gaze fixed on Franca.

"Still snoozing?" Franca asked, her smile in place.

Just because you don't have acting lessons at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, you're letting yourself go like this?

Jenna combed through her tawny locks and grumbled, "It's all Ciel's

fault; things went on late into the night."

"…" Franca's smile froze.

Jenna continued, "I don't know what happened to him last night, but his mood and condition were off. I was worried something might happen, so I followed him. Only after he entered Auberge du Coq Doré and got into bed did I return to get some rest."

Franca breathed a sigh of relief and inquired with concern, "Tell me everything."

Jenna recounted the events starting from her performance at Salle de Bal Brise, seeing Lumian sitting by the road in the rain, all the way until he employed an unimaginable "method" to secure Gabriel's script deal. Finally, she said,

"Dammit, it was almost three o'clock before he finally agreed to go back to his room and sleep. I was beyond exhausted!"

Franca listened attentively and expressed her worry, "It's rare to see him in such a state…"

Franca paused, a realization dawning on her.

Lumian was still undergoing regular treatment from a psychiatrist, and perhaps this state she witnessed was his truest form.

"He must have experienced some sort of trauma last night. I'll ask him about it later." After Franca referred to him as a relative, she no longer concealed her close relationship with Lumian in front of Jenna.

Jenna nodded.

"Choose your words carefully. Don't agitate him."

…

On the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise, in Lumian's office, he noticed Franca, who had turned invisible.

“I heard from Jenna that something happened to you last night,” Franca, dressed in a white blouse and black pants, asked casually. “Did you meet Madame Pualis?”

During her lunch with Jenna, she had managed to piece together what had triggered Lumian’s mental distress.

Lumian seemed to lose all his strength upon hearing Franca’s question and slumped into the swiveling armchair.

After a pause of more than ten seconds, he exhaled and said, “That’s right. I can’t accept the truth I learned, but I have no choice.”

Sensing his reluctance to share further, Franca didn’t press the matter. She nodded slightly and offered, “Is there anything I can do for you?”

Lumian straightened up and spoke bluntly, “Two things. First, I have numerous questions about mysticism. Second, the issue with the Poison Spur Mob.

“As I mentioned before, once the election is over, Hugues Artois will become a member of parliament. ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger and his cohorts will gain a new boon. In due time, we’ll all be in danger. Should we launch a raid on 126 Avenue du Marché at night to eliminate any hidden threats before the election results are announced?”

Franca pondered for a moment and replied, “Based on your description, the Heretic Spellmaster holds a significant advantage on their home turf. Even if the two of us use our trump cards, our chances of successfully eliminating ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger and the others are uncertain, assuming there are no other surprises awaiting us.

“But if we don’t act now, they will become even more formidable after receiving their new boons…”

She hesitated, unsure of the best course of action. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

…

At 126 Avenue du Marché, within the three-story building with a garden.

“Black Scorpion” Roger gazed at his subordinate who had infiltrated the market district’s parliamentary election commission and asked eagerly, “What’s the situation?”

The subordinate replied with excitement, “Monsieur Hugues Artois is leading by a wide margin!”

A smile crept across “Black Scorpion” Roger’s face. Once the subordinate left, he turned to “Baldy” Harman and “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina, saying,

“The election results will be announced tomorrow afternoon. Lady Moon will personally oversee the ritual and grant us a boon during the night.

“Afterward, we won’t hold back anymore. That wretched Ciel must meet his demise!”

Chapter 223 - 223 Choice

223 Choice

On a southeastern hill overlooking Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, there stood an active quarry.

Having departed from Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian embarked on a quest to find a suitable candidate, which led him to this very place.

The night was deep, and the lamplighters diligently illuminated the gas lamps strewn across the streets. In stark contrast, the quarry, having concluded its daily operations, was enveloped in darkness, devoid of any artificial illumination.

Scattered across the quarry floor were several gypsum furnaces, surrounded by numerous tramps.

Lumian honed his focus, meticulously assessing each individual's circumstances.

At long last, he discovered a target that fit his requirements.

Resting against one of the gypsum furnaces was a male tramp. His shirt, pants, and jacket were tattered, their original hue obscured by the dark brown soil. Sunken cheeks and emaciated limbs almost distorted his figure. His unkempt hair and beard intertwined in a mess of strands.

His eyes were half-shut, and his shallow breaths suggested he might perish at any moment.

According to Lumian's observations, the tramp was indeed approaching the end of his waning life. He had but two or three days left.

Approaching the figure, Lumian squatted down and retrieved the gas canister he had obtained from the unsavory Hedsey, whom Franca had aptly named Mysticism Smelling Salts. Unscrewing the lid, he positioned it near the tramp's nostrils.

He and Franca had already distributed Rentas's "remains." The sedatives and coins totaling 212 verl d'or belonged to Lumian, while the remainder was Franca's share.

Achoo!

The tramp sneezed twice, and his eyes fluttered open.

Weakly gazing at Lumian, donned in a blue laborer's uniform and a dark cap, he inquired, puzzled, "W-who are you? W-what are you trying to do?"

Lumian responded calmly, "I'm just a passing worker. I sensed that your demise was imminent, so I approached to verify."

The tramp found no fault in Lumian's explanation. In the Intis Republic, upon discovering a lifeless body, whether reporting to the governmental authorities or the two Churches, individuals would receive compensation for promptly ensuring purification or cremation.

Though the sum was meager, a mere 1 verl d'or, even the lower-class citizens found it a pleasant surprise, no matter how modest the additional benefits.

The tramp's beard trembled as he managed a smile.

"You guessed right. I also feel as if my time is drawing near. Drop by more frequently over the next two days, so your money doesn't get snatched away."

Perhaps it was the effect of the Mysticism Smelling Salts, or perhaps the topic of death momentarily stirred the tramp's spirits, for his words ceased to falter, and his reasoning became clearer.

"Have you got any family left?" Lumian inquired casually, squatting before the tramp as he stowed away the Mysticism Smelling Salts.

The tramp fell silent for a few moments, then slowly shook his head.

“No, not any more.

“Has your family passed on?” Lumian probed further.

The tramp’s beard swayed with the motion of his muscles, and his voice carried an unmistakable tinge of anguish.

“They’re gone. All gone. My parents didn’t make it past 45. My brother fell in the war a few years back. My sisters succumbed to illness, and her child became a child laborer. By the age of ten, he was already hunchbacked and died from sheer exhaustion in a textile mill…” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The tramp seemed to stray from Lumian’s question, more akin to a recollection before his impending demise. He rambled on, “I used to toil in the quarry, praised for my strength. Then, a Monsieur saw my diligence, believed I could endure hardship. He taught me to place detonators and loosen rocks. My pay rose, and life took a turn for the better. I had a wife, tough as nails just like me, and three precious children, but only one survived. My little angel, my daughter.

“When the food prices sparked protests, my body suddenly gave way, and I fell grievously ill.

“My wife and daughter spent everything, amassed debts. Eventually, they nursed me back to health, but I lost my job in the process. We were hounded by loan sharks day in and day out. Those men took away my little angel. My wife and I searched desperately. A few weeks later, we found her lifeless body. She couldn’t endure their torment and chose to end it all.

“My wife wanted to turn to the police, but they beat her to death and dumped her somewhere. I was battered and left unconscious, but I survived. I’ve made it till today…”

Lumian listened in silence, his voice deep when he finally spoke, “Any wishes?”

The tramp laughed out loud.

“Wishes? My greatest wish is to pass away shortly after catching that illness.”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before continuing, “No thirst for revenge?”

The tramp’s eyes glazed over as he replied, “Those loan sharks were killed by other mobs. New loan sharks have taken their place.”

He recollected Lumian’s initial question and spoke in a voice that seemed to drift from another realm, “When my time comes, I think—I think I’d like to have another meatloaf. I remember those years, every weekend, my wife would buy the meat herself, add flax seeds and vinegar, turn it into a sauce, and stuff it between flatbread. My daughter adored it, and I loved it too…”

Lumian nodded, rising to his feet and making his way down the hill, toward the streets below.

After approximately 45 minutes, he returned to the gypsum furnace, carrying a Rouen meatloaf that filled the air with its enticing aroma.

The tramp seemed on the verge of fainting once more. Lumian employed the Mysticism Smelling Salts once again to rouse him from his stupor.

The tramp sneezed a few times, his gaze fixed blankly on the Rouen meatloaf. He quickly took bites, his beard becoming coated with a thin layer of oil.

Having consumed half of it, he gasped for breath and inquired with a smile, “What’s your game, lad?”

“I’ll be stabbing you later. It might just bring about your demise tonight,” Lumian stated plainly.

The tramp chuckled weakly and queried, “Aren’t you afraid of the police? I fear not death. I should’ve perished long ago. Did you know that every winter, I sleep inside this gypsum furnace? Even after a day’s work, it retains a soothing warmth that lasts until nearly daybreak. However, the lingering fumes within are poisonous and could claim me in my sweet slumber. So far, it hasn’t happened to

me."

Lumian chuckled.

"I reckon the police aren't too bothered about how a tramp meets his end, so long as it's not a blatant murder."

Without further ado, the tramp devoured the remaining Rouen meatloaf and let out a belch.

After a pause of over ten seconds, he adjusted his position and spoke, "You may proceed."

Lumian drew his blade, Fallen Mercury, adorned with sinister patterns, and thrust it into the tramp's hand.

Blood trickled forth, staining the tip of the blade crimson.

Simultaneously, Lumian once again beheld the illusory river of mercury.

His purpose in seeking a near-death tramp was to exchange for a more practical fate!

This was not to say that encountering the fate of the Montsouris ghost wasn't formidable. Quite the contrary, it could lead to certain death or even the demise of an entire family for many humans. Furthermore, it clung tenaciously. However, the issue lay in the time it took to take effect. The exchange of fates could often be completed within minutes, whereas the Montsouris ghost's assault on its target occurred at random intervals. It might strike in ten to twenty minutes, or it might wait for three to four months.

In other words, the fate of "encountering the Montsouris ghost" was ill-suited for a surprise attack or a battle.

Furthermore, having learned from the experience and lessons of Margot's death, Lumian's target, "Black Scorpion" Roger, would undoubtedly be wary of such matters. If stabbed by Fallen Mercury and not instantly dispatched, there was a high likelihood that he would seek aid from Madame Moon. Lumian was uncertain if the lady possessing true godhood could fend off the Montsouris ghost. If

she could, his operation would be an utter failure.

Considering these factors, he intended to preemptively alter the fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost and choose a destiny more conducive to surprise attacks and assassinations. He desired “Black Scorpion” Roger to perish on the spot, without a chance to seek any assistance.

As these thoughts raced through Lumian’s mind, a series of images “appeared” before him.

He saw the tramp, asleep inside the gypsum furnace, the tramp who had been viciously beaten and left unconscious, the tramp who had recently fainted, the tramp who had crumbled in front of his daughter’s lifeless body, the tramp who had shared homemade meatloaf with his wife and daughter, the tramp who meticulously prepared and set up explosives…

Lumian knew he couldn’t choose the tramp’s destined fate of perishing in two or three days. It was an overwhelming burden, beyond what Fallen Mercury could bear. Even the Luck Transference Spell couldn’t transfer such a dire fate.

The only solution Lumian could think of was to employ the Substitution Spell and find a death row inmate to take the tramp’s place. He would assume the inmate’s identity for a period of time, gaining the acceptance of those around him. Then, he would perform the ritual and swap the tramp’s impending death with that of the inmate. However, this process would take two to three weeks, if not longer, to prepare. Time was not on his side.

Drawing on his vast experience, Lumian made a quick decision and chose the fate of the tramp who had recently collapsed due to his failing body.

It departed from the mercury river and condensed into a droplet that seeped into the blade of Fallen Mercury. Simultaneously, the fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost shifted entirely to the tramp.

Lumian retracted the wicked, pewter-black dagger. It remained clean and free from bloodstains, and the wound on the tramp’s hand was

shallow, as though it would soon leave a scar.

“That’s it?” the tramp asked in puzzlement.

He had been prepared to meet his end then and there.

“Yes.” Lumian stood up and departed from the hill.

Late that night, inside the gypsum furnace, the tramp convulsed suddenly and succumbed to suffocation.

…

Across from 126 Avenue du Marché.

Returning here, Lumian nestled in a shadowy corner, shielded from the glow of the gas street lamps. His eyes fixated on the target building.

Beside him, Franca emerged from the darkness, dressed in a black robe and hood.

“How did it go?” Lumian asked, entirely unsurprised.

Chapter 224 - 224 Disguise

224 Disguise

Franca cast her gaze upon 126 Avenue du Marché and remarked, “Whether it’s ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger, ‘Baldy’ Harman, or ‘Short-legged Candlestick’ Castina, none of them have shown themselves.”

“Extremely cautious,” Lumian objectively commented.

Franca let out a scoff.

“If I were in their shoes, I’d be cautious too. If I manage to make it through tonight, I can turn the tables and emerge victorious. How foolish would it be for me to reveal myself? Even if someone were to abduct Gardner and maim him at the doorstep, I wouldn’t budge.”

This example isn’t convincing… Lumian asked, “What if it’s Jenna who’s bound instead of Gardner?”

“…” Franca fell silent.

Noticing the Provoker potion taking effect, Lumian, nearing the completion of his digestion, chose not to press further. Instead, he inquired, “What else have you observed?”

Neither Lumian nor Franca had devised a specific plan for the assault on “Black Scorpion” Roger and the others. They possessed only a handful of vague ideas and were currently engaged in preliminary investigations and preparations.

Franca pondered for a few seconds before revealing, “A member of the Poison Spur Mob frequents the election commission and this vicinity. It’s as if he’s providing ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger with real-time updates on the polls.”

Pausing briefly, a mischievous smile curled the corners of her mouth.

“We can exploit this!”

Simultaneously, Lumian mirrored her grin.

“Isn’t it like stumbling upon a soft pillow just when you’re sleepy? Indeed, delving into politics is a treacherous affair.”

Franca turned her head, amusement twinkling in her eyes as she glanced at Lumian.

“Your sister must have imparted many hometown sayings to you. How do you plan on operating this thing?”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before speaking again.

“If I were an Actor, the problem would be simple. Nonetheless, I still possess those glasses.”

Franca nodded, satisfied with his response.

“This operation requires both a surprise attack and an assassination. The importance of the assassination must outweigh that of the surprise attack to minimize a Heretic Spellmaster’s advantage on their home turf.”

After some deliberation, the two of them moved away from 126 Avenue du Marché, positioning themselves in a shadowy spot near the district’s parliamentary election commission.

The day’s voting had concluded, and the election commission staff toiled diligently, counting the votes and providing real-time updates. Countless reporters from various newspapers gathered there, eager to acquire firsthand data.

If all went according to plan, Hugues Artois would secure more than half of the registered votes tonight, enabling him to declare his election victory.

As time ticked by, the night grew darker. Suddenly, Franca nudged Lumian and pointed towards a figure exiting the election commission.

The person appeared to be almost thirty, boasting black hair, brown eyes, and a narrow face. He sported a blue-and-white striped shirt, a light brown jacket, and a thick gold necklace.

Lumian offered a subtle nod and departed from his hiding place, adopting an air of urgency as he approached the man.

He pulled his dark cap down low, obscuring his distinct blond-and-black hair.

Upon noticing someone drawing nearer, the Poison Spur Mob member cautiously altered his path.

At that moment, Lumian took a diagonal stride forward, positioning himself in front of the individual. He smiled and greeted, “Long time no see. How have you been faring within the Poison Spur Mob?”

The man was caught off guard. Utilizing the illumination from the gas street lamps, he scrutinized Lumian’s face.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian lunged forward, gripping the other person’s neck and pulling them into an embrace.

Simultaneously, Lumian pushed the metal canister closer to the target’s nose with his left hand.

He had already unscrewed the lid, but he kept his finger pressed against the opening, controlling the gas release.

The Poison Spur Mob member struggled desperately, but Lumian’s palm covered his mouth and nose, silencing any outcry. His punches and kicks were easily deflected—either his neck was constricted or his back was pinned down by an elbow. His head remained ensconced in the other person’s grasp, nestled against their chest. In his anxious state, it was difficult for him to strike his foe’s vulnerable points, and Lumian endured the onslaught.

After a few seconds, the man’s resistance began to wane. Passersby cast fleeting glances at him before walking away without detecting anything amiss.

Within moments, the man in Lumian’s arms lost consciousness.

Supporting his “intoxicated” companion, Lumian sealed the bottle once more with his finger.

They arrived at a deserted alley barricaded from public access, where Lumian abandoned his target and screwed the metal canister shut.

“You’re very reckless.” Franca emerged from the shadows beside him. “Only in Trier can you get away with this. Anywhere else, someone would have raised a loud alarm.”

“I reserve these actions solely for Trier,” Lumian replied, crouching down to strip the Poison Spur Mob member of his attire and necklace. He bound his hands and feet with a rope he had brought along.

Having completed the task, Lumian administered some truth serum to his captive before reviving him with the Mysticism Smelling Salts.

Three consecutive sneezes followed. The Poison Spur Mob member opened his eyes and exclaimed in horror, “Who are you? What do you want?”

Lumian removed his cap and crouched in front of the target, wearing a smile. He asked, “Can’t you recognize me?”

Under the crimson moonlight, the Poison Spur Mob member glimpsed the golden-black hair and a vaguely familiar face.

His teeth chattered.

“C-Ciel!”

“I have something to ask you. If you refuse to answer or choose to deceive me, you know the consequences,” Lumian said with a smile.
Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

His cold, merciless, and unhinged reputation preceded him within the Poison Spur Mob. The man was so terrified that his heart seemed ready to leap out of his throat.

“I’ll talk, I’ll talk!”

Unfazed, Lumian inquired, “Where were you planning to go just now?”

“To the Boss’s place to report the election’s polling situation. Monsieur Hugues Artois has secured nearly half the votes. He’s just a little shy…” Not only did the man answer Lumian’s question, but he also provided additional information.

Lumian nodded contentedly and proceeded to inquire about the specific details the Poison Spur Mob member had previously relayed to “Black Scorpion” Roger.

This encompassed his demeanor towards the staff, his manner of addressing “Black Scorpion” Roger, his positioning, and his tone.

Having meticulously memorized the details, Lumian employed the sedative once more to render the Poison Spur Mob member unconscious.

Without delay, he changed into the other person’s attire, retrieved his Mystery Prying Glasses, and perched them upon his nose.

This time, underground, he beheld rats, insects, and serpents, but a charred building and a blurred face behind a glass window also materialized.

The face possessed unusually vacant eyes.

Lumian’s mind momentarily spun into disarray. Frowning, he removed the Mystery Prying Glasses and retrieved a collection of cosmetics.

Assisted by the crimson moonlight and the small torch held by Franca, he meticulously applied various substances to his face, utilizing the makeup mirror his companion carried.

Around ten minutes later, his countenance grew gaunter and began to assume the likeness of the Poison Spur Mob member.

His skill in makeup fell short of fully replicating the other person’s appearance, but the inherent effect of the Mystery Prying Glasses would convince anyone who glimpsed his face that he was the

individual named Alsai.

Smack!

Lumian snapped the makeup mirror shut, daring not to gaze upon his reflection once more.

As Franca stowed away her belongings, she had Lumian turn his back to her.

She feared that she, too, might mistake her companion for a member of the Poison Spur Mob, thereby hindering their subsequent collaboration.

Franca examined Lumian's hair color and retrieved the disguise props she had acquired from Rentas.

"Hair and eye color are the most noticeable flaws. First, use this black hair dye, then wear these brown contact lenses.

"Damn it, anything is possible in the realm of mysticism. Who would have thought that in this day and age, Actors could create the illusion of cosmetic contacts? Although the materials are different and they don't improve vision, they can indeed alter the color of one's irises. Otherwise, Rentas wouldn't have been able to pass as Ive or you. It defies scientific explanation, but it's utterly mystical!"

Lumian paid no mind to Franca's musings and took the mysticism hair dye, which could be washed away with a special lotion. Under her guidance, he transformed his golden and black hair into a solid black hue.

Once he donned the brown contact lenses, Franca seized the opportunity to discuss the specifics of their forthcoming assault.

The two of them swiftly outlined a rough plan, but they refrained from delving into every detail. Firstly, time was limited, and secondly, they had to anticipate numerous unforeseen circumstances at the scene. It was impossible to account for every possibility, so they could only adapt and make decisions based on the main concept.

Franca produced a coin pouch.

It was a fist-sized bag made of grayish-white cloth, filled with gold, silver, and copper coins.

Franca rummaged in her bag and retrieved an iron-colored ring with a thick band and slender spikes on its surface.

“This is one of my mystical items, the Ring of Punishment,” she explained to Lumian. “It serves a single purpose. It can pierce a target’s Spirit Body within a five-meter range, causing excruciating pain and rendering them temporarily unconscious. For Low- and Mid-Sequence Beyonders, there are very few Beyonder powers capable of bypassing defense and directly attacking a Spirit Body. This is one of them.”

Franca paused momentarily before continuing, “Wearing it for an extended period will make you irritable, bloodthirsty, cruel, and impulsive. If you use it more than three times in an hour, it will cause your personality to undergo mutation. If you remove it, you will suffer indiscriminate Psychic Piercing damage once you enter a five-meter radius. To seal it, you need to place it amidst a pile of valuable metal coins.”

Currently, Franca wore the ring, ensuring neither she nor Lumian fell victim to its effects.

She handed the Ring of Punishment to Lumian.

As soon as Lumian slipped the ring onto his right middle finger, he experienced overwhelming frustration.

Collecting himself, he donned black gloves, left the alley, and jogged towards 126 Avenue du Marché.

Chapter 225 - 225 Exposed

225 Exposed

On 126 Avenue du Marché in Lumian, concealed as Alsai, a member of the Poison Spur Mob, pressed the doorbell of the three-story building with a garden out back.

Amidst the pleasant chimes, the valet, who had previously ushered Louis Lund inside, swung open the wooden door.

Seeing Alsai's face beaming with joy, he returned the smile.

"Have the voting results for today been announced?"

"You bet!" Lumian concealed his voice with feigned delight. "Monsieur Hugues Artois will be the new member of parliament by noon tomorrow!"

The valet had long been a believer in the Great Mother, and he had been promised a reward of becoming a Villain after the election. Hearing this news delighted him, and he led Lumian straight to the living room.

In the living room, "Black Scorpion" Roger, now wearing aqua-blue silk pajamas, lounged on a divan. He addressed "Short-legged Candlestick" Castina, nestled beside him while he playfully squeezed her buttocks, and "Baldy" Harman, who paced around the room.

"Hold on tight. It all comes to an end tomorrow night.

"No matter what happens in the next 24 hours, we can't leave this place!"

Is that so? Are you willing to stay here even if there's a fire, explosion, or earthquake? Lumian criticized silently. He shook off the

valet and swiftly approached.

“Boss, I have good news!”

“Black Scorpion” Roger’s excitement was palpable. He forgot to scrutinize his subordinates’ movements, voices, and appearance. His eyes sparkled as he inquired, “Has Monsieur Hugues Artois won the election?”

“Baldy” Harman and “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina turned their gaze toward Lumian as well.

At that moment, Lumian had closed the gap between him and “Black Scorpion” Roger, standing just three meters away from the divan and the glass coffee table before it.

He exclaimed with excitement, “He’s only 2,000 votes away from securing a majority!”

“Black Scorpion” Roger felt a tinge of disappointment, but his happiness prevailed.

He nodded and proclaimed, “Very good…”

Before he could even complete his sentence, Lumian’s hand caught his attention.

He was wearing a pair of black gloves.

Alsai didn’t have such a habit!

At that moment, two blinding beams shot out from Lumian’s eyes—like silent bullets and swift lightning bolts.

With a snap, “Black Scorpion” Roger felt the imaginary sound of his Spirit Body shattering, sending waves of excruciating pain through him. He cried out tragically, clutching his head in agony.

In his state of distress, he completely forgot to activate the protective enchantment that usually shrouded the master bedroom and living room.

The sudden twist of events, their origin unknown, left “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina and “Baldy” Harman bewildered, struggling to comprehend the situation. Their responses were purely instinctive.

One of them stood tall, assuming a defensive stance against the suspicious Alsai, while the other sprinted towards their boss, shielding his flank.

Lumian seized this golden opportunity. Drawing his weapon, Fallen Mercury, he lunged at “Black Scorpion” Roger, who huddled on the couch.

Witnessing the attack, “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina intercepted with her right elbow, disregarding the harm that would befall her. Her intention was to aid “Black Scorpion” Roger in fending off the strike.

In her other hand, she grabbed the nearby axe, attempting to swing it at Alsai.

Suddenly, a figure dressed in black robes, their face concealed beneath a hood, materialized behind her.

Franca!

Franca had skillfully employed Invisibility to trail Lumian all the way to this location. Her primary target was “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina, the one providing protection to “Black Scorpion” Roger.

She refrained from directly assassinating “Black Scorpion” Roger, fearing that a fatal blow jeopardizing his life would activate the “magic circle” with its substitution effect.

The hidden blade, wreathed in black flames, darted forth alongside Franca’s full-force strike. It pierced through Castina’s back, finding its mark in her heart.

Castina’s brown eyes widened, her face contorted with disbelief, pain, and despair.

Despite the injury, she continued to block for “Black Scorpion” Roger, but her strength had already abandoned her.

Lumian's arm seemed to possess no bones. With fluid motion, he flicked his joints and swung his forearm, evading Castina's feeble attempt to obstruct him. The pewter-black dirk soared, aiming straight for the leader of the Poison Spur Mob.

Fallen Mercury's tip pierced through the aqua-blue pajamas, puncturing the skin over "Black Scorpion" Roger's ribs.

Crimson blood rapidly welled up, and amidst the pain of the Psychic Piercing somewhat subsiding, "Black Scorpion" Roger snapped back to reality.

He emitted an unnaturally enraged shriek, and blurry faces, some bluish-white, materialized on the living room's floor, ceiling, and walls. Most were ordinary people, a handful being children, their visages twisted with agony.

As the Undying Lands materialized, "Black Scorpion" Roger, nearly impaled by Fallen Mercury, vanished from Lumian's sight, leaving behind the pewter-black dirk stained with blood.

Crash! "Baldy" Harman toppled the coffee table and lunged towards Lumian, who had just collapsed onto the sofa.

Lumian hastily raised his hand, but his body wavered, and he slumped to the ground.

In midair, his eyes caught a glimpse of "Baldy" Harman's form, followed by lighting up with two beams of light resembling lightning.

Harman, on the verge of launching a close combat assault, experienced an anguish that penetrated the depths of his soul, forcing an involuntary scream to escape his lips.

His body froze, tilting backward. Franca, fresh from dispatching "Short-legged Candlestick" Castina, brandished a classic brass revolver in her right hand.

She aimed it at Harman's bald head and swiftly pulled the trigger.

With a resounding bang, an obsidian bullet pierced Harman's gleaming scalp, causing it to explode like a watermelon. A spray of

red and white erupted in all directions.

“Black Scorpion” Roger, having just manifested from the visage of an undead on the adjacent wall, witnessed the scene and emitted an unusually resentful and outraged howl.

Alongside this outcry, his eyes darkened, as though a fervent life burned within.

The blood that drenched the living room and the two lifeless bodies churned, surging towards “Baldy” Harman and “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina as if infused with a life force. The two victims adorned a crimson shroud, rising unsteadily to their feet.

The blood upon Fallen Mercury ignited, casting forth a radiant glow akin to the warmth of spring’s sun.

“Black Scorpion” Roger vividly recalled Margot’s demise, prompting his initial response to rid the evil dirk of the blood it bore and retaliate against the assailant, averting an inexplicable demise in battle.

His second response was to swiftly conclude the conflict and seek aid from Lady Moon. Even the Rebirth ritual proved incapable of absolving the influence of Ciel’s wicked dirk. The efficacy of solely burning the blood remained uncertain.

Indeed, he had recognized the assailant as that wretched lunatic, Ciel, through the pewter-black malevolent blade.

Cursed Ciel!

The radiant flames upon Fallen Mercury blazed along the blade, reaching towards Lumian’s fingertips. Without hesitation, Lumian cast aside the malevolent pewter-black dirk, letting it fall upon the ground amidst the contorted visages.

At this point, Fallen Mercury was no longer required.

The pewter-black dirk, which facilitated the exchange of destinies, merely utilized blood as a conduit; it did not depend on it. Once the fate officially entered the exchange process, the presence of blood

would no longer influence subsequent developments.

As Lumian retrieved Fallen Mercury, the exchange of fates commenced.

He made no deliberate choices, allowing Fallen Mercury to exercise its own discretion.

Lumian braced his left hand against the pallid, indistinct faces strewn upon the ground. With the resilience bestowed by the Alms Monk, he rebounded onto the divan amidst the bone-chilling cold and rigidity.

No longer did the horrifying countenances of the undead pervade this space—only “Baldy” Harman and “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina, their original appearances concealed beneath the flowing cascade of blood.

Simultaneously, the two lifeless bodies extended their arms and lunged at Lumian, seeking to ensnare him in their clutches.

Meanwhile, Franca leapt nimbly, alighting upon a chair with an air of weightlessness.

Unbeknownst to all, a thick frost had descended from the pallid-white or bluish-white ground, solidifying into a translucent sheen of ice.

This restrained the undead countenances, constraining their movements.

Almost concurrently, Franca’s left hand, pressed against the hidden blade, tightened its grip, causing black flames to erupt within “Short-legged Candlestick” Castina’s form, consuming her from within. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

The lingering spirit of the blood-colored corpse emitted an ethereal crackling sound as its mutated body melted akin to a dripping candle, splashing upon the ground.

“Black Scorpion” Roger, relying upon the characteristic of the Undying Lands to shift locations, emitted yet another shrill cry.

A layer of black flames enkindled upon Franca's person.

In contrast to her own black flames, the black flames conjured by the Heretic Spellmaster exuded an overt malevolence, as if they consumed the life force and vitality of all who stood witness.

With a resounding crack, Franca's figure shattered, leaving behind naught but irregular shards of mirror.

Upon the icy veneer upon the ground, the Witch's form swiftly coalesced and leaped forth.

She had taken the initiative to create frost and freeze the ground not for restricting the movements of "Black Scorpion" Roger. Firstly, she sought to diminish the influence of the deceased spirits, and secondly, she aimed to gather ample materials for the Mirror Substitution.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Devoid of the pincer attack from "Short-legged Candlestick" Castina, Lumian deftly parried head-on, successfully evading the bloodied Harman. Springing onto the overturned coffee table, he withdrew his revolver and unleashed a volley of shots towards "Black Scorpion" Roger upon the wall. Concurrently, he produced the drawing depicting the peculiar sun.

He held no concern that his assault upon the target would disrupt the exchange of fates. For he was neither the wielder of Fallen Mercury, nor did he grasp its hilt.

The yellow bullets struck the wall with force, yet "Black Scorpion" Roger had already diminished into a wan, distorted, transparent countenance, vanishing from Lumian and Franca's sight.

Chapter 226 - 226 Sculpture

226 Sculpture

Lumian's left hand trembled, revealing the sun pattern that emitted a colorful glow.

The living room, once chilly, suddenly warmed up, but the frost on the ground remained stubbornly frozen. Only the pale, distorted faces turned away, unable to bear witness to what was about to unfold.

Harman, decapitated and drenched in blood, charged at Lumian, heedless of the revolver pointed his way, driven by a sinister desire to "embrace" his intended victim by force.

The drawing of the sun caused his body to tremble, and blood dripped from him onto the ground.

Instinctively, Lumian knew he couldn't engage in a direct confrontation with this "corpse." He used his light brown jacket to shield himself, pushing back against Harman's relentless assault.

The jacket quickly turned blood-red, showing signs of wear.

At that moment, "Black Scorpion" Roger had been absent for a couple of seconds, and Franca finally found an opportunity to act.

A dense black flame materialized in her palm, which she hurled at the zombified Harman.

The black flames struck the blood-stained corpse with the force of a cannonball, causing it to burst into silent flames that ignited the hidden spirituality within the blood and remains.

Harman began to melt, much like Castina, resembling a candle tossed in a blazing fire.

Just then, “Black Scorpion” Roger emerged from a corner, his face pale, cradling a sculpture of equal height in his arms.

The sculpture portrayed a woman with gentle features, her long dress intricately detailed and lifelike.

After exerting great effort to place the sculpture on the ground, Roger melded with the writhing, distorted faces around him, evading Lumian’s shots and Franca’s black flames with impeccable timing.

In the next instant, he reappeared beneath the ceiling chandelier, cursing rapidly.

“You’re dead meat!”

“I’ll turn you into fertilizer!”

“Son of a bitch, daring to intrude upon my Undying Lands!”

“I’ll take every last one of your lives!”

“I want you to have 20 children!”

“Black Scorpion” Roger constantly changed positions as he spat out these words. He swiftly moved and leaped, skillfully dodging Lumian’s unfolded drawing and Franca’s array of witchcraft spells, primarily comprised of black flames and frost.

Each word, seemingly stemming from Intisian, pierced Lumian and Franca’s minds like an arrow. They felt dizzy and their blood resonated with the onslaught.

In the corner, the female sculpture activated, its surface blazing with brilliant flames.

Lumian’s head throbbed as if struck by an ethereal hammer. Bright red blood streamed uncontrollably from his nostrils.

Franca herself endured similar injuries. She suspected that “Black Scorpion” Roger was employing a curse-like incantation. Moreover, the female sculpture’s augmentation had greatly fortified his physical and spiritual presence. Franca couldn’t endure more than a few

uttered words.

As “Black Scorpion” Roger had left the sculpture unprotected, Franca believed that a direct attack might result in even more dreadful consequences, likely taking the form of a curse.

Suppressing her boiling blood, dizziness, and bodily pain, she raised her brass revolver and fired at “Black Scorpion” Roger, seizing the chance to leap towards the sculpture.

The iron-black bullet shattered a contorted face, leaving marks on the wall, but it failed to harm Roger.

Once Franca landed, she swiftly circled around the sculpture. She didn’t squeeze the trigger of her brass revolver again, nor did she thrust with her blade. While evading the slender figures summoned by “Black Scorpion” Roger, she encased the sculpture in layers of frost.

Meanwhile, Lumian, who had been the focal point of Roger’s attention, found himself in imminent peril.

A piercing cry resounded as illusory black flames kindled upon Lumian’s body.

It drained his life force with alarming speed, causing his physical strength to wane.

Without hesitation, Lumian discarded the peculiar sun drawing and lunged towards the sofa, reaching into his pocket with his left hand.

Beside the overturned coffee table, “Black Scorpion” Roger emerged from the icy seal, brandishing a pitch-black, malevolent scythe that stood half the height of a man. He cleaved through the furniture before him, rending it in two.

Lumian alighted on the sofa, his left hand withdrawing from his pocket, clutching a slender and slightly pale finger.

In the face of Roger’s scythe, Lumian, already weakened, barely managed to evade the strike by shifting his body.

Simultaneously, he tossed the severed finger into the air.

It was Mr. K's finger!

Amidst the sound of tearing leather and fabric, the divan was sundered by the wicked scythe. The pale-white finger expanded and detonated like a bomb.

It metamorphosed into a shower of flesh and blood droplets that cascaded onto Lumian, extinguishing the fading black flames.

The flesh absorbed the surrounding blood and dissolved corpses, swiftly coalescing and draping Lumian in a cloak of blood-red hue.

The profound weakness that had plagued Lumian dissipated. He sprang up, launching a counteroffensive against "Black Scorpion" Roger.

Witnessing this, Roger avoided a direct confrontation. He retreated into the fractured ice and merged with one of the distorted faces.

Franca, who had already encased the sculpture in frost, suddenly felt an intense chill.

The restless spirits in the living room seemed incensed. They surged from all directions, extending their arms and gaping mouths, enveloping Franca.

With a resounding crack, yet another mirror shattered.

Franca's form materialized on the other side of the ice. She raised her hand, causing black flames to surge around the sculpture, setting ablaze the indistinct souls and blood-hued shadows.

"Black Scorpion" Roger peered out from a nearby wall and unleashed another curse, "Damn bitch!"

As he weakened his targets, he swiftly shifted positions with the aid of the tormented faces. Sometimes, he targeted Lumian, and other times, he assailed Franca. He relied on the power of the Undying Lands and the sculpture to single-handedly suppress the two foes.

At intervals, vile black flames ignited over Lumian's form, sapping his life force and diminishing his strength. Yet, each time, they were counteracted by the robe forged from flesh and blood. Franca evaded the combined assaults of Evil Word, Blood Spirit, Weak Black Flame, and Life Burning time and again, employing the technique of Mirror Substitution.

Time slipped away swiftly. Noticing that Ciel's robe of flesh and blood teetered on the brink of disintegration, while the mirror and ice that Franca had brought with her neared depletion, "Black Scorpion" Roger poked his head through the ceiling, a malicious chuckle escaping his lips.

"You fools!

"Do you truly believe you can withstand the might of the Undying Lands?

"I fear no consequence, even if the entire leadership of the Savoie Mob were to enter this domain!

"Go to hell!"

His cutting words pierced Lumian and Franca's ears and minds, causing their bodies to tremble as if they could bear no more.

Observing this, "Black Scorpion" Roger, who had already shifted to the adjacent wall, revealed a sinister smile, brimming with anticipation.

Suddenly, his vision darkened, and a surge of intense emotions overwhelmed his heart.

Disbelief, shock, confusion, and panic.

In the subsequent moment, he lost consciousness.

Thud!

The boss of the Poison Spur Mob materialized from the wall, collapsed onto the floor, and slipped into unconsciousness.

The fate exchange had finally concluded, as Fallen Mercury swapped the unconscious fate of the dying tramp with “Black Scorpion” Roger’s!

It happened swiftly, much faster than the exchange involving Margot.

This was because the tramp was an ordinary person, and when Fallen Mercury selected “Black Scorpion” Roger’s fate, it chose the least significant one, unrelated to any Beyonder matters.

Lumian’s gaze fixated on “Black Scorpion” Roger, clad in aqua-blue pajamas. Supported by his blood-colored robe, Lumian traversed the transparent and distorted faces, enduring the bone-chilling cold and stiffness. Finally, he reached his motionless target. Retrieving the metal canister containing the sedative, Lumian unscrewed the cap and squatted down.

He directed the sedative obtained from Rentas toward “Black Scorpion” Roger’s nose, gently fanning the gas with his hand, ensuring its entry into the enemy’s breath.

With that done, Lumian lifted “Black Scorpion” Roger and made his way out of the living room, guarded by Franca.

The valets and maids had long since fled.

As “Black Scorpion” Roger departed the living room, the bluish-white faces swiftly faded away, and everything returned to normal.

Witnessing this, Lumian dropped the Poison Spur Mob leader to the ground and aimed his revolver at the man’s head.

After a few seconds of contemplation, Lumian pulled the trigger calmly and silently. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Two shots rang out, transforming “Black Scorpion” Roger’s head into a burst watermelon, splattering blood in every direction.

He met his demise while in a coma.

Franca glanced at Lumian, still aiming at “Black Scorpion” Roger, and asked calmly,

“How is it? Have you vented all your frustrations?”

If it weren’t for Franca’s desire to assist Lumian, she would have considered reporting “Black Scorpion” Roger and his associates for their belief in the Great Mother.

Lumian fell silent for a moment, his lips curling into a smile.

“No.

“It merely resolved one hidden danger.”

Franca let out a soft sigh.

“In my homeland, we say that to cure a heart’s ailment, the remedy must come from within. But if you don’t do it right, no matter how much you try, it’s futile.

“Well, I’ll quickly communicate with the spirit, and let’s strive to depart this place within three minutes. Hurry and seize the spoils.”

“Alright,” Lumian responded, as the remaining bloodstained garments on his body disintegrated, staining the ground red.

That’s it? Lumian couldn’t help but furrow his brow.

It wasn’t that Mr. K’s finger lacked strength. On the contrary, without it, Lumian would have been too feeble to resist and would have required Franca’s aid.

However, its performance fell short if made to face the formidable evil spirit, Susanna Mattise. Lumian couldn’t help but feel disappointed and perplexed.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, he headed toward the living room, scanning his surroundings for valuable items.

Suddenly, he noticed a figure cloaked in a large hood and black robe standing quietly on the staircase.

Mr. K!

Lumian's pupils dilated, but in an instant, Mr. K vanished into the shadows.

Chapter 227 - 227 Agent

227 Agent

Did the finger serve as a signal? How did Mr. K manage to arrive so swiftly? Or was he perhaps observing me from nearby? Lumian felt a surge of tension, his weariness from the battle fading considerably.

This revelation granted him a fresh understanding of Mr. K's power, fueling his fear.

Lumian averted his gaze and retrieved Fallen Mercury,

its blade tarnished by the scorching and decay. He couldn't help but wonder if it would endure until the year's end.

After securing Fallen Mercury, Lumian proceeded to examine the two corpses that had mostly disintegrated under the deluge of blood.

The victims displayed clear signs of petrification, rendering them motionless on the ground, and their ghastly appearance would haunt anyone who laid eyes on them for years to come.

The clothing and personal effects of the deceased suffered extensive corrosion, including Harman's poisoned dirk and Castina's cherished axe.

Among the few items that remained relatively unscathed were several specially crafted canisters with an iron hue, emitting a flickering metallic sheen. Although they bore noticeable signs of corrosion on their surfaces, the liquid contents remained unaffected.

Lumian scrutinized the canisters and discerned four distinct types, distinguished by etched patterns: a tree, a bear-like face, a spring fountain, and a scorpion.

Harman and Castina had each carried one, leaving a total of eight canisters.

Gathering them up, Lumian approached the peculiar scythe recently wielded by “Black Scorpion” Roger. It exuded an ominous aura, its pitch-black blade sharp and menacing. It wasn’t as compact as a wheat-harvesting scythe, nor as colossal as a giant weapon. It lacked the capacity to shock onlookers and measured only half the height of an average person.

The moment Lumian’s black-gloved hand touched the scythe, he sensed an ethereal spike extending from it, piercing into his flesh and gradually siphoning his life force. It felt chilling and merciless.

Swiftly retracting his hand, Lumian realized that his life was no longer ebbing away slowly.

Is it a mystical artifact or a Beyonder weapon akin to Fallen Mercury… How can I remove it safely? Lumian delved into deep contemplation.

Just then, Franca finished her preparations and commenced spirit channeling.

Lumian returned to “Black Scorpion” Roger’s corpse, carrying the eight canisters, and communicated with Franca through the wall of spirituality, saying, “Inquire about the purpose of these objects and how to transport the scythe.”

Franca nodded and directed her gaze toward Roger’s face, which materialized on the mirrored surface.

“What effects do these canisters on Harman and Castina have? How can I identify them?”

Roger, his face pale and bewildered, replied, “The tree-patterned one is Bark Agent. It toughens your skin and muscles, rendering them as resilient as trees.

“The bear-faced pattern is Berserk Agent. It grants you extraordinary strength when unleashed.

“The spring fountain pattern represents Healing Agent. It mends most external wounds, alleviates severe injuries, and eliminates minor ailments.

“The scorpion pattern is ‘Scorpion Poison.’ It is primarily used on weapons and induces arrhythmia and respiratory paralysis, ultimately leading to death.”

Quite useful indeed… Franca silently praised.

Her Hidden Blade would greatly benefit from a canister of Scorpion Poison.

Franca persisted with her questioning.

“How do you usually transport that scythe?”

“In my study, there’s a large wooden box. Put it inside quickly, and you can take it away,” replied Roger, his face pale and devoid of emotion.

Franca pressed further, “Is the scythe a mystical object or a Beyonder weapon? What are its abilities?”

“It’s called Harvest Sacrifice. It’s a weapon infused with a blessed aura and possesses the quality of sharpness. Once it inflicts a wound on the target, and that wound becomes tainted with the corresponding blood, it can continuously drain the life force of the other party,” Roger described the scythe in a dazed manner.

Seizing the opportunity, Franca redirected the conversation to more crucial matters. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Have you encountered Madame Moon? How do you maintain contact with her?”

Roger’s pale face contorted with pain.

“I met Madame Moon in the wilderness. Well, now she’s Lady Moon. She sat in a peculiar carriage pulled by two demons, wearing a veil that made her appear holy and maternal to me.

“Usually, she seeks me out and commands me to venture into the wilderness abruptly.

“She gave me a green seed to place inside the statue’s abdominal cavity. If I face danger, I can use it to urgently contact her.

“But there’s no need for the seed now. By reciting her full honorific name, I can elicit her response.”

She can respond to an honorific name? That’s quite advanced… Franca refrained from inquiring about Lady Moon’s honorific name, fearing that the other party might detect her intention.

Although she could already surmise the answer, she asked out of curiosity, “Why didn’t you seek Lady Moon’s assistance earlier?”

Roger replied, his gaze vacant, “I can win.”

You clung to your delusion until the very end, didn’t you? Franca clicked her tongue and remarked, “Why are you supporting Hugues Artois?”

“Lady Moon instructed us to aid in his election,” Roger replied with a blank expression. “She claimed that Hugues Artois is an open-minded individual.”

Open-minded… What does that mean? Franca struggled to comprehend this assessment.

As Franca channeled “Black Scorpion” Roger, Lumian didn’t linger by her side. Instead, he ventured into the study, assuming Alsai’s appearance, and began sifting through valuable items.

Armed with a short wire, he attempted to unlock the safe door, but his efforts proved futile.

Within the study, he discovered a suitable wooden box for housing the sinister scythe. Carrying it, he descended the stairs to the open-door basement.

The area appeared tidy, except for a stone platform suspected of holding the statue, devoid of any other objects.

Employing his keen observation skills as a Hunter, Lumian scoured the vicinity and uncovered a concealed door.

With a grating sound, he pushed open the secret passage and revealed a corridor beyond. On either side of the corridor stood prison cells enclosed by iron bars. Dozens, if not hundreds, of people were crammed inside. Most appeared destitute, but among them were well-dressed gentlemen, ladies, and seemingly lost children.

In that moment, nearly a third of the captives lay lifeless on the floor, their skin shriveled and lacking vitality. They resembled skeletons more than human beings.

They no longer drew breath, and they had lost control of their bodily functions. The stench permeated the private prison.

Lumian's gaze swept over the trembling individuals, and he noticed numerous sinister and peculiar symbols etched upon the ground, the wall behind them, and the iron fence in front.

No wonder a Heretic Spellmaster wields such formidable power on their home turf… Lumian reached a realization.

Not only did they possess the backing of a "magic circle" teeming with deceased souls, but they could also extract the life force of others at will to replenish their own!

Balancing the wooden box with one arm, Lumian retrieved his revolver, pressed it against the door of a cell, and pulled the trigger.

With a resounding bang, the iron lock shattered and clattered to the ground.

After reloading, Lumian paid little attention to the captives. He progressed methodically, obliterating the iron locks of the remaining cells.

Then, with the revolver holstered under his armpit, he turned and departed, leaving behind a bewildered and numbed group of survivors.

When Lumian returned to the ground floor, Franca had just

concluded the spirit channeling and dispelled the spiritual barrier.

“Did you discover anything?” Franca inquired casually.

Lumian gestured toward the wooden box nestled under his left arm.

“It should suffice for storing the scythe. I couldn’t access the safe. It’s possible that the servants fled to the second floor or the garden at the back. I didn’t encounter them.”

“Don’t concern yourself with them. As followers of an evil deity, they will meet a swift demise once their protection wanes. Furthermore, we have disguised ourselves adequately to avoid recognition,” Franca affirmed with a nod. “Pack up Harvest Sacrifice. We shall depart now. Oh, by the way, the scythe is called Harvest Sacrifice.”

Before long, Lumian returned to “Black Scorpion” Roger’s lifeless body with the scythe in hand, presenting the wooden box to Franca.

Then, he squatted down, tore off a section of his pajamas, crumpled it into a ball, and stained it with blood.

Curious, Franca inquired, “What are you doing?”

Lumian remained focused, his gaze fixed on the task at hand, and succinctly replied, “Providing a hint to the official Beyonders.”

With the blood-stained cloth in hand, Lumian made his way back to the living room. Beside the serene female statue, he messily inscribed words in Intisian: “Great Mother.”

Having completed the task, Lumian discarded the cloth bundle and headed towards the door.

Why does it seem so provocative… Franca sighed and turned around.

Behind her, dark flames materialized and ascended, consuming the traces left by both of them and the lingering Spirit Bodies of the deceased.

Shortly after, Franca scattered shimmering powder and recited the incantation of invisibility. She disappeared from the foyer, clutching

the wooden box.

Lumian pushed open the door and confidently stepped out onto 126 Avenue du Marché.

He left the door ajar, allowing the scene within to be exposed to passersby.

Under the yellowish glow of the gas wall lamps, a lifeless body lay in the foyer, surrounded by blood.

Lumian crossed Avenue du Marché, constantly altering his course, until he reached the alley where he had changed his clothes and assumed his disguise.

He wiped his face clean and donned his original attire, no longer emanating the aura of Alsai.

In the next moment, Franca transformed into her hooded figure, draped in black robes. She retrieved the Ring of Punishment from Lumian and returned it to her coin bag.

The Witch glanced at the unconscious Poison Spur Mob member, Alsai, and said to Lumian, who was about to depart, “Aren’t you going to take care of him?

“He knows Ciel knocked him out, and the person who killed ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger posed as him.”

Lumian remained silent. He drew his revolver, partially turned, and fired at Alsai, clad in a blue-and-white striped shirt.

Two gunshots rang out as the Poison Spur Mob member, trusted by “Black Scorpion” Roger, was struck in the chest and met his demise.

Observing Lumian’s nonchalant demeanor, Franca shook her head inwardly and proceeded to deal with the remaining Spirit Body and traces in the alley.

Then, she concealed herself once more and departed alongside Lumian. He scaled the outer wall and returned to the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

After using a special lotion from Rentas to remove the excess black dye from his hair and transforming back into Ciel Dubois, Lumian, Franca smiled and inquired, “Do you want to keep this scythe? If not, I’ll sell it and we’ll split the proceeds evenly.

“Your Provoker potion should be almost fully digested. You’ll need to gather funds and ingredients for your advancement.”

Chapter 228 - 228 Sudden Digestion

228 Sudden Digestion

Upon Franca's mention of advancement, Lumian felt a sudden urge to make preparations.

It wasn't that he didn't aspire to become a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac and master mysticism techniques, but the Hunter and Provoker potion formulas were bestowed upon him by Madam Magician, making them easily obtainable and reducing the sense of urgency. His plan was to wait until the Provoker potion had fully digested before writing a letter to Madam Magician, inquiring about the price for obtaining everything necessary for his advancement.

More importantly, Lumian knew that Madam Magician possessed a Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic.

But now that he thought about it, he felt that he had to make additional preparations.

It occurred to him that Madam Magician might not be associated with the Hunter pathway, which meant she might not possess the Pyromaniac potion formula. Furthermore, she could have already given the Beyonder characteristic to someone else. Lumian couldn't be the only one with the Minor Arcana card, and it was unlikely that they all belonged to different pathways.

While Madam Magician's level and abilities made it relatively easy for her to acquire the Pyromaniac potion formula and its main ingredient, she might be unwilling or face unforeseen delays.

Lost in thought, Lumian glanced at the wooden box resting on Franca's lap and hesitated before suggesting, "Let's sell it."

The evil scythe possessed an uncanny sharpness and the ability to drain an enemy's life through blood, perfectly suited to Lumian's close-quarters combat style. However, it proved highly inconvenient to carry and conceal due to its usage restrictions. Most of the time, Lumian could only store it at Salle de Bal Brise or Auberge du Coq Doré, relying on it when attacked. Alternatively, he could draw it in advance and hide it in the cover of night shadows for offensive purposes.

If Lumian wished to have it with him at all times, his only solution was to acquire a cello case and carry it on his back.

Yet, for a mobster leader, this would raise suspicions.

In fact, if Franca hadn't brought up the topic of preparing for his advancement, Lumian would have deemed his current stash of 4,000 verl d'or far from sufficient. He needed to acquire more funds. Keeping the evil scythe, known as Harvest Sacrifice, wasn't a problem as it could still prove useful in certain situations. If necessary, Lumian could use the Mystery Prying Glasses to disguise himself as a musician, carrying the cello on his back to assassinate his intended target. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Franca sighed in response.

"I suppose selling it is our only option. It's actually quite good, but it doesn't suit my combat style."

She then gestured towards Lumian's waist.

"How about we each get a canister?"

To be honest, Franca wasn't particularly interested in the Berserk Agent and the Bark Agent. She only desired the Scorpion Poison and the Healing Agent. However, considering that Lumian also required poison for his weapons and healing capabilities, she opted for a fair solution.

"Alright," Lumian agreed.

…

In the dead of the night, outside 126 Avenue du Marché:

A group of police officers, dressed in black uniforms, formed a barricade to keep pedestrians away from the building behind them.

Within the house, Angoulême de Fran?ois with his blond hair, eyebrows, and beard, stood before a delicate female sculpture. His gaze fixed upon the blood-red words adorning the wall.

Donning a row of golden buttons on his chest, he remained silent, emanating an overwhelming sense of oppression that affected both the surrounding Purifiers and police officers.

After a moment, the Purifier of Southern Continent descent emerged from the basement and approached Angoulême. In hushed tones, he spoke, “Deacon, we have found clear signs of sacrificial rituals to an evil god beneath us. There are deceased individuals who were used as living sacrifices.”

“The prison cells have been unlocked, and some of the abductees managed to escape. Those who remain informed me that ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger did indeed employ sorcery.”

Angoulême listened impassively, scanning his surroundings. He then addressed the nearby police officers, saying, “Did none of you notice the significant number of people who had gone missing?

“Who was it that claimed the market district housed only a handful of controllable Beyonders? Who suggested that arresting them would only pave the way for new criminal organizations, causing even greater chaos?”

His voice, filled with anger, reverberated through the living room of 126 Avenue du Marché, causing each police officer to lower their gaze.

At that moment, Angoulême abruptly turned his attention to the delicate female sculpture. He sensed a fleeting surge of anger emanating from it, quickly dissipating.

He had sensed a faint fluctuation of anger there, but it disappeared in a flash.

A golden light enveloped Angoulême's body as he extended his right palm, opening the abdomen of the statue.

There, a cavity large enough to cradle a curled-up human revealed itself. Within it rested a brownish-green seed, silently crumbling into dust when stirred by the wind.

…

On the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian furrowed his brow abruptly.

"What's wrong?" Franca asked.

Lumian found himself torn between elation and confusion.

"My Provoker potion has fully digested.

"Could it be that some important figure was provoked by our actions?"

Franca speculated, "Perhaps Lady Moon, or maybe an official Beyonder?"

"All possibilities," Lumian conceded. If he couldn't unravel the mystery, there was no use dwelling on it. After all, it was a positive development.

This meant that he could now advance to become a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac!

This realization struck him with a newfound understanding.

He didn't need to meticulously summarize all the principles of acting to fully digest the corresponding potion.

By summarizing a portion of his acting principles and consistently receiving feedback while performing appropriately, he could rely on quantity or the accumulation of time to digest the potion.

Hence, most Beyonders can rely on time and fortunate encounters to

digest the potion without being familiar with the acting method… Lumian pondered silently, feeling enlightened.

After distributing the agents and deciding to sell the remaining spoils for money, Lumian bid Franca farewell. Deliberately, he circled Salle de Bal Brise before departing Avenue du Marché and returning to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As he reached the second floor, he noticed that the door to Room 206 stood ajar, allowing the light from a carbide lamp to spill into the dim corridor.

Curiosity piqued, Lumian glanced inside as he passed by, spotting Gabriel seated by the bed in his preferred black dungarees, observing the hallway outside.

“You’re finally back!” the playwright exclaimed with delight upon seeing Lumian.

Raising an eyebrow, Lumian queried, “You haven’t been arrested by the police yet?”

“…” Gabriel found himself momentarily speechless.

After a few seconds, his joy overcame him, and he replied, “Monsieur Nathan Lopp didn’t report me to the police. In fact, he signed a contract with me and purchased my script.

“He intended to make a down payment of 1,500 verl d’or, but considering how we frightened him, he deducted 500. Once the play commences, I’ll receive 2.5% of the ticket revenue for each show.”

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips.

“I thought the revolver had coerced him into agreement, fully expecting him to go back on his word. I never imagined that your script would genuinely move him.”

If you thought so, why did you still do it? Gabriel grumbled instinctively.

He elaborated, “Monsieur Lopp understands the idiosyncrasies of

artists and doesn't mind such matters. He mentioned that his previous mistress was a female painter. She not only kept a sheep on his balcony but also attempted to flirt with men. She even prepared fake props to try and convince him, which ultimately led to their breakup."

"You Trieriens…" Lumian sighed, even as the Prankster King of Cordu.

Gabriel, hailing from a different province and not being a Trierien himself, took Ciel's teasing in stride, unfazed by the remark.

He expressed his gratitude sincerely. "Thank you very much. Although I don't agree with your approach, Monsieur Lopp would have never laid eyes on my script without your help."

Gabriel, perplexed, questioned, "Monsieur Lopp mentioned that we authors weren't cautious enough. We only covered our faces once we reached his doorstep. After conversing with the guard at the lobby, he knew what we looked like. Once he calls the police, there's no escape for any of us.

"Why didn't you mask up earlier when we tied up the guard?"

Gabriel believed that Ciel, being a mob leader, should have been more cautious.

Lumian responded calmly, "Why should I have masked myself?"

"…" Confusion filled Gabriel's face as he asked, "Then why did you eventually mask yourself?"

Lumian replied calmly, "Because Jenna masked up."

What kind of logic is this… Even as a playwright himself, he found it difficult to comprehend Ciel's thoughts.

He could sense that Ciel's state last night was abnormal, but he didn't know the exact reason. It was difficult to determine his mental state and the motives behind his actions.

Gabriel let out a sigh and remarked, "Fortunately, things turned out

well. Otherwise, we would have been apprehended by the police…"

He paused for a moment, realizing that Ciel was a leader of the Savoie Mob. The crimes he had committed in the past were more serious than what happened last night. There was no need to fear. Even if the police came looking for him, he could hide for a day or two, and the matter would pass. No one would pursue him for such a trivial case.

Lumian chuckled and gave Gabriel's shoulder a friendly pat.

"Even if you get caught, you're just an accomplice. You didn't carry a weapon. You can secure your release by posting bail."

With that, Lumian walked towards his room and opened the door to Room 207.

Gabriel watched Ciel's retreating figure, feeling a mixture of confusion and relief.

…

In Room 207, Lumian carefully examined Fallen Mercury.

He felt that if the dirk wasn't repaired, it could last a maximum of three months.

Perhaps I should consult Franca. She might know a few individuals skilled in the mending of mystical artifacts and Beyonder weapons… Lumian half-closed his eyes and established a connection with Fallen Mercury, seeking communication.

After a while, he discerned the swapped fate that had taken place.

The destiny of "Black Scorpion" Roger gulping down alcohol.

Lumian carefully stored Fallen Mercury, stood up, and exited the room, making his way to the third floor.

Approaching the door of Room 310, he overheard the lunatic's frantic cries, still filled with fear.

“I’m dying, I’m dying!”

Lumian pulled out the short wire, unlocking the door. He then beheld the lunatic crouched on the moonlit floor, clutching his head and trembling uncontrollably.

Leaning against the door frame, Lumian couldn’t help but let out a chuckle.

“You’re rather fortunate. The Montsouris ghost hasn’t come to claim your life just yet. I wonder if it’s preoccupied or slacking off.”

Chapter 229 - 229 Equivalent Exchange

229 Equivalent Exchange

The lunatic still wore a grimy linen shirt and yellow trousers, as if changing clothes was not part of his plan.

Upon hearing Lumian's words, he looked up, revealing a face obscured by a black beard.

It seemed as though he had forgotten Lumian entirely. His blue eyes were empty, clouded over.

"I'm dying, I'm dying!" He clutched his shoulder, which was hidden beneath his unruly black hair, and let out another terrified scream.

Lumian approached, his left hand gloved in black, and drew out Fallen Mercury. With a swift motion, he plunged it into the lunatic's shoulder.

The filthy linen shirt tore open, revealing a shallow wound that still oozed blood.

The lunatic stood frozen, as if the long-awaited judgment had finally arrived.

After a few seconds, he collapsed to the ground, placing his hands on the floor as he scrambled away from Lumian.

In his terror, he cried out, "Don't kill me! Don't kill me!"

The tenants in the neighboring rooms heard the commotion, but none of them bothered to investigate. The lunatic often ranted about his impending demise and pleaded not to be killed.

The sinister pewter-black dagger had already left the lunatic's shoulder, and Lumian continued to gaze at the shimmering river of mercury, lost in thought.

He witnessed the blissful first half of the lunatic's life and the tragic deaths of his family, one by one. It was as though Lumian could relate to the sensation of a complete mental breakdown caused by an overwhelming blow.

At times, Lumian yearned to break down like the lunatic, to abandon all reason and act on primal instincts until his own demise. However, there was still a glimmer of hope—a minuscule, almost unrealistic hope—and he was not ready to relinquish it. He desired to pursue it.

Thus, he often acted impulsively and displayed self-destructive tendencies, yet he was always restrained by the rationality that stemmed from that flicker of hope. He never truly disregarded the consequences, existing in a state of profound contradiction.

Knowing precisely which fate he wished to exchange and its approximate date, Lumian swiftly located the lunatic's destiny of encountering the Montsouris ghost in the underground market district. With the tip of the blade, he pried it loose, transforming it into a droplet of liquid mercury. The drinking fate originally belonging to "Black Scorpion" Roger flowed into the lunatic's body.

Ignoring the lunatic's terrified pleas, Lumian squatted before him. He wiped the blade of Fallen Mercury clean with his clothes and assisted in staunching the bleeding.

Then, Lumian pulled up the only chair and took a seat, patiently awaiting the completion of the fate exchange.

"I'm dying, I'm dying!

"Don't kill me! Don't kill me!"

As the lunatic shrieked, time ticked by. Finally, Fallen Mercury quivered gently.

The lunatic's voice abruptly ceased. He rose to his feet, his gaze clearing as he muttered to himself, "I need a drink. I need a drink…"

Lumian smiled and stood up. “The drinks are on you. Consider it a reward for helping you escape the Montsouris ghost.”

Naturally, the true reward was the fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost. With careful planning and an unguarded target, it served as an excellent tool for assassination.

The lunatic appeared startled for a moment before replying, “You got rid of it?”

“You can choose not to believe me.” Lumian turned and walked into the dimly lit corridor, devoid of wall lamps.

The lunatic, driven by an insatiable thirst for drink, unwittingly trailed after Lumian.

As they made their way to the basement bar, the lunatic glanced around and noticed a distinct change in his surroundings.

The eerie sensation of being watched from the shadows had vanished!

Perplexed, the lunatic settled himself at the bar counter and ordered two glasses of oatmeal beer—one for Lumian and the other for himself. He downed his own glass, leaving traces of foam clinging to the corners of his mouth.

Since he occasionally visited the bar in moments of sobriety, no one suspected anything amiss.

After quenching his alcohol craving, the lunatic turned to Lumian and asked once more,

“Have I truly escaped the Montsouris ghost? How did you manage it?”

“I’ve slain the Montsouris ghost, but I can’t be certain if it will resurrect,” Lumian replied solemnly. “However, if those who previously encountered it are still among the living, they shall be free from its torment. Remember, I mentioned encountering the Montsouris ghost myself. Look at me—I’m alive and well.”

“Really?” The lunatic found it hard to believe that this handsome young man had defeated the Montsouris ghost.

Not even the Church had succeeded!

Lumian smiled.

“I lied. I merely discovered an incantation that prevents the Montsouris ghost from plaguing me, but I require the blood of someone haunted as a conduit.”

A glimmer of understanding flickered in the lunatic’s eyes.

“No wonder you stabbed me.”

Blushing with embarrassment, he admitted, “I may not be able to compensate you at present. My savings are meager, and I must find new employment…”

Lumian interrupted, “What shall I call you?”

“Just Flameng will do,” the lunatic replied before inquiring, “And you?”

“Ciel.” Lumian downed his oatmeal beer.

By the time his glass contained only a thin film of liquid, Flameng had become quite tipsy. He grasped Lumian’s arm and babbled on.

“Did you know? I used to be a university lecturer. Simultaneously, I was entrusted with the safety of some students.

“Many of those students were audacious and reckless, daring to engage in any endeavor and shout slogans of ‘freedom’ when challenged.

“They even held proms in the catacombs, burning the bones of nameless corpses to warm their asses. They believed in nothing and feared nothing. Of course, I was much the same in those days.”

Flameng recounted tales from the first half of his life, his tone shifting between pride, happiness, admonishment of the present ills,

and wistful reminiscence.

“Might you have entered the Underground Trier to dissuade certain students from taking risks?” Lumian asked casually, taking a sip of his beer.

Flameng shook his head.

“No, my expertise lies in minerals. The subterranean rock formations of Trier are uniquely fascinating for study. Together with the medical school, we even established a Museum of Mineralogy and Pathology in the catacombs.

“I had been leaving the museum, making my way toward the underground market district with the intention of heading home when I encountered the Montsouris ghost.

“My Sandrine… My Bastian…”

Flameng clutched his head, his voice filled with an agonizing pain.

Lumian quickly changed the subject.

“So, the subterranean rock formations in Trier are quite unique?”

“Indeed,” Flameng instinctively replied, before collecting himself and continuing, “We even assigned poetic names to those formations. From top to bottom, they’re referred to as ‘flowers,’ ‘sheep,’ and ‘sedges’…”

Engrossed in conversation, Lumian and Flameng chatted well into the midnight hours. The latter appeared lively, and even his bearded face seemed to regain some color.

He didn’t lose his sanity again. Having confirmed that there was no longer a feeling of being watched in the darkness, he returned to normal.

After bidding a cheerful farewell to the intoxicated Flameng, Lumian smiled and withdrew his gaze. He entered Room 207 to compose a letter to Madam Magician.

In the letter, he first mentioned how Termiboros had nearly influenced him into transferring Charlie's luck and how he had slain "Black Scorpion" Roger and other Lady Moon subordinates. Lumian then revealed that the Provoker potion had been completely digested due to the latter. He inquired whether Madam Magician possessed the Pyromaniac potion formula and the associated Beyonder characteristic, as well as the price he needed to pay for them.

Not long after Lumian had tidied up the room and summoned a puppet messenger to deliver the letter, he received a reply from Madam Magician:

"Good job. You've already recognized the potential influence and threat that long-named fellow poses to you. Stay vigilant.

"Based on your description, this Lady Moon should be a Sequence 3. Being able to truly provoke such a demigod will undoubtedly hasten your digestion of the potion. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"If I recall correctly, you are attending Mr. K's gathering tomorrow night and will inform him that you can worship that being. This means you will truly become one of them, completing the initial phase of the mission I assigned you. As a reward, I will provide you with the Pyromaniac potion formula free of charge.

"I still possess the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic, but remember, the principle of equivalent exchange must be upheld.

"In Intis, the two main ingredients of the Pyromaniac potion cost more than 18,000 verl d'or, often exceeding 20,000. Correspondingly, the Beyonder characteristic usually amounts to around 35,000 verl d'or.

"What does this mean? It implies that many people in Intis have become Pyromaniacs, yet many Pyromaniacs have also perished.

"As a holder of a Minor Arcana card, I will offer you a substantial discount. The Beyonder characteristic will only cost you 30,000 verl d'or.

"Good luck."

Phew, 30,000 verl d'or… Lumian exhaled, feeling that the sum was not unattainable.

He already had over 4,000 verl d'or in savings, and the evil scythe known as Harvest Sacrifice could fetch a decent price. Additionally, he could borrow some funds from Franca and embezzle a portion of Salle de Bal Brise's money. These combined efforts would bring him close to 30,000 verl d'or.

And just as Lumian had suspected, Lady Moon had transformed from a mere Madame to a Lady capable of birthing deities. She was undoubtedly more than a Sequence 4.

Fortunately, we had feigned impending defeat in our previous battle, preventing "Black Scorpion" Roger from seeking assistance… Lumian burned Madam Magician's letter, freshened up, climbed into bed, and drifted off to sleep.

…

Just after six in the morning, Lumian had finished washing up and changed into a crisp white shirt, black vest, brown pants, and sleek leather boots, when he heard footsteps descending from the third floor.

It was Ruhr and Michel, clad in tattered clothes and emanating a pungent odor.

As Lumian stood by the door of Room 207, Ruhr, his voice filled with panic, cried out, "Ciel, Monsieur Ciel! That lunatic is dead!"

Dead? Flameng is dead? Lumian was momentarily stunned before darting past Ruhr and Michel, making his way to the third floor.

The door to Room 310 was wide open. Lumian cast a quick glance inside and spotted Flameng hanging from the window.

He faced the door, having cleanly shaven his face, revealing a gentle and gaunt visage.

Now, he no longer breathed. His face had turned blue, his eyes slightly bulging. His mouth hung open wide, and the morning light

streamed through the window, bathing his lifeless body. He hung silently, suspended by a belt tied to the window frame.

Beneath him, on the wooden table, lay a nearly extinguished kerosene lamp, several large books, and a white sheet of paper weighted down by a fountain pen. It appeared that something had been written on it.

Lumian fell into an eerie silence for a few seconds before cautiously approaching the white sheet of paper.

In precise Intisian handwriting, it read:

“When I was deranged, I still harbored the will to live.

“Upon awakening, I found no purpose in life.

“Please lay me to rest in the Underground Tomb of Lights within the catacombs.”

Lumian raised his gaze, meeting the vacant blue eyes that seemed to peer back from beyond the grave.

He stood in solemn silence, transfixed, as if time had come to a halt.

Chapter 230 - 230 Scapegoat

230 Scapegoat

At the stroke of 8 a.m., a pair of law enforcement officers ambled up to the third floor of Auberge du Coq Doré. One meticulously examined the lifeless body, the suicide note, and the surroundings, while the other commenced interrogating the neighboring tenants.

Lumian, already disguised using the Mystery Prying Glasses, had taken his position at the entrance of Room 310.

The officer, donning a uniform and clutching a pen and paper, cast a fleeting glance in his direction.

“You must be Ciel Dubois. Enlighten me on the matter.”

Lumian proceeded to recount how Flameng’s sanity was gone prior to his arrival. The man incessantly raved about encountering the Montsouris ghost and the demise of his own kin. Soon, it seemed, his turn was imminent. Lumian continued, revealing how Flameng had abruptly regained consciousness the previous night and indulged in a bout of heavy drinking.

“What about the wound on his shoulder?” interjected the officer attending to the deceased in the room.

“Before he regained consciousness last night, he inflicted the injury upon himself. I was the one who bound it up,” Lumian responded with composure.

After interrogating the other tenants and the proprietor of the basement bar, the two officers cautiously deduced that the deceased had long been plagued by mental instability. He possessed a motive for suicide and displayed corresponding behavioral tendencies.

As they maneuvered Flameng's body into the mortuary bag, they addressed Lumian, saying, "We shall transport him to the catacombs, but it's a rather intricate procedure. It entails ascertaining the precise cause of death, summoning a clergyman for purification rites, finding a suitable heir for his estate, and liaising with the catacomb administrators. This will take roughly a week or two."

Lumian fell silent momentarily before resuming, "I've shared a few drinks with him. Remember to inform me when you lay him to rest."

Affirming their agreement, the two officers departed Auberge du Coq Doré, taking Flameng's body and the belongings from the room along with them.

Lumian removed his disguise and returned to Room 207.

Seated in a chair, his back to the window casting sunlight, he faced the dimly lit corridor, grappling with a swirl of emotions.

Flameng's suicide had presented Lumian with an alternative fate.

Lumian had aided Flameng in evading the Montsouris ghost, not driven by a desire for personal gain or reward. It was simply because he saw a reflection of his own predicament in the man who had lost his family. One had succumbed completely, descending into lunacy, while the other persevered, clinging to a glimmer of hope and desperately struggling to maintain his grasp on reason.

But in the end, Flameng, no longer tormented by the Montsouris ghost and driven to madness by fear, had opted to terminate his own existence.

In the corridor, Elodie, her tresses concealed beneath a blonde wig and her eyes accentuated with eyeshadow, alongside the other cleaning lady, had already commenced their bustling day. They worked ceaselessly, mopping the floors and battling bedbugs without respite.

Lumian observed silently, his gaze appearing distant and unfocused.

After the passage of nearly fifteen minutes, light yet hurried footfalls reverberated along the staircase, eventually reaching Room 207.

Jenna's silhouette came into Lumian's view. Today, she donned a more understated attire compared to her usual flamboyance. Her blouse clung slightly, complementing the gentle brown shade of her top and a fluffy, beige, short skirt. She sported knee-high black boots, and her makeup exuded both decadence and allure.

She glanced at Lumian, entered Room 207, and gently shut the wooden door behind her.

Lumian snapped out of his reverie and observed her silently, refraining from questioning her intentions.

Jenna repressed her curiosity and excitement before speaking up.

"Have you heard? The boss and two leaders of the Poison Spur Gang have been murdered!"

"I'm aware," Lumian acknowledged with a nod.

Jenna scrutinized his expression and deliberately probed further.

"You weren't involved, were you?"

"Do you think I possess the capability to eliminate 'Black Scorpion' Roger, 'Baldy' Harman, and 'Short-legged Candlestick' Castina all at once?" Lumian retorted.

Jenna, having already gleaned an estimation of Ciel's strength from Franca, understood that "Black Scorpion" Roger was no less formidable than Franca herself. She shook her head and uttered, "No."

She then drawled in a leisurely tone, "But you can still seek assistance."

For instance, Franca.

"The authorities don't even suspect me," Lumian stated, shrugging his shoulders.

In truth, he found this matter rather perplexing.

Ordinarily, as one of the few individuals who had recently engaged in a direct confrontation with the Poison Spur Gang, he would undoubtedly be subjected to questioning following such an incident. Yet, Lumian had remained on standby since last night, prepared to don a disguise at a moment's notice, yet no investigators had arrived.

Just then, hurried footsteps echoed from the staircase.

Knock, knock, knock. Knocks resounded against the door of Room 207.

Charlie? Lumian's gaze fixated on the door as he beckoned, "Come in. It's not locked."

The visitor who stood before them was none other than Charlie. Clad in a crisp white shirt, a light-colored vest, and a formal black suit, he exuded an air of dignity. Atop his head rested a half top hat, while a dark bow tie completed his ensemble.

His attire seemed even more refined than when he served as an attendant at H?tel du Cygne Blanc.

After sizing up Charlie, Lumian couldn't help but smile.

"Well, well, where did this civilized individual come from?"

Charlie couldn't conceal his own grin. His tone brimmed with warmth and enthusiasm as he replied, "Right? I am now a true gentleman. I'm still in the process of mastering classical grammar. Madame, Monsieur, please allow me to extend my civilized greetings."

With those words, he removed his half top hat, pressed it against his chest, and offered a slight bow.

Jenna chuckled but didn't discourage Charlie. Lumian clicked his tongue and remarked, "To be frank, you're more like a monkey playing dress-up in civilized clothing."

Charlie remained unaffected, his joy unwavering.

"I've only just begun my studies. In a month's time, you'll witness an

entirely different version of me. Oh, by the way, this is Monsieur Charlie Collent. He is currently enjoying a sumptuous dinner worth 8 verl d'or!"

At this point, Charlie glanced at Jenna, who stood beside the bed. He opened his mouth as if he had something to say, yet hesitated to do so in her presence.

Nonchalantly, Lumian inquired, "What's the matter? Just speak your mind."

Charlie lowered his voice.

"Did you hear? Last night, 'Black Scorpion' Roger, 'Baldy' Harman, and 'Short-legged Candlestick' Castina were all killed."

"I'm aware. And?" Lumian believed Charlie wouldn't seek him out for something that would soon become public knowledge.

Charlie glanced at Jenna and continued, "What has been confirmed is that the murderer belongs to a terrorist organization known as the Aurora Order. They have a penchant for gruesome displays of carnage and primarily target individuals who worship evil gods. In this case, 'Black Scorpion' Roger and his cohorts followed an evil god named the Great Mother."

Aurora Order? Lumian was taken aback.

Where did this scapegoat come from?

Why were the official Beyonders suddenly pointing fingers at the Aurora Order?

Shouldn't they first investigate those who had conflicts with "Black Scorpion" Roger and the Poison Spur Gang? That's how detective novels were written!

"Are you saying that the Aurora Order truly carried out these murders?" Jenna inquired curiously.

Charlie nodded emphatically.

“That’s correct. The Aurora Order appears to have claimed responsibility for these acts in some capacity. Tomorrow, there should be reports about the case in certain newspapers.” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The latter half of Charlie’s statement suggested that the information he had just shared was meant to be disclosed and held no confidentiality clauses.

The Aurora Order claiming responsibility? They weren’t even involved. Why would they assume responsibility? Lumian found himself momentarily perplexed yet slightly amused.

If he hadn’t personally slain “Black Scorpion” Roger, he might have suspected the Aurora Order as the culprits.

Charlie glanced at Lumian and added in a hushed tone, “This afternoon, once the election concludes, a crackdown on the mobs in the entire market district shall commence in response to the public’s concerns about the district’s security.”

Are you reading from a document? Your words sound so official. Lumian realized why Charlie had rushed to inform him.

It was best for those with dirt on them to leave the market district this afternoon and hide for the time being!

Lumian nodded subtly and replied, “I have a mysticism gathering to attend this afternoon.”

Although Mr. K’s gathering was scheduled for 9 p.m., Lumian intended to arrive early.

Charlie breathed a sigh of relief and gestured toward the door.

“I’ll make a move first.”

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian responded, “In the future, there’s no need to inform me about such trivial matters.”

He added mockingly, “Do you doubt my abilities?”

Charlie sheepishly smiled.

“It’s my first time, so I couldn’t help but feel a bit emotional. Don’t worry, unless it truly concerns you, I won’t drop any more hints.”

As Lumian watched Charlie depart, Jenna clicked her tongue and sighed.

“He’s turned into your spy among the official Beyonders.”

“I’d prefer it if he wasn’t,” Lumian mumbled, pursing his lips. “He’s just an imbecile, bound to mess things up.”

Jenna scoffed and waved her hand.

“I’m going to find Franca. Are you planning to share the information Charlie gave us with the others?”

Lumian shook his head.

“If everyone flees, the official Beyonders will undoubtedly investigate any leaks. That imbecile won’t be able to escape.

“Besides, some people deserve to end up in jail.”

And you don’t? Jenna criticized as she left Room 207 and stepped into the corridor.

At that moment, the two cleaning ladies had already reached the staircase.

Jenna hurried over, her gaze sweeping across the cleaning lady named Elodie, who wore a blond wig.

Suddenly, Jenna’s expression froze, and she swiftly turned around, heading back to Room 207. Lumian, who was about to leave, found it peculiar.

Elodie, a woman of almost 50 years with a blond wig and eye shadow, also noticed Jenna. She stared at the apprentice actress’s retreating figure for a few seconds before calling out in confusion and concern, “Celia…”

Jenna's body went rigid.

She slowly turned back, forcing a smile, and greeted Elodie with a loud voice, "Mother."

Mother? Lumian almost couldn't believe his ears.

Then he recalled Elodie mentioning that she used to be a theater actress and now enjoyed watching performances at the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. Her husband had passed away a few years ago in a factory accident, leaving behind two nearly adult children who helped support the family.

Jenna, on the other hand, was an apprentice actress at the same theater. Her father had also passed away a few years ago, leaving only her mother and brother. Her plan was to earn enough money for her tuition fees and other expenses for the coming year.

It all adds up… Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

Elodie approached Jenna with a broom, assessing her appearance.

"Why are you here? And what kind of makeup is that?"

Chapter 231 - 231 Mr. K's Purpose

231 Mr. K's Purpose

Jenna's eyes darted around, her arm raised in the air.

"This is a requirement for my theater acting class!"

Her words seemed to ease her tension, and her smile took on a more natural quality.

"Didn't I mention that I work part-time as a waitress at a bar to make ends meet? This is my boss. I'm here to discuss a salary increase with him!"

Jenna pointed confidently at Lumian, stationed by the door of Room 207.

Elodie glanced at Lumian, then fixed her gaze on Jenna for a few moments before nodding. "Don't forget to come home tonight."

Jenna's smile faltered momentarily before she replied, "Okay."

Seeing Elodie return to her tasks, cleaning the other side of the second floor, Jenna tiptoed down the stairs and made her way out of Auberge du Coq Doré.

It didn't take long for her to spot Lumian catching up to her, prompting her to grumble, "Dammit! Why is my mother at Auberge du Coq Doré?"

Lumian contemplated for a moment before responding. "Blame it on Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. Monsieur Ive, the owner of Auberge du Coq Doré, found a part-time cleaning lady who works

only half a day there. And your mother is a regular visitor at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons for plays."

Jenna clenched her teeth and exclaimed, "Those cursed heretics!"

She then threw up her arm.

"Tonight, I'll tell her the truth. I'll say I'm working part-time as an underground singer to save up for next year's tuition, and I earn quite a bit!"

Lumian glanced at Jenna's side profile, curious. "You don't seem too nervous or afraid?"

Jenna spat.

"That's my mother, not some man-eating monster.

"She's kind-hearted and understanding. I didn't tell her what I was up to before because I didn't want her to worry."

"She'll worry now, though," Lumian reminded her.

Being an underground singer in dance halls and bars often involved dealing with shady characters. Being taken advantage of was an unfortunate reality from time to time.

Jenna's smile was mischievous as she playfully remarked, "I'm the mistress of Ciel Dubois, leader of the Savoie Mob and guardian of Salle de Bal Brise. Who dares to mess with me?"

Lumian chuckled. "That's even more dangerous."

Jenna averted her gaze and observed the street vendors on Rue Anarchie.

"If my mother can't accept it, I plan to demonstrate my current abilities and convince her that I can protect myself." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Oh, really? Lumian didn't raise the example of the perverted Hedsey.

Jenna composed herself and said in a heavy voice, “She’s been through so much. She has worked tirelessly for years. I want to help her shoulder some of the burden so she won’t break herself.”

Lumian contemplated for a moment before responding. “Since your father’s passing?”

Jenna’s gaze shifted to the ground, and she tersely confirmed, “There was an accident at the factory. My father was severely injured and spent over ten days in the hospital. In the end, he couldn’t be saved.”

“We used up all our savings and still owe a significant amount of money. A few years ago, I could have pursued a career in theater and studied acting. But it wasn’t until the beginning of this year that we managed to repay almost half of our debt and save up some money for my education. My mother insisted that we couldn’t delay any longer. If we kept delaying, I would become too old.”

Lumian listened attentively, his brow furrowing in puzzlement. “No compensation for the factory accident?”

“Yes, but that scoundrel hasn’t compensated us yet!” Jenna clenched her teeth. “He keeps appealing, and the courts always take their time. F*cking dammit, is he trying to drag it out until we’re all dead?”

Lumian fell silent briefly before changing the subject. “Was your mother truly a theater actress?”

“That’s correct.” Jenna’s expression softened gradually. “She had great acting skills and was beautiful, but most theater managers, sponsors, and owners were men. They would prey on actresses in the theater like lions patrolling their territory. Those who refused to submit to them wouldn’t get good roles. It’s infuriating, everyone thinks it’s normal, even the police and the courts!

“My mother has a gentle nature, but she’s fiercely stubborn. She could only land supporting roles and was even fired once. When the theater she worked at went bankrupt, she lost the chance to return to the stage temporarily. She had to take on odd jobs as a motel maid and laundry worker.

“That’s when she met my father. They got together and became husband and wife in the presence of God. Praise the Sun. At that time, my father was working hard to become a skilled laborer. My mother took on various jobs and saved money while searching for an opportunity to return to the theater. Those were the days she cherished the most.

“Later, my brother and I were born. Mom and Dad became busier, struggling to make ends meet and give us a chance to pursue an education.

“When we became self-sufficient, my mother was already old and couldn’t return to the stage. She placed her hopes on me. She wanted to see me become an exceptional actress, even if it meant playing supporting roles. My father wished for my brother to become a skilled laborer.”

These words had been bottled up inside Jenna’s heart for a long time, and only now did she find the opportunity to express them.

Lumian patiently waited for Jenna to finish before posing a question. “Do you aspire to be a theater actress yourself?”

Jenna beamed with pride and contentment. “It’s hard not to love theater when your mother is such a dedicated fan and talented actress.”

Her smile inexplicably evoked a twinge of jealousy in Lumian.

Sighing with a touch of emotion, he remarked, “I can tell that your mother has a genuine passion for theater. Even as a cleaning lady, she adorns herself with makeup and wears exquisite wigs.”

Jenna lightly nodded and shared, “She says it makes her feel youthful, as if she’s back on the stage. In her eyes, she remains a true theater actress, and her other jobs are merely part-time endeavors.

“She’s always been like this. She takes me to witness the sunrise, reminding me that darkness will always give way to light. And she tells me that even in the darkest times, I must find a way to kindle my own inner light. Only then can I patiently await the sunrise.”

Jenna's yearning for the future grew palpable.

"If I continue as an underground singer for another year, I'll save enough for next year's tuition and make significant progress in repaying our debts. With the combined earnings of my mother and brother, we won't be burdened anymore. Soon, she won't have to juggle multiple jobs, and my brother will have the opportunity to learn skills from others!"

As Jenna spoke, her excitement grew, and she couldn't help but raise her arm, as if reaching out to grasp the beauty of the future

Lumian observed Jenna silently, and a wave of pent-up emotions within him seemed to dissipate.

Hope. Such a profound and moving word.

After a few moments of relief, Jenna suddenly felt an inexplicable sense of embarrassment. She turned her head and gave Lumian an accusing glare.

"Why are you staring at me? Haven't you seen someone getting excited before?"

Lumian scoffed but chose not to respond.

Jenna studied him intently and muttered to herself, "Why do I feel like you're in better spirits?"

"No," Lumian replied succinctly.

At that moment, the two of them had already entered Avenue du Marché. Posters celebrating Hugues Artois's successful election as a member of parliament adorned the surroundings.

Hugues Artois, the joint support of the Savoie Mob and the Poison Spur Mob, has indeed become a member of parliament… I wonder what changes he will bring to the market district… Lumian averted his gaze from the poster, his mind echoing Franca's words: Lady Moon, a follower of the Great Mother, believed that Hugues Artois was an open-minded individual.

…

In the afternoon, prior to embarking on his journey to Avenue du Boulevard in search of Mr. K, Lumian arranged an altar in the second-floor bedroom of Salle de Bal Brise.

With the wall of spirituality in place, Lumian proceeded to light three candles in the order from deity to mankind, left to right. After carefully dripping essential oils and extracts, he took a couple of steps back, enveloped in a misty atmosphere, and intoned in a deep voice,"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

A faint gray fog arose, accompanied by an unsettling aura.

Suppressing the sluggishness of his thoughts and the tingling sensation beneath his skin, Lumian fixed his gaze upon the bluish-black flame of the candle. Following the instructions of Madam Magician, he recited the subsequent incantation in the ancient language of Hermes.

"I implore you, I implore your protection…"

After a series of gestures, Lumian caught sight of the divine angel, seemingly materialized from pure light.

Simultaneously, he faintly heard a dreamy sigh.

A sigh originating from an infinite height.

Descending from above in resplendent and ethereal form, the angel extended its arms to embrace Lumian.

Wings of radiant light enveloped him.

When Lumian regained consciousness, everything had returned to its usual state.

…

As evening descended upon 19 Rue Scheer, Avenue du Boulevard,

Lumian once again found himself in the basement, face-to-face with Mr. K.

Clad in his customary voluminous hood and black robe, Mr. K sat silently upon a chair with a crimson backrest.

Meeting Lumian's gaze, Mr. K nodded gently and spoke in a low, raspy voice, "I am highly pleased with your adeptness in action. What's more, unknowingly, your actions align with the teachings of my lord, countering those Blessed of evil beings!"

Pausing momentarily, Mr. K inquired, "Have you given it sufficient thought?"

"Yes, I have," Lumian replied, lowering his head. "You have revealed to me the magnificence of the Lord."

"Haha!" Mr. K burst into a maniacal laughter, as if his sanity had slipped away.

After a few seconds, he regained composure and disregarded the attendants, ensuring they stayed put. He continued, "My lord's honorific name is the Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord who reigns behind the curtain of shadows, the ruler of the mind world, and the degenerated nature of all living things. Choose any three and entreat Him in Hermes."

The mere description by Mr. K caused Lumian's garments, skin, flesh, and bones to dissolve completely, leaving behind an unnerving sensation of pure consciousness and self-awareness.

Involuntarily trembling, Lumian instinctively recited, "The Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord who reigns behind the curtain of shadows…"

Lumian's mind was too overwhelmed to deliberate, and he unconsciously selected the first three phrases.

Almost instantly, his surroundings darkened, as if enshrouded by a heavy curtain.

Beyond the illusory and profound shadowed veil, a pair of eyes

fixated upon Lumian, penetrating his consciousness and nearly rendering him unconscious.

After an indeterminate period, Lumian regained his faculties, his body drenched in cold sweat.

Rising from his seat, Mr. K's deep voice seemed laced with a smile.

"Henceforth, you are our brother, truly one of us.

"We're a secret organization that believes in the True Creator. We go by the name of the Aurora Order."

"Aurora Order?" Lumian was taken aback.

Isn't this the terrorist organization that took the blame for me?

It seems that the official Beyonders did not misidentify their target…

I have truly become a member of the Aurora Order…

Dismissing the attendants from the basement, Mr. K addressed Lumian, "Gardner Martin is a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. This secret organization once revered our lord, but in recent years, they have distanced themselves from us and ceased their frequent prayers. They appear to be plotting something of great significance.

"I have assigned you to infiltrate their ranks, for I hope you can discover the cause behind their actions and unravel their intentions."

Chapter 232 - 232 Financing of Activities

232 Financing of Activities

The Iron and Blood Cross Order… appears to have some significant plans in the works… Lumian finally grasped Mr. K's true intentions for persuading him to join a mob.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order—an equally secretive organization—seemed to be related to a competition of faith and Trier's situation.

Curiosity stirring within him, Lumian inquired, "What exactly is the Iron and Blood Cross Order?"

The more Lumian understood, the more he inclined towards actions that would gain Gardner Martin's approval.

Mr. K let out a chuckle. "Allow Gardner Martin to personally enlighten you. If you possess knowledge about their circumstances before they disclose it to you, they are likely to notice some problem."

So, you found a wanted, simple country boy like me to be a spy? You wanted someone with a clean slate and humble background? Lumian pondered, nodding thoughtfully.

His thoughts wandered to the mysterious item Gardner Martin had smuggled into Trier through Rat Christo, as well as the support the Savoie Mob extended to Hugues Artois. After two seconds of contemplation, Lumian voiced his suspicion, "Could the Iron and Blood Cross Order's plan be connected to Hugues Artois?"

In a raspy voice, Mr. K responded, "According to the information we've gathered, that is merely one component, not the primary one."

I see… Lumian then broached the topic of “mirror people” before continuing, “Gardner Martin seemed aware that the item he had the smuggling caravan transport could trigger a corresponding incident.”

Mr. K fell silent momentarily before speaking, “I suspect that item holds immense importance. It’s a matter you’ll need to unravel. Don’t worry. Our Aurora Order is generous with rewards. When the time comes, you can make any request.”

Just as Lumian was about to internally utter the words, “Help me revive my sister,” Mr. K added, “As long as it lies within my power.”

Very straightforward… If I genuinely become an official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and gain access to pertinent information, they will undoubtedly grant me certain privileges. And in turn, I can seek rewards from the Aurora Order. Yes… This is akin to further fulfilling Madam Magician’s mission. She won’t reject me, the bearer of a Minor Arcana card… Such “treatment” is rare—to receive three rewards for a single task… As Lumian silently sighed, he assumed it wouldn’t matter if he faced rejection.

“I now require some financing for my future endeavors.”

The purpose of these funds was to enhance Lumian’s personal strength and establish a “solid foundation” for completing the mission.

Mr. K nodded. “No problem. I will provide you with 10,000 verl d’or later. This is one of the perks of officially joining our Aurora Order and participating in a high-risk mission.”

In Intis, “perk” was a commonly used term coined by Emperor Roselle.

Very generous… At that moment, he found himself wondering if he should seek out more secret organizations like this one, just to enjoy additional membership perks.

Rising from his seat, Mr. K extended his hands and began to circle Lumian slowly.

As he walked, he spoke in a solemn tone, “My Lord is the great being

who created this world, the father of all living creatures."

"We all originate from Him, carrying the divine essence He bestowed upon us."

"Divinity exists within every living being, and no one is inherently more noble than another. We distinguish our status based on our proximity to our Lord and our ability to embrace His teachings."

"It is through our shared divinity that we can consume potions, face trials, and accumulate more divine power. Ultimately, we can become angels in service to my Lord…"

Is he preaching? Lumian couldn't help but feel that there were similarities between Mr. K's words and Madam Magician's story of the original Creator—the Oldest One—fragmenting and manifesting different Beyonder characteristics. They seemed to share a common essence.

This led him to suspect that the True Creator of the Aurora Order corresponded to the Oldest One.

After nearly fifteen minutes, Mr. K concluded his preaching and traced a cross on his chest, starting from the top and moving to the bottom, left, and right.

"Praise be to you, the creator of all things. Praise be to you, who carries the burdens of the world's sins."

Lumian followed suit, offering his own words of praise.

Mr. K then proceeded to introduce the Aurora Order.

"We currently have a total of seven Saints and twenty-two Oracles, each designated by alphabetical code names, scattered across various locations…"

There are still 21 individuals as powerful as Mr. K? The Saints are Sequence 4 and Sequence 3 demigods with godhood. And there are a total of seven in the Aurora Order? Lumian was taken aback by this revelation.

The Aurora Order was far more formidable than he had anticipated!

As for whether there were any figures on the level of angels, Mr. K did not mention it, leaving Lumian to wonder.

Concluding the introduction, Mr. K took hold of his right index finger with his left hand and tore it off. He then tossed it to Lumian, the finger dripping with blood.

“Use it in times of dire need.”

Lumian caught the finger, its blood already congealing, and imagined the phantom pain he had experienced before.

Although he was unafraid of pain or injuries in battle and could stab himself without hesitation when necessary, he couldn’t simply pluck out a finger without reason, as Mr. K had done.

In a matter of moments, a new finger sprouted from Mr. K’s hand, its skin fair and unblemished.

With the gathering scheduled for 9 p.m., Lumian secured the 10,000 verl d’or and made his way to Psychic’s old journal library, a lavish off-white six-story building located at 19 Rue Scheer. He stayed there until 6 p.m.

Then, he leisurely found a nearby restaurant and spent 2 verl d’or on an inexpensive set meal.

The meal included an ordinary bottle of red wine, a bowl of soup, three dishes, a dessert, and an unlimited supply of bread.

Lumian made his selections from the provided menu, opting for a beef chowder, braised rabbit meat, and a serving of roasted cauliflower.

As the gathering commenced, Lumian, already in possession of the Scorpion Poison, sold the aquatic monster’s blood, poisonous scales, and other items he had no use for, fetching him 100 verl d’or.

Thus far, he had amassed a total of 14,710 verl d’or and 24 coppet in cash, mostly courtesy of Mr. K.

This filled him with confidence that he could gather the remaining 30,000 verl d'or within a short span of time. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

If he borrowed a bit here and pocketed a bit there, combined with the spoils of war, wouldn't he have enough?

Shortly before 11 p.m., Lumian returned to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Ruhr and Michel, residents of the third floor who made a living selling photos of street ma?tresse d'atelier near the Suhit steam locomotive station, were hauling a bulging flaxen-colored cloth bag up the stairs.

Lumian cast a curious glance at the white-haired duo and asked, slightly puzzled, "So late?"

He knew that Ruhr and Michel also worked as part-time scavengers, having encountered them on a few occasions before. However, he recalled that their work typically ended by nine.

Ruhr, clad in tattered clothing with a slight hunch to his back, mustered a smile and replied with a touch of joy, "Tonight, the member of parliament's office hosted a celebratory feast and discarded a lot of valuable rubbish. We waited until the bags could no longer hold before returning."

The market district's member of parliament's office was celebrating Hugues Artois's election? Lumian nodded subtly and walked past the elderly couple, making his way to Room 207.

Before igniting the carbide lamp, he noticed a square-folded white paper on the table, illuminated by the faint crimson moonlight streaming through the window.

Observing the neatly folded paper, Lumian suspected it to be a letter from Madam Magician.

The Pyromaniac potion formula? Did she have the messenger leave the Pyromaniac potion formula here before my arrival? Is she so confident in my ability to become an official member of the Aurora

Order? Or does she have something else to inform me about? These thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as he ignited the carbide lamp, picked up the white paper, and carefully unfolded it.

"Your next mission is to complete the task assigned by Mr. K. Do you understand what I mean?

"Pyromaniac potion formula:

"Main ingredient: Fire Salamander gland, Magma Elf core;

"Supplementary ingredients: 50 milliliters of Fire Salamander blood, 10 grams of Magma Pyroxene powder, 10 grams of Redcrown Balsam powder, 10 drops of Sun Star extract.

"Usage: What do you think?"

She actually wrote down the main ingredient… Does this mean I'll need the accompanying parts for the potion? Is Madam Magician also interested in uncovering the Iron and Blood Cross Order's current situation? How did she know that today would be the day Mr. K would assign me this task? Or does she simply disregard Mr. K's intentions? Does she only hope that I can gain more of Mr. K's trust and gradually become a core member of the Aurora Order? Lumian leaned towards the first possibility, but he couldn't dismiss the latter.

For now, he had no choice but to follow her instructions.

Having attended two mysticism gatherings, Lumian had developed a certain understanding of the potion formula's value. He knew that the Pyromaniac potion formula in his possession was worth at least 30,000 verl d'or.

If he were to sell it, he could exchange it for the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic.

Of course, this idea was fleeting. Without Madam Magician's explicit agreement, he didn't dare entertain it.

Wouldn't it be equivalent to trading Madam Magician's potion formula for her Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic?

Instead, Lumian found a more feasible plan, inspired by a popular trade scheme in Intis which was also known as Commercial Paradise or Financial Empire.

The plan required a down payment of 10,000 verl d'or, with the remaining 20,000 to be paid in installments over a year, along with a 10 to 15% interest.

After careful consideration, Lumian, sensing a high likelihood of Madam Magician possessing godhood, dismissed the idea.

He had already gathered almost half of the required funds. There was no need to risk offending a demigod by negotiating installments.

Even if Harvest Sacrifice didn't yield a satisfactory price or Franca had little savings due to her extravagant lifestyle, Salle de Bal Brise still had a substantial amount of cash in its safe. As the protector of the dance hall, what harm would there be in embezzling a small sum?

Chapter 233 - 233 Advance Payment

233 Advance Payment

Realizing the lateness of the hour, Lumian planned on delving into Aurore's grimoire until midnight. He resolved to seek out Franca the next morning and inquire about the sale of Harvest Sacrifice. Additionally, he intended to ask her to keep a watchful eye on the supplementary ingredients like Fire Salamander blood and Magma Pyroxene powder.

Hmm, Franca is known for her late sleeping habits. If I go searching for her now, she'll surely still be awake. Most likely, she'll be asleep before 11 a.m. tomorrow… Taking this into consideration, Lumian had a change of heart. He tidied the wooden table, rose from his seat, and departed from Auberge du Coq Doré.

3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in front of Apartment 601.

After knocking a few times, Lumian caught sight of Franca. Her flaxen locks were disheveled, and she wore a lake-blue silk nightgown as she opened the door.

"What's the matter this time?" the Witch inquired, a smile gracing her lips as she stepped aside to make way.

Lumian didn't respond immediately. He glanced around and inquired, "Is Jenna not here?"

Unconsciously, Franca's smile faded away.

"Are you here for her? She doesn't have to perform tonight. She left early today."

Lumian nodded.

“That’s good. I won’t have to climb the outer wall and leave later then.”

“…” Franca’s lips twitched, and she clicked her tongue with a chuckle. “So, you’ve come to mock me?”

After playing a simple prank, Lumian settled himself on the gray divan.

Just as he was about to speak, Franca, who had curled up in the recliner, causing her nightgown’s hem to slip, let out a soft chuckle.

“You missed quite a show in the market district this afternoon.

“The police took care of all the places tied to the mob. Brignais, Simon, Christo, and Black were all apprehended and brought to the police headquarters. They nearly fell into the clutches of the official Beyonders and received their customary treatment. Luckily, Gardner managed to contact the newly elected Hugues Artois and convinced him to exert pressure on the two Churches and the police headquarters. By throwing a few scapegoats under the bus, the matter was resolved.”

Hugues Artois is indeed in cahoots with the Boss… Lumian chuckled.

“You didn’t get caught?”

“I didn’t go to any of those locations today. I spent the whole afternoon playing Fighting Evil with Jenna and my star dancer. Why would I get caught? You see, there’s nothing wrong with being lazy. My favorite saying is that lazy people are blessed by being lazy,” Franca replied, amused.

“I’ve never heard that before,” Lumian asked casually. “Where does this proverb come from?”

“I made it up,” Franca replied nonchalantly.

Pondering Franca’s explanation, Lumian’s suspicions were confirmed.

“Did Jenna suggest staying indoors in the afternoon and playing cards?”

“How did you know?” Franca exclaimed in surprise.

She scrutinized Lumian, her gaze turning suspicious.

Could it be that Jenna told him herself? Had they shared so much in private?

Lumian had nothing to hide and spoke frankly, “Charlie paid me a visit today, and Jenna happened to be there. From him, I learned that the official Beyonders and the police headquarters planned a joint operation to clean up the mobsters in the market district this afternoon.

“I advised Jenna to keep it a secret so as not to trouble Charlie. And it seems she’s proven to be trustworthy. She simply kept you occupied in the apartment,” Lumian explained.

Franca’s face brightened with understanding. “No wonder you weren’t around in the afternoon.”

A smug expression crossed her features. “Jenna is still on my side!”

She let out a satisfied sigh before curiosity tinged her voice as Franca asked warily, “Why did Jenna come to you?”

Lumian smiled knowingly. “After the demise of ‘Black Scorpion’ Roger, she finds me suspicious due to my ongoing conflict with the Poison Spur Mob.”

Franca’s response was a mix of relief and amusement.

“The Aurora Order ended up being the scapegoat in this case.”

“Since I arrived in Trier, I’ve noticed in the newspapers that whenever something happened, the terrorist group known as the Aurora Order would claim responsibility. But I never imagined that we would finally get a taste of that treatment. The subsequent investigations were misled, and no one suspected us.”

The Aurora Order is indeed responsible for this… After Lumian mocked Franca, he steered the conversation back on track.

“Taking advantage of the situation, I attended a mysticism gathering in the afternoon and managed to obtain the formula for the Pyromaniac potion, as well as some clues about its main ingredient.”

“You’re quite fortunate,” Franca exclaimed, her eyes widening slightly. “If we weren’t in Intis, I’d doubt your story. It’s only in Intis that the Pyromaniac potion formula is so readily available.”

Lumian then made a request.

“Please help me keep an eye on the supplementary ingredients: Fire Salamander’s blood, Magma Pyroxene powder, and Redcrown Balsam.”

He omitted mentioning Sun Star, as it was relatively common and could be found in larger flower shops.

“No problem,” Franca assured him. She inquired about the quantities of each ingredient in detail before raising another concern. “Do you have enough money? I mean, enough to purchase the main ingredient for the potion.”

From her perspective, Lumian had likely spent all his savings on the Pyromaniac potion formula.

Lumian seized the opportunity to respond, “Actually, I was just about to ask if Harvest Sacrifice had been sold.”

“How can it be sold so soon? It’s only been a day! I haven’t even had the chance to attend any mysticism gatherings,” Franca replied, pausing before offering a solution. “If you urgently need money, I can lend you some. After all, I don’t have any immediate need for the next potion.”

“There’s no rush,” Lumian replied after considering the matter. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

He still needed to gather all the supplementary ingredients.

Franca estimated, “Based on my experience, Harvest Sacrifice won’t fetch a high price due to its inevitable side effects. You can expect it to sell for around 10,000 to 12,000 verl d’or.”

“When you need the money, I can directly provide you with 6,000 verl d’or, considering it a buyout of Harvest Sacrifice. Additionally, I can lend you 20,000 to 30,000 verl d’or, but you must return it within three months.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed without hesitation.

He then produced Fallen Mercury and said to Franca, “I need to find someone who can repair Beyonder weapons.”

Franca examined the dirk with its ominous patterns and asked in confusion, “What’s the point of repairing a Beyonder weapon? Its energy will deplete eventually.”

“It’s tremendously useful. I want to utilize it for as long as possible,” Lumian admitted, though he naturally refrained from mentioning that he had a means to replenish Fallen Mercury’s energy.

Of course, he had to wait until he reached Sequence 6 and could withstand the corruption. Otherwise, Termiboros would undoubtedly seize the opportunity to cause trouble.

“That’s true,” Franca recalled Fallen Mercury’s impressive performance in the battle against “Black Scorpion” Roger. “I’ll help you inquire, but no Artisan would likely accept the task of repairing a suspected corrupted Beyonder weapon. They fear the potential adverse effects it could have on them.”

Artisan… a Beyonder skilled in repairing mystical items and Beyonder weapons? After exchanging a few more words with Franca, Lumian left Room 601 and returned to Avenue du Marché, entering Salle de Bal Brise.

Despite it almost being midnight, the place was still bustling. Lumian made his way to the finance office on the second floor corridor. As he unlocked the safe, he asked about the accountant and the cashier on the night shift.

“How much cash do we have at the moment?”

The accountant, a refined bespectacled woman in her thirties, replied with a hint of apprehension, “Approximately 28,000 verl d’or and some change.”

Lumian had already opened the safe’s door by then, revealing stacks of banknotes and shimmering golden coins.

After a quick calculation, he calmly requested, “Give me 12,000 verl d’or.”

“Huh?” Both the accountant and the cashier exclaimed fearfully.

While Monsieur Ciel was the protector of Salle de Bal Brise, taking away such a substantial amount of cash in one go was unthinkable!

The accountant exchanged a glance with the young cashier, silently indicating her to find the dance hall manager, René, in the adjacent office.

Dressed in formal attire, Gardner Martin’s designated representative glanced at the open safe and inquired, “Monsieur Ciel, why do you need to withdraw 12,000 verl d’or?”

“Personal expenses,” Lumian replied calmly.

René pondered for a few seconds before responding, “No problem.

“In the first two years, Baron Brignais would take between 40,000 and 50,000 verl d’or from the dance hall annually. During the transition, he even withdrew 15,000 verl d’or, which would have counted as part of the first half of the year. And it’s not even the second half yet. Monsieur Ciel, consider this 12,000 verl d’or an advance.”

“Sure.” Lumian didn’t concern himself with the details; he simply wanted the 12,000 verl d’or!

After securing the cash in a cloth bag, Lumian let out a silent sigh of relief.

He had nearly gathered the required 30,000 verl d'or to purchase the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic. Now, all he had to do was await news of the supplementary ingredients!

Currently, he possessed a total of 26,710 verl d'or. With an additional 6,000 from the Harvest Sacrifice, he would have enough.

As Lumian, laden with a significant amount of cash, left Salle de Bal Brise, a sense of unease suddenly washed over him.

He wasn't afraid of being robbed; rather, he worried that a conflict might damage the money bag or tear the banknotes.

I must find a safe place for it. I can't keep carrying it like this… Lumian strolled along Avenue du Marché, contemplating transferring the funds to the safe house.

Before long, his eyes caught sight of the brightly illuminated office belonging to the market district's member of parliament.

It stood as a classic four-story building, boasting a khaki-colored fa?ade with statues adorning the top two floors—a Sunbird and Giant Gears.

The celebration banquet is still underway… Lumian shook his head disapprovingly.

Pausing for a moment, he settled in the shadows across the street, observing the departing guests from the banquet hall.

Hugues Artois, who enjoyed the combined support of the Savoie Mob and the Poison Spur Mob, not to mention Lady Moon's praise, was undoubtedly a man of influence. Some of the guests he had invited could very well be problematic individuals connected to the schemes of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

As time went by, an increasing number of guests emerged from the member of parliament's office. Lumian found no one who aroused suspicion. He could only confirm that most of them belonged to the upper echelons of society. They were elegantly attired, and their faces had graced the pages of various newspapers.

Suddenly, a familiar figure caught his eye.

It was Gardner Martin, an amiable man with chubby cheeks, a few silver strands of hair at his temples, and brownish-red eyes!

Gardner Martin, the boss of the Savoie Mob!

Dressed in a tailcoat and a dark bow tie, Gardner seemed to sense something. He abruptly turned his head, fixing his gaze on the shadowy spot where Lumian sat.

Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

His thoughts raced, and he swiftly made up his mind. Rising to his feet, he approached Gardner Martin.

Gardner Martin regarded him with a penetrating stare, revealing no trace of emotion.

"Good evening, Boss," Lumian greeted as he drew nearer.

Gardner Martin asked nonchalantly, "What brings you here?"

Lumian replied candidly, "I left Salle de Bal Brise and noticed that the member of parliament's office banquet was still ongoing. I thought I'd check which guests Monsieur Hugues Artois had invited, so as to avoid offending the wrong people in the future."

Gardner Martin nodded subtly and spoke calmly, "That's a commendable habit."

With a gesture signaling Lumian to depart, he proceeded towards a private carriage, accompanied by Butler Faustino.

Lumian's heart stirred as he followed suit, taking the initiative to speak, "Boss, I took an advance of 12,000 verl d'or from the dance hall today."

Chapter 234 - 234 Sincerity

234 Sincerity

Gardner Martin's brows lifted in surprise as he cast a curious glance at Lumian, taking a moment to ponder the situation.

"Let's converse inside the carriage."

Upon hearing this, Butler Faustino took the initiative to settle himself in the front of the carriage, right beside the driver.

Silently, Lumian trailed behind Gardner Martin and entered the carriage, taking a seat opposite him.

As the carriage slowly set in motion, Gardner Martin fixed his gaze upon Lumian and spoke up.

"Why did you advance such a hefty sum of cash?"

Lumian responded with candor.

"Given the opportunity to enhance my strength, I aspire to become a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac."

Gardner Martin hadn't anticipated Lumian's straightforwardness. After a brief pause, he smiled and inquired, "Is 12,000 verl d'or sufficient?"

Lumian didn't bat an eye as he replied, "In addition to the 18,000 verl d'or you provided last time and my previous savings."

Gardner Martin nodded slowly.

"Did you come across anyone selling the main ingredient for the Pyromaniac potion elsewhere? And do you possess the formula for the potion?"

“Yes,” Lumian confessed without reservation.

Gardner Martin chuckled.

“You’ve divulged all of this to me. Shouldn’t these matters be kept secret?”

Lumian displayed an unusual sincerity as he responded, “I feel prepared to consume the Pyromaniac potion. It won’t be long before I advance to Sequence 7.

“When that happens, if a conflict arises, concealing the change in my strength would be impossible. Boss, you’ll soon discover it anyway. So why not tell you now?”

Furthermore, René, the manager of the dance hall, worked under Gardner Martin. He would undoubtedly report the 12,000 verl d’or advancement.

Lumian paused momentarily before continuing, “That’s one reason.

“Another reason is that I’ve lived on the streets, endured rural life, and faced persecution. Now, I adhere to a single principle: I treat those who treat me well.”

He wasn’t attempting to flaunt his loyalty. According to Jenna, such exaggerated loyalty would seem untrustworthy, especially when he had only met Gardner Martin once. His main goal was to convey his allegiance.

Similarly, Gardner Martin would definitely comprehend the underlying purpose behind Lumian’s frankness. It was a display of his astuteness.

Gardner Martin lifted his head and burst into laughter.

“Very good.

“Brignais, Christo, and the others have their own secrets. They assume I’m oblivious.

“The fact that you can accurately grasp your situation, your future

progress, and my stance indicates that you're more astute than them. Most times, sincerity proves to be the most effective approach."

Sincerity? Lumian seized the opportunity to express himself with an extraordinary sincerity. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"Boss, I have leads on the main ingredient, but I'm unsure where to acquire the supplementary ingredients.

"Could you keep an eye out for Fire Salamander's blood, Magma Pyroxene powder, and Redcrown Balsam?"

From Lumian's perspective, Gardner Martin, suspected to be a Sequence 6 or perhaps even a Sequence 5 Beyonder of the Hunter pathway, would have an easier time finding the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion compared to Franca.

Perhaps he still possessed leftover supplementary ingredients from advancing to Pyromaniac?

According to Aurore's grimoire, spiritual supplementary ingredients could be preserved for an extended period if the method was correct.

Gardner Martin was taken aback. He hadn't anticipated Ciel making such a direct request.

Initially, he had intended to inquire about a few matters of concern and understand Lumian's needs before offering assistance to win him over.

After a brief pause, Gardner Martin nodded and responded, "No problem."

Observing that Gardner Martin didn't inquire about the quantities of the three supplementary ingredients, Lumian grew increasingly convinced that the Savoie Mob boss was a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway.

Gardner Martin peered out of the window and spoke inquisitively.

"While you were observing the parliament member's office, did you notice anything suspicious?"

“No,” Lumian shook his head. “They’re just individuals whose pictures occasionally appear in the newspapers.”

Gardner Martin smiled nonchalantly.

“Indeed, there’s the president and vice-president of our Savoie Chamber of Commerce; Bono Goodville, the owner of Goodville Chemical Factory; Clement, the manager of Nova Mechanical Prosthetics; and Etienne from Saint-Ger Phlogiston Factory… I was invited as a shareholder of Rist Docks and the head of Rist Shipping Company and Savoie Construction Company, not as the boss of the Savoie Mob.”

Gardner Martin let out a soft sigh.

“However, we can barely squeeze into Trier’s high society. In the business world, the true heavyweights are the chairmen and proprietors of Trier Bank, Suchit Bank, and Asset Credit Bank. They are the shareholders of behemoths like Suhit Textile Group, Tilisi Coal and Steel Consortium, Anubi Steel Company, Southern Liquor Merchants Federation, Falgar Weapons Group, and Balam-Paz Import and Export Corporation.”

Lumian had come across these names in newspapers and magazines. The company that had left the deepest impression was Balam-Paz Import and Export Corporation.

To protect their interests in the West Balam and Paz Valley of the Southern Continent, they had even been allowed to finance a substantial private army and a fleet as mercenaries.

Noticing that the carriage was about to depart from Avenue du Marché, Gardner Martin signaled the driver to halt and nodded at Lumian.

“Before consuming the potion, ensure your condition is favorable. It’s better to delay than to take unnecessary risks.”

After acknowledging Gardner Martin’s advice, Lumian left the carriage and headed towards Rue des Blouses Blanches.

He intended to conceal all his cash within the confines of the safe

house.

After walking a certain distance, Lumian hesitated.

Safe houses didn't guarantee absolute safety, especially in lower-class areas like the market district and Quartier du Jardin Botanique, where the population was denser. Thieves ran rampant in such places.

If a burglar were to stumble upon Aurore's grimoires, they would be of little value to them. At most, they would search through them in the hopes of finding hidden banknotes, but the sum of over 26,000 cash would undoubtedly be taken.

Should I set up a few traps in the safe house to deter thieves? Lumian's thoughts raced, and suddenly, a better idea struck him.

That idea was to provide Madam Magician with an advance payment of 26,000 verl d'or!

This way, there would be no risk of losing such a large sum of cash.

Furthermore, a lofty individual like Madam Magician would not deny accepting the advance payment.

Phew… With his mind made up, Lumian arrived at the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches and retrieved pen and paper to write a letter.

"Esteemed Madam Magician,

"I have already procured 26,000 verl d'or. I will offer this as an advance payment. Once I gather the remaining 4,000, you may send me the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic.

"Looking forward to your reply."

Lumian refrained from requesting Madam Magician to grant him the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic immediately, as he had yet to acquire the corresponding supplementary ingredients. Preserving Beyonder characteristics proved to be quite troublesome, and there was a risk of losing them.

After summoning the puppet messenger and entrusting it with the cloth bag containing cash and coins, along with the letter, Lumian felt a significant sense of relief. However, he couldn't help but worry that the messenger might fall victim to robbery in the spirit world.

Before long, the puppet messenger adorned in a golden dress returned with a reply from Madam Magician.

"26,000 verl d'or has been received.

"Magician."

It's akin to receiving a receipt… Lumian murmured to himself, expressing gratitude to the puppet messenger.

He then departed Rue des Blouses Blanches and made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As was his routine, Lumian used a short wire to open the door, quietly traversed the dimly lit lobby with only the basement bar's glow, and ascended the stairs.

Reaching the second floor, he pursed his lips and continued upwards to the third floor, arriving at Room 310, where Flameng had once resided.

The wooden door to the room stood ajar, and the curtains remained undrawn, allowing the crimson moonlight to filter through the glass.

It was an unwritten folklore often believed by the lower-class citizens of Trier:

In a room where someone had met their demise, the door had to be left open and the curtains undrawn for three days.

This was done out of concern that the ghost of the deceased might be reluctant to depart.

Lumian stood at the doorway, gazing into the empty room, as if he could see the madman clutching his head and whispering, "I'm dying."

After a while, he silently averted his gaze and proceeded towards the stairs.

As he approached the staircase, he overheard a conversation emanating from Room 302, despite their attempts to suppress their voices.

The room belonged to Ruhr and Michel, the sellers of counterfeit photographs who worked as part-time scavengers.

There was no sign of a kerosene or carbide lamp being lit within the room. No light seeped through the crack in the door.

Lumian's acute hearing allowed him to instinctively tune in to the discussion between the elderly couple.

"Old Woman, look at these. They're worth a fortune! Those gentlemen and ladies simply discarded them!"

"I reckon this bag alone could fetch 5 verl d'or…"

"5 verl d'or? It's worth at least 15!"

"Old Man, if only we could stumble upon such valuable rubbish every day."

"Then we'd have to vote for a member of parliament every day."

"Praise the Sun. Let that member of parliament host a banquet every day. In that case, we could return to Aurmir and purchase 10 acres of fields to cultivate grapes within a year."

"You're quite the dreamer, Old Woman.

"What's wrong with dreaming? Don't you dream? Even without the banquet, we've managed to save up a significant sum. Another four or five years should suffice."

"True. When the time comes, we won't have to toil as hard as we do now, and we won't need to worry about being unable to work…"

Lumian ceased eavesdropping and silently chuckled. Descending the

stairs, he returned to Room 207, briefly freshened up, and climbed into bed.

In the midst of the night, half-asleep, he was suddenly startled by hurried footsteps.

As he sat up and glanced towards the corridor, there came a knock on his door.

Lumian, feeling a mix of wariness and confusion, approached the wooden door and opened it.

Standing outside was Madame Michel, the short, gray-haired woman adorned in a yellow cloth dress.

She spoke with fear and panic, “Ruhr has taken ill suddenly! Ciel—Monsieur Ciel, can you assist me in carrying him to the clinic on Rue des Blouses Blanches?

“I-I have the money for his treatment!”

Monsieur Ruhr is unwell? He was perfectly fine when I fell asleep… Lumian was taken aback.

Chapter 235 - 235 “Disease”

235 “Disease”

Observing Lumian’s silence, Michel spoke with anxiety creeping into her voice.

“If you’re not willing, I can find someone else.”

“Who should I look for… They don’t really like us. They can’t stand our foul odor…”

That was precisely why she sought out Lumian, a leader of the mob. Lumian and Charlie were the only ones at Auberge du Coq Doré who could calmly communicate with the couple, but Charlie had already left.

Glancing at the short and hunched figure of Madame Michel, Lumian let out a sigh and responded.

“I’ll go and check it out.”

Still perplexed, he walked past Madame Michel, hastened up to the second floor, and entered Room 302.

The place was filled with various kinds of rubbish, emitting an indescribable stench. Lumian raised his hand, pinching his nose, and maneuvered his way through the cramped space, barely fitting a single person, until he reached the yellowish and greasy bedsheet.

Ruhr, with his wrinkled eyes tightly shut, lay on the bed, his face flushed and his breath ragged. He had fainted.

He’s seriously ill… Lumian furrowed his brow, holding his breath. He turned around and carried Ruhr out of the room.

Meanwhile, Michel swiftly rummaged through the piles of trash,

uncovering hidden spots with single banknotes and coins, which she promptly concealed on her person.

Soon, they left Room 302. As Michel locked the door, she spoke to Lumian.

“Monsieur Ciel, pay me no mind. Send Ruhr to the clinic without me. I’ll catch up.”

Lumian nodded, quickened his pace, and sprinted out of Auberge du Coq Doré.

He was familiar with Rue des Blouses Blanches’ clinics, often frequenting the area. After a short sprint, he spotted the Roblin Clinic, a small hospital in all but name.

Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman and Quartier de No?l had been neighboring districts for some time now. The Holy Palace Hospital, funded by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, was located across the bridge. As a result, only a few clinics were situated on this side of the bridge.

Roblin Clinic had two doctors on duty during the night. Temporary beds were set up in the spacious hall, with a few patients lying on them, receiving infusion treatments.

Lumian carried Ruhr to one of the doctors and gently placed him on a treatment bed.

The doctor, donning gold-rimmed glasses and in his early thirties, glanced at Lumian. Without directly mentioning any consultation fees, he disdainfully examined Ruhr’s condition.

After a few minutes, he adjusted his glasses and spoke.

“He’s running a high fever, but there don’t appear to be any other symptoms. I suggest we try to bring down the fever first. If it persists, we should immediately transfer him to the Holy Palace Hospital.”

“Alright.” Lumian possessed limited medical knowledge, so he could only heed the doctor’s advice.

The doctor swiftly wrote a prescription for Lumian and instructed him to make the necessary payment. Lumian complied, receiving the fever medicine and infusion drip from the pharmacy.

The Fool Pharmaceutical Company's Type 1357 Fever Medicine… Lumian glanced at the prescription's contents and then proceeded to the payment window.

Madame Michel finally arrived, panting and exhausted.

She accepted the prescription from Lumian and glanced at the price. In a burst of frustration, she exclaimed, "It's 5 verl d'or…"

Without waiting for Lumian's response, she clenched her teeth and retrieved copper and silver coins. She gathered 5 verl d'or and paid the consultation fee.

Before long, Ruhr was carried to a temporary bed for the infusion.

This treatment had gained popularity only in recent years.

Madame Michel finally regained her composure and spoke to Lumian.

"Thank you, Monsieur Ciel. You can go back and rest. I'll stay with Ruhr."

Lumian didn't insist. After all, he wasn't a doctor.

He nodded slightly and directed his gaze towards Ruhr. Concentrating, he intended to check on his luck.

Lumian couldn't help but furrow his brow.

Monsieur Ruhr was on the brink of death!

However, it wasn't severe or evident. Unlike the previous vagrant, there seemed to be a chance of salvation.

Just as Lumian was about to suggest transferring him to the Holy Palace Hospital, Ruhr's condition took a turn.

Translucent blisters resembling burns emerged on his skin. They

swiftly filled with light yellow pus, exhibiting signs of festering.

Such symptoms, such progression, and such rapid evolution caused Lumian's pupils to contract. His intuition informed him that this was no ordinary illness.

Perhaps it was connected to mysticism and supernatural forces!

Monsieur Ruhr is merely a scavenger. Why is he affected by supernatural powers? Lumian raised his head and pointed at the unconscious Ruhr. He addressed Madame Michel, "You're believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun, correct? Take him to the église Saint-Robert and give it a try."

He sensed that the Holy Palace Hospital might not be equipped to treat an illness involving supernatural powers. It would be better to visit the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral and determine if purification could eliminate the effects.

Madame Michel noticed her husband's peculiar transformation and pleaded with a sobbing tone, "No, transfer him to the Holy Palace Hospital! Transfer him to the Holy Palace Hospital!"

To Madame Michel's understanding, seeking blessings at the cathedral was akin to giving up on treatment and preparing for the solace of a deathbed.

Lumian refrained from persuading her, realizing that it was the dead of night and église Saint-Robert had long closed its doors. Moreover, Ruhr and Michel were nothing more than a couple of scavengers, so the chances of the cathedral opening for them were slim. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Additionally, église Saint-Robert was quite far away. Ruhr's condition was rapidly deteriorating, and he might not survive the journey, let alone live long enough to rouse the cathedral's caretakers to unlock the door.

Lumian observed Ruhr, whose blisters had burst and were now oozing pus. After a brief moment of silence, he spoke to Madame Michel, "Find a doctor and transfer him to the Holy Palace Hospital

immediately."

"Alright, alright!" Michel snapped out of her daze and hurriedly approached the doctor who had attended to Ruhr.

Once she vacated the temporary bed, Lumian positioned himself to block the view of the other patients. From his pocket, he retrieved an iron-colored metal canister adorned with a spring fountain pattern.

This was the Healing Agent he had obtained from "Baldy" Harman!

Lumian believed that ailments as a result of mysticism could only be countered by mysticism remedies. Although uncertain whether this agent, primarily meant for external injuries, would work on Ruhr, he was determined to give it a shot.

Unscrewing the cap, he pinched Ruhr's mouth open and forced down half of the agent.

Ruhr, seemingly parched, instinctively swallowed the clear liquid resembling a refreshing spring.

After two gulps, he began to calm down.

In less than a minute, Madame Michel returned with the doctor. The blisters on Ruhr's face shriveled, scabbed over, and silently fell away.

It actually worked… Lumian breathed a sigh of relief and focused on observing the shifts in Ruhr's fate.

This time, there were no signs of impending death. Ruhr's destiny for the next few days appeared somewhat chaotic, making it difficult for Lumian to decipher or speculate upon.

Perplexed, the doctor glanced at Ruhr and asked Madame Michel, "Isn't he in pretty good shape?"

Madame Michel also noticed that the dreadful blisters that had marred her husband's face were now gone, leaving behind only scars and wrinkles. His breathing had steadied and was no longer labored.

"I apologize for my anxiety," she quickly apologized.

The doctor, irritated by the stench emanating from her and Ruhr, waved his hand dismissively.

“The Fool Pharmaceutical Company’s medications are far more effective than others. Since the situation has improved, keep a close eye on him. Don’t rush to transfer him to the Holy Palace Hospital.”

With that, he hastily departed from the temporary bed.

Madame Michel slumped down next to Ruhr, occasionally checking his forehead to gauge his body temperature.

Lumian remained by their side. He pulled up a stool and sat, attentively observing Ruhr’s condition.

Ten minutes later, Ruhr opened his eyes and gazed blankly at the unfamiliar white ceiling.

“Where am I?”

Michel let out a sigh of relief and swiftly recounted his sudden illness.

“Why did I fall ill out of the blue?” Ruhr was bewildered. “I felt perfectly fine before going to bed.”

Interrupting their conversation, Lumian casually inquired, “What did you do before bed that was different from your usual routine?”

“Nothing,” Ruhr pondered for a moment before replying, “Just the usual routine. I sorted through the trash I collected, went to the washroom, had a chat, and then went to sleep… Maybe I came back late last night. It was nearly one o’clock by the time I finished sorting. I guess I ended up sleeping too late…”

Could there be something amiss with the garbage? Or did something occur during the day that only manifested in the dead of night? Lumian delved deeper, hoping for valuable clues from Ruhr and Michel, but alas, his efforts proved fruitless.

Ruhr recuperated swiftly. Once the IV had been administered, he insisted on leaving the Roblin Clinic immediately, unwilling to spend

any more money and determined to return to the motel before dawn.

Observing that Ruhr's luck remained unchanged, Lumian didn't try to dissuade him.

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 302.

Lumian furrowed his brow, surveying the piles of garbage emitting various odors, hoping to pinpoint the problematic one. Ruhr and Michel stood beside him, expressing their gratitude incessantly.

Given the peculiar environment, his sense of smell proved useless. Lumian activated his Spirit Vision and observed for a while, yet found no clues.

He could only say to Ruhr and Michel, "We can't rule out the possibility that there might be something contaminated in this trash that caused your illness. Sleep in a different room tonight and wait until morning."

Lumian intended to seek the assistance of Franca, a skilled Witch in divination, once she awoke, in order to identify the source of the problem.

Before Ruhr could respond, Michel, terrified by her husband's sudden illness and brush with death, spoke up.

"Alright! Thank you, Monsieur Ciel."

Two vacant rooms were available on the third floor. Lumian arranged for Ruhr and Michel to rest in Room 307.

It was already past four in the morning. Lumian returned to Room 207 and lay on the bed, contemplating the reason behind the strange occurrence. Gradually, he drifted off into a dazed slumber.

Suddenly, he jolted awake, barely catching a glimpse of a woman's anguished cry.

Lumian's heart tightened as he grabbed Fallen Mercury and left the room. Following the sound of the wailing, he ascended to the third floor.

In the darkness, his heart sank as he slowed his pace, filled with trepidation.

Finally, he halted outside Room 307. In the crimson moonlight that filtered through the curtains, he spotted Madame Michel kneeling before the bed, weeping uncontrollably.

Sensing his approach, Michel, clad in a yellow gown, turned her tear-streaked face in the dimness and directed her gaze towards the door.

Her voice hollow, she uttered, “Ciel—Monsieur Ciel, Ruhr is dead…”

Chapter 236 - 236 Morning Light

236 Morning Light

He's dead… Lumian thought, his heart heavy with the news he had anticipated but couldn't fully accept.

Leaving the clinic, Ruhr had appeared to have recovered, escaping the clutches of death. How could he have died so suddenly?

With a heavy heart, Lumian stepped into Room 307, fixing his gaze upon the bed.

There lay Ruhr, his body plagued by festering wounds that oozed a faint yellow pus. His complexion was pale and sickly, and he lay completely still.

Ruhr's eyes were wide open, and there was evidence of vomit around his mouth.

After a few moments of silently studying Ruhr's dazed, pained eyes, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "When did he pass away?"

Michel, her white hair now devoid of its usual luster, slowly shook her head and replied, "I was exhausted and fell asleep. When I awoke, he was already gone…"

"Did he return to Room 302 before bedtime?" Lumian inquired, pressing for details.

"No, he only went to the washroom near Room 302. I followed him…" Michel's voice carried a deep timbre, but it gave Lumian an otherworldly sensation, as though a part of her soul had left her body.

They had all visited the washroom. One fell victim to the strange ailment, while the other remained unscathed… Lumian furrowed his brow, determined to investigate the washroom.

If nothing seems amiss there, the likelihood of Madame Michel being abnormal becomes increasingly probable!

As Lumian departed from Room 307, heading toward the designated washroom, Michel remained kneeling by the bed, quietly weeping, unaware of the other's movements.

The third-floor restroom was no longer as filthy as before, thanks to the regular cleaning ladies. Although some stains and trash were unavoidable after a day's use, it was still passable for civilized individuals.

Lumian glanced around, taking in the sight of the toilet bowl and sink illuminated by the moon's crimson glow streaming through the window. He noticed the rusty tap and mirror, reflecting his own image.

After careful observation, he noticed a white silk handkerchief draped over a pipe in a hidden corner.

Even with a casual glance, Lumian could tell that it didn't belong to any of the current residents of Auberge du Coq Doré. The fabric was of superior quality, adorned with elegant embroidery—a clear sign of its expense. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

An outsider, perhaps? Lumian's initial instinct was to pick up the silk handkerchief and examine it more closely. However, he quickly reminded himself of the sight of Monsieur Ruhr's festering body when he had fallen ill and forced himself to restrain his impulses.

Lumian's mind raced as he left the washroom and returned to Room 307. He approached Madame Michel, who was still sobbing, and inquired, "Do you know who the handkerchief in the washroom belongs to?"

Confused and filled with sorrow, Michel instinctively replied, "It's Ruhr's."

Monsieur Ruhr's? Lumian was both surprised and convinced.

He pressed further, "Where did it come from?"

Madame Michel gazed at Ruhr's grotesque, lifeless form and spoke dreamily, "It was among the trash we collected tonight. I wonder which gentleman or lady discarded it…

"It had phlegm on it but was undamaged. Ruhr cleaned it and intended to sell it second-hand instead of throwing it away…

"After you mentioned the possibility of something unclean in the trash, Ruhr took it out and hid it in the washroom. He didn't dare to return to Room 302…"

Phlegm… Lumian felt he had discovered the root of the problem.

He let out a slow exhale and said, "Did Monsieur Ruhr touch the handkerchief again? Did you?"

"I don't know…" Madame Michel shook her head slowly. "He went to the washroom by himself. I didn't touch it…"

As expected… Lumian retrieved his gloves and put them on. He returned to the washroom and used Fallen Mercury to lift the white silk handkerchief. He carefully placed it in the white paper he had with him, folding it neatly.

Throughout the process, he made sure not to touch the handkerchief directly.

Afterward, Lumian wiped Fallen Mercury's blade with another piece of white paper and tossed the crumpled ball into the toilet bowl. He waited for it to soften and then flushed it away.

Stepping out of the washroom, he noticed Madame Michel standing silently by the door of Room 307, like a ghost wandering in the darkness.

As Lumian approached her, the old lady with white hair wore a pleading expression.

“It’s almost dawn, Monsieur Ciel. Could you help me move Ruhr back to Room 302?”

Her voice still held a dreamy quality.

Lumian was taken aback. After a brief pause of five or six seconds, he replied, “Okay.”

He entered Room 307 and carefully wrapped Monsieur Ruhr’s body in the bedsheets, hoisting him onto his back.

With just a few steps, Lumian carried the lifeless form and placed it on the bed in Room 302.

Madame Michel, having squeezed through the trash, expressed her profuse gratitude before striding towards the wooden table and drawing back the curtains.

It was almost 6 a.m. As the first rays of dawn broke through the sky, dimming the crimson moonlight, Michel listened to the vendors outside the motel and fixated her gaze on Ruhr.

Lumian retreated from Room 302 and returned to the corridor, stepping out of the reach of the light. He leaned silently against the wall, not disturbing the serene scene.

After a few minutes, Madame Michel suddenly sprang into action.

She rummaged through the room, finding more banknotes and coins. Then, she hastened out of the room and descended downstairs.

Lumian didn’t follow. He raised his right foot to the wall and leaned against the sleeping darkness of the wall.

As time passed, Madame Michel returned with an abundance of items.

There was a bottle of red wine, grilled cod, cured meat, meatloaf, soybean paste, hot sauce, and apples.

Without sparing a glance for Lumian, Madame Michel entered Room 302. She collapsed onto the bed and placed the food beside the

decaying corpse.

After a moment's contemplation, she rose again and ignited the carbide lamp on the wooden table, filling the room with its glow.

Madame Michel once again lowered herself to the floor, picked up the meatloaf, and brought it to Ruhr's mouth. Smiling, she uttered, "Haven't you been craving meatloaf lately? I bought it for you today."

After allowing some of the oil to moisten the corpse's lips, Madame Michel took a bite of the meatloaf and savored it with closed eyes.

"It's delicious. How long has it been since we last ate? Two weeks, right?"

Having taken a few more bites of the meatloaf, Madame Michel seized the bottle of red wine and took a swig.

Mumbling, she continued, "Old Man, our vines have produced red wine. We needn't worry about what the future holds!"

Engaging in one-sided conversation with Ruhr's lifeless body, she continued to indulge in wine and various delicacies.

Outside the door, Lumian remained in the darkness, leaning against the wall as he silently observed the unfolding scene. He neither entered nor departed.

Soon enough, Madame Michel began to feel the effects of her intoxication. As a former barmaid, she began to sing loudly:

"Trier, a city dressed in gold,

"A ball that endures 'til dawn unfolds;

"Chicken roasted, dripping with oil's grace,

"A castle cake to fill each eager embrace.

"A bow-tied attendant glides 'mongst the guests,

“Merrily dancing with joy and delight.

“My beloved, hidden ‘midst the crowd,

“Among them, a beacon shining bright.

“Among them, my love resides,

“In the Capital of Joy, forever Trier!”

Madame Michel rose unsteadily and stumbled towards the wooden table, gathering the banknotes in front of the carbide lamp.

In an instant, the cash caught fire and flames erupted on the table, emitting a bright yellow glow.

With her arms outstretched, Madame Michel shouted, “In the Capital of Joy, forever Trier!”

She retrieved the rope that had once bound the sack and climbed onto the wooden table, tying the rope firmly to the window frame with a tight knot.

In the flickering light of the fire, Madame Michel turned to face Ruhr, lying motionless on the bed. She positioned the knot around her neck and bent her legs.

The knot tightened, and Madame Michel’s eyes bulged in her struggle for breath.

Outside the window, the sky grew brighter, casting a faint light that bathed a portion of the corridor. Lumian leaned against the wall, concealed in the shadows. With his hands in his pockets and his right foot propped up, he gazed impassively at Madame Michel, suspended from the window frame. He witnessed her mouth gradually open, her expression contort in pain, and her bent legs letting up upon her demise.

In the morning light, the corpse swayed gently.

…

At 6:35 a.m., 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Startled by the knocks on the door, Franca, her flaxen hair disheveled, wore a bitter expression as she rose from her slumber.

“I’ve only had three hours of sleep. Three hours!”

“Help me inspect the contents for any anomalies.” Lumian ignored Franca’s complaints and presented the handkerchief wrapped in white paper. “Be cautious. It might be infectious.”

“Infectious?” Franca snapped out of her daze and retreated to her room, donning translucent, pale-yellow rubber gloves.

She carefully unwrapped the outer layer of paper, extracted the silk handkerchief within, and placed it on the glass coffee table.

Tapping her teeth while observing intently, Franca spoke with a solemn expression,

“There is indeed an issue. There are numerous small but active spirits lingering on it. They belong to the same category.

“I suspect it’s a pathogen. It spreads through direct contact with the skin or even blood exchange. Based on your description, it’s not highly contagious.”

Although Lumian didn’t comprehend the concept of a pathogen fully, he grasped the essence of Franca’s explanation.

He fell into silence momentarily before saying, “Can you determine the owner of this handkerchief?”

“No problem. With a powerful medium present, as long as they don’t possess strong anti-divination abilities, I can locate them.” As Franca spoke, black flames flickered on her rubber gloves.

After “cleansing” the area, she removed her gloves and retrieved a makeup mirror. Hovering her left palm over the handkerchief, she stroked the mirror with her right hand.

Reciting a series of incantations in a hushed tone, her eyes darkened.

She repeated the divination statement.

“The owner of this handkerchief.

“The owner of this handkerchief…”

After several repetitions, the mirror emitted an aqueous glow, reflecting a figure in the darkness.

It was a slender young man with a pale complexion and an unhealthy appearance.

His curly dark-yellow hair framed his face, and his brown eyes conveyed an unmasked indifference. Clad in a black tailcoat, he clutched a white silk handkerchief. He coughed twice and expectorated into the fabric.

Lumian strained to capture the person’s features, feeling a sense of familiarity wash over him. It was as if he had encountered this individual somewhere before.

After a brief recollection, it dawned on him.

This was a member of Hugues Artois’s campaign team, the one who stood behind the red-haired woman!

Chapter 237 - 237 Concealment

237 Concealment

“So? Do you know him?” Franca glanced at Lumian, seeking his insight.

Lumian shifted his gaze away from the mirror, its reflection gradually fading, and spoke with a deep voice, “He’s one of Hugues Artois’s men. I spotted him during the campaign.”

Franca furrowed her brow, closing her makeup mirror and inquiring, “What happened?”

Lumian recounted the encounter between Ruhr and Michel, concluding, “There’s something suspicious about this man.”

Franca sighed, remarking, “They’re already in such dire straits as scavengers, and yet they still have to face such a situation…”

She scoffed, adding, “Considering Lady Moon’s endorsement of Hugues Artois as an open-minded individual, it wouldn’t surprise me if he surrounds himself with peculiar characters.”

Pausing to look at Lumian, Franca continued, “Hugues Artois is now a member of parliament. He’ll have both visible and covert protection. If we make a move against him or his associates, we’ll easily be tracked down. The consequences would be severe.”

“Let’s entrust this matter to the official Beyonders for further investigation. I can’t guarantee much else. At the very least, the Inquisition’s Purifiers and members of the Machinery Hivemind won’t turn a blind eye to such affairs. They will find a way to uncover the truth and assess the situation,” Franca suggested.

Lumian nodded slowly and inquired, “Then which Sequence or

pathway could it be? Can phlegm transmit such a deadly disease?"

As he made his way from Auberge du Coq Doré to Rue des Blouses Blanches, Lumian diligently recalled the twenty-two paths of the divine detailed in Aurore's grimoires but found no match for the current circumstances.

Franca pondered deeply and said, "My understanding of the twenty-two paths of the divine is similar to your sister's, but I have a more comprehensive knowledge of certain aspects. I can only think of one pathway that fits the criteria, but it's of a higher level and exclusive to women. It doesn't align with the target's situation."

"Hmm… Considering we've encountered the Great Mother and the Blessed of the Mother Tree of Desire, could our target be someone blessed by another evil deity?"

"Heh heh, if it truly involves the faith of an evil god, the Beyonders from both Churches will undoubtedly intensify their efforts."

"Yes, Ruhr's death is peculiar indeed. As long as the investigating police aren't blind, they'll swiftly report it to their superiors, who will assign someone capable to handle the case."

Lumian acknowledged her words briefly, his expression softening.

After bidding farewell to Franca, he made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As he walked past the reception desk, Madame Fels rose to her feet, a mix of fear and flattery evident in her voice as she greeted, "Good morning, Monsieur Ciel."

A few days ago, the police had informed her that Monsieur Ive was believed to be involved in a cult and had become a wanted criminal. They had requested her to use the rental income to cover expenses and ensure the motel's smooth operation during this period. Additionally, they wanted her to keep a record of the accounts. Once the elections were over, they would settle the matter of Auberge du Coq Doré's ownership promptly.

Madame Fels felt uneasy, fearing that the new boss would dismiss

her. Subconsciously, she tried to win Ciel's favor, hoping that a leader of the Savoie Mob would stand up for her when the time came. Whoever took control of Auberge du Coq Doré would not want to offend the corresponding mob, unless they had influential connections.

"Good morning," Lumian replied simply. He walked along the wall, covered in newspapers and pink paper to conceal stains, cracks, and bedbugs, making his way up to the third floor.

He had locked the door to Room 302 before the other tenants on the third floor had awakened, so as of yet, no one had discovered the lifeless bodies of Ruhr and Michel.

Madame Michel's singing before she took her own life had failed to disturb the neighbors. To those residing on Rue Anarchie, various noises during the night were commonplace. Singing, gunshots, brawls, shouting, and sporting activities were nothing worth paying attention to.

Lumian returned the silk handkerchief to its hidden spot in the washroom before pausing in front of Room 302. Extending his left hand clad in a black glove, he turned the handle and opened the creaking wooden door.

Madame Michel's lifeless form hung silently in the room. The aroma of food mingled with the surrounding stench of garbage, filling the space as the light grew brighter.

Lumian gazed at the scene for over ten seconds before slowly turning away, preparing to leave.

…

It was nearly eight o'clock when the two police officers arrived at Auberge du Coq Doré. They spotted Lumian, who had disguised himself using the Mystery Prying Glasses.

"Why is there another death?" grumbled the officer who had previously interrogated Lumian.

His face was rugged, lacking in handsome features, and bore the

marks of age.

Lumian responded calmly, “One died of illness. I’m no doctor, unable to save him.”

“And the other one?” the officer pressed for more information.

Lumian replied honestly, “She took her own life after the blow.”

The older-looking policeman furrowed his brow and entered Room 302, accompanied by his partner.

The first sight that greeted them was Madame Michel’s lifeless body hanging from the window frame. The officer instinctively covered his nose.

The place was far too filthy and foul-smelling!

Next, his gaze fell upon Ruhr’s decaying corpse, observing the putrefying flesh and spilled blood.

“Son of a bitch, you call this an illness?” he couldn’t help but turn to Lumian, his eyes filled with shock and fear.

Lumian briefly recounted the events of the previous night, omitting the fact that Ruhr’s condition had worsened while he was at Roblin Clinic and had been revived by half a bottle of Healing Agent. Lumian attributed the credit to The Fool Pharmaceuticals’ fever-reducing medicine.

He also mentioned his suspicion that the Ruhrs had encountered an infectious source within the pile of garbage they had collected the previous night, causing them to sleep in Room 307. Lumian brought up Madame Michel’s mention of a silk handkerchief in the washroom as well.

The more the two officers listened, the quieter they became, their expressions slightly off.

After Lumian finished speaking, they hurried to the washroom to confirm the presence of the silk handkerchief.

The older-looking officer glanced at Ciel outside and whispered to his partner, “Another mysticism incident. Stay here and guard the scene. I’ll report the situation.”

The other officer nodded. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“No problem.”

Lumian observed as they divided the tasks, patiently awaiting the arrival of the official Beyonders.

In less than half an hour, the older-looking policeman returned to Auberge du Coq Doré, alone.

Where are the official Beyonders? Lumian’s eyes widened in surprise.

The older-looking policeman avoided Lumian’s gaze and pulled his partner to the end of the corridor, engaging in a hushed conversation.

Lumian stood at a distance, straining his ears to catch their words, but they remained unintelligible.

After a while, the older-looking officer approached Lumian, his expression grave.

“We’ve preliminarily determined it as death due to illness and suicide.”

No further investigation? Lumian’s eyebrows twitched in disbelief.

The officer repeated what he had said when they had taken Flameng’s body away. He donned gloves, carefully placed the silk handkerchief into a cloth bag, and secured it tightly.

Lumian silently observed as they removed the corpses, wrapped Ruhr’s body, and placed him in a body bag. Numerous thoughts raced through his mind.

Even though he died in such a manner, the official Beyonders don’t find it suspicious? No need for further investigation?

Or perhaps the police officer didn’t report the matter, and the official

Beyonders remain unaware?

Could someone have intervened and persuaded them to treat this as an ordinary death case, not involving any criminal offense?

"…"

With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Lumian quietly followed the officer carrying the two bodies to the carriage.

From a distance, he trailed them, detecting the lingering odor emanating from Ruhr's and Michel's bodies. He tracked them all the way to the entrance of the police headquarters in the market district.

Lumian furrowed his brow as he observed uniformed police officers entering and exiting the building.

His initial suspicion was that an officer from the police headquarters had halted the investigation, but he couldn't confirm the identity.

Even if he were to enter the police headquarters, given the circumstances and his own status, it would be impossible for him to trace their steps all the way to the relevant office. If he observed from outside, he wouldn't be able to discern who might be involved from the people coming out.

Lumian pondered the direction of his investigation once more.

Get Franca to use divination?

But there's no medium available…

Alternatively… Why did the officer stop the investigation? Was he aware that someone would be implicated, or had someone already alerted him to such matters beforehand?

If it's the latter, there's a high chance that he holds considerable influence within the parliamentarian's office…

Lumian's heart stirred as he left the entrance of the police headquarters and swiftly arrived outside the four-story khaki-colored building that housed the parliamentarian's office in the market

district.

Taking cover in an alley across the street, he found himself in the company of a group of vagrants.

Before long, his eyes landed on an officer.

The officer was plump, in his early forties, with brown hair and blue eyes. Three-petaled silver-white sweet irises adorned his black epaulets.

This indicated that he was a chief inspector, one rank lower than a superintendent.

As Lumian watched the chief inspector enter the parliamentarian's office, a smile curled upon his lips.

…

In the khaki-colored four-story building, on the second floor…

Tybalt, his face pale and his hair curly and yellow, entered the office of the member of parliament's secretary.

The secretary, a man in his thirties with neatly combed back black hair and blue eyes hidden behind gold-rimmed glasses, possessed refined features and an air of sophistication.

He glanced at Tybalt, who was coughing, and tossed a cloth bag on the table. With a cold expression, he spoke, "We've recovered your handkerchief."

Tybalt, his dark-yellow hair curly, was attired in a black suit. He smiled and replied, "That was quick."

"You bastard!" the member of parliament's secretary cursed. "Do you not realize that your phlegm can spread diseases to others? Aren't you afraid of attracting the attention of the two Churches?"

Tybalt's brown eyes remained indifferent as he nonchalantly remarked, "At most, two or three commoners might die. No one would care about them. I've been sick for far too long without

receiving a new boon. It frustrates me, and it makes me want to kill someone."

The member of parliament's secretary stared at him for a few seconds before admonishing in a deep voice, "If I hadn't taken precautions in advance, the Purifiers would have come looking for you. Your life is inconsequential. Don't jeopardize us! Tybalt, there will be no next time."

Tybalt shrugged, accepting the reprimand.

Chapter 238 - 238 Endure

238 Endure

Lumian sat in the alleyway across from the member of parliament's office, blending in with a group of tramps.

Having followed and observed carefully, he had pieced together the entire situation.

Within the office, someone had managed to find a reliable officer beforehand and instructed him to monitor cases of mysterious illnesses in their jurisdiction. This officer would keep things quiet, refraining from reporting to the corresponding official Beyonders. Furthermore, any evidence he discovered would be sent to the member of parliament's office.

This revelation implied that the sickly lad who had spat into the handkerchief and discarded it knew the consequences of his actions. As long as he kept his mouth shut, the member of parliament would never seek assistance from the police headquarters!

Lumian's gaze fixated on the khaki-colored four-story building. His hands unconsciously balled into fists, yet he restrained himself from taking any drastic measures.

After a while, he let out a slow exhale.

Just then, a familiar figure emerged from the door of the building that housed the member of parliament's office.

This man donned a silk top hat and wielded a dark cane. Clad in a sharp black suit, a thick brown beard adorned his mouth and chin. Deep wrinkles framed his dark-blue, almost black eyes.

It was Bono Goodville, the owner of Goodville Chemical Factory. He

had left the celebratory banquet earlier than Gardner Martin—the boss of the Savoie Mob—the previous night. Occasionally, his photos would appear in certain newspaper reports.

Lumian averted his gaze and waited. Only when the chief inspector left the member of parliament's office unaccompanied and returned to the police headquarters did he rise from the alleyway teeming with tramps. He casually found a café and enjoyed a simple late breakfast.

Shortly before 11 a.m., he knocked on Franca's door once again.

"How did it go? Have the official Beyonders taken over?" Franca had already risen from bed and changed into her favorite white blouse and light-colored breeches.

Lumian shook his head. "No."

As he stepped into the apartment, he elaborated, "It was brushed under the carpet by a chief inspector from the police headquarters."

Franca comprehended the situation and couldn't help but scoff. "Even the folks at the member of parliament's office recognize the problems of spitting anywhere!"

Lumian found a spot on the sofa and sat down. He recounted everything, from the moment the police arrived to investigate the scene until the chief inspector entered the member of parliament's office.

Franca peered into his eyes, contemplating for a few seconds before speaking up,

"I understand that you find it hard to accept and that a fire might be raging in your heart. I truly empathize with you. Though that couple had no relation to you, you tried your utmost to save them, only to meet with failure. Many people can sympathize with such tragic encounters.

"But I must insist, be patient, endure, restrain yourself from rash actions or seeking revenge. These individuals are connected to the member of parliament. If anything were to happen, the situation would explode. It's beyond our capacity to bear."

Observing Lumian's silence and absence of emotional outburst, Franca let out a sigh of relief and continued, "I'll say it once more. It's best to leave this matter to the official Beyonders for investigation. Later, through my contacts, I'll inform them of this case and provide the suspect's identity and description.

"Although crucial physical evidence might have been lost by now and the body likely cremated hastily, as long as the official Beyonders discover the existence of abnormal pathway Beyonder powers in their jurisdiction, targeting the person I identified through divination, they will discover his problem sooner or later."

Upon hearing Franca's advice, Lumian nodded, his thoughts aligning with her suggestion.

"Let's go with that plan."

Franca relaxed, taking a moment to contemplate before speaking again.

"I won't divulge the precise details. I'll merely mention a peculiar ailment causing festering in the market district. There's suspicion that someone from the member of parliament's office might have wrapped a handkerchief around thick phlegm, and similar incidents may have been concealed by the police headquarters.

"If I don't do this, the official Beyonders might suspect you as the source of the information and thoroughly investigate you."

Lumian acknowledged her concerns with a curt response, signifying his agreement.

After bidding farewell to Franca and departing Rue des Blouses Blanches, he encountered Jenna on his way to Salle de Bal Brise.

"Well, if it isn't Celia?" Lumian greeted.

Showy Diva, dressed in a simple grayish-blue gown, had her brownish-yellow hair tied up in a natural bun. Her face lacked makeup, giving her an elegant appearance without her usual air of decadence.

Upon hearing Lumian call her by her real name, Jenna clenched her teeth and retorted,

“Just call me Jenna!”

Lumian sized her up.

“Did your mother hit you with a broomstick? Are you considering leaving the underground singer circle?”

“Dammit! You can’t seem to wish anything good upon me, can you?” Jenna exclaimed. “My mother is a gentle and reasonable person. Why would she hit me with a broomstick?”

She smirked confidently.

“Initially, she opposed my singing in the dance halls, thinking it was dangerous and prone to debauchery. But after I explained how much I could earn each week without having to sleep with any man, she relented. She even said she’d come to Salle de Bal Brise after work today to watch me perform. Dammit, what am I going to do?”

Lumian deliberately asked, “If your mother saw you wearing a revealing dress and deliberately raising your leg while singing ‘his touch is skilled indeed,’ how would she react?”

Jenna tousled her brownish-yellow hair. “She’d storm the stage and beat me to a pulp!”

She mumbled to herself before suggesting, “I don’t have to wear overly revealing dresses. Remember when I tried singing in a cocktail dress last time? The response was pretty good. It’s been a while, but I can give it another shot. The key is the song selection. I’ll discuss it with Franca. She has excellent taste. She even knows how to compose her own songs and write lyrics, though they’re all rather peculiar…”

Lumian smiled and spoke up, “If that doesn’t work out, I can have René organize a themed night event at Salle de Bal Brise. Tonight’s theme will be love.”

This would pair well with less suggestive love songs.

Jenna's eyes lit up. "That's a brilliant idea!"

She looked at Lumian awkwardly, offering her thanks.

"You're quite quick-witted. Uh, dammit, thank you!"

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Jenna instinctively glanced around and lowered her voice.

"I also told my mother that I'm good friends with Red Boots from the Savoie Mob and that she's protecting me. That's how I can sing at Salle de Bal Brise and stay safe. Remember, I came to you that day to negotiate a higher singing fee. And thanks to Franca, you agreed.

"If my mother asks you, just give this answer."

Lumian nodded and teased, "It's called collusion."

"It's called a harmless fib," Jenna replied gleefully. "Just hold onto that story until I've been singing for another year. I'll save up enough money for my tuition and pay off my debts."

Lumian glanced at the apprentice actress and pondered, "Haven't you thought about seeking proper compensation for that accident?"

"How?" Jenna's eyes widened in confusion. "The court hasn't reached a final verdict yet."

Lumian chuckled.

"Why wait for the court? Settling debts is protected by the Guardian of Businesses. We can handle it ourselves."

"That factory owner never said he wouldn't pay us. His constant appeals are just about the division of responsibilities and the amount of compensation…" Jenna eyed Lumian suspiciously. "Are you suggesting we force him to compensate us? That's illegal!"

"Illegal?" Lumian looked amused. "As a mob leader, I break the law every day. Didn't you want to assassinate Margot and avenge your friend? Did legality matter to you back then?"

Jenna's words faltered as she muttered,

"Margot is a mob leader who has committed countless crimes. Each one of them is deserving of the gallows."

"So you want to be his judge and jury?" Lumian smiled. "That factory owner may have done many wrongs. Let's mask our faces, infiltrate his house, tie him up, and make him compensate everyone. Alternatively, we can convince him to hand over the money quietly and split it among ourselves to avoid arousing suspicion during subsequent investigations."

Jenna wore a troubled expression.

"I'll think about it. I'll consider it."

Ciel lived up to his reputation as a mob leader. Discussing breaking the law came as naturally to him as eating and drinking.

Lumian didn't press the matter further. Since Jenna wasn't in a hurry, he saw no need to worry about her.

…

As evening approached, Lumian sat in the café on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise, awaiting another night.

For now, he had nothing to occupy his time. All he could do was wait for Franca or the Boss to procure the additional ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion, the final step before his breakthrough to Sequence 7.

"Boss, what would you like to have for dinner tonight?" Louis asked Lumian as the sky grew darker.

Just as Lumian was about to respond, Jenna approached.

Showy Diva had transformed herself, donning a dress the color of roses. The hem of her gown appeared to defy gravity, resembling an inverted flower.

Her long, brownish-yellow hair was fashioned into a simple bun, with

most of it cascading smoothly over her shoulders. Her makeup was subtle, accentuating her complexion and striking features. A mole adorned the right side of her face, and she held a beautifully patterned fan in her hand.

This left Louis and Sarkota dumbfounded. They could hardly believe that this was the same “Little Minx” Jenna.

Jenna nervously asked Lumian, “Is this suitable?”

“Quite impressive.” Lumian didn’t discourage Jenna.

Suddenly, a deafening explosion echoed in the distance. The ground trembled visibly, and the café’s glass windows rattled.

“Dammit, what’s happening?” Jenna exclaimed, peering out of the window in shock.

Lumian stood up and made his way to the window. As he looked outside, he noticed the perplexed and flustered pedestrians.

In the distance, a plume of black smoke billowed from the south.

“Find out what’s going on,” Lumian instructed Louis.

Once Louis departed, Jenna approached Lumian, her gaze fixed on the dark smoke rising from the southern part of the market district. Anxiousness and concern filled her.

After some time, Louis returned to the café and reported to Lumian, “Boss, there was an explosion at the Goodville Chemical Factory.”

A thud interrupted the conversation as Lumian turned to see Jenna’s fan fall to the ground. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Jenna appeared to lose her spirit as she murmured, sounding disoriented, “My mother, my mother is there…

Chapter 239 - 239 Fighting Fire

239 Fighting Fire

Before she could finish, Jenna snapped out of her daze. Adorned in a rose-colored dress that hugged her slender frame, she hurried towards the staircase and descended.

Witnessing this, Lumian motioned for Louis and Sarkota to maintain order in Salle de Bal Brise before giving chase.

Anxiety and fear filled Jenna's face, her expression teetering on the edge of collapse.

She made no attempt to conceal her Beyonder identity. She exerted every ounce of her strength, as if she intended to soar through Avenue du Marché and into the streets leading south of the market district.

Only the darkness of the sky and the unlit gas street lamps, combined with the chaos caused by the panicked pedestrians after the explosion, prevented anyone from noticing the extraordinary speed at which the woman ran.

Lumian swiftly caught up to her, his pace surpassing hers. He urgently tapped her shoulder and said, "Take to the shadows!"

Determined to reach Goodville Chemical Factory as swiftly as possible, Jenna ran a distance before comprehending Lumian's meaning. She altered her course slightly and darted towards the dimly lit area cast by the unilluminated street lamps, blending in seamlessly.

Assassins possessed the ability to conceal themselves within shadows.

Jenna's emotions surged, making it difficult for her to maintain

control. Additionally, sprinting at full speed weakened the effectiveness of this ability. At times, she would become visible, and at others, she would vanish. Nevertheless, compared to before, she managed to avoid drawing much attention from passersby.

Lumian ran alongside the shadows, paying no heed to the perplexed gazes directed his way, his nostrils filled with the lingering scent of Jenna's perfume.

Pushing his Hunter's speed to its limits, he left observers dumbfounded.

Certainly, such behavior would arouse suspicion, but he paid it no mind.

As the two Beyonders endowed with enhanced physiques raced at full tilt, they arrived at Rue Saint-Gerre near Trier's city walls within a mere ten minutes.

The area was teeming with factories, and the sky was shrouded in dusky smoke tinged with a yellowish hue, obscuring the fading glow of the sunset.

Emerging from the shadows, Jenna caught sight of the blazing metal container—Goodville Chemical Factory was engulfed in flames, with firefighters battling desperately to extinguish the inferno and rescue those trapped inside.

Some of the rescuers wore peculiar masks adorned with elongated, pointed beaks, while others sported mechanical octopuses on their faces. Several donned black helmets that appeared to consist of multiple layers. The commonality among them was the presence of apparatuses resembling steam backpacks, albeit with significant differences. Thick rubber hoses extended from the contraptions, connecting to the "masks."

Without a moment's hesitation, Jenna rushed for Goodville Chemical Factory, where sporadic explosions continued to erupt.

The pungent odor in the air threatened to overwhelm Lumian's sense of smell. He seized Jenna's shoulder and spoke in a deep voice, "Do

you know which factory your mother is in?”

Jenna was taken aback. “I don’t know.”

“Have you come equipped to shield yourself from chemical contamination?” Lumian switched questions.

“No,” Jenna replied, her confusion evident.

“Then are you attempting to commit suicide?” Lumian scolded. “Perhaps your mother has already been rescued. Let us first search the area where the injured are being attended to. Are you venturing inside to create further chaos for the rescue team?”

Jenna’s heart churned with conflicting emotions. She yearned to rush to the chemical plant to find her mother, yet she couldn’t deny the logic in Lumian’s words.

After Lumian pulled her back, she followed him with a vacant mind for a few paces. Then, her senses returned, and she sprinted toward église du Sifflet, not far from Rue Saint-Hilaire.

It stood as the grand cathedral of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Jenna had witnessed the rescued victims being carried there.

In a matter of seconds, she and Lumian arrived at the square outside the cathedral.

It was teeming with workers from Goodville Chemical Factory, groaning in agony. However, a significant number of them lay unconscious, and some no longer drew breath.

Doctors and nurses, clad in white coats, maneuvered through the crowd, feverishly providing first aid. They guided those deemed salvageable to a two-story carriage stationed at the square’s periphery, adorned with various coats of arms or Sacred Emblems. From there, they transported them to several major hospitals in Quartier de No?l.

Jenna’s body involuntarily quivered as her gaze swept over the

lifeless bodies and injured individuals, fearing what she might witness.

Lumian seized her arm and guided her across the square, in search of Elodie.

The gas lamps lining the square cast a rudimentary glow, granting them a modicum of illumination.

After a few minutes, Lumian's keen Hunter eyesight detected a wounded figure whom he suspected to be Elodie.

Upon receiving the news, Jenna dashed over, crouched down, and studied the unconscious person's face.

The injured individual's golden wig had mostly been singed away, exposing her flaxen hair, now blackened by the flames.

Her eyes, adorned with smudged eye shadow, remained tightly shut, her countenance marred by soot. Burns covered her body, and her lips bore an unnatural blue tinge. It was none other than Elodie, the cleaner at Auberge du Coq Doré—Jenna's mother.

"Mom! Mom!" Jenna's strength evaporated, and she crumpled beside Elodie.

Realizing her mother's unconscious state, occasionally punctuated by twitches, Jenna abruptly rose to her feet and muttered to herself, "We need a doctor. We must get her to a hospital without delay!"

Having confirmed the victim's identity, Lumian focused on assessing Elodie's luck and deduced that it was dire. Even if she were swiftly transported to the hospital, her chances of survival seemed slim.

Swiftly, he seized Jenna and spoke in a solemn tone, "Help me shield her from prying eyes."

Jenna regarded him with astonishment. Infused with his composed demeanor, she turned her body to block the area on Elodie's left side.

"I possess a healing agent from mysticism. Let us first test its efficacy," Lumian explained in a hushed tone as he circled around to

Elodie's right side, his back serving as a barrier for her other flank.

A healing agent from mysticism… Jenna's eyes sparkled, a glimmer of hope illuminating her face.

Intently, Jenna watched as Lumian produced an iron-colored metal canister, unscrewed the cap, and poured its contents into her mother's mouth.

After more than ten seconds, Elodie appeared to regain some consciousness and swallowed the curative liquid.

Observing this, Jenna felt a slight wave of relief wash over her. She instinctively sensed that her mother's condition had improved marginally.

Time seemed to stretch unbearably, suffocating her. A minute felt like an eternity.

Finally, she witnessed the burns on Elodie's body start to heal at an astonishing pace, and the bluish tint on her lips gradually faded.

Jenna looked up at Lumian, her astonishment palpable.

Countless words clamored to escape her lips, but they remained lodged there, unable to form coherent utterances.

Lumian met her gaze and nodded. He whispered, "This agent works wonders in treating external injuries and alleviating ailments caused by chemical fumes. It can transform near-fatal wounds into severe injuries, severe injuries into minor ones, and minor injuries into complete recovery.

"Your mother suffered severe injuries earlier. For now, her life is no longer in immediate danger. However, she will require extensive treatment in the days to come. Otherwise, her condition may deteriorate."

Upon hearing the words "no longer in immediate danger," Jenna's vision blurred.

She had suppressed her tears, determined not to let them hinder her

search and her mother's treatment.

But now, tears streamed down her face. She raised her hands, clumsily wiping them away, and muttered incoherently, "Thank you… Thank you…"

Amidst her words, distant cries reached their ears.

Relatives of the deceased had arrived.

Just as Lumian was about to offer a jest to lighten the mood, a muffled thunder resounded in the air.

Rumble!

Instinctively, Lumian looked up and beheld a thick dark cloud looming over Rue Saint-Hilaire, where flames still flickered and explosions echoed.

The cloud wasn't expansive, enshrouding only a few streets.

Silver-white lightning streaked across the sky, accompanied by muted thunderclaps that reverberated through everyone's hearts.

Torrential rain poured down, concentrated over Rue Saint-Hilaire and Goodville Chemical Factory.

The grayish-black smoke tinged with yellow swiftly dissipated, settling to the ground. The flames were swiftly extinguished, and no further explosions occurred.

As swiftly as it had arrived, the storm dissipated. The dark clouds dispersed, and the setting sun on the horizon cast a fiery glow.

Within the golden-red light, a behemoth soared above Rue Saint-Hilaire.

It was a dark gray airship, its elongated and circular balloon emitting a loud buzzing sound.

At the rear of the hull, paddlewheels spun frenziedly, while numerous cannon muzzles and bomb ports adorned its surface. At that moment,

a translucent turquoise liquid rained down upon Goodville Chemical Factory below.

The acrid stench in the air began to subside.

Are the authorities resolving the catastrophe? The dark clouds, the lightning, and the rain didn't seem natural. Could they be the work of a Beyonder or Sealed Artifact? It almost resembled the handiwork of a deity… Lumian withdrew his gaze, a tinge of astonishment in his eyes.

Jenna had also witnessed what had just happened, but her focus remained fixed on her mother's injuries, not dwelling too deeply on what had transpired.

Elodie's burns had mostly healed, leaving behind only a few charred remnants. Her breathing had stabilized, and although her lips remained pale, it didn't seem to cause much concern to those around. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The curative agent had taken full effect, bringing stability to her condition.

Jenna closed her eyes and absentmindedly wiped her face.

At that moment, a voice nearby called out, "Celia!"

Jenna glanced to the side and waved her hand. "Julien, over here!"

A young man, standing nearly 1.75 meters tall, swiftly made his way to Elodie's side. Clad in a grayish-blue worker's uniform, he had flaxen-colored hair and eyes that mirrored Jenna's blue hues. His features were rather pleasing to the eye.

He looked at Elodie with concern and asked hurriedly, "How's Mom?"

Jenna pursed her lips and replied, "She sustained serious injuries, but she'll pull through."

Relief washed over Julien, who then cast a curious glance at Jenna.

“Why are you dressed like that… And who is he?”

Only then did Jenna realize she was wearing a rose-colored gown. Hastily, she explained, “I came straight from the theater. This is my friend, Ciel. He has been a great help.”

“Thank you,” Julien sincerely expressed his gratitude to Lumian.

Lumian nodded and advised, “Fetch a doctor and arrange for a carriage to take her to the hospital immediately. Otherwise, her condition may worsen.”

“Alright.” Julien dashed off to find the nearest doctor and nurse.

Lumian turned to Jenna and said, “If you can’t secure a carriage promptly, hire one yourself.”

Jenna nodded, her gaze filled with gentle concern as she looked at her unconscious mother. She whispered, “I owe you my gratitude this time…”

Chapter 240 - 240 Bewitchment

240 Bewitchment

Lumian cast a contemplative gaze at Jenna, his lips forming a tight line.

“You lack the awareness of an Assassin and the understanding that you’ve stepped into the realm of mysticism. Had you possessed such insight, you might have joined mystical gatherings through Franca and procured valuable resources in the past month or two. Though they may not rival the potency of my healing agent, it would have been a proactive step instead of watching your mother’s condition deteriorate.”

Jenna, instead of erupting in a fit of humiliation and resorting to vulgar retorts, remained silent for a few moments before curtly acknowledging his words.

This response left Lumian at a loss. He clicked his tongue and spoke again.

“Of course, considering your financial constraints and the weight of debts and tuition fees, even if you were to participate in these mysticism gatherings, you wouldn’t be able to afford much. It would be more of an opportunity to earn money or valuable items by accepting commissions.”

Just then, Jenna’s brother, Julien, arrived with a doctor and two nurses.

The doctor glanced at Elodie with a puzzled expression and inquired, “I recall that there was no need to resuscitate her…”

“You remembered incorrectly,” Lumian calmly interjected.

The doctor, overwhelmed by the influx of injured patients, had his memories tangled and disorganized. Upon hearing Lumian's remark, he assumed he must have mistaken the person. Consequently, he swiftly tended to Elodie's remaining external injuries and arranged for her to be carried into the carriage, awaiting transportation to the hospital.

…

Connected to Quartier de No?l and the bustling market district, stood Passy Bridge, one of the five bridges that stretched over the mighty Srenzo River in the city of Trier.

Nestled beside Passy Bridge was the Holy Palace Hospital, generously funded by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. Elodie, a devout follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun, had been admitted to this renowned establishment. Placed on the top floor of the white six-story building, she shared a ward with five other patients.

Jenna watched as doctors and nurses meticulously drew blood, conducted examinations, and administered intravenous drips. A soft sigh escaped her lips.

"The hospital has undergone quite a transformation in the past few years…"

"Oh?" Lumian was puzzled.

Jenna's expression darkened as she replied, "A few years ago, when my father and the others were brought to the hospital, the more severe cases were immediately taken to the operating room. Those with lesser injuries were simply bandaged and given medication to gauge its effectiveness. There was no blood being drawn, and the examinations were rudimentary. It's completely different now. The entire process seems to have changed."

"That's a good thing." Lumian nodded.

It looked more professional.

As the two spoke in hushed tones, Jenna's brother, Julien, diligently assisted the doctors and nurses. He answered inquiries about the

patients' normal physical conditions, aided in moving IV stands, and was dispatched to the pharmacy as needed.

However, even after the medical professionals in their white coats had concluded their tasks, he had yet to return.

The doctor overseeing Elodie's care approached Jenna, holding a writing board, and observed her rose-colored gown. His expression softened.

"Is Elodie your mother?" he inquired.

"Yes," Jenna confirmed with a nod.

The male doctor pondered for a moment before speaking, "Your mother's condition is better than I anticipated. It seems surgery may not be necessary at this time. Of course, this assessment is preliminary and contingent upon the results of the tests we conducted.

"That's some good news. On the other hand, your mother has suffered severe burns. She may need to remain hospitalized for months, half a year, or even longer. Even if she recovers, she will likely be in a weakened state.

"The Church's philanthropic foundation will cover the initial two days of treatment. The remaining expenses will be deducted once the accident insurance from the factory is settled. However, you must be prepared to bear the subsequent costs yourself. It won't be a small sum. I must caution you not to have excessive expectations of the accident insurance. From my experience, it typically takes an average of three to five years to obtain compensation. You must understand that our Intis laws tend to favor factory owners and bankers in order to protect their interests."

Jenna didn't hesitate for a moment.

"I will ensure my mother's full recovery."

Jenna had already contemplated the possibility of borrowing money from both Franca and Lumian if she found herself in need of a substantial sum. She was willing to repay them in installments at a

later date. Whether it meant making monthly or weekly payments for the treatment, she was prepared to cut back and save, reducing her previous debt payments, while also relying on her income as a part-time underground singer.

However, this meant that her plan to remain an underground singer for just one year, as she had initially intended, would need to be extended. It seemed she might have to continue as an underground singer for two, or even three, years.

The doctor briefly assessed Jenna's appearance and attire before giving her the necessary instructions.

"Take this form and make a payment of 200 verl d'or at the payment counter on the first floor."

200… Jenna breathed a sigh of relief. She signed the form under her real name, Celia Bello, and took it with her as she descended the stairs.

On her way down, she glanced at Lumian, who was by her side, and hesitated before speaking.

"I-if I ever find myself in need of a large sum for medical fees in the future, I think I would like to borrow from you."

Jenna had always been a stubborn individual with her own principles. In the past, when she worked tirelessly to earn money in various dance halls within the market district, the thought of borrowing from Franca or asking for her help in securing an easy and lucrative part-time job had never crossed her mind. But now, for the sake of her mother, Elodie, she was willing to let go of her stubbornness in this regard.

Although Lumian had already "squandered" more than 700 verl d'or on himself and received an advance from the proceeds he could obtain from Salle de Bal Brise, he showed no signs of concern. He replied nonchalantly, "Okay."

Jenna regarded him suspiciously.

"I thought you might hesitate for a moment. Franca mentioned that

you needed a significant sum of money for something important."

Lumian chuckled.

"That's for advancing and purchasing the main ingredient for Pyromaniac. However, it doesn't prevent me from lending you money. As a Beyonder and the leader of the Savoie Mob, even if I don't have a coppet at the moment, I can assist you in acquiring the necessary funds.

"The simplest solution would be to have René sign a long-term contract with you, advancing you 10,000 verl d'or. Then, 50% of your income from the dance hall will be deducted each day to repay the loan in installments. Once it's fully repaid, the contract will naturally be terminated."

Jenna fell silent for a moment, realizing that something that had deeply troubled her was easily resolved in Ciel's presence.

Lumian glanced at her and smirked.

"As an Assassin, you shouldn't fret about medical expenses like these. If you aim to advance in the future, you'll need tens of thousands in funds.

"You need to change your mindset now. Don't hold the law in such high regard. As you heard earlier, Intis's laws don't protect the poor. We can only protect ourselves.

"Once you've come to terms with this, we'll kidnap the former factory owner and extract enough cash from him. After the verdict is announced and he pays the compensation for your father's accident, you can donate the money to someone in need.

"As long as we execute it cleanly, combined with Franca's anti-divination measures, the likelihood of success is exceedingly high. It won't leave a trace behind. It's improbable for a factory owner like him to have Beyonder bodyguards."

Jenna's heart raced at his words. She hesitated for a moment before speaking.

“It just doesn’t sit right with me…

“Dammit, are you the Instigator, or will I become the Instigator? How are you so adept at bewitching people?

“Eventually, you’ll have to face the consequences of breaking the law, won’t you?”

Lumian smirked once again.

“I didn’t finish. We only do what’s necessary. We can’t act recklessly. Not only would it bring danger, but it could also increase the risk of losing control. Kidnapping the factory owner is to reclaim the compensation your family deserves.”

Jenna fell silent once more.

Realizing they were about to reach the first floor, she hurriedly said, “I need to use the washroom.”

By the time she emerged from the washroom, she had a stack of 200 verl d’or notes in her hand.

Seeing Jenna pay the initial treatment fee, Lumian glanced at her rose-colored gown and commented,

“You can’t tend to a patient dressed like this. I’ll return to the dance hall and fetch your clothes. I’ll also help you secure some time off.

“If your mother’s condition worsens, come to me or Franca immediately.”

Having just examined Elodie’s luck and confirmed that her condition was no longer critical, though still uncertain of improvement, Lumian found it somewhat chaotic. It might have been dependent on the hospital’s treatment effectiveness.

“Okay.” Jenna pursed her lips and nodded.

…

On the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

Just as Lumian was about to inform Manager René about Jenna and ask him to reschedule tonight's performance, Louis approached him.

Louis cast a quick glance around and lowered his voice.

"Boss, about half an hour ago, Boss sent someone to deliver a bag of items to the financial safe. He said it was for you."

Something from Boss… Supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion? As expected of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway… Lumian nodded slightly, pleased, and passed through the café, entering the second-floor corridor.

Upon opening the safe, he felt a burning sensation.

Inside the grayish-white cloth bag were three glass bottles. One contained bubbling crimson blood, from which flames burst with each bubble. Another held blood-colored powder at the bottom, while the third contained a finger-sized stone emitting a red fluorescent light.

Fire Salamander blood, Redcrown Balsam powder, Magma Pyroxene… Indeed, supplementary Pyromaniac ingredients… Lumian picked up the items, satisfied.

…

3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, outside Apartment 601.

Lumian, having left Salle de Bal Brise, headed straight to Franca's place. He intended to borrow 4,000 verl d'or, using his share of the Harvest Sacrifice as collateral.

Upon opening the door and seeing Lumian, Franca clicked her tongue and remarked, "Did you hear? There was an explosion at a factory in the southern part of the market district. Numerous incidents have been occurring in the market district lately, giving me the sense that a storm is brewing."

Upon hearing this, Lumian instantly recalled something.

He spoke in a deep voice, "There was an accident at the Goodville

Chemical Factory. This morning, the owner of the factory paid a visit to the member of parliament's office."Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Chapter 241 - 241 Indomitable Spirit

241 Indomitable Spirit

After hearing Lumian's words, Franca exclaimed, "Dammit! Are we dealing with those lot again? What's Hugues Artois up to?"

"I can't quite fathom the purpose behind causing a chemical plant explosion either… Maybe it's just a coincidence. Bono Goodville and Hugues Artois have quite a good relationship. It's not unusual for him to pay a visit, but it just so happens that there was an explosion at the chemical plant today," Lumian pondered before speaking.

He couldn't dismiss every coincidence in life, but he also couldn't treat each one as a problem.

Franca nodded thoughtfully and remarked, "True enough.

"However, I must remind you that the chemical plant explosion isn't meaningless. It may have already resulted in numerous deaths, and that holds great significance for certain dark rituals. The living are always the third-best sacrifice."

"Could this also be part of a ritual?" Lumian was somewhat taken aback.

Franca corrected him, "There's no real distinction between using a knife to sacrifice someone and using a chemical plant explosion to kill the intended victim as part of a ritual for the deity the host desires to invoke. Your understanding of ritualistic magic is still too narrow. Some rituals may indeed require such explosions to be effective."

It's akin to the Substitution Spell, requiring a substitute to assume the

identity to be replaced for an extended period before the ritual. Lumian grasped the idea.

Franca let out a sigh.

“This is merely my conjecture. It doesn’t necessarily mean it’s true. However, we must alert the official Beyonders to be vigilant for signs of a ritual and to investigate the role of the member of parliament’s office in this catastrophe.

“F*ck, if that bloke wasn’t a member of parliament, I’d have captured him tonight, strung him up from the ceiling, and given him a thrashing. I’d interrogate him about his intentions and his connection to those heretics.

“Sigh, in that explosion just now, countless individuals lost their parents, spouses, siblings, or children. I wonder how many people are praying, worrying, and suffering for their injured loved ones.”

“Like Jenna,” Lumian interjected.

Franca was momentarily stunned. “What did you say?”

“Jenna’s mother works at the Goodville Chemical Factory. Didn’t you know?” Lumian inquired.

Franca was taken aback before asking with concern, “How is her mother?”

Lumian briefly recounted how he had accompanied Jenna to Rue Saint-Hilaire in search of Elodie and had used the last bit of healing agent to save her from near death.

Franca let out a sigh of relief and expressed in anguish, “Why wasn’t I there! Why wasn’t I there!”

Lumian’s lips twitched as he calmly said, “You still have a chance. Jenna is fretting over the subsequent medical expenses.”
nove(l)bi(n.)com

“I’ll go to the Holy Palace Hospital right away!” Franca’s eyes lit up, and she was about to dash out of the apartment.

Lumian hastily called out to her, “Don’t forget to bring the Poison Spur Mob’s healing agent with you. I’m concerned that her condition might worsen.”

Just like Monsieur Ruhr.

Without waiting for Franca’s response, he added, “Also, help Jenna bring the dress she wore this morning.”

“Right… I need to borrow 4,000 verl d’or from you and offer half of the Harvest Sacrifice as collateral. I’ve already gathered the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion.”

“So soon?” Franca exclaimed, taken aback. “I haven’t even begun searching for you!”

Lumian smirked once again.

“Last night, I ran into Boss at the entrance of the member of parliament’s office and confessed my plans to advance and about the advance on my pay. I requested he keep an eye on the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion.”

The more Franca listened, the more complicated her expression became.

“You’re more cunning than I realized, kid… Confiding in Gardner about this matter is indeed the best approach.

“However, can’t you consider me? Don’t you know that I also wanted to help you gather the supplementary ingredients for the Pyromaniac potion through Gardner? He’s a Sequence 6 Conspirer or a Sequence 5 Hunter, and he has a group of Hunters working with him. He won’t be lacking in such things. Luckily, I haven’t approached him in the past two days. Otherwise, he would have surely suspected that we were having an affair.”

Lumian had always assumed Franca would seek materials through the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. He hadn’t expected her to approach Gardner Martin out of convenience and proximity, almost exposing their secret relationship.

Franca returned to her room and retrieved a banknote worth 4,000 verl d'or from somewhere. She handed it to Lumian and solemnly reminded him, "Once you obtain the main ingredient, don't rush to concoct the potion. You must ensure that your condition can withstand the impact of your advancement. Otherwise, it's best to delay it for a while. The main ingredient is much easier to preserve than the potion itself."

"I'm well aware," Lumian replied calmly.

After a moment of thought, he asked, "Before you go to Jenna, it would be wise to inform the authorities. The explosion just happened, so there might be some clues left behind."

"Yes," Franca agreed.

Before bidding farewell, Lumian asked curiously, "If the living are the third-best sacrifice, what are the second-best and the best?"

"The second-best are beings with Beyonder characteristics. And the best…" Franca smiled. "They are demigods."

…

Quartier de No?l, sixth floor of Holy Palace Hospital.

As Jenna returned to the ward from the washroom, she spotted her brother Julien assisting their mother, Elodie, in tucking the corners of the blanket.

Elodie remained unconscious, but her complexion showed signs of improvement.

Julien stood up and beckoned his sister to the side. He whispered, "Celia, don't fret about the upcoming medical expenses. I'll find a solution. Keep attending your acting lessons at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons."

Jenna's heart swelled with gratitude as she inquired, "Did the doctor talk to you?"

"Yes, he just did." Julien nodded with solemnity.

Jenna pressed her lips together and assured him, “Don’t worry. My friends have agreed to lend me money. I can repay them over three years with minimal interest. With my earnings as an underground singer and your wages, if we are frugal, it should be enough without affecting our respective apprenticeships.”

There was a moment of silence as Julien pondered, before he finally spoke, “That Ciel?”

“Yes, he’s one of them, but I have other friends too. And Franca, the ‘Red Boots’ I mentioned last night.” Jenna felt the need to clarify the situation, fearing her brother might resort to extreme measures.

She recalled how two years ago, Julien had contemplated secretly selling himself to Balam-Paz Import and Export Corporation, unbeknownst to their mother, in order to become a disposable mercenary and repay all their debts, allowing Jenna to pursue her dreams as an apprentice actress. Fortunately, that plan had been thwarted in the end.

Just as Julien was about to respond, his gaze fell upon a tall, slender woman standing at the ward’s entrance.

She donned a blouse, light-colored breeches, a thin black-on-white checkered tweed top, and vibrant red boots. Her long flaxen-colored hair was tied back in a simple ponytail. With eyebrows that extended toward her temples and eyes that sparkled with energy, she exuded an irresistible charm.

Jenna eagerly approached her.

“Franca.”

…

Rue des Blouses Blanches, inside the safe house.

Lumian, having acquired Sun Star and currently distilling its extract, took a seat and awaited Madam Magician’s response.

On the desk in front of him, Fire Salamander blood, Magma Pyroxene powder, and Redcrown Balsam powder were neatly arranged.

Just as the Sun Star extract was about to be completed, the arm-height "doll" dressed in a light-gold gown, with exquisite yet slightly peculiar facial features, appeared on the windowsill.

It placed a metal biscuit tin on the windowsill and sniffed the air.

"Use this extract the next time you summon me."

"Alright." The request from the other party was so unusual that Lumian was momentarily taken aback. His instinctive response was the only thing he could offer.

In an instant, the puppet messenger vanished before his eyes. Lumian opened the bright silver biscuit tin and beheld the small crimson "heart" burning silently within.

Without hesitation, he grabbed a prepared beer mug and dropped in the Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic.

Immediately afterward, Lumian poured over 50 milliliters of Fire Salamander blood into the cup.

With a sizzling sound, the crimson liquid evaporated, transforming into a mist of blood that swirled around the "heart."

The Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristic softened considerably, its surface rippling like the water of a lake.

Following the potion formula's instructions, Lumian added Magma Pyroxene powder, Redcrown Balsam powder, and Sun Star extract into the beer mug. As he did so, the blood mist surrounding the "heart" abruptly shrank, giving rise to a yellowish liquid with red bubbles.

In Lumian's eyes, this was the Pyromaniac potion.

Rather than consuming it immediately, Lumian closed his eyes.

In his mind, he conjured images of Flameng's lifeless body dangling from a window frame, the lunatic's will inscribed on a sheet of white paper. He envisioned Monsieur Ruhr, his body ravaged by decay. He pictured Madame Michel, drowning her sorrows in drink and singing

boisterously, only to ultimately meet her demise by hanging herself in the morning light. He also saw the cries that echoed through Sifflet Square.

Then, he glimpsed his own stubborn and determined self as a wanderer. He witnessed his unwavering spirit, refusing to surrender despite the repeated blows. He envisioned an alternative outcome for himself. He witnessed the sorrow, anger, powerlessness, and oppression that came with pursuing hope, only to be engulfed by darkness.

The mocking laughter of fate resounded in his ears, igniting a raging fire within his heart.

If this is the unavoidable conclusion;

If this is the fate of insignificance,

If efforts yield no fruit, and hope remains forever out of reach;

Then I shall fight with every ounce of my being to change it all!

Even if there is no light ahead, and hope dwindles to a mere flicker, I will fight until my last breath!

Motherf*cker member of parliament!

Motherf*cker Guillaume Bénet!

Motherf*cker heretics!

Motherf*cker Termiboros!

Motherf*cker Inevitability!

Lumian's eyes snapped open as he solidified his final acting principle as a Provoker.

Provocation symbolized indomitable spirit!

He didn't need this for digestion assistance. With a fire raging within his chest, he seized the beer mug and guzzled down the liquid.

It burned from his mouth, down his esophagus, into his stomach, and seared into his heart.

Chapter 242 - 242 Pyromaniac

242 Pyromaniac

Instantaneously, Lumian felt an inferno raging within him. The scorching agony seared through his body and soul, engulfing him completely. This sensation was not alien to him. Whether it was the dire wounds inflicted during his pursuit of the flaming monster or the brink of losing control while receiving a boon, all had set him ablaze.

In this very moment, the tormenting fire failed to extinguish the blazing determination in his heart. He defied destiny, yearning to alter the course of events, to incinerate the oppressive flames of despair and desolation.

Instead of succumbing to the pain and collapsing to the ground, Lumian remained upright. Clenching his teeth and contorting his face, he refused to bow down.

Gradually, the agony became unbearable, and his body began to bend. Nevertheless, Lumian mustered all his strength to straighten his back, just as he had confronted Guillaume Bénet, the padre, and Termiboros, who had unleashed a cataclysmic calamity upon Cordu.

Step by step, he lowered his body and raised it again. The scent of singed flesh filled his nostrils, and the voice from infinity reverberated in his ears.

A familiar, excruciating pain pierced his skull, eliciting an involuntary cry. Cracks formed on his skin, and molten liquid akin to lava coursed beneath.

Desperately, Lumian leaned on the desk before him, seeking support.

The spot he touched promptly blackened and charred, permeating the air with the scent of burning timber.

His instinctive scream was stifled. His mouth hung open, expelling searing gas.

Instead of immediately uncorking the vial of gray amber perfume, he relied on the fire within his chest to combat the mounting anguish and the increasingly hazy thoughts welling up from within.

Seconds ticked away. Lumian, with gritted teeth, sensed the flames within his chest surging forth, mingling with the inferno raging throughout his being.

Gradually, the manifold pains subsided, and his muddled thoughts gradually cleared.

Using his hands as support, Lumian hoisted himself up and directed his gaze towards the full-length mirror in the room.

Reflected in the looking glass, his blond locks retained a tinge of black, his attire reduced to tatters. His body bore scorch marks that swiftly scabbed over and fell to the floor, revealing his fair complexion.

Simultaneously, Lumian beheld two crimson flames ablaze within his blue eyes. It was only after striving to regain composure and still his racing heart that the flames gradually dissipated.

In the next second, In the next heartbeat, Lumian raised his right hand, manifesting a crimson flame in his palm.

He had triumphantly ascended to the Sequence 7 of the Hunter's path, emerging as a Pyromaniac!

From his palm, flames surged, intertwining with the original crimson hue, constantly compressing.

After a span of more than ten seconds, the fiery crimson transformed into an incandescent white. The temperature and explosive force it contained surged to greater heights.

I can wield the crimson flame directly or, by accumulating and compressing it for a duration, unleash an even more scorching white-hot blaze… Lumian's palm appeared impervious to the scorching heat

as he allowed the white-hot flame to silently burn.

Having already conducted a preliminary assessment of his condition and the mystical knowledge he had acquired, Lumian had gained a fairly comprehensive understanding of the superpowers bestowed upon a Pyromaniac.

First and foremost, a Pyromaniac's spirituality had seen a remarkable improvement, leading to a transformative shift in Lumian's Spirit Vision. No longer confined to a chaotic spectacle, he now possessed the ability to employ a more discreet and expeditious activation method. Moreover, he could finally perceive the hues and shades his sister had described, discerning the various components of the Ether Body.

This newfound insight proved invaluable to a Hunter, enabling Lumian to better grasp an adversary's physical state and thereby target them with greater precision.

Secondly, his instinct for danger had undergone significant enhancement. Gone were the days when he only sensed trouble at the very brink of eruption. Through careful observation of his surroundings and the assimilation of information, Lumian could now activate his intuition preemptively. Consequently, he could detect if he was being followed and employ his anti-tracking techniques more effectively and flawlessly.

Thirdly, his command over flames had brought with it a handful of accompanying spells.

At present, Lumian's primary ability involved controlling the flames that originated from within him or were conjured by his own hands. While he possessed an affinity for flames and combustible substances in his vicinity, his influence over them remained somewhat limited. It was possible that, upon digesting the Pyromaniac potion or advancing to a higher Sequence, corresponding changes might occur.

Furthermore, Lumian could employ the flames he created as weapons against his adversaries. However, once the flames left his body, they no longer fell under his dominion unless he had pre-invested a portion of his spirituality in them.

In essence, altering the trajectory of a fireball in mid-flight proved to be quite challenging, necessitating a supplementary expenditure of spirituality.

The control of flames could be categorized into seven distinct aspects:

Firstly, there was compression—a bombardment in the form of a fireball. The longer the compression lasted, the more flames gathered, resulting in a more potent strike.

Secondly, Lumian could ignite a layer of flames over his body, affording him a measure of defense against freezing effects, poisonous gases, and other forms of assault.

Thirdly, he could fashion various temporary weapons using flames, capable of inflicting scorching, cutting, and piercing damage. Depending on the time spent channeling the flames, this ability could be categorized as either crimson or blazing-white.

Fourthly, Lumian had mastered the art of delayed explosions. By employing additional spirituality and manipulating the structure, he could fashion a Flame Bomb that would detonate at a predetermined time, rather than immediately upon impact.

Fifthly, he possessed the power of area-of-effect attacks. By extending the reach of the flames instead of hurling them forth, Lumian could ensure precise control over their detonation, causing them to erupt at a desired location or manifest in different forms.

Sixthly, Lumian had honed the technique of Fire Infusion. Through close-quarters combat and the forceful clash of strength, he could gradually inject flames into an opponent's body before triggering their detonation.

Finally, the seventh aspect involved imbuing his weapon with fire damage.

The fire-type spells Lumian had acquired were instrumental in these various aspects, leveraging certain techniques to achieve effects that he could not ordinarily produce.

The spells at Lumian's disposal were as follows: Fire Raven, Blazing

Spear, Wall of Fire, and Giant Fireball.

Of them all, the Fire Raven spell stood out as the most enchanting. With its aid, Lumian could swiftly condense a flock of flaming ravens around him, bestowing a fraction of his spirituality upon each avian form. This granted him a degree of control even after they departed from his body, enabling them to momentarily adjust their flight path and lock onto their intended targets.

Without this spell, Lumian, a recent convert to Pyromaniac, would need to expend at least three times his present store of spirituality and energy to achieve a similar outcome. Moreover, the Fire Ravens would possess a significantly more clumsy and rigid disposition.

Blazing Spear, on the other hand, entailed the rapid condensation of white flames, though they could only maintain the shape of a spear. Infused with spirituality, they could roughly guide Lumian's created fireball.

By utilizing the ground as a conduit and drawing upon its own essence, Wall of Fire summoned forth a pair of flaming serpents that slithered toward the enemy, erecting a scorching barrier around them. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Giant Fireball demanded a span of ten to twenty seconds, akin to the compression of numerous crimson fireballs into a single devastating blast.

While the Pyromaniac's flames originated from his physical form and primarily inflicted bodily harm, they were also capable of burning a Spirit Body. Lumian was no longer defenseless against creatures of a soul-like nature, though he still relied on external assistance.

Additionally, the potion's modifications had bestowed upon his body a remarkable resistance to flames. Even if doused in animal fat and subjected to the flames of a torch for half a day, the damage he suffered would be minimal. Nevertheless, the concussive force of a fireball's explosion could still harm him in a conventional manner.

Lumian held the belief that as he advanced to higher Sequences, his body might even merge with fire itself.

With a casual flick of his right hand, the blazing white flame dissipated into the air.

Then, with a firm grip, he summoned a longsword crafted from crimson flames, materializing it from thin air.

Lumian brandished the fiery blade a few times, his disappointment evident. He muttered silently to himself, It possesses the ability to harm the enemy, but it cannot block or parry…

The flaming sword lacked a tangible form. Lumian surmised that he would need to reach a higher Sequence before he could turn such a weapon corporeal.

He dismissed the flaming longsword and drew Hedsey's dagger.

As his fingers caressed the dagger's surface, a fiery blaze enveloped the blade.

Lumian tightened his grip on the hilt and executed a few thrusts with the dagger. He observed the rapid dissipation of red sparks in the air, creating an ethereal spectacle.

It can block and deal fire damage. Though it may lack scorching temperatures in this form, it remains highly useful.

The current problem lies in the fact that ordinary weapons cannot endure exposure to flames for long… Lumian pondered, nodding approvingly.

Having confirmed his Beyonder powers as a Pyromaniac, he swiftly organized his desk and donned a linen shirt, a brown jacket, and dark trousers.

Lumian cast a final glance at his reflection in the mirror, a smile curling upon his lips.

He placed the dark-blue cap upon his head, turned on his heel, and strode purposefully toward the door.

Crimson flames silently erupted in his wake, an ephemeral and blinding display.

…

On Avenue du Marché, outside the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the member of parliament's office,

Lumian once again found himself seated among the destitute at the alley opposite, quietly observing the steady flow of people entering and exiting the targeted establishment.

In the wake of the explosion at Goodville Chemical Factory, countless workers had tragically lost their lives, leaving many more injured. The entire city of Trier was abuzz with news reporters flocking to the scene. As a result, Hugues Artois's office remained aglow with gas-powered wall lamps, as his staff tirelessly attended to visitors with varied intentions.

The member of parliament had yet to return home, and his entourage naturally remained within the khaki-colored building. Every room seemed to radiate with illumination, brimming with activity.

Leaning against the wall of the street, Lumian observed the comings and goings within the member of parliament's office, his mind churning with contemplation.

He yearned to ignite a "fire"!

He yearned to "incinerate" the despicable scoundrel responsible for spreading disease!

He was fully aware of the dire consequences that awaited him. As a Pyromaniac, he understood that he alone was not yet strong enough to face off against the evil god's Blessed who surrounded Hugues Artois.

Yet, he simply longed to take action. He couldn't shake the feeling that no matter how fierce a conflagration may be, it all started with a single spark.

Chapter 243 - 243 Visit

243 Visit

Lumian's fury did not mean he would lose his composure—to just disguise himself and sneak into the member of parliament's office, where he would find the fellow who had dared to "casually spit" and incinerate him on the spot. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

It wasn't a ridiculous scheme, but without enough information, taking such a risk could easily turn into suicide.

First and foremost, Lumian had no knowledge of the number or strength of the heretics present in the member of parliament's office.

He also had no idea how many protectors Bureau 8 or the two Churches had assigned to Hugues Artois, nor did he know their abilities.

Furthermore, he lacked precise details about the target's whereabouts or situation. Even if he managed to infiltrate the office successfully, finding the target would be no easy task.

Lastly, he hadn't yet devised a plan for sneaking in and, more importantly, a plan for a safe retreat.

Nevertheless, Lumian couldn't deny that the chaos caused by the Goodville Chemical Factory explosion provided an excellent opportunity for his infiltration.

For now, his temporary strategy was to be a patient hunter. He would trail the target silently, observing his movements and waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

Based on the target's status in Hugo Artois's campaign, Lumian surmised that the man couldn't be too powerful. He certainly didn't

possess godlike abilities. Even if he were a Mid-Sequence Beyonder, he would likely be no higher than a Sequence 7.

Lumian wasn't overly concerned if his judgment was wrong and the target turned out to be a Sequence 6 or even Sequence 5. In fact, he believed that Mr. K would find the hunt for heretics quite intriguing!

Phew… Lumian breathed out slowly, his gaze fixed on the brightly illuminated khaki-colored four-story building. He continued to gather useful information for his upcoming operation.

As time passed, he noticed middle-aged scavengers carrying linen bags, sifting through the trash piled beside the building.

This sight made Lumian sigh, fueling the fire of determination in his heart.

In Trier, people couldn't scavenge just for the sake of it. Each scavenger had an employer, whether they worked full-time or part-time. They were assigned specific scavenging areas and were not allowed to cross boundaries. Violations often led to conflicts and violent encounters. As a result, Ruhr and Michel wished fervently that Hugues Artois would host banquets every day instead of wandering into areas where banquets were already being held, as those spots belonged to other scavengers.

The difference between full-time and part-time scavengers lay in their employment terms. Full-timers received a monthly salary from their employers, and the employers owned all the trash they collected. Occasionally, if they stumbled upon valuable or usable items, they might decide whether to surrender them or keep them for personal use. Part-timers like Ruhr and Michel didn't have a fixed salary. They scavenged in the morning and evening, delivering everything they found to a designated waste disposal site, typically owned by their employers.

These circumstances restricted street tramps to scavenging for food and clothing, with little opportunity to exchange their findings for money.

Lumian patiently waited until 9 p.m., observing as the number of

guests visiting the member of parliament's office gradually dwindled. People stepped out onto the balconies for a smoke or a brief respite.

And then, his eyes widened as he spotted a figure.

Standing on the balcony of a second-floor room, there he was—the thin, pale man with curly dark-yellow hair and piercing brown eyes.

Dressed in a blue shirt, black vest, and a somber suit, complete with a bow tie, he held a cigarette, enveloped in a cloud of smoke, occasionally taking a drag. Lumian had seen him before in Franca's Magic Mirror Divination. It was the spitter.

Cough, cough, cough! A fit of violent coughing shook the frail young man, as if he wished to expel his lungs from his body.

Finally, he hacked up another glob of thick phlegm after some harrumphing.

Pulling out a handkerchief, he spat the viscous phlegm into it, wrapping it up and tucking it away in his pocket. He didn't discard it carelessly.

Lumian's eyes narrowed. He knows that his phlegm can transmit diseases as a result of mysticism.

As more people flocked to the balconies of their respective rooms, Lumian swiftly identified the familiar faces.

Member of Parliament Hugues Artois from the market district occupied the room at the top floor, boasting the largest balcony.

The red-haired woman resided on the same floor, right next door to him.

On the second floor, on the opposite end of the corridor from the spitter, was a man in his thirties with gold-rimmed glasses, a document always in hand. Every now and then, he would wander to the balcony to enjoy a smoke and the view, displaying a lack of concern for the aftermath of the Goodville Chemical Factory explosion.

The third floor housed a tall, muscular middle-aged man, occupying the central office.

Directly beneath Hugues Artois, on the fourth floor, was a refined young woman in a white shirt and a dark-blue coat. She shared the same side of the building as the man with gold-rimmed glasses, deliberately avoiding any proximity to the spitter.

Lumian observed closely and deduced that the rooms adjacent to the spitter's were part of a collective office, likely accommodating several employees.

This implied that the probability of them holding any significant status or possessing Beyonder powers was negligible.

So, the other heretics intentionally distanced themselves from the incessant coughing and spitting man. They believe the member of parliament's office is heavily guarded, and that individual possesses Beyonder powers. It's highly unlikely for an attack to be directed at him. True enough. If an assault were to occur in the member of parliament's office, the target would undoubtedly be Hugues Artois and not one of his subordinates. Only then would it be worth the risk… Lumian pondered this realization earnestly for a moment and suddenly sensed an opportunity emerging.

The dilemma now lay in how Lumian could infiltrate the member of parliament's office unnoticed, particularly given his conspicuous golden hair with a touch of black. After all, he didn't have Franca's help.

After careful consideration, Lumian devised a plan.

He departed from the vicinity of the office and made his way back to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Without hesitation, he set up an altar and offered a prayer to the great existence, seeking His protection.

Lumian firmly believed that since the embrace of an angel would shield him from the prying eyes of any deity, it definitely ensured sufficient anti-divination effects!

Just as before, he found himself bathed in the radiant brilliance and divine majesty of the angel. Overwhelmed by indescribable emotions, he witnessed cascades of luminous wings enveloping him.

Once he completed this ritual, Lumian pressed his hand to his head.

His golden and black hair erupted into flames, cascading down like withered grass until only a few hair roots remained.

Putting on his trusty dark-blue cap, he concealed his features behind the Mystery Prying Glasses. With his transformed appearance, Lumian left Rue des Blouses Blanches and ventured towards Avenue du Marché near Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. There, he located a clothing store that didn't specialize in cheap garments.

The two shop assistants, a man and a woman, were taken aback when they saw a person dressed like a vagrant entering, unsure of how to react.

In a panicked tone, Lumian explained, "I encountered a perverted thief who stole my clothes and trousers. I had no choice but to purchase this set from a nearby beggar."

The female shop assistant struggled to suppress her laughter.

They had witnessed similar situations countless times before, well aware that those who made such excuses were often involved in affairs with certain ladies, fleeing in a state of undress with their wallets once their husbands returned, only to seek refuge in the garments of a beggar.

When someone confidently claimed that their predicament stemmed from an affair, it usually meant they had genuinely encountered a twisted thief.

In the end, Lumian acquired a suit that appeared decent but was actually quite ordinary. It included a shirt, coat, bow tie, and a dark cane. Additionally, he opted for a brown wig and a matching fake beard.

The total cost came to 78 verl d'or.

After carefully covering his tracks and returning to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches, Lumian shed his disguise and once again adorned the Mystery Prying Glasses. Following his recollection, he skillfully applied makeup to achieve his desired effect.

His aim was to transform himself into an older version. As he gazed into the mirror, Lumian gradually took on the appearance of a middle-aged man, complete with a fake brown beard affixed to his mouth and chin.

Thus, Lumian assumed the identity of Bono Goodville, the proprietor of the Goodville Chemical Factory.

Though the resemblance was only around 40 to 50%, anyone acquainted with Bono Goodville would instinctively mistake Lumian for the man, provided they didn't scrutinize or closely distinguish him.

In this guise, Lumian intended to infiltrate the member of parliament's office!

Before embarking on his mission, he ventured into the underground and stashed the tramp's attire in a cavern within the quarry.

Emerging from Underground Trier, Lumian hastened to the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the member of parliament's office, cane in hand.

After observing for a brief moment and ensuring that the figures in each room remained relatively unchanged, he lowered his head, partially concealing his face, and approached the entrance.

"Whom are you seeking?" inquired an armed guard donned in a dark blue uniform, blocking his path.

Lumian raised his head, withdrew his hand, and responded with anxiety in his voice, "I'm looking for the member of parliament."

One of the guards caught a clear glimpse of the visitor's face under the glow of the street lamp and involuntarily exclaimed, "Monsieur Goodville, what brings you here again…"

Abruptly, he halted his words, realizing that this gentleman, who had recently experienced a devastating explosion at his factory, had an abundance of issues to address this night, along with numerous concerns that required assistance.

The two guards refrained from further inquiry and stepped aside, granting Lumian passage.

The lobby on the ground floor bustled with activity, despite the late hour. Reporters, officials, representatives of charitable organizations, hospital staff reporting in, and various personnel responsible for receiving them filled the space.

Lumian preserved his desire to remain inconspicuous. With his head lowered, partially obscuring his face, he proceeded directly to the staircase. Employing the same tactic, he passed by the two armed guards and ascended to the second floor.

Orienting himself, Lumian bypassed the two employees who emerged from a nearby room and arrived in front of the office belonging to the unhealthy young man.

Embedded on the vermilion door was an aluminum-white nameplate inscribed with a few golden Intisian words: “Assistant Secretary, Tybalt Jacques.”

Tybalt… Lumian smiled, donned his gloves, and tapped lightly on the door.

Chapter 244 - 244 Red and Black

244 Red and Black

Knock, knock, knock.

The office reverberated with an urgent knock.

A feeble and disinterested voice floated through the air.

“Come in, please.”

Lumian turned the doorknob and pushed open the vibrant vermilion door. Before him stood a frail, gaunt young man.

Dressed in a blue shirt, black waistcoat, and somber suit, he stood by the expansive desk, his eyes fixed on the door.

As Tybalt Jacques recognized the visitor to be Bono Goodville, a chuckle escaped the assistant secretary.

“Don’t fret. Decay is an unavoidable fate. It afflicts humans and organizations alike. Once the decay sets in, all sorts of troubles will arise…”

Before Tybalt could conclude, he saw Lumian approach. Guard raised, he blurted out,”What do you think you’re doing…”

Bam! Lumian threw a punch, accompanied by a blazing crimson flame.

His action cut off Tybalt’s words, forcing him to instinctively raise his forearm to block the blow.

Flames flickered, consuming Tybalt’s sleeves.

Simultaneously, a taunting voice reached his ears.

“So weak?”

Originally, Lumian’s plan was to cloak his fist in flames, launching a surprise attack on his adversary without alerting the nearby employees. In the ensuing chaos, he aimed to use Fallen Mercury and inflict a wound upon him. Then, before his foe could recover, Lumian would forcefully make his way past him, exiting the khaki-colored building housing the parliament member’s office through the balcony.

Throughout this endeavor, he would employ fireballs, Fire Raven, and other techniques to impede his opponent. Even if he sustained injuries, he had to escape into a nearby alley and disappear into Underground Trier before Hugues Artois’s security personnel, the red-haired woman, and the other campaign members could react. After all, the fiery “armor” he created had the power to incinerate pathogens. With limited contact, the chances of contracting an illness were slim. And if something did manage to slip through, the symptoms would be mild enough for Lumian to endure until six in the morning.

If worse came to worst, he could borrow half a canister of healing agent from Franca.

Even Ruhr, a scavenger with his advanced age, succumbed to the illness only an hour or two after being exposed to the thick phlegm. Lumian believed it would be even less of a problem for him.

Of course, the condition was that the thick phlegm represented one of Tybalt’s more potent methods. He couldn’t concoct a highly virulent disease that triggered symptoms within a minute or two. Nonetheless, Lumian had his flames to shield him.

Yet, now, after a swift exchange, Lumian realized that Tybalt Jacques was far weaker than he had presumed!

This revelation instantly altered Lumian’s course of action.

Silently, his form became shrouded in a cloak of fiery crimson.

The flames undulated like liquid, seamlessly encasing his skin, hair, garments, and hat. They hung there, a constant flickering and flowing.

Crimson flames continued to emerge from Lumian's being, melding with the inferno.

It felt as though Lumian had wrapped himself in a crimson cloak. Amidst the swirling blaze, his disguised countenance and blue eyes, each harboring a blazing fire, came into view.

With a snap, he discarded the dark cane and launched a fist wreathed in flames towards Tybalt.

The cane's handle remained aglow, eradicating any traces of fingerprints, sweat, or handprints.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Tybalt staggered back two steps, as though battling a tempest of fire. His eyes burned with a reddened intensity.

He harrumphed and expelled thick phlegm at Lumian.

The viscous yellow-green phlegm met the fiery cloak and was instantly incinerated, emitting a sizzling sound.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian's arms, engulfed in crimson flames, swung repeatedly, pinning Tybalt to a corner of the office. His back pressed against the wall, with no escape or retreat. All he could do was defensively parry with his arms.

Witnessing the Sputum of Disease prove futile and the surrounding air heating up under the flames' influence, causing his skin to scorch, Tybalt's heart constricted, and he was about to cry out for help.

However, just as he opened his mouth, Lumian's flaming fist collided with his arm, causing him to tremble. His words became trapped in his throat.

Tybalt attempted to call for aid, but his pleas were repeatedly interrupted by the adversary. The deep voice of his foe resounded in his ears.

“Is that all you have?”

“How dare a feeble fledgling like you spit so recklessly?”

“Didn’t your deity teach you to behave with civility?”

“I shall summon a hundred vagabonds to spit in your mouth!”

The mockery inflamed Tybalt’s eyes, and he momentarily forgot about seeking assistance. All he yearned for was the other party to suffer and perish.

Translucent blisters materialized on his exposed skin, brimming with a sickly yellowish-black fluid.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian’s flaming fist consumed Tybalt’s sleeve, rupturing the translucent blister within. Yet, the repugnant yellowish-black liquid failed to touch his flesh. It was first scorched by the flames before being halted by the gloves.

The lingering pathogens on the surface of the gloves rapidly dissipated beneath the crimson flames’ effect.

Amidst the relentless but non-lethal strikes, all the translucent blisters burst of their own accord within the increasingly sweltering environment. The faint yellowish-black liquid sizzled and evaporated, forming an almost imperceptible mist around Tybalt.

However, the mist was either consumed by the flames or melted by the soaring temperatures. It couldn’t breach the fiery cloak and corrode Lumian’s body.

In that moment, Tybalt, battered multiple times, regained his senses from the Provocation. He opened his mouth and cried out for aid.

High-temperature gas and dissipating flames infiltrated Tybalt’s mouth as Lumian’s fist connected. The heat contorted his expression, rendering him unable to scream.

“Feeling grand, are we? Enjoying yourself?”

“When you spat without a care, did you ever consider that it would lead to your own demise?”

“Taking your life is no different from slaughtering a chicken!”

Lumian locked his gaze onto Tybalt’s eyes, witnessing despair, fear, and pleas for mercy slowly emerge.

He didn’t relent. With fists ablaze in crimson flames, he unleashed another relentless onslaught of strikes.

He had no intention of evading Tybalt’s feeble attempts at defense; each blow found its mark.

With a subdued thud, Lumian abruptly halted and withdrew his hands.

Tybalt remained motionless against the wall, his eyes vacant.

The flames enveloping Lumian’s form dissipated like a receding river, leaving behind a trace of crimson in his footsteps.

Without sparing Tybalt a second glance, Lumian stooped to retrieve his cane. He took Mr. K’s finger and pressed it against the wall beside Tybalt.

Having done so, Lumian removed his half top hat and placed it upon his chest, bowing to Tybalt.

Then, he strode past his lifeless, statue-like prey and ventured onto the balcony. Concealed by the shadows, he pressed against the wall and effortlessly leaped to the side of the khaki-colored building.

Only then did the occupants upstairs sense something amiss. Several individuals rushed out, peering into the outside world. Lumian’s figure had already vanished into the depths of the dark alley.

Simultaneously, a muffled sound emanated from Tybalt’s rigid body.

Boom!

In an instant, he erupted from within, crimson flames splattering

flesh and internal organs in every direction.

Fire Infusion!

Pyromaniac's Fire Infusion!

Prior to Lumian's departure, Tybalt had teetered on the precipice of death. His organs and brain had been consumed by the injected flames. What ensued was primarily the annihilation of his Spirit Body.

There were three reasons why Lumian had a change of heart at the last moment, opting to forgo the quickest and simplest method of dispatching Tybalt.

Firstly, utilizing the Montsouris ghost could potentially impact Tybalt's family. If possible, it was preferable to avoid such measures, despite the high probability that they had already succumbed to the influence of an evil deity. Secondly, he could utilize the implosion to create a gruesome scene of carnage, strewn with flesh and blood. Coupled with Mr. K's fingerprint, it would point subsequent investigators in the direction of the Aurora Order. It would also serve as a clear indication that Tybalt was a follower of an evil god. Thirdly, by utilizing Fire Infusion, he could delay the explosion and dismantle Tybalt's Spirit Body, thereby minimizing the efficacy of the evil god's Blessed's investigations through spirit channeling.

Furthermore, there was another reason. Beating and cursing Tybalt to death brought Lumian an undeniable sense of satisfaction.

…

Before long, a group of seven or eight individuals, including Hugues Artois, the red-haired lady, and the bespectacled secretary, arrived at Tybalt Jacques's door.

What greeted their eyes were scattered flesh, fragments, and internal organs, along with scorch marks that marred the ground.

The sight of red and black intermingled was jarring, rendering everyone present speechless.

“Who could have done this?” Hugues Artois exclaimed, horror etched on his face.

In his mind, the murder of Tybalt and the macabre aftermath served as a chilling warning and a preview of his own impending demise!

After all, who would go to such lengths to target an assistant secretary?

The red-haired lady cast a brief glance at Hugues Artois before speaking in an androgynous tone,

“Based on the evidence before us, it appears that the perpetrator is a Pyromaniac, or perhaps even more formidable. Given Tybalt’s capabilities, he should have been dispatched within ten seconds. However, the assailant deliberately prolonged the act.

“It seems that the goal was to create this gruesome scene. It bears the hallmark of those lunatics from the Aurora Order.”

Hugues Artois’s eyes narrowed, and he lapsed into silence for a couple of seconds.

“Why would the Aurora Order target me?”

“I cannot say.” The red-haired lady peered deeply into Hugues Artois’s eyes, shaking her head slightly.

While the official Beyonders conducted their investigation, the original campaign team returned to Hugues Artois’s office.

The red-haired lady turned her attention to the secretary with gold-rimmed glasses.

“What has Tybalt been involved in recently?” she inquired.

“Due to his chronic illness, he intentionally disposed of his disease-ridden handkerchief and ended the lives of two elderly scavengers who had no children,” the secretary with gold-rimmed glasses truthfully replied. “I have managed to keep this matter under wraps.” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The red-haired lady muttered to herself, her voice barely audible, “Two childless elderly scavengers… It seems that Tybalt’s demise is undeniably targeted at Monsieur Member of Parliament.”

Chapter 245 - 245 “Speech”

245 “Speech”

All eyes turned towards Hugues Artois, the distinguished member of parliament, his prominent nose and graying temples giving him an air of refinement. He had quickly regained his composure and wore a smile as he spoke.

“There’s no need to fret. If the assailant possessed the means to breach two layers of defense and confront me directly, there would be no reason to go through the trouble of assassinating Tybalt. This seems more like an act of blackmail, a surface-level threat.”

The four members of the campaign present nodded simultaneously, coming to the conclusion that Monsieur Member of Parliament’s deduction was accurate.

Hugues Artois turned to the lady with red hair.

“Cassandra, my knowledge of mysticism is limited. I have only heard that Beyonders can extract the truth from a deceased soul through spirit channeling. Will Tybalt’s spirit betray us?”

Cassandra, with her red hair flowing, slowly shook her head.

“Under normal circumstances, we would have to take the risk of cleansing the situation. However, in the recent attack, the assassin clearly took ample time to obliterate Tybalt’s spirit, thereby concealing his own identity. It’s equivalent to assisting us.”

Hugues Artois nodded slightly and cast a glance at the two anxious secretaries. With a smile, he reassured them.

“Rh?ne, Margaret, fear not. Time is on our side, and the future lies within our grasp. A minor setback will not hinder the ultimate

outcome.

“You must always believe that our actions represent justice.”

Rh?ne, donning gold-rimmed spectacles, and the refined Margaret were bewildered. They couldn’t fathom being associated with the concept of “justice.”

Not only them, but even Cassandra with her red hair and the middle-aged, muscular Boduva looked at Hugues Artois in confusion, sensing they might have misheard.

Cautiously, Hugues Artois glanced towards the door, silently questioning if anyone might be eavesdropping.

After the red-haired Cassandra nodded, he launched into an impromptu speech.

“Ladies and gentlemen, while I may not possess the ability to convert and pray for a boon due to a binding contract, I have acquired a profound understanding of our world.

“You, better than anyone, should be aware that the vast cosmos above us represents an expansive universe. Countless planets exist within it, each akin to its own world. Many of these worlds harbor their own civilizations. The world we inhabit is but one among an endless expanse, as insignificant as a speck of dust.

“The seven deities have imprisoned us in this realm, preventing us from making contact with the civilizations that thrive in the universe. They desire our blindness and deafness, seeking to keep us enslaved for generations.

“They label these magnificent beings as evil gods. They weave falsehoods, warning us of the peril that lies in believing in these evil gods. Their goal is to prevent us from making contact with these higher civilizations, to keep us confined.

“If the belief in an evil god were genuinely dangerous, why do numerous civilizations in the universe, comprising different species, still exist?

“They are afraid. If these mighty entities were to descend upon our world, They alone would face destruction. Only the saints, angels, and fanatics who follow Them would be affected. For most people, it would merely be a shift in faith, devoid of peril.

“Believing in one of the seven deities is deemed faith, but believing in other great beings is not?

“We can no longer remain captive to the seven deities. We must venture forth into the future of humankind and the course of civilization. From the mere fact that boons can be obtained, these great beings are mightier than the seven deities. They will bestow protection and willingly offer their power. Their divine benevolence is boundless, akin to the vast sea.

“In the days to come, when we navigate the universe and reflect upon the journey we have undertaken, you shall come to comprehend that our cause is one of justice.

“In this process, death is an inevitability, yet those who perish are deserving. They are either aged, feeble, unlucky, or destined to meet such a fate. Most of the blame does not lie with us.

“Furthermore, they constitute only a minority. We cannot impede the majority from seeking refuge with a higher civilization, pursuing a better future.

“Ladies and gentlemen, sacrifices are inherent in any cause. As long as we steadfastly believe that our actions are driven by justice and persist unwaveringly, the future shall unquestionably be ours!

“In a decade’s time, humanity will secure a ticket to join the circle of cosmic civilization. We shall no longer be barbarians, hiding in the shadows of obscurity!”

The red-haired Cassandra, Secretary Rh?ne, and the rest were left dumbfounded.

Who was the true believer of the evil god?

Each had their own reasons for following different evil gods, and deep down, they knew they had veered onto the wrong path.

Nevertheless, they had already set foot on this journey and had no choice but to press forward. Thus, they either used faith as a facade to gradually reshape their understanding, or they completely surrendered themselves, seeking any motivation to propel them onward.

And yet, Hugues Artois, someone who clearly wasn't a believer and hadn't received any favors or undergone significant assimilation, managed to speak such astonishing and captivating words straight from the depths of his heart.

The four members of the campaign were taken aback, realizing the sense behind Hugues Artois' words, causing them to reevaluate the meaning behind their past actions.

After a few moments, the red-haired Cassandra let out a slow exhale. She looked at Hugues Artois and sincerely praised him.

"An exceptional speech, Monsieur Member of Parliament. In the future, when you choose your faith, I can recommend one for you."

"Oh?" Hugues Artois inquired in a nasal voice.

Cassandra smiled and elaborated.

"Among the boons bestowed by that individual is one called Orator."

Hugues Artois nodded and flashed a relaxed smile towards the four members of the team.

"Do not be disheartened by Tybalt's demise. We will remain steadfast in our original plan."

Cassandra, Rh?ne, Margaret, and Boduva responded in unison.

"Yes, Monsieur Member of Parliament."

…

In the depths of Underground Trier.

Lumian took a detour and returned to the quarry cave. Swiftly, he

shed his clothes and shoes, removing the wig and beard that concealed his true appearance.

Once he changed back into his ragged tramp attire and adorned a dark-blue cap, semi-translucent crimson Fire Ravens materialized around him.

The Fire Ravens darted out, alighting upon the cane, shirt, bow tie, wig, and other objects, causing them to erupt in soft explosions of flame.

Lumian, having turned his back, proceeded towards the exit of Underground Trier. Crimson flames surged in his wake, consuming everything related to the previous attack, casting an illuminating glow within the dark cavern below.

…

Around midnight, in the depths of the Eternal Blazing Sun Inquisition beneath église Saint-Robert.

Angoulême de Fran?ois, engrossed in perusing the investigation records, heard a knock on his office door.

His brown coat, adorned with two rows of golden buttons, hung neatly on a coat rack near the entrance. He wore a light golden shirt featuring the emblem of the Sun Sacred Order, along with dark brown pants.

“Please, come in,” Angoulême calmly invited.

Valentine, powdered hair and face adorned with subtle makeup, entered the room.

He had been preoccupied with thoughts of Cordu all this time. Upon learning of survivors appearing in the Trier region, he had submitted an application and transferred to this post. His wife and child had long yearned for the bustling city of Trier, so they eagerly moved with him without much persuasion.

He was on night duty with a few teammates and happened to encounter the murder of the member of parliament’s assistant

secretary.

Valentine, clad in a slim blue tweed coat with a golden brooch, took a seat across from Angoulême and spoke directly.

“Deacon, why haven’t we investigated Hugues Artois?

“While most members of the Aurora Order may be crazy, they possess an uncanny ability to detect heretics. Although not every person they target is a believer in the evil gods, at least 70% are.

“Considering the information we’ve gathered, we can reasonably conclude that Tybalt Jacques, who met his demise tonight, was a heretic and wielded the power of decay. Furthermore, he served as Hugues Artois’s assistant secretary.

“We cannot allow a highly suspicious individual to continue serving as a member of parliament. Investigating him is not only a responsibility to the people of the market district, but also to Hugues Artois himself. If we find no evidence of wrongdoing, we can assist him in purging any heretics surrounding him.”

Angoulême hadn’t anticipated his new team leader to be more devout and zealous than himself. He couldn’t help but raise his hand and furrow his brows.

With a bitter smile, he responded.

“Perhaps you are unaware, but every member of parliament has signed a contract with the two Churches and received a notarized contract.

“In this contract, they pledge their faith, display their abilities and associated sources. The two Churches promise not to restrict the personal freedom of any member of parliament or their key staff without substantial and compelling evidence. They won’t be subject to the influence of Beyonders.

“This is to safeguard the authority of the National Convention.

“According to the contract, Hugues Artois believes fervently in the mighty Eternal Blazing Sun and is not a Beyonder.

“Hence, you may question him and his core staff, but that is the extent of it.”

Valentine couldn’t conceal his disappointment.

“Why is such a contract in place?”

“It is a byproduct of the past coup d’état, a change that accompanied the course of history,” Angoulême provided a simple explanation.

Valentine let out a sigh, rose from his seat, and extended his arms. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Praise the Sun!”

“Praise the Sun!” Angoulême stood up and returned the gesture, watching his subordinate exit the office.

…

Quartier de No?l, Holy Palace Hospital.

Jenna sat upon a small stool, slumped beside her mother Elodie’s lightly slumbering form in the hospital bed.

After bidding farewell to Franca and sending her brother Julien home, who had to attend to his factory duties come dawn, Jenna found herself alone. The Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons had yet to resume its acting training, as plans were underway to auction it, along with Auberge du Coq Doré, at the police headquarters. However, the recent explosion at the Goodville Chemical Factory had caused a delay in those proceedings.

Suddenly, Elodie stirred. Jenna startled awake, her eyes fixating on her mother, who gradually opened her own.

Elodie’s gaze mirrored the face of her daughter as she mustered a smile.

“I thought I was about to see your father.”

Without awaiting Jenna’s reply, Elodie inquired, her voice frail,

“How are my injuries?”

Jenna, overjoyed to witness her mother awaken from her coma, beamed genuinely and responded, “They’re not severe. Look, no surgery is required.”

Elodie heaved a sigh of relief and nodded slowly.

Still recovering from her coma, her body and mind weren’t yet in their prime state. After a brief exchange, she drifted back into slumber.

Jenna clasped her mother’s hand and beheld the contentment that graced the wrinkled, gray-haired countenance beneath the gentle illumination streaming in from the window.

Observing for a while longer, she glanced upward and caught sight of the first rays of dawn gradually painting the sky with light.

Chapter 246 - 246 Resolution

246 Resolution

As the first rays of dawn illuminated the room, Lumian slowly opened his eyes, awakened by the gentle chime of bells from église Saint-Robert.

The previous night, he had stayed at Auberge du Coq Doré.

He raised his right hand to touch his head. His bald head had grown thick and healthy hair once more.

Leaving the comfort of his bed, Lumian walked over to the full-length mirror and saw a reflection that looked both familiar and unfamiliar.

Back in Cordu, his hair had never been dyed golden.

But in the morning light, he couldn't help but smile, feeling better than he had in a long time.

At the very least, he didn't meet with failure with everything he did. Killing and taking revenge didn't pose a problem.

After breakfast at a street vendor, Lumian planned to find a barbershop in either Quartier de l'Observatoire or Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative to revert his hair color to golden. But before he could set out, hurried footsteps approached his room. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

He braced himself, thinking someone might kick the door open, but instead, there was a knock.

It was Franca, who rarely rose so early. She couldn't hide her surprise upon seeing Lumian's pure black hair.

"You dyed it back?" she exclaimed.

“Sort of,” Lumian replied, observing Franca as she entered Room 207 and closed the door behind her.

Without mincing words, Franca confronted him, “Did you kill Hugues Artois’s assistant secretary? And did you rush to advance to Pyromaniac last night?”

Lumian stood up, smiling.

“Yes.”

Franca was momentarily at a loss for words with the frank admission.

After a few seconds, she hissed and said, “You brat, you promised me you would hold back and endure, but the very next moment, you went ahead without hesitation. You really can’t suppress your hatred for a night, can you?

“If you keep going like this, I seriously doubt you’ll survive this year —no, this month!”

Lumian explained simply, “Actually, I didn’t intend to kill Tybalt last night. I merely wanted to monitor him, gather information, and plan a proper approach to deal with him together with you. But an opportunity presented itself, and it was too good to pass up. I couldn’t convince myself to hold back.”

“Right, I made preparations in all aspects, including measures against divination and tracking.”

Relieved, Franca asked, “That Tybalt guy seemed weak. Was it easy for you to handle him?”

“He mainly transmitted diseases through contact, and Pyromaniacs happened to counter that ability. If not for my anti-divination and anti-spirit channeling preparations, I could have taken care of him in ten seconds,” Lumian recalled.

Franca sighed, admitting, “You got lucky. Have you considered the possibility that your target might be much stronger?”

“My initial judgment was that he wouldn’t be too formidable. If he

exceeded a certain threshold, I was prepared to use my dirk," Lumian replied before asking, "Why are you up so early?"

"Gardner woke me up!" Franca replied with gritted teeth. "He instructed me to gather the leaders of the Savoie Mob and find the person responsible for killing Hugues Artois's assistant secretary. When I heard the details, I knew it had to be you! I told you last night to get in the right condition before drinking the Pyromaniac potion, but you went ahead and consumed it anyway."

Lumian spoke earnestly, his voice filled with sincerity. "I believed that I was in the perfect state to advance to Pyromaniac, so I swiftly concocted the potion. Will Boss suspect me?"

"For now, no," Franca replied, shaking her head. "Besides yourself, nobody expected you to consume the potion last night. Moreover, you cunningly framed the Aurora Order. Gardner doesn't see any motive in you."

Franca glanced at Lumian's head and suggested, "Come here, I'll help you restore your original hair color. It's best not to make any changes during a time like this to avoid arousing suspicion."

"Alright," Lumian agreed, feeling delighted to save some money.

…

In the morning, the ward buzzed with more activity compared to the somberness of the night. Echoing through the air were the cries of those being carried away, the presence of relatives escorting loved ones back home, and the determination of some patients who defied the cries, choosing to depart from the hospital's confines.

Jenna and Elodie—who had regained consciousness—observed the scene in silence. They understood the painful reality unfolding before them.

Not everyone could bear the weight of insurmountable medical expenses, nor did they wish to drag their families into the depths of despair.

Sometimes, the patient surrendered while the family persisted. Other

times, it was the family that gave up, leaving the patient with no choice but to accept their fate. At times, patient and family would tacitly leave the ward, exchange silent glances, and be unable to hold back their tears as they cried or wailed.

After a while, as the ward regained a semblance of tranquility, Elodie, who had managed to sit up, whispered softly, “How long will I have to stay here for treatment?”

Jenna pondered for a moment before deciding to tell her mother the truth. It was an impossible matter to conceal. The doctors’ rounds, treatments, and further examinations would inevitably reveal some information. Besides, Elodie would piece it together based on her physical condition and the fact that she hadn’t been discharged after several days.

Organizing her thoughts, Jenna explained, “The doctor said you’ll be here for months, possibly even half a year. Your external injuries aren’t severe, but your body has suffered significant damage. Unless you make a full recovery, your condition may worsen.”

Before Elodie could respond, Jenna smiled reassuringly and continued, “I’ve already secured the funds for your treatment. I borrowed the money from Franca. She has no shortage of resources. She promised Julien and me that we could repay it in two to three years, in installments. By then, Dad’s accident compensation will surely have been paid. There may even be hope for yours.”

Elodie’s expression faltered for a moment. After a few seconds, she spoke with weariness in her voice, “Why will it take so long…”

“With such a massive explosion and the chemical gasses, it’s a miracle that you survived,” Jenna said before asking. “What exactly happened back then?”

Elodie contemplated for a moment and replied wearily, “I don’t know. The explosion happened so suddenly, and I lost consciousness.

“I think it originated near the metal tank. Sigh, many of the factory’s facilities are old and prone to breakdowns. They require repairs, but the boss refuses to invest in replacements. Sigh…”

After chatting for a while, Jenna noticed her mother's energy waning. She advised Elodie to rest for a while and headed towards the washroom at the end of the corridor.

As soon as Elodie witnessed Jenna's departure from the ward, she mustered all her strength, disconnected the IV, and leaned against the wall for support. Gasping for breath, she took two steps towards the ward diagonally opposite, where doctors and nurses meticulously examined each injured individual.

Elodie located the doctor, provided her ward and bed number, and inquired, "How long will my treatment last?"

The doctor leafed through his records and responded, "We don't have all the results yet, but we estimate it will take about five to seven months."

"What will be the cost of treatment each month?" Elodie inquired.

The doctor pondered for a moment and replied, "Let's wait for the complete assessment. If all goes well, it should amount to around 200 verl d'or per week. As treatment progresses, the cost will decrease. However, if your condition isn't too favorable, it might range from 300 to 400 verl d'or per week. Furthermore, even after you leave the hospital, you must prioritize rest and avoid exerting yourself."

Elodie found herself rendered speechless. The nurse assisted her back to the ward and reinserted the needle into her arm.

Shortly before noon, Julien rushed into the ward, his concern for his mother evident in his eyes.

After conversing with him for a while, Jenna announced, "I'll go to the hospital cafeteria and bring back some food for you."

With that, she departed the ward, moving briskly as she descended the stairs.

Thanks to Lumian's guidance, Jenna had come to realize that she possessed extraordinary abilities as a Beyonder. She was no longer an ordinary individual. With a willingness to take calculated risks, she had numerous avenues to earn money.

Consequently, the expenses for Elodie's treatment and the overwhelming debt held no power over her. The fact that her mother had been saved was cause for celebration, a reason to extol the sun.

In the ward, Elodie gazed at Julien, who sat beside her, and posed a question with a tender expression, "You're nearly 23, aren't you?"

"That's right," Julien replied, a smile gracing his face. "I've been a provider for the family for quite some time now. But in your eyes, I'm still a youngling."

Elodie offered a faint smile and spoke, "That's because my criteria for true adulthood differ from others. I've always believed that one can only be considered an adult when they possess a skill that consistently earns them money. You're still a year away from that, and Celia has another year and a half to go.

"You've endured so much these past few years."

"It was you who endured," Julien responded with a sigh. "Before I could truly assist, you worked three jobs a day for a whole year, from 6 a.m. until midnight."

Emotions surged within him, causing him to blurt out, "We'll definitely cure you!"

Elodie chuckled in delight, her hand gently caressing her flaxen hair.

"Unfortunately, my wig is gone.

"And your sister. She previously deceived us, claiming that the theater required her to dye her hair a brownish-yellow shade. In reality, it was to prevent herself from being recognized when she went to sing at the dance hall. I don't know what to do with her.

"Sigh, I truly don't want you to shoulder more debt. It will waste years. By then, you won't be young anymore…"

Julien swiftly consoled his mother, assuring her that he excelled at his job and would undoubtedly receive a salary increase next year.

After rambling for a few minutes, Elodie clutched her chest and

beseeched Julien, “I’m not feeling well. Please find a doctor for me.”

“Okay.” Julien stood up abruptly and dashed out of the room.

Elodie promptly removed the IV needle and stumbled toward the ward’s window, relying on the nearby beds for support.

Meanwhile, on the first floor of Holy Palace Hospital.

Jenna emerged from the cafeteria, carrying a wooden lunch box, and began her journey up the staircase.

Suddenly, from the corner of her eye, she witnessed a figure hurtling downwards, resulting in a resounding thud.

Jenna’s heart skipped a beat, her mind filled with unease. Hastily, she turned around, uncertain about the source of her apprehension. She dashed out of the hall and approached the spot where the person had jumped, maneuvering through the gathering crowd.

In the next instant, she beheld a crimson liquid seeping and a familiar face adorned with delicate wrinkles.

With a thud, the lunch box slipped from her grasp, crashing onto the ground. Her eyes grew vacant, reflecting a vivid red.

The lifeless body belonged to her mother, Elodie.

The person who had leaped from the building was her mother, Elodie.

Chapter 247 - 247 Instigation

247 Instigation

In the café on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise,

Lumian finished his lunch and caught sight of Franca once more. She was attired in a white shirt, light-colored breeches, and vibrant red boots.

This time, her countenance was grave, causing an uneasiness to settle upon Louis, Sarkota, and the other gangsters. They feared that trouble might accompany her arrival.

Lumian rose from his seat, casting an inquisitive gaze in her direction.

Franca exhaled slowly and spoke, her tone weighted with solemnity.

“Jenna’s mother passed away.”

Lumian was taken aback, as though he had witnessed Flameng’s lifeless body dangling from a window frame or Ruhr decaying to the bone.

His eyes narrowed, and his hands clenched into fists. After a few moments, he inquired, “Was it due to her declining condition?”

“No,” Franca shook her head. “It was suicide.”

Observing Lumian’s perplexed expression, she sighed and elaborated, “Last night, when I sought out Jenna, I worried that she might put up a brave facade and keep her difficulties concealed or seek our assistance, so I made a point to meet the attending physician and the nurses responsible for her mother’s care. I treated them to coffee and dessert, urging them to keep a close watch on Jenna’s mother. I

arranged for them to notify me immediately of any complications, and I pledged to cover any necessary expenses.

“They informed me that upon learning about the months-long treatment and its approximate cost, Jenna’s mother took advantage of Jenna’s visit to the cafeteria and Julien’s absence in search of a doctor. She leaped from the sixth floor…

“Alas, her health was already frail, and she perished instantly upon impact.”

Lumian fell into a pensive silence. Suddenly, he pressed his left chest and sneered, “Is this fate?”

Franca couldn’t provide an answer.

…

At 1 p.m., Lumian and Franca arrived at the Holy Palace Hospital. The nurse, whom Franca had deliberately befriended, guided them to the Farewell Sanctuary, situated on the ground floor of an annex.

The place was known as the Farewell Sanctuary, where the departed awaited their purification.

Julien, Jenna’s brother, sat by the door, his head in his hands, wearing a pained expression as he stared at the sky-blue-painted wall opposite.

Approaching him, Franca asked in a hushed voice, “Are Auntie and Jenna inside?”

Julien nodded slowly and whispered to himself in anguish, “I shouldn’t have left her alone in the ward…

“I shouldn’t have left her alone in the ward…”

Franca didn’t know how to console him; all she could do was sigh and enter the Farewell Sanctuary alongside Julien.

Elodie’s body lay on a bed covered by a white sheet, concealed beneath a plain white cloth.

The blood on her body had been cleansed. Her face appeared pallid, and her eyes were tightly shut.

Jenna sat on a stool across from her mother, her gaze empty and her voice absent, as if her soul had departed.

Franca called out, a mix of pain and concern in her tone, but Jenna ignored her, as if she had encased herself in another realm.

Lumian pulled up a chair and seated himself next to Jenna, his gaze also fixed upon the lifeless figure of Elodie.

After a few seconds, he spoke in a deep voice, “I understand what you’re feeling. Not long ago, I, too, lost the family member who meant the most to me.”

Jenna remained silent, as if she had transformed into a statue.

Lumian directed his gaze toward the same direction as Jenna and continued, “But you need to know who is responsible for this tragedy.

“Is it your fault? Is it your mother’s fault? Is it your brother’s fault?

“No, you did nothing wrong! Faced with accidents and debts, you chose to endure them with determination. You chose to rely on your own labor and suffering to secure a new life. It took you several years to emerge from it slowly. Is that wrong? No!

“This time, you didn’t abandon your loved one. You fought hard to find a solution. Is that wrong? No!

“You didn’t hide anything from your mother. You informed her about the duration of the treatment, the costs, and the source of funding. Is that wrong? No! There was no way to conceal it!

“Your mother loves you and wants you to avoid reliving the painful past few years. She wants you to walk in the light, not in darkness. Is that wrong? No!

“Who is at fault?

“It’s the factory owner who continuously appeals and delays the

compensation for the accident, subjecting you to years of painful and oppressive existence! New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“It’s the laws that protect their actions!

“It’s Bono Goodville, who disregards safety regulations and fails to replace worn-out machines!

“It’s the exorbitant cost of treatment that plunges the less fortunate into despair!

“It’s the National Convention and the government who have caused all of this!”

Jenna’s expression finally shifted, a glimmer of pain surfacing in her vacant eyes and impassive face.

Lumian turned towards the door, his voice resonating with depth as he spoke, “I have something else to say. Perhaps the explosion at Goodville Chemical Factory, which led to your mother’s tragic fate, wasn’t an accident.”

Jenna instinctively turned to face Lumian and Franca.

Lumian directed his gaze towards Elodie’s corpse.

“Perhaps it was a murder, a sacrificial offering to an evil deity.

“Our Honorable Member of Parliament, Hugues Artois, has been assessed by the Blessed of powerful evil gods as an open-minded individual. He is surrounded by heretics, including Tybalt Jacques, the assistant secretary responsible for spreading diseases and taking innocent lives.

“Yesterday morning, Bono Goodville paid a visit to the parliament member’s office, and by evening, his chemical plant had exploded.

“When I encountered Tybalt Jacques in the guise of Bono Goodville, he mentioned something about unavoidable troubles following an organization’s decay. It convinced me that the chemical plant explosion was something they eagerly anticipated. It might have been orchestrated with a specific purpose that remains unknown to us.

“Are you consumed by anger? Do you feel a burning hatred? Can you accept this?

“Do you wish to sit here and watch as the murderers responsible for your mother’s death and the destruction of your happiness revel in champagne, indulge in dance parties, and inflict more heartbreak on innocent families?”

Jenna’s expression twisted slightly, as if she grappled with conflicting emotions within.

Eventually, she raised her hands to cover her face, weeping bitterly.

“But my mother… she cannot be brought back…”

Franca crouched down before Jenna and embraced her, allowing her tears to flow freely. As Jenna wept, Franca offered her guidance, “What your mother desires most is for both you and your brother to be free from the burdens of debt and to embark on a fresh new life. She wishes for one of you to become a remarkable stage actress, while the other escapes the constraints of ordinary labor and masters a particular skill. She yearns for you to live well. Can you bear to disappoint her?”

Jenna sobbed and asked, “But isn’t it said that the night will pass and light will emerge? Why? Why is it always so dark? Why can’t I see any light…”

“It will come, it will come,” Franca repeated, patting Jenna’s back soothingly. “What you must do now is to give your mother a proper burial and consider doing something meaningful in her honor.”

“Okay,” Jenna agreed tearfully.

She wept until exhaustion overtook her, finally finding stability within her emotions.

At that moment, the clergyman from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, who had come to offer his final words of solace, arrived.

Clad in a white robe adorned with intricate golden threads, he entered the room alongside Julien and positioned himself beside

Elodie's lifeless body.

In one hand, he grasped the Holy Bible and recited a prayer, while the other hand held a suspended bottle of holy water.

Eventually, a beam of sunlight, accompanied by the holy water, materialized from thin air and gently bathed Elodie.

"Praise the Sun. May this sister find peace and enter the realm of God." The clergyman extended his arms.

"Praise the Sun!" Jenna and Julien joined in prayer.

Observing the ceremony, Lumian bowed his head and silently scoffed.

Franca, a devout follower of the God of Steam and Machinery, refrained from praising the Sun as well.

With the purification ritual concluded, the priest departed from the Farewell Sanctuary. In his place, the administrator in charge of the Holy Palace Hospital morgue entered and posed a question to Julien and Jenna, "Should we proceed with burial or cremation for this sister? Shall we send her to the catacombs, Cimetière des Innocents, or Cimetière des Prêtres?"

Julien and Jenna exchanged glances before responding, "Cremation. We'll personally escort her to the catacombs."

Their father also rested there.

The morgue administrator made a notation and added, "There have been numerous casualties from last night. The crematorium won't be available until next week. Would you like this sister to remain in the morgue for the time being?"

"Very well." Jenna's voice trembled slightly.

And so, the four of them watched as Elodie's visage was veiled with a white cloth and her body was gently guided out of the Farewell Sanctuary.

They trailed behind the wheeled bed, descending through the steam-powered elevator into the subterranean realm until they arrived outside the morgue.

The morgue door gleamed in a silvery-gray hue, while the interior emanated an eerie coldness, producing a misty white fog at the intersection.

Jenna stood in a daze as her mother, Elodie, was propelled through the door, vanishing into the frigid chamber filled with metallic cabinets illuminated by gas-powered wall lamps. She remained fixated as the silver-gray door slowly shut.

Unconsciously, she took a few steps forward, halting at the threshold.

Silently, the door closed.

Her mother was now forever beyond her sight.

…

As they returned to Passy Bridge in Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Jenna's eyes fixed on her brother Julien, who walked ahead of her with a heavy heart. Sorrow engulfed her as the bright afternoon sun blinded her vision.

Franca averted her gaze from Julien's retreating form and contemplated finding a task to occupy Jenna's mind.

"Your brother is emotionally distressed. It seems he blames himself. Offer him guidance in the upcoming days and assure him that it wasn't his fault. Any ordinary person would have hurriedly sought a doctor."

Jenna momentarily snapped out of her sorrow and tersely acknowledged, "I'll counsel him. But what if it doesn't work?"

She glanced at Lumian and Franca, her expression filled with helplessness.

Franca nodded reassuringly.

“When the time comes, I can assist him in finding a genuine Psychiatrist—one with Beyonder abilities.”

Jenna let out a sigh of relief, her nose sniffing with gratitude.

“Thank you. Thank you both.”

Lumian, drawing from his own experiences, reminded her, “You must also attend to your own mental well-being.”

Jenna pressed her lips together and nodded, her gaze gradually transforming into one of determination.

In a hushed, raspy voice, she addressed Franca and Lumian, “Tonight, I intend to pay a ‘visit’ to Bono Goodville.”

Chapter 248 - 248 Visitors

248 Visitors

In Quartier des Thermes, at 55 Rue Chestnut, stood a three-story building tinged with a grayish-blue hue. It boasted a delightful garden, a well-kept lawn, and even stables.

Within the establishment, a band played a melodic tune from a corner. Bono Goodville, the owner of this fine establishment, gracefully navigated through the guests with a glass of golden champagne in hand. Engaging in conversations about the aftermath of the chemical plant explosion, he cunningly aimed to evade his responsibilities while securing a substantial compensation from the insurance company.

Between his interactions, he chatted with the wife of a government official, conferred with his lawyer, and sought out influential figures relevant to the matter at hand.

Like a natural social butterfly, he effortlessly flitted from one person to another, exhibiting wit and vigor amidst the elegant setting. The light from the crystal chandelier illuminated his dark-blue eyes and thick brown beard, lending them a captivating sparkle.

As he gracefully maneuvered around an unassuming guest, Bono Goodville unexpectedly encountered Travis Everett.

The superintendent of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman was not in uniform that evening. Clad in a sleek black suit paired with a stylish blue bow tie, he held a glass of light golden champagne in his hand.

“Superintendent Everett, it is imperative that you ensure my protection during this trying time!” Bono Goodville smiled at Travis Everett, expressing his concerns. “The explosion claimed many lives,

and I fear their bereaved relatives might resort to drastic measures."

Everett adjusted his black-framed glasses and returned the smile.

"Ah, you see, Quartier des Thermes falls beyond my jurisdiction. Moreover, once I stepped onto this street, it became evident that the frequency and intensity of police patrols have notably increased."

"Indeed, but didn't you hire numerous bodyguards? What is there to worry about? Those who perished were ordinary workers. They pose no threat to you. Furthermore, they are unaware of your place of residence."

Everett jestingly remarked, his tone lighthearted.

"But if the injured and their families discover that you continue to host a lavish banquet, serving fine wine while being serenaded by a small accompanying symphony band, their anguish might drive them to madness. They could drag you and your family into the depths of despair."

Bono Goodville sheepishly smiled and replied, "The banquet is unrelated to compensation. I must adhere to the law and await judgment."

"Superintendent Everett, if I were to return to the market district to handle matters, I humbly request your assistance in assigning two or three police officers to protect me."

Everett gently nodded.

"That is my duty, but I must remind you that several police officers' families are employed at your chemical plant."

Implicitly, he emphasized the urgency of compensating his subordinates, hoping for a swift resolution.

Bono Goodville nodded silently, seemingly unaffected.

The banquet continued into the early hours of the morning. Amidst the lingering fragrance, Bono Goodville bid farewell to his three children, embracing each one before ascending to the third floor.

Untying his bow tie, he entered the bedroom with his wife, ready to retire for the night.

With a flick, the gas wall lamp ignited, casting a soft glow that reflected in Bono Goodville's wide eyes.

There, in his cherished recliner, sat an unexpected guest.

Although seated, the man leaned forward, exuding an air of superiority that made Bono Goodville feel small and insignificant.

Clad in a worker's uniform of muted grayish-blue, complete with a dark-blue cap, his face concealed behind swaths of white bandages, leaving only his piercing blue eyes and a glimpse of his nostrils visible.

Bono Goodville's heart raced, his instinct urging him to scream for help.

However, before a sound could escape his lips, a phantom-like crimson flaming raven materialized behind the "surprise" visitor. With a swift swoop, it crashed into Bono Goodville's teeth.

A soft bang resonated as Bono Goodville's mouth seared with pain, and two teeth clattered to the ground. Agony distorted his features, stifling his cry.

At that precise moment, a pair of sharp daggers pressed against the backs of both Bono Goodville and his wife.

Emerging from the shadows of the doorway, Franca and Jenna closed the bedroom door behind them, effectively trapping their captives. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

One of them donned a black robe with a concealed hood and leather armor, her face veiled by darkness. The other sported a man's linen shirt, a brown jacket, dark brown trousers, and laceless leather boots. A silver-white metal mask adorned her upper face, leaving only her eyes exposed.

Franca used her free hand to steady Bono Goodville, preventing him from collapsing in agony.

Maintaining his seated posture, Lumian grinned.

“Monsieur Goodville, consider that a warning. It could have been much worse. Those two missing teeth and minor injuries are nothing compared to what could have transpired.”

Bono Goodville’s wife snapped out of her daze, her voice trembling with fear as she asked, “Who are you? What do you want?”

“Who am I?” Lumian chuckled, a hint of mischief in his tone. “You may consider me your father.”

With a glance toward Franca, she retrieved the truth serum Lumian had provided earlier and administered it to Bono Goodville.

As Lumian awaited the serum’s effects, he maintained his smile and continued, “Monsieur Goodville, I had hoped for a more challenging encounter, but instead, here we are, having a pleasant conversation. You disappoint me.”

He hadn’t received a boon!

Under the influence of the truth serum, Bono Goodville wore a bitter expression as he mustered the courage to ask, “What do you want? I have a considerable sum of money in my safe. I can give it to you!”

Jenna’s anger flared up, surging from her chest to her head.

In a sudden motion, she raised her left foot and delivered a swift kick to Bono Goodville’s calf.

Oh, how she longed to strike him where it truly hurt, but circumstances prevented her from doing so!

Dammit, take your money to the catacombs!

Bono Goodville’s body leaned, and the sound of bones cracking reached his ears.

Before his instinctual scream could escape, frost materialized, sealing his voice.

Lumian nodded in approval, acknowledging Jenna's actions. Once Bono Goodville had regained composure, Lumian spoke, "I want to know why you orchestrated the detonation at your own chemical plant."

Bono Goodville's expression transformed, and he blurted out, "How did you find out?"

Before he could finish his sentence, he wished to raise his right hand and slap himself.

Shouldn't he have denied the accusation first? Why did he utter his thoughts so recklessly?

"Well, well, you are quite forthcoming. I was merely testing you, and you readily confessed," Lumian remarked, his tone almost causing Bono Goodville's brain to seize.

Jenna felt as if her soul had vacated her body.

Though Lumian's analysis had mentally prepared her, hearing the admission still left her in disbelief.

Could there truly exist such a wicked individual?

Hundreds of families were devastated!

Snapping out of her stupor, Jenna clenched her teeth tightly,

fearing that any relaxation might ignite her anger, prompting her to stab Bono Goodville.

No, it would be hundreds of stabs!

Goodville's wife also stared at her husband in a state of shock and fear.

She had believed the explosion at the chemical plant to be a mere accident.

Lumian cast a cold gaze upon Bono Goodville and questioned, "Why did you do it? Does it have any connection to someone within

Hugues Artois' office?"

Upon hearing the latter inquiry, Bono Goodville could not contain his astonishment and dread.

After consuming the peculiar liquid and "confessing" to orchestrating the chemical plant explosion, Bono Goodville's psychological defenses crumbled. In that moment, an overwhelming urge consumed him—to drag someone down with him and share the burden of his sins.

"It's Rh?ne and Tybalt! They are Secretary and Assistant Secretary to Member of Parliament Hugues Artois.

"They have been dropping hints that the chemical plant has been deteriorating for years and could explode at any given moment. I thought I might as well find a way to cash in on the insurance compensation I had purchased in the past. And when the time came, Member of Parliament Hugues Artois would use the excuse of setting up a factory to boost the economy and protect the interests of the factory owner, thereby securing funds for reconstruction and compensation.

"They kept saying that everything decays. My chemical plant was no exception, so I anticipated various problems. Instead of waiting for it to explode naturally, I decided to exchange it for greater benefits.

"I visited them again yesterday morning. For some reason, I was foolish enough to be convinced by their words. When the explosion actually occurred, I grew fearful and went to the member of parliament's office thrice.

"They assured me everything would be fine."

What an idiot. He's not even a heretic… Could superpowers have influenced him? Tybalt had also mentioned decay when he saw me disguised as Bono Goodville. What is their true agenda? Lumian pondered for a moment, about to inquire further about the conversation, when the sound of a doorbell being pulled suddenly resonated from the iron gate outside the lawn.

Lumian and Franca exchanged swift glances, both coming up with guesses.

To arrive at such an hour, ringing the doorbell politely, it could only be either a friend or an official investigator seeking Bono Goodville!

Without uttering a word, Lumian rose to his feet, and Franca sheathed her dagger in silence.

Jenna reacted instantly, comprehending their intentions.

Taking a diagonal step, she raised her dagger high and thrust it into Bono Goodville's shoulder.

Blood spurted forth as Bono Goodville let out a pained grunt.

Jenna didn't linger. She dashed towards the window opposite the main entrance.

On her dagger, black flames ignited and swiftly extinguished in several spots within the room.

The trio leaped out of the building, vaulted over the iron fence bordering the garden, and vanished into the encompassing night.

…

Inside the bedroom, a three-person team consisting of Angoulême, Valentine, and the mixed-blood Imre confronted Bono Goodville, who had just finished bandaging his scorched mouth.

The factory owner seethed with anger as he addressed them, "Officer, I was nearly abducted by three criminals!"

Angoulême surveyed the scene, a smile playing on his lips.

"We will investigate that matter later. For now, the primary problem lies with you."

"My problem?" Bono Goodville grew alarmed.

Angoulême nodded slightly.

“Let us first confirm your faith before delving into your visit to the member of parliament’s office on the morning of the chemical plant explosion.”

With insufficient evidence to take drastic measures against the member of parliament and his staff, the Purifiers redirected their investigation towards Bono Goodville.

Upon hearing these words, Bono Goodville, his psychological defenses shattered, paled in apprehension.

Chapter 249 - 249 Loophole in the Contract

249 Loophole in the Contract

Observing Bono Goodville's reaction, Angoulême's confidence grew a little.

With a swift motion, he withdrew a pen and paper, preparing to draft a Notary Certificate. The concept behind it was for Bono Goodville to swear an oath to a deity, ensuring his honesty during the subsequent questioning.

As Angoulême affixed his signature, the paper emitted a radiant golden glow.

Bono Goodville swallowed nervously, feeling the weight of the situation.

In recent years, as a well-known factory owner in Trier, he had encountered mystic knowledge and extraordinary powers that surpassed the imagination of ordinary folk. Such matters were not unfamiliar to him. It was akin to one of the three abductors blasting him with a flaming raven, another conjuring black flames, and a third leaping from the third floor.

"Sign your name," Angoulême instructed, handing Bono Goodville the Notary Certificate, now devoid of its golden glow.

"Very well." Bono Goodville's right hand trembled as he inscribed his name upon the pledge.

With each stroke, a flash of golden light emanated from his penmanship.

Once he finished, Angoulême spoke in a deep, commanding voice.

“Which deity do you believe in?”

“The God of Steam and Machinery.” For Bono Goodville, this question held no challenge.

Angoulême proceeded to the next inquiry.

“Why did you visit the member of parliament’s office on the morning of the chemical plant explosion?”

Bono Goodville hesitated for two seconds. Fearful of supernatural powers and divine witnesses, he repeated what he had divulged to Lumian and the others under the influence of the remaining truth serum.

Angoulême, Valentine, and Imre took turns posing questions, allowing Bono Goodville to reconstruct his conversation with the Member of Parliament’s secretary, Rh?ne, and his assistant secretary, Tybalt, as accurately as possible.

When the inquiry concluded, Angoulême delivered the verdict to Bono Goodville.

“You shall be arrested for arson, deliberate detonation of an explosion, and murder. Your assets will be temporarily frozen pending compensation for the deceased and injured.”

Bono Goodville’s face drained of color as he slumped into the recliner, utterly depleted.

Valentine took a couple of steps towards the door, casting a glance at the corridor beyond. Lowering his voice, he proposed, “Deacon, after we bring this blasphemous scoundrel to the police headquarters, shall we formally apprehend Hugues Artois’s secretary, Rh?ne?”

Angoulême sighed, shaking his head slowly.

“Not yet.

“Did you not notice? Rh?ne and the late Tybalt were exceedingly

cautious. They never explicitly suggested that Bono Goodville instigated the explosion at his chemical plant. They merely insinuated their support for the member of parliament's policies and preached a philosophy of decay. They might exploit Bono Goodville's blinded mind, misconstruing their words to justify his actions.

"It has been nearly two days, and finding any traces of Bono Goodville being influenced by superpowers is proving challenging.

"Put simply, we lack sufficient evidence to apprehend Secretary Rh?ne and employ Beyonder powers in the interrogation. We can only summon and question him through conventional means."

Valentine seethed with anger, but he realized there was nothing he could do.

He harbored an unwavering certainty that something was awry with the member of parliament's secretary, yet due to regulations, he couldn't employ mystical methods to confront him.

After a brief pause, he glanced at Bono Goodville, sprawled on the recliner like a heap of decaying meat, and spoke with a deep voice, "I suggest we deliver him to the stake!"

Angoulême nodded, addressing Valentine and Imre, "Let us proceed. Take this man back to the market district, where he deserves to meet his end in ten different manners."

Valentine was taken aback.

"Deacon, aren't we going to track down the three Beyonders who infiltrated this place?"

Angoulême chuckled. "Why should we?"

Valentine gazed at him, perplexed by his deacon's approach.

Imre, accustomed to his ways, whispered, "The three Beyonders infiltrated this place without pillaging or harming anyone. They merely sought information about the chemical plant explosion and the visit to the member of parliament's office. It's evident they possess a genuine interest in Secretary Rh?ne and Member of

Parliament Hugues Artois."

"I even wonder if they're from the Aurora Order, and one of them is the one who killed Assistant Secretary Tybalt."

Angoulême chuckled and added, "Since we are barred from thoroughly investigating the member of parliament's office due to contracts and regulations, why not allow untamed Beyonders, equally keen on prying and employing violence, to squeeze out the pus and expose it to the sunlight?"

"Wouldn't that pose a problem?" Valentine blurted out.

Amused, Angoulême responded, "Of course not. When dealing with cunning individuals adept at exploiting regulations, we must be even more cunning and find loopholes. If need be, we can even collaborate with secret organizations and unite with wild Beyonders.

"The contracts we hold with members of parliament and high-ranking officials only limit certain actions; they don't prohibit us from harboring ill intentions or cultivating informants among untamed Beyonders. Such contracts don't constrain the actions of untamed Beyonders.

"Likewise, these contracts mainly serve as restrictions. They don't compel us to take certain actions. Sometimes, we can observe events unfold without transgressing the contract while handling things in the usual manner.

"Valentine, even beneath the sun, shadows abound. Consider everyone's shadows, for instance. You must learn to coexist with them. At times, you must eliminate them, and at others, utilize them to extol the Sun!"

Valentine recalled his collaboration with Lumian in Cordu and reluctantly embraced the deacon's words. He extended his arms and replied, "Praise the Sun!"

Angoulême added, "I did not craft these words. Ever since Emperor Roselle's demise, the two Churches, parliament, the government, the military, and Bureau 8 have been embroiled in conflicts. Each has

amassed considerable combat experience that would not be deemed aboveboard in any other context.

“Hence, why do you think I silently permit the presence of wild Beyonders amidst the mobs of the market district? Based solely on the reassurances and rhetoric of the superintendents? No, I merely believe they may prove useful at some point.

“Of course, it is everyone’s responsibility to tolerate the convergence of heretics into a large mob. I am no exception. There are advantages and disadvantages to everything.”

Valentine contemplated in silence, refraining from further inquiries.

Similar tensions were apparent in Riston Province, although they paled in comparison to those in Trier. After all, this was the heartland of the nation.

…

During their journey from Underground Trier to the market district, Lumian, having removed his bandages, cast a glance at the silent Jenna and casually remarked, “I thought you’d dispatch Bono Goodville on the spot, subjecting him to unforgettable torment even if he became a ghost. Who would’ve guessed you’d merely stab him in the shoulder?”

Jenna pursed her lips and took a few steps ahead before responding in a hushed voice, “If he dies now, the legal process for accident compensation will drag on for years. It might even be symbolic…”

Though she no longer cared, many people still awaited justice.

Franca subtly nodded and added, “Fear not. Bono Goodville will undoubtedly face the death penalty. The only question is the means. Besides, we have left clues for the official Beyonders. Just as we shield Hugues Artois, we shall always assist in eliminating hidden dangers.”

Jenna offered a sad smile.

“That’s the member of parliament we elected. His secretary and

assistant secretary greeted us with an enormous explosion intentionally."

"Are you afraid?" Lumian mockingly inquired.

Jenna fell silent, momentarily at a loss for words.

Lumian pressed on, "I have never relished the benefits of Intis, nor have I cast a vote. Should I encounter a similar situation, I would not spare the member of parliament's secretary or even the president who governs this country!

"My sister once said that blood alone can repay blood. I care not for the identity of the bleeding individual."

Jenna's expression contorted once more, and she spoke with a tinge of anguish, "My mother always taught me to be kind and embrace forgiveness. I cannot allow suffering and hatred to dictate my life. That way, I shall never see the light…"

Without waiting for Lumian and Franca to respond, she lowered her head and gritted her teeth.

"But I despise it so much!"

Lumian pursed his lips and stated, "If you eliminate all your enemies, your life shall not be governed by hatred."

Jenna fell silent for a few seconds before giving a terse nod.

"At the very least, at the very least, I shall not let Secretary Rh?ne off the hook!

Franca promptly commended her, "Very good. Maintain this resolve."

She then emphasized, "Of course, revenge cannot be blind or impulsive. You must wait until you are strong enough and seize the opportune moment to act. Otherwise, you shall only bring more harm to your family and friends. Furthermore, you will have to witness your enemy living a good life."

"Alright," Jenna softly replied, nodding.

…

Late at night, Jenna, clad in her usual attire, returned to her home at 17 Rue Pasteur in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, her emotions in disarray.

This place was situated near Rue Saint-Hilaire in the market district and the multitude of factories south of Quartier du Jardin Botanique. Previously, Jenna's family had opted to rent this place for the convenience of Elodie and Julien's work.

Upon opening the door, Jenna was greeted by the sight of her brother, Julien, crouched by the window, his head buried in his hands.

Her heart sank, and her voice quivered as she inquired, "Julien, what's the matter?"

Illuminated by the crimson moonlight, Julien leaned against the old wooden table, wearing an expression of terror.

"Don't fire me! Don't fire me!

"My mother passed away. She really passed away. That's why I didn't come to the factory this afternoon…

"Don't fire me! Don't fire me!

"Mom, Mom, it's all my fault. I shouldn't have left you alone in the ward!

"It's all on me, entirely! Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

"Sob!"

Julien broke into tears, resembling a frightened child.

It seemed as though he had lost his sanity.

Jenna stood in the darkness at the doorway, gazing blankly at her brother. It felt as though she was slowly descending into an

unfathomable abyss.

Chapter 250 - 250 Condolence Banquet

250 Condolence Banquet

Julien's sobs reverberated through the room, bathed in the glow of the moon. Jenna stood hesitantly by the door, unwilling to take a single step forward.

Fear gripped her—fear that stepping inside would confirm this as reality and not some dreadful nightmare.

After a while, Jenna shut her eyes tightly and clenched her teeth as she entered the room that served as Julien's bedroom, living space, kitchen, and dining area.

Hunching down beside her brother, she let him cry, not daring to touch him in his state of shock. Softly, she spoke, "We don't have much debt left to settle. Even if we lose our current jobs, we can find new ones. There's no rush…

"You have a solid foundation. There must be other masters out there who would gladly take you in…

"Mom wanted us to have a better life, not to wallow in self-blame…"

Jenna repeated these words again and again until Julien, his spirit shattered, exhausted himself. His body gradually weakened, and he slumped against the wall by the window, drifting off to sleep.

Finally, silence fell.

Watching her brother's face slowly relax, his fear and anguish ebbing away, Jenna let out a silent sigh. Tears welled up in her eyes and streamed down her cheeks.

After shedding silent tears for some time, she rose to her feet and made her way to Julien's bed. Tenderly, she gathered the blanket and draped it over her sleeping brother, leaning against the wall.

Having done all this, she trudged wearily back to the other room. It was her and her mother Elodie's bedroom.

Jenna lay down, her vacant eyes fixed on the dimly lit ceiling, cast in moonlight.

Her mother's words echoed incessantly in her mind, but she couldn't convince herself.

Perhaps, aside from a fortunate few, darkness was the dominant theme in life. Light was but an occasional adornment.

Abruptly, Jenna seized her mother's pillow and pressed it against her face, her body trembling with suppressed sobs.

Why, why is darkness always so overpowering, devoid of light?

When will the sun rise again?

At some point, Jenna succumbed to a deep slumber.

She was startled awake by the commotion outside.

Sitting up, she rubbed her swollen eyes and hastened out of the room.

The sight that greeted her eyes was Julien, toasting slices of bread.

He no longer bore the devastation of the previous night; instead, he was focused on his task.

Jenna's lips quivered for a moment before she finally spoke her customary greeting.

"Why are you up so early?"

Julien responded with a touch of stiffness, "I didn't have dinner yesterday, and my hunger woke me up.

"Just wait a little longer. The toast will be ready soon."

Observing her brother's state, Jenna couldn't ease her worry.

If Julien were still in the midst of a mental breakdown, weeping as he did the night before, she might feel uncomfortable, gloomy, and desperate, but she wouldn't be afraid.

She would compel her brother to meet Franca and have her find a genuine psychiatrist for his treatment.

Yet now, she couldn't be certain if Julien had genuinely recovered or if he was merely presenting a facade of normalcy.

If there were unresolved issues lurking beneath, they could prove catastrophic when they resurfaced!

Jenna feared her brother might leap from a building and end his own life just after they finished breakfast.

Carefully observing Julien for a while, she sensed that his hysterical breakdown had indeed dissipated, but his mind hadn't fully returned to its usual state.

When Julien prepared breakfast, he moved with agility and skill. No issues there. However, during their conversations, he appeared wooden, rigid, and slow to react.

This convinced Jenna that her brother had repressed not only his breakdown and abnormalities but also his thoughts and soul.

Sigh… I still have to find a real Psychiatrist… Jenna's vision blurred once more.

Before long, Julien finished toasting the bread and went to a nearby vendor to purchase a relatively fresh can of milk.

As Jenna nibbled on her breakfast, she pretended indifference and glanced at her brother.

"I couldn't sleep last night, and I felt despondent. I want to see a psychiatrist. You don't seem any better. Would you like to come with me?"

After a brief pause, Julien replied, “I need to job hunt.”

A wave of sorrow washed over Jenna once more.

Her brother didn’t question her pursuit of a psychiatrist.

People in this neighborhood were reluctant to visit even a regular doctor, let alone a psychiatrist, for mental concerns.

Most of them were unaware of the profession of “psychiatrist” and didn’t believe they had any psychological issues.

Considering that seeing a genuine Psychiatrist might require an appointment, Jenna didn’t press the matter. After some contemplation, she spoke encouragingly, “I think you should choose your employer and master carefully this time. It’s normal not to find a job within a few days. It might take a week, or two, or even a month.

“When the time comes, both of us will have an income. Maybe we can settle the remaining debt within a year. I certainly can’t do it alone. The income of an underground singer isn’t stable. I never know when my popularity might wane.”

On the one hand, Jenna aimed to alleviate the pressure on her brother in advance, so he wouldn’t break down again due to the inability to find a job quickly. On the other hand, she emphasized his importance, assuring him that she couldn’t do it alone. By relying on his responsibility, she sought to fortify his will to survive and prevent any sudden thoughts of suicide.

Jenna, who had never considered such details the previous day, couldn’t help but ponder similar matters today.

Having repeatedly steadied Julien’s condition, she watched her brother depart for the gathering spot at Quartier du Jardin Botanique, where factories sought employees and gave opportunities.

After taking a brief rest, Jenna left 17 Rue Pasteur, still feeling somewhat weary, and made her way towards Rue Saint-Hilaire, which was within close proximity.

Her plan was to stroll leisurely towards Rue des Blouses Blanches. It would coincide with Franca waking up, enabling her to persuade Franca to arrange an appointment with a genuine Psychiatrist.

Lost in her thoughts as she passed the intersection, Jenna's gaze swept across the vacant space, catching sight of a newspaper article displayed on a nearby newsstand: "Member of Parliament Hugues Artois Stresses Impartial Handling of Goodville Chemical Factory Explosion."

Intrigued, Jenna was drawn to the words, instinctively stepping closer and picking up the newspaper to swiftly peruse the news.

"…Newly elected member of parliament, Hugues Artois, believes it is unjust to vilify factory owners solely based on accidents. Nor should factory owners, who generate numerous jobs and contribute taxes to the country, face bankruptcy after enduring a mishap. Such circumstances would result in a surge of bankruptcies, heightened unemployment rates, and a fresh wave of protests and turmoil.

"Hugues Artois has expressed his commitment to not forget the injured and deceased in the explosion. He intends to establish a new public welfare fund to assist factory owners in covering a portion of accident compensation, enabling the factories to continue operating. Those responsible for the accident will bear the weight of their sins through increased job creation and tax contributions.

"He further stated his intent to propose a bill at the National Convention, fostering a more favorable environment for entrepreneurs. This would involve streamlined dismissal of unqualified workers and employees, as well as fairer compensation for accidents…"

At that moment, Jenna's shoulders quivered unexpectedly.

She laughed, her body trembling for an extended period.

After a while, she set the newspaper down and resumed her onward journey.

Unbeknownst to her, Jenna arrived at Rue Saint-Hilaire and the

partially destroyed Goodville Chemical Factory.

As she gazed at the battered metal tank, thoughts of her mother, Elodie, flooded her mind once again.

She would always gravitate towards that iconic structure upon entering the factory.

A few minutes later, through her blurred vision, Jenna spotted an unfamiliar yet vaguely familiar face.

It was a woman donned in a worn-out dress who said to Jenna, “Hurry, let’s make our way to Avenue du Marché. The member of parliament is hosting a condolence banquet and extending invitations. We might be able to obtain something!”

“A condolence banquet?” Jenna asked, bewildered.

The woman nodded enthusiastically.

“Yes, indeed! Your mother was injured in the explosion too, don’t you remember? We met in the ward.

“That member of parliament arrived at the hospital just half an hour ago. There will be a condolence banquet later!”

“Hugues Artois?” Jenna blurted out instinctively.

“Exactly, exactly. That’s the name,” the woman affirmed, grasping the dazed Jenna’s arm and hastening towards the member of parliament’s office on Avenue du Marché.

Half an hour later, they reached the khaki-colored four-story building.

Many individuals dressed like paupers were queued up for inspection, awaiting entry into the hall.

Jenna, wearing a simple grayish-blue dress, let her hair fall naturally over her shoulders without any makeup.

She joined the back of the line and gradually made her way forward.

Nearly fifteen minutes later, it was finally her turn.

A woman in a dark-blue uniform began the inspection, starting with Jenna's head and proceeding to her boots.

After confirming the absence of any dangerous items, the woman directed her to register and verify her identity before entering the banquet hall. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian cast a surprised glance at Franca, who had appeared at the door, and exclaimed, "You're early again today."

Franca, still donning a blouse, light-colored breeches, and red boots, was now clad in a different ensemble.

She scoffed and retorted, "I'm merely concerned that you and Jenna might outwardly agree, only to carry out an assassination on the Member of Parliament's secretary, Rh?ne."

"Am I seen as such a reckless individual in your eyes?" Lumian inquired.

"Yes," Franca responded without hesitation.

She even contemplated adding the word "most," but when she recollected a Folk of Rage she had encountered in a seaside town, she felt that Lumian couldn't be categorized as one.

Breathing a sigh of relief, she continued, "Since you haven't acted impulsively, Jenna should be safe. I'll go and visit her, assessing if she requires any assistance at home."

Just as Franca concluded her statement, hurried footsteps resounded from downstairs, drawing nearer.

Lumian and Franca, positioned by the doorway, turned their heads to behold Jenna, garbed in a simple grayish-blue dress, her hair tousled,

rushing over in distress. She sobbed and uttered, “My brother, my brother has gone insane! He’s become a lunatic…”

Chapter 251 - 251 Giant Tree

251 Giant Tree

Jenna's brother gone mad? Lumian's rage surged.

Not because he was angry with the other party and thought his mental strength too weak to crumble so easily into madness, but because he heard fate's mocking laughter once again. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

He noticed yesterday that Julien blamed himself for Elodie's death and showed signs of withdrawing into himself, but that was far from madness. Even if he faced psychological issues in the future, they would be prolonged, not an instant breakdown.

Unless… unless something happened last night that dealt Julien another heavy blow!

Damn fate!

Franca shared the surprise.

Yesterday, she had warned Jenna to keep an eye on her brother's mental state, but she hadn't expected Julien to lose his mind so swiftly.

As far as she knew, he was a resilient young man. He was in good health, and his emotions wouldn't easily be affected or trigger dangerous tendencies. It would be normal for him to isolate himself or indulge for a while, but a complete breakdown in one night seemed unlikely.

Jenna had mentioned Julien's inclination towards extremism, but that was for the sake of their family. With his sister still alive, burdened with debts, and the need to become an underground singer,

it was evident that Julien would persist and work hard to share the load until the debts were repaid. If his psychological issues persisted until then, he might collapse or quietly take his own life.

This led Franca to suspect that Julien had been agitated once again the previous night.

She had similar concerns about Jenna's mother's decision to commit suicide, but she refrained from mentioning it to avoid upsetting Jenna.

Franca understood Elodie's feelings and choices, but suicide felt too hasty and impulsive, as if something had influenced her emotions.

Before transmigrating into this world, Franca had read many reports of such nature. She knew that the torment of poverty, self-blame for burdening the family with debts, fear of being incapable of labor, and pure selfless love could drive an optimistic person into a desperate situation, leading them to sacrifice themselves.

However, such matters typically involved a period of internal struggle before they were carried out. After all, everyone had a will to survive and would consider their loved ones' feelings. While it wasn't impossible to commit suicide upon understanding the circumstances, the chances were quite low.

Franca speculated two possibilities. First, Jenna's mother might have been psychologically affected by her physical condition. Second, the explosion at the chemical plant might have been part of the motives of the Member of Parliament secretary, Rh?ne, and others. The subsequent abnormal and widespread emotional fluctuations could be connected to those events.

Is Julien in a similar situation? Franca shifted her gaze to Jenna, who approached Room 207, sobbing.

"What happened?"

"Julien got fired," Jenna said, her expression filled with resentment. "Just because he didn't go to the factory yesterday afternoon. But who thinks of work when their mother has just passed away? After

leaving the hospital, he immediately went to his master to request time off, but they handed him a dismissal notice instead. He had been an apprentice there for a whole year!"

"Dammit!" Franca cursed. "Can't they just deduct some money? Are they heartless? Do none of their own family members die?"

"They said it needed to be requested in advance. It can't be done afterward." Jenna wiped her tears. "Julien broke down this morning. He cried like a child, blaming himself and expressing his fear of losing his job. I waited until he was exhausted from crying and fell asleep before rushing over to find you. I went to Rue des Blouses Blanches first but found no one there, so I came here."

As she spoke, her words meandered, as though a flood of emotions had surged within her and needed release.

Franca let out a relieved sigh.

"It doesn't seem too grave. Sounds more like an overwhelming breakdown. Trust me, a genuine Psychiatrist can heal your brother completely. I'll arrange an appointment for you right away!"

As Franca spoke, she turned and headed towards the staircase.

The anger in Lumian's heart intensified.

Forgetting to request time off, getting fired on the very day he made the request, succumbing to new disturbances, and spiraling into madness—it all seemed too coincidental.

Motherf*cker Termiboros!

Motherf*cker Inevitability!

Lumian spun towards Jenna and said sharply, "Let's pay a visit to the factory owner and your brother's master!"

Jenna pursed her lips and replied simply, "Okay."

Lumian walked past her and followed Franca up the stairs, his fiery blue eyes burning with determination.

At that moment, the words of Psychiatrist Madam Susie echoed in his mind: Always remind yourself not to overreact. Whenever you feel a similar surge of emotions, take deep breaths and find your calm…

Lumian took a deep breath, feeling a sense of alarm.

In the face of Jenna's brother's madness and fate's cruel taunts, he should be angered and protest, but he shouldn't have allowed his rage to consume him completely!

Almost simultaneously, behind Lumian, Jenna's resentful expression transformed into a calm one. From somewhere, she drew a brownish-green dagger,

resembling a blade fashioned from tree branches instead of metal. Its surface was adorned with bark, arranged in intricate patterns.

With a swift motion, Jenna thrust the dagger towards Lumian's back.

Reacting swiftly, Lumian twisted his body, narrowly avoiding a fatal blow. The dagger found purchase between his shoulder and back, drawing blood.

Jenna leaped back with agility, while the crimson blood from Lumian's wound flowed profusely, like crimson fire.

The bark on Jenna's brownish-green dagger seemed to come alive, greedily absorbing Lumian's blood.

In that moment, the muscles on Jenna's face contorted, rendering her unrecognizable to Lumian and Franca.

In an instant, she transformed into an enchanting and ethereal girl, her features captivating.

Lumian's pupils dilated as he recognized the imposter.

Charlotte Calvino!

Charlotte Calvino, the leading actress of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons!

Charlotte blended seamlessly with her surroundings, evading Lumian's fiery crimson fireball with ease.

Amidst the thunderous explosion, the door to Room 207 crumbled. The actress chuckled and uttered,

"You regained your senses swiftly. I couldn't eliminate you directly.

"But it matters not. We only require a small portion of your blood."

…

On Avenue du Marché, outside the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the member of parliament's office,

Jenna stepped into the banquet hall with bewilderment. Before her eyes lay an array of exquisite desserts, savory dishes, and glasses of vibrant-colored drinks, spread across long tables.

In one corner of the hall, a small symphony band played a soothing melody, accompanied by the sparkling brilliance of a crystal chandelier and the gentle rays of sunlight pouring in through the windows.

Amongst the crowd were individuals clad in brown jackets, linen shirts, and nondescript attire from the market district, appearing rather out of place amidst the opulence of the banquet.

Some stood in a corner, their expressions vacant, while others regarded the luxurious items with resentment. Some consumed food in a state of confusion, while others savored champagne with excitement, relishing the taste of an affair reserved for the upper class.

Instinctively, Jenna retreated to a dimly lit corner, her expression impassive as she silently observed everything around her.

Meanwhile, on the fourth floor of the member of parliament's office.

Hugues Artois, dressed in a black tailcoat and a dark-blue bow tie, his sideburns mottled and his nose prominent, stood behind a window, surveying the market district.

This chaotic and antiquated place belonged to his kingdom.

“Monsieur Member of Parliament, why host a condolence banquet and invite these plebeians?” Rh?ne, wearing gold-rimmed glasses and sporting neatly combed hair, asked in confusion.

Hugues Artois smiled.

“It is the duty of a member of parliament. Before assuming another identity, I must fulfill my obligations.

“Furthermore, by offering condolences and assistance to the grieving people at this time, I will leave a lasting impression in their minds. They may become my loyal followers in the future. When the time comes, their conversion will be easier.”

The red-haired Cassandra chuckled.

“And they shall remain oblivious to the fact that it is you, a member of parliament, who has brought calamity, pain, and despair upon them.

“They will only perceive the care and concern from a high-ranking figure, satisfied by your promises.”

Secretary Rh?ne nodded, a smile playing on his lips.

“In their eyes, Monsieur Member of Parliament is an esteemed figure they can only admire from afar. They dare not approach or question him, let alone harbor suspicions, vent their anger, or harbor hatred.

“As long as there is no organization among them, they will never dare to resist.”

Hugues Artois laughed and declared, “That is precisely why we must sow division among them, fueling their animosity towards each other.”

With those words spoken, Hugues Artois turned his gaze towards the sunlit window and muttered to himself, “Those under the Mother Tree of Desire must have already commenced their actions, I presume…”

…

On Rue Anarchie, just outside Auberge du Coq Doré.

Without warning, the ground split open and the center caved in, catching several vendors off guard. They tumbled into the abyss, their screams abruptly silenced.

A colossal brownish-green tree sprang forth from the depths, its branches spreading in every direction.

Stretching across multiple blocks, it ensnared Auberge du Coq Doré within its leafy embrace.

The eloping couple, amidst their verbal sparring, found themselves once again engaged in their favored pastime. Anthony Reid, the information broker, sought refuge beneath a rickety wooden table, trembling uncontrollably. Meanwhile, Pavard Neeson, the proprietor of the underground bar, reached for his sketchpad, downing a gulp of liquor as he sketched with an expression of deep concern…

The immense brownish-green tree continued to grow, unabated.

Chapter 252 - 252 Ancient Times

252 Ancient Times

Lumian's fireball missed its target, Charlotte, and in response, countless branches and vines slithered into Auberge du Coq Doré from every direction, entwining the walls, floor, windows, and ceiling. They twisted together in a tangle of brown and green, creating an impenetrable barrier.

In an instant, the entire scene transformed into a surreal illusion before solidifying once more.

Before him stood an immense tree, its shades of brown and green blending together harmoniously. Its roots delved deep into the earth, while its majestic crown reached ever higher towards the heavens.

Lumian's eyes widened as he realized he had been unknowingly transported. It was reminiscent of his previous journeys into Paramita, where he would find himself in a new place without any awareness of the transition.

Gone was Auberge du Coq Doré. Now, his feet trod upon the tangled knots of tree roots that carpeted the ground. His gaze ascended to the colossal tree, reminiscent of ancient legends, as the vast expanse of the sky with its painted-like blue hue and fluffy white clouds loomed above.

The tree's surface was marred by repulsive, damp growths, and each branch appeared to bear the weight of a structure—a building, a road, and other peculiarities.

Auberge du Coq Doré was among them, perched upon a brownish-green tree trunk, intertwined with countless branches and vines,

revealing a mere dozen windows to the world.

Through one of the glass windows, Lumian caught sight of the eloping couple engaged in passionate love-making, while the information broker, Anthony Reid, cowered under a wooden table, trembling in fear…

The other tree trunks held objects enshrouded by branches, leaves, and vines, appearing ethereal and hazy, as if they were scenes recorded by a magnetic field through foggy air. Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Within this realm, ancient buildings with pediments, herringbone roofs, and lead-framed windows emerged. Women clutching gas street lamps were embraced from behind, priests stood before nude men, and individuals leaped out of glass windows while covering their behinds. Exquisite bodies were carried on trays to dining tables, orgies unfolded with clothing strewn about, and an evil beauty turned her head to reveal two black goat horns. A bishop naked from the bottom half heard confessions from believers in front of a Sacred Emblem.

The scenes varied in architectural styles, clothing, and hairstyles, some evoking ancient times while others seemed to have occurred just yesterday.

Behind Lumian, crimson Fire Ravens materialized, half-illusory. He swiftly scanned the area, yet Franca was nowhere to be found.

Franca hadn't been transported to this place caught between reality and illusion!

On Rue Anarchie, amidst the tree roots, branches, and vines, street vendors and pedestrians devoured the food they sold. Even after vomiting, they continued to eat with unwavering determination. Some forcefully pinned down members of the opposite sex on the street, others drawing daggers to attack peers who had provoked them or dared steal their spots. In scenes of utter chaos, certain individuals approached glass windows, attempting to entice their reflections into a dance with a gentlemanly bow.

Pedestrians and carriages traversed the streets, seemingly oblivious to the extraordinary circumstances. Vendors continued their lively hawking, and shops remained open. Passersby appeared captivated by the bustling atmosphere, unwilling to depart.

What they failed to notice was the absence of anyone who had entered this area—they had simply vanished, never to return.

…

On the fourth floor of the khaki-colored building that housed the member of parliament's office at Avenue du Marché.

Hugues Artois, lost in thought, gazed out at the nearby streets.

Cassandra, with her fiery red hair, turned back to him and asked with curiosity, "What is Susanna from the Bliss Society planning?"

A smile formed on Hugues Artois' lips as he replied, "They spoke a great deal, but my understanding was limited. I recall them mentioning a plan to submerge the underground divine tree into the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier and extend it into a place called the astral world."

Cassandra, Rh?ne, Margaret, and Boduva exchanged puzzled and concerned glances, unable to hide their confusion.

"But won't that cause a tremendous uproar? Our current strength is far from that of official Beyonders. It's best to avoid a direct clash with them. You might not be aware, but I come from the Sauron family, and I understand the authorities quite well. I know how powerful and formidable they can be.

"Everything we've done so far has been in secret, evading investigations as best we could. If we were to be exposed, it's highly likely that we would face a Saint or a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact. And beyond them, there are angels and Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts."

Hugues Artois pressed his right hand down and reassured them with a smile.

"Fear not, they won't implicate us.

“I didn’t incite them to undertake this endeavor. I didn’t even offer a hint or assistance. I can only be considered aware of their plan in advance, silently consenting to their actions.

“The only thing that could potentially link us to this affair is the explosion at the chemical plant that received an excessive amount of decay blessings. However, that occurred because Bono Goodville misunderstood Rh?ne’s intentions and committed an unforgivable crime. The various emotions and desires stemming from the accident were exploited, amplified, and used as nourishment. What does that have to do with us?”

As the team members’ expressions eased, Hugues Artois stepped away from the window, emitting a deep chuckle.

“If they succeed, it will mark another solid step forward in our pursuits. We will be even closer to welcoming the descent of great existences. If they, unfortunately, fail, we will exercise restraint for the time being and strive to ensure that our activities remain hidden from the Beyonders of the two Churches. We will continue to be the rulers of the market district.

“Success or failure, it’s our opportunity.

“During the National Convention’s discussions, I will expose the corruption and mediocre abilities of the Beyonders from the two Churches. They have allowed heretics to repeatedly ravage the market district, each time worse than the last!

“I will request Bureau 8 to establish a branch in the market district to assist the inept Church Beyonders and share their burden.

“Bureau 8, always eager to expand its authority, will surely support my proposal.

“With three different official forces simultaneously present in the market district, conflicts among them will work to our advantage.

“Compared to the orthodox Beyonders of the two Churches, Bureau 8 can be influenced, corrupted, and gradually swayed to our side.

“This is my plan. In the long run, victory will be ours!”

Rh?ne, the secretary with gold-rimmed glasses and neatly combed hair, chuckled.

“That’s my specialty.”

Influencing, corrupting, and gradually decaying an organization, leading to its decline and moral degradation.

Hugues Artois adjusted his tailcoat and bow tie, preparing to leave for the banquet hall.

Before departing, he surveyed his surroundings, his gaze shifting between Cassandra, Rh?ne, Boduva, and Margaret. An unusual sense of confidence and certainty washed over him.

These four subordinates possessed impressive Beyonder powers, with the red-haired Cassandra being particularly formidable, instilling him with a sense of security.

Outside the office door, near the stairs, stood an official Beyonder team tasked with protecting him.

Not every member of parliament received the privilege of a three-man protective team. Some were already powerful Beyonders, while others hailed from noble backgrounds and had their own Beyonder bodyguards. For some, a certain level of personal strength warranted the presence of a Beyonder companion to ensure their safety. It was only someone like Hugues Artois, lacking Beyonder abilities and familial support, who required such protection.

According to the rules, the responsibility of safeguarding Hugues Artois rotated among the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, the God of Steam and Machinery Church, and Bureau 8. Today, it was the turn of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

In addition to the Beyonders, the entire building housed ten well-trained professional security guards armed with firearms. They were members of Bureau 7, a branch of the Intis Intelligence and Homeland Security Committee—the Special Services Bureau—responsible for providing basic protection to members of parliament and high-ranking government officials.

Standing by the door, Hugues Artois awaited Rh?ne, his secretary, to open it. With a smile on his face, he lifted his head slightly, puffed out his chest, and confidently walked out, descending the stairs.

…

On the ground covered with tangled tree roots,

Lumian surrounded himself with semi-illusory Fire Ravens, once again spotting Charlotte Calvino, the leading lady of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

With a remarkable talent for acting, Charlotte gracefully wandered through the illusory scenes formed by the various tree trunks. Sometimes, she adorned a corset dress and styled her hair in an elegant bun. Other times, she embraced contemporary fashion, donning a fitted dress, a small coat, and long boots. On certain occasions, she even transported herself to the era of the Sauron royal family, embodying their love for masculine attire and blending seamlessly with the corresponding backdrop.

In this ethereal process, whenever she left one misty illusory scene, she promptly emerged in another, as if leisurely strolling through different eras of Trier.

Beneath the dim glow of the gas street lamps, Charlotte wore a smile as she addressed Lumian, "You should consider yourself honored. You are the first dissident to enter the divine tree and merge with it."

The crimson Fire Ravens encircling Lumian condensed but refrained from attacking. This was because Charlotte constantly flickered between illusory scenes, altering her appearance with each transition.

Her voice echoed from all directions, forming sentences.

Lumian had already donned black gloves. His right hand was in his pocket, gripping Mr. K's finger tightly.

Charlotte continued her discourse, introducing the situation as if through an aria, as if it were insufficient to satisfy her inner desires.

This ancient Tree of Shadow predates the construction of present-day

Trier. Its roots were buried deep underground.

“It brings delight and sustenance to the people of Trier. With the aid of the devil lineage and devoted followers, the ambiance here gradually transformed according to the deity’s desired path. The people of Trier have never failed it. Both debauchery and pleasure are inherent to human nature. Year after year, they showered it with various excessive desires, providing it with nourishment.

“Over a millennium has elapsed. Although Trier hasn’t reached the expected pinnacle of unbridled joy and indulgence until death, it has taken form. The divine tree’s growth has now reached a crucial crossroads.

“In such a situation, pure desires and emotions can no longer play their primary role. They can only serve as firewood for the fire. We require a sacrifice of considerable magnitude. And you, who possess corruption at the angelic level but lack commensurate strength, are the perfect choice!”

Lumian’s heart skipped a beat upon hearing this. His pupils dilated, as if he wished to see Charlotte’s face clearly.

Does she know that I carry the sealed power of Inevitability within me?

Charlotte grinned.

“The first time you summoned High Priestess Susanna, she sensed the terrifying angelic power sealed within you. She didn’t dare possess you. Her subsequent attempts to kill you were not solely motivated by Charlie!”

Chapter 253 - 253 Root of the Problem

253 Root of the Problem

Upon hearing Charlotte's words, Lumian grasped the problem in an instant.

As soon as he reached the market district and attempted his first Summoning Dance, he unintentionally summoned Susanna Mattise, who had been drawn to Charlie, into his room.

At the time, Susanna seemed eager to possess him, but she instinctively sensed the danger lurking within the seal and refrained from acting. This mirrored the behavior of the peculiar creatures Lumian had summoned before. It appeared that only by compelling them would they dare to take hold of him.

Hence, Lumian didn't see anything amiss then. Even when he later encountered Susanna Mattise again and gained deeper insight into the Bliss Society, he failed to connect the dots.

But now, he realized his oversight.

Susanna Mattise was fundamentally different from the strange creatures he had previously summoned!

The dissimilarity didn't lie in her status as a Sequence 5 evil spirit who had failed to attain godhood, but rather in her possession of reason and the ability to think. Besides being extremely fanatical and persistent, she could also lead and develop a secret organization!

When such an evil spirit sensed the tremendously dangerous power sealed within Lumian's body, even if she didn't immediately recognize it as angelic-level corruption, she would have left in

confusion and sought revelation from the evil god she believed in!

By the time she grasped the situation, Lumian, possessing the strength of a Low-Sequence Beyonder equivalent to an angel, would be irresistibly appealing to heretics skilled in sacrificial rituals. He would be no less enticing than a hundred million verl d'or abandoned on the street before a Scrooge.

Had it not been for Lumian's quick thinking, temporarily stunning her with Fallen Mercury and deceiving Susanna Mattise during their second encounter, the situation might have reached its conclusion before the official Beyonders arrived.

For Charlie, an ordinary person, to successfully descend from the fifth floor to Lumian's door and seek help despite Susanna Mattise's threats and lingering presence, it seemed more than just mere luck.

One couldn't trust the words and emotions of an Actor, especially those who were particularly good-looking!

In Charlotte Calvino's performance, Lumian had been scanning the surroundings, hoping to utilize a Hunter's instincts to find an exit from this peculiar space.

Yet, aside from the entangled tree roots blanketing the ground, the colossal slowly-growing brownish-green tree, and the oil painting-like blue sky with white clouds, there was nothing else.

In such an environment, Lumian's Pyromaniac instincts made him stop hesitating. He released his grip on Mr. K's finger and flung it into the air.

Almost simultaneously, the semi-illusory crimson Fire Ravens condensed around him took flight, each tracing an elegant arc as they soared toward the illusionary scene where Charlotte Calvino stood and the fog of the past lingering on the surrounding branches.

Charlotte stepped out of the grand palace, suspected to be a scene depicting Emperor Roselle's affair, and entered the White Maple Palace during the Sauron royal era. There, a Beyonder who had transformed into a man due to a potion but hadn't changed his sexual

orientation was scrutinizing the noble ladies' spouses.

The rumbling sounds persisted, yet Charlotte effortlessly evaded the onslaught of Fire Ravens. The fog-shrouded scenes of the past remained unyielding, as if they were truly nonexistent. However, the brownish-green branches that bore them showed signs of scorching and charring.

The Tree of Shadow was, after all, a tree, and thus susceptible to combustion!

The only issue was that Lumian's Fire Ravens inflicted minimal harm upon it.

In an explosive moment, Mr. K's finger detonated like a bomb, transforming into a gruesome rain of flesh and blood that draped Lumian in a hooded robe of crimson.

To Lumian's dismay, Mr. K didn't appear immediately. It was uncertain whether it would take time to sense his presence or if the Tree of Shadow had isolated this space from the real world.

Charlotte ventured into the illusory scene of a torrential downpour, where a few naked figures sprinted about. Her white silk dress seemed drenched, adhering to her body and accentuating her unusually exquisite form.

She bestowed Lumian with a smile, her eyes akin to serene lakes tinged with timidity, innocence, and purity.

A searing flame coursed through Lumian's being, igniting from his head down to his very core.

Lumian's heart surged with longing. He darted between the entangled roots, heading toward the brownish-green tree and the captivating figure of Charlotte Calvino.

Charlotte didn't traverse the various illusory scenes. Instead, she stepped onto a tree branch below and leaned against the brownish-green trunk. Her body trembled slightly, as if yearning to hide but finding no escape.

Lumian's eyes blazed with a reddened fury as his gaze fixated upon Charlotte's sparkling eyes, moist lips, graceful neck, and alluring curves. His thoughts became a chaotic haze.

Thus, he failed to notice Charlotte's abdomen and legs sinking into the brownish-green trunk. He failed to observe the crack forming, unveiling a colossal moist flower.

The vivid red flower bloomed gradually, akin to an enormous mouth anticipating its prey.

Lumian lunged toward Charlotte, propelled by his fervor.

Charlotte couldn't help but smile.

At that very moment, a muffled explosion erupted from Lumian's right pocket.

Boom!

Underneath his blood-colored robe, a ball of flames burst forth, ripping through his pocket and igniting his shirt, causing an agonizing pain to course through Lumian's waist.

Lumian's eyes regained some semblance of clarity. Swiftly, he reached out and grasped Charlotte's wrist, keeping a minimal distance between himself and the moist flower.

Having long been aware of the Mother Tree of Desire's ability to awaken various desires, how could Lumian not have been on guard against Charlotte's seduction?

However, in order to prevent the other party from detecting his defenses prematurely and setting a trap, he chose not to directly soak the Mysticism Smelling Salts in cloth and place it near his nose. Nor did he turn the dagger around, preparing for the collision that would bring him back to his senses. In their current predicament, such methods held little reliability, for Charlotte might not allow him to truly pounce on her.

Hence, Lumian opted to create a small fireball with a delayed explosion in his pocket, all the while gripping Mr. K's finger!

If he remained unaffected and the fireball neared detonation, he could choose to dispel it and create another.

The small fireball inflicted negligible harm upon him. Its primary purpose was to awaken him through pain.

As for the resultant burn injuries, Lumian paid them no heed.

Pyromaniacs held no fear of such trivialities!

In an instant, Lumian seized Charlotte's wrist, and he caught a flicker of fear on her face.

Without delay, two serpent-like crimson flames burst forth from Lumian's palm, searing their way along Charlotte's arm toward her body and head.

Instinctively, Charlotte tilted her neck back, emitting a pained groan as her skin swiftly turned black from the scorching flames.

Just as Lumian was on the verge of engulfing her entirely, a wave of intense danger washed over him.

He attempted to pull Charlotte to the side, but she appeared to meld with the brownish-green tree. No matter how hard Lumian tugged, he couldn't extricate her.

Reluctantly, Lumian abandoned his futile efforts and lunged to his right.

With a muffled thud, a tree trunk as thick as a wine glass descended from the sky, impaling the ground teeming with tangled roots like a javelin, its tip quivering violently. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Lumian glanced upward and beheld Susanna Mattise, her turquoise hair cascading around her, her emerald eyes and scarlet lips.

She possessed a translucent quality, standing amidst the dense and ethereal canopy of the tree, blending seamlessly with it.

Both the brownish-green trunk and the outstretched branches bore

colossal wet flowers in pale hues, flourishing and blooming.

…

On Avenue du Marché, inside the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the parliament member's office.

In a corner, Jenna observed Hugues Artois, garbed in elegance, leading his secretary Rh?ne and others through the gathering. With a glass of champagne in hand, he offered consolation, made promises, and delivered impromptu speeches with mere words. In response, he received sincere gratitude, unveiled dependence, and instinctive flattery.

Jenna couldn't help but recall a question Lumian had once posed to her: "Do you wish to sit here and watch as the murderers responsible for your mother's death and the destruction of your happiness revel in champagne, indulge in dance parties, and inflict more heartbreak on innocent families?"

Unconsciously, Jenna's fists clenched, her knowledge of the truth fueling an uncontrollable anguish.

However, she understood the need to restrain herself. Acting impulsively wouldn't yield results. She had to endure.

This was because following the proper procedures, she couldn't take action against a parliament member without substantial evidence. And if she desired to seek justice independently, her adversaries boasted several Beyonders who had been bestowed with an evil god's boon and were protected by official Beyonders and armed personnel.

All she could do was endure and await the future!

…

Within the confines of Auberge du Coq Doré, ensnared by branches and vines, Franca stood near the staircase, her face flushed and her eyes glistening as she battled to suppress the overwhelming desire coursing through her veins.

Her right hand trembled as she retrieved the canister of Mysticism

Smelling Salts obtained from Rentas. With a twist of the lid, she raised it to her nose.

Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!

A series of sneezes erupted, marking Franca's triumph over her desires and the gradual return of her rationality.

Swiftly scanning her surroundings, she realized that Lumian, who had been mere steps away, had vanished.

Taking note of the unnatural transformations plaguing the motel and the adjacent streets engulfed by colossal trees, Franca clenched her teeth and arrived at a resolution. The tree crowns above seemed to grow increasingly ethereal as they reached skyward, extending into an otherworldly realm.

She retrieved two objects from her possession.

They were a pair of tarot cards.

One depicted a man and a woman raising their cups in a greeting—the Two of Cups. In the center, a wooden staff coiled by twin serpents stood prominently.

The other card portrayed an angel sounding a trumpet, calling forth the resurrection of the departed—the Judgment card!

Chapter 254 - 254 The Weight of History

254 The Weight of History

Franca clutched the Judgment card tightly and chanted in Hermes, “Rain judgment!”

The ordinary-looking tarot card remained unchanged, but within a few seconds, Auberge du Coq Doré trembled visibly.

The brownish-green branches and turquoise vines that covered the building’s facade receded, as if filled with fear.

Franca’s view through the window expanded. She witnessed the sky merging with the ethereal canopy of a colossal tree. The clouds appeared to be caught in a hurricane, swirling in unison.

As the wind shifted, numerous white clouds gathered, forming a massive vortex that descended to the ground, elongating into a sword-like gust that bridged heaven and earth.

The sword descended, and a figure stood unwavering in the middle of Rue Anarchie.

It was a woman with shoulder-length blond hair, donned in a traditional grayish-white knight’s training attire.

Standing over 1.5 meters tall, her features were exquisite, and her eyes exuded a commanding aura of dignity, demanding submission and obedience.

Rue Anarchie, where she stood, was no longer recognizable. The surrounding buildings, the narrow roads, and the vendors and pedestrians, consumed by their own desires, were divided and

scattered across the strange wilderness, blending with the other streets.

Interwoven roots sprouted from the ground, connecting the scattered sections. Radiating from the brownish-green tree at the center, they spread out layer by layer, growing denser as they neared the core.

The streets occupied by the colossal tree remained hidden from the outside world, thanks to this strange wilderness!

Franca let out a sigh of relief at the sight of the short yet dignified lady with blond hair.

Grasping the Judgment and Two of Cups cards, she blurted out, “Praise The Fool! Praise Madam Judgement!”

As soon as the woman known as Madam Judgment landed, her gaze fell upon the side of the brownish-green tree. Unbeknownst to Franca, a cradle-like dark-red open carriage had appeared there at some point. Two towering creatures with goat horns, pitch-black bodies, and burning dark flames pulled the carriage. They seemed to be Demons.

Seated within the carriage was a woman wearing a light-colored veil. She adorned a loose white robe, her slightly swollen belly emanating a tangible maternal glow.

Lady Moon!

The strange wilderness was her Paramita world!

Lady Moon… You have emerged from the rat’s hole… The eyes of Judgment, the blond-haired lady, instantly took on an ethereal quality, as if touched by a golden hue.

Through her eyes, she perceived the intertwining Beyonder powers that existed within the woman on the carriage, manifesting in different colors and states.

“Deprivation!” Madam Judgment’s solemn voice resounded.

It was an ancient Hermes word.

With a simple gesture of her right hand, Madam Judgment temporarily stripped the ability to copulate between creatures of different genders.

Immediately after, Madam Judgment leaned forward, pushed out her palm, and declared in ancient Hermes, “Exile!”

With a whirring sound, an invisible and majestic force coalesced into a terrifying hurricane, howling before Lady Moon.

Unfazed by distance, it materialized directly where the carriage was.

Beneath Lady Moon’s veil, her faintly discernible red lips parted as she took deep breaths.

The exaggerated hurricane, capable of toppling an entire building, seemed to find an outlet in a confined vessel. It surged into Lady Moon’s mouth and permeated her body.

In just a second, the hurricane dissipated into nothingness, completely absorbed by Lady Moon.

With a radiant maternal glow, she extended her right hand, caressing her swollen stomach with tenderness.

…

The cerulean sky and billowing clouds resembled exquisite paintings, while the earth beneath was a realm entwined with tree roots.

Lumian’s gaze met Susanna Mattise perched atop the crown of the tree, and they exchanged a knowing look. In an instant, semi-ethereal crimson Fire Ravens materialized around him.

The Fire Ravens circled and soared towards the heavens, but they couldn’t breach the ethereal canopy of the tree. They could only approach, their presence without touch.

They alighted upon the brownish-green trunk, scorching it with blackened marks.

Observing this, Lumian swiftly shifted his focus.

He had discovered earlier that flames possessed the ability to inflict certain damage upon the enigmatic entity known as the Tree of Shadow!

Crimson fireballs condensed one after another, hurtling towards the branches of the tree. Yet, they merely singed them without evident impact.

Lumian paused momentarily. Susanna Mattise was preoccupied with something, and Charlotte Calvino had yet to recover from her burns. It was suspected that she had taken refuge within an illusory scene, allowing the crimson flames in his palm to accumulate layer by layer until they transformed into a fist-sized sphere of searing incandescence.

Boom!

The explosion caused by the incandescent fireball was several times more powerful than before, but not a single fragment of the Tree of Shadow's bark fell. Only a larger area of charred flesh and the faint whiff of a colossal light-colored blossom attested to the reality of the incandescent white flame stream.

Lumian's expression turned grave. After a moment of contemplation, a spear formed from blazing white flames materialized in his hand.

He hurled the spear towards the brownish-green tree, witnessing it puncture needle-sized holes in the charred bark before disintegrating into a cascade of flames that spread across various sections of the tree.

Witnessing this, Lumian's heart clenched as he recalled his sister Aurore's favored phrase for describing those who overestimate their abilities to the point of impracticality: "It's akin to an ant attempting to shake a towering oak."

Lumian's anxiety, impatience, and fear compelled him to unleash his fists.

His clenched fists were engulfed in crimson flames.

As he struck the brownish-green tree, a wisp of fire infiltrated its

surface.

Fire Infusion!

Lumian sought to bypass the Tree of Shadow's resilient outer bark and directly harm its core.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

His flaming fists pummeled the trunk of the brownish-green tree, as if he aimed to inject every accumulated flame within his being into it.

Bam! Bam! Bam! After a flurry of frenzied attacks, he retracted his fists and took a step back.

Rumble!

A muffled explosion reverberated from within the tree trunk, causing the charred bark to finally crumble away, consumed by flames.

In an instant, an ethereal mist enveloped the scene, as if a long-forgotten beautiful dream had been set ablaze by a match.

Lumian found himself momentarily lost in a haze, as if he had transformed into the protagonist of that dream—a man engaged in a passionate encounter with an enchanting woman wearing an exquisite dress, her hem teasingly lifted.

The unfamiliar sensation felt so vivid that Lumian believed himself to be living it firsthand.

Abruptly, a sharp pain shot through his ankle, snapping him out of the reverie. He discovered numerous branches and vines emerging from his surroundings, stealthily coiling around his feet, their thorns piercing through his blood-colored robe, sinking into his flesh, and greedily drinking his blood.

Lumian grunted, crimson wisps emanating from his body, manifesting into a vibrant cloak of fiery flames that swathed his robe of flesh and blood.

Amidst crackling sounds, the branches and vines ignited, quickly

withering into brittle twigs and ashen remnants.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian swiftly retreated, his gaze fixed upon the wound he had inflicted.

His eyes met the same brownish-green bark, albeit slightly recessed compared to its surroundings.

Beneath the bark… more bark!

Lumian's pupils dilated as he gleaned the gravity of the situation.

The Tree of Shadow had been nurtured by the abnormal desires of Trier's denizens for one to two millennia. Each piece of bark likely represented specific human activities from a particular era, layered upon one another, carrying the weight of history and the subtleties of humanity.

In simple terms, Lumian realized that if he wished to destroy the Tree of Shadow, he would have to confront countless desires accumulated over the span of two thousand years. And he had exhausted his strength to vanquish merely one desire, perhaps one in a billion, or even billions upon billions.

How could he possibly prevail?

Only then did Lumian comprehend the abnormality of his actions.

He had been focused on assaulting the Tree of Shadow instead of seeking an escape route.

An exchange of glances with Susanna Mattise brought forth fear, anxiety, and a deluge of emotions.

No wonder Susanna Mattise allowed me to act freely. No wonder the injured Charlotte Calvino didn't intervene… Lumian had been cautious of the Fallen Tree Spirits and Actors that could evoke desires and emotions, yet he had unknowingly fallen under their sway.

Once more, he raised his gaze and beheld Susanna Mattise, her hair a cascade of turquoise, nimbly shifting positions within the ethereal canopy, uttering an arcane incantation. Charlotte Calvino resumed

her enigmatic actions, traversing illusory scenes, her attire, hairstyle, and makeup transforming to mirror various eras. It was no mere performance.

As Lumian's thoughts raced, dizziness assailed him, and his strength rapidly waned.

Such a sensation was foreign to him, but he had subjected others to its effects.

The sedative concocted by the Bliss Society!

Ever the keen observer of his surroundings, Lumian swiftly took out the Mysticism Smelling Salts, his attention drawn to the multitude of pallid flowers adorning the brownish-green tree.

He suspected they were responsible for releasing the sedative gas!

Achoo!

In the midst of his sneeze, Lumian pivoted, intending to distance himself from the Tree of Shadow. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Yet, Mr. K remained absent.

In the blink of an eye, roots emerged from the earth, intertwining to erect a formidable wooden barricade, surpassing ten meters in height, encircling the brownish-green tree and obstructing Lumian's path to freedom.

Lumian halted and pivoted on his heel. Countless fractures marred the trunk, branches, and roots of the Tree of Shadow. Some crevices harbored moist, light-colored flowers, while others resembled cavernous mouths oozing with viscous slime, swiftly elongating toward him.

Trapped with no means of escape, Lumian's lips curled into a smirk.

Without warning, he extended his right hand, pressing it firmly against his left chest. He spoke with a derisive tone, "Termiboros, they truly underestimate your worth. They actually intend to employ you as a sacrifice."

Chapter 255 - 255 Bridge of Communication

255 Bridge of Communication

Upon learning of the Bliss Society's plan, Lumian's immediate assumption was that Susanna had made a crucial mistake.

What lay sealed within him wasn't just corruption at an angelic level, but an actual angel!

The former lacked self-awareness and reacted on instinct alone. Without undoing the seal and reconnecting it with its true form, it was like a cache of explosives temporarily without a detonator. While there was still a possibility of explosion, Susanna and the other heretics believed they could manage the situation.

By employing the right method, utilizing the isolated environment within the Tree of Shadow, arranging the necessary rituals, and harnessing the evil god's gaze during the sacrificial ceremony, they could break the seal and offer it as a sacrifice to the Mother Tree of Desire, ensuring the angelic corruption wouldn't pose a threat.

However, the true angel possessed intelligence and a strong will. He wouldn't idly stand by while being sacrificed.

Once the seal was completely lifted, could Susanna, Charlotte, and the others truly handle a genuine angel?

One of them was a Sequence 5 evil spirit that required the Tree of Shadow to possess some godhood, while the other was undoubtedly an Actor with an irrepressible desire to perform. As for a true angel, He had to be at least a Sequence 2 for Lumian to address Him as such. In ancient times, They were nearly on par with deities and were considered subsidiary gods. The difference between them was as vast

as that between a saint and an ordinary individual.

Initially, Lumian hesitated to use Termiboros as an escape plan, fearing that the sinister and detestable angel would exploit the opportunity to make him do something seemingly innocent on the surface but secretly aid Him in infiltrating more of His powers beyond the seal.

In that scenario, Lumian, Susanna, and Charlotte would meet their doom. The Tree of Shadow would be destroyed or vanish underground, allowing Termiboros to truly descend upon the world.

Left with no other choice, Lumian cautiously stepped onto the steel rope suspended above a metaphorical abyss, hoping to maintain his balance. nove(l)bi(n.)com

One misstep, and he would fall into irreparable oblivion.

As soon as Lumian finished speaking, Termiboros's deep and commanding voice resounded in his ears.

It had been a while since Lumian had heard and resisted the angel's temptation. He could only sense His connection to his own fate through the abnormal occurrences around him or the predetermined events. Yet, the angel hadn't given up and continued to make attempts.

Now, after many days, Lumian once again heard Termiboros's voice, experiencing the full presence of the angel sealed within him.

Termiboros's voice carried a tinge of relaxation and satisfaction as it echoed in Lumian's ears.

"If they underestimate me, it will only aid my escape from this seal.

"This environment is perfect, precisely what I've been waiting for. Even if you perish later and the seal loses its support, the outside world won't detect the corresponding changes and won't be able to prevent me from breaking free of my restraints.

"They may not outright kill you, but once they attempt to shatter the seal and perform their sacrificial act, I will unleash their

predetermined fate. I will abandon your body and disrupt their ritual."

Termiboros's words insinuated:

This is the opportunity I've long awaited!

Why should I assist you? Just wait patiently for the inevitable outcome!

Lumian fell into silence and leaped away from his original position.

The tree roots split apart, and a massive, damp, pale flower blossomed, one after another, as if the abyss itself had yawned open.

Achoo!

Lumian inhaled the Mysticism Smelling Salts once more, dispelling his drowsiness.

He gazed up at Susanna Mattise in the sky and erupted into wild laughter.

"Haha, you're the most dim-witted bunch I've ever encountered!

"You've set up this ritual without a clue. Did your brains empty out because of your faith in the Mother Tree of Desire, or have they been filled with various liquids?

"Let me enlighten you. What's sealed inside me isn't corruption at the angelic level, but a bona fide angel. His name is Termiboros!

"As soon as that seal is undone, He shall descend upon us and slaughter you all. He'll shatter this foul, wretched fallen tree and cast it into a cesspool!

"If I were you, I'd cease this ritual now and let me go!"

Susanna Mattise, continually shifting positions within the illusory tree canopy, looked down at Lumian and smiled.

"Are you bluffing again? Bluffing seems to be your favorite pastime. I

fell for it once; I won't be fooled again."

Not far from her on a branch, one of the few windows on the surface of Auberge du Coq Doré, entwined with vines and branches, reflected the figure of the playwright Gabriel.

He frantically penned his name on a piece of paper with a fountain pen, as though a renowned author signing autographs for avid readers.

He had succumbed to the allure of his script, Lightseeker, gaining fame and becoming a household name.

Susanna Mattise continued, "Furthermore, we've contemplated the possibility that it's not corruption but an actual angel.

"Therefore, with the divine revelation, we've altered a crucial segment of the ritual. We will employ you as the primary sacrifice, together with the seal and the angel, to offer them to the mighty Mother Tree of Desire. It won't hinder the final outcome.

"Sacrificial rituals are not like cooking, where ingredients are transformed into dishes. Our task is to present the offerings to the deity. As for what befalls you, along with the seal and the angel within, it is for the great Mother Tree of Desire to decide.

"Why do you think I refrained from truly attacking you? Such an action might have prematurely shattered the seal!

"Don't even entertain the notion of threatening me with suicide. I shall imbue you with an ardent desire to live."

It seemed as though Termiboros was akin to a valuable gift that would break free of its own accord. The seal was like a locked box, and Lumian himself was the exquisite wrapping. Susanna and Charlotte had no intention of unwrapping the box and presenting the gift to the Mother Tree of Desire. Instead, their plan was to offer the box and its packaging to the deity, avoiding any significant risks.

Upon hearing Susanna Mattise's words, Lumian remained unfazed—neither surprised, nor fearful, nor disappointed.

He tilted his head slightly and directed his gaze towards his left chest, a smirk forming at the corners of his mouth.

“Termiboros, did you hear that? You’re going to be packaged up and offered to the deity known as the Mother Tree of Desire. You won’t get a chance to escape that seal.

“I’m not sure how the Mother Tree of Desire will deal with you, but I can assure you it won’t be anything pleasant. Are you really content to wait for the final outcome as a mere bystander?”

This time, Termiboros didn’t immediately respond to Lumian. After a few seconds, His resonant voice reverberated, “Draw your Fallen Mercury and plunge it into the trunk of the Tree of Shadow. Pierce through its second layer of bark.”

Lumian was taken aback.

“The fate of the Tree of Shadow can also be exchanged?”

Termiboros’s voice regained its grandeur.

“It wasn’t possible before, but now it is. That tree possesses a certain living characteristic. It’s akin to a mythical treant that hasn’t fully developed its intelligence.”

Without hesitation, Lumian extended his left hand, passing through the crimson-flaming cloak and robe made of flesh and blood. He grasped the pewter-black dirk adorned with sinister patterns.

Bending his body slightly, engulfed in flowing crimson flames, he sprinted toward the trunk of the Tree of Shadow, swift as a cheetah. Along the way, he leaped agilely, evading the cracks and blooming gigantic flowers.

Observing Lumian’s new course of action, Susanna Mattise didn’t pay too much heed. She didn’t believe he could truly harm the Tree of Shadow or her. Nevertheless, she remained cautious. She intended to kindle his desires and fabricate corresponding illusions, luring him to “unite” with a certain flower or crevice in the tree.

Susanna Mattise’s emerald eyes reflected Lumian’s figure, draped in a

robe of flesh and blood and adorned with a flaming cloak. Moisture welled up in her eyes instantly.

She had hoped to witness Lumian abruptly changing his direction and pouncing upon the colossal light-colored flower. Yet, Lumian appeared unaffected as he charged toward the brownish-green trunk.

Beneath the flaming cloak, Lumian clutched the Mysticism Smelling Salts in his right hand, holding it close to his nose.

Tears welled in his eyes, obstructing his sneeze. However, with the aid of the Alms Monk's endurance, he managed to endure it.

Susanna Mattise was puzzled. With her level and Sequence, even if the other party repeatedly sniffed the Mysticism Smelling Salts, he shouldn't remain completely unaffected.

Under normal circumstances, given the disparity in their strength, she could easily induce Lumian to sneeze while he searched for light-colored giant flowers or brownish-green crevices and continued inhaling the Mysticism Smelling Salts.

Of course, there was a possibility of failure in such situations, but it was unquestionably lower than the probability of success.

But now, Susanna Mattise's initial attempt had proven futile. It was as if a skilled dice thrower had surprisingly rolled the lowest number.

Achoo!

Lumian let out a loud sneeze.

Seizing the moment while his mind remained clear and Susanna hadn't exerted her influence a second time, he shielded the metal canister with his right finger and thrust the Fallen Mercury at the brownish-green trunk of the Tree of Shadow, aiming for the needle-sized hole he had created with the burning-white spear.

A resounding clang echoed as Fallen Mercury failed to penetrate any deeper, as if it had struck an impenetrable iron plate.

Achoo!

Lumian, having inhaled a substantial amount of the Mysticism Smelling Salts, sneezed once more, shaking off yet another desire incited by Susanna. Her attempts faltered once again.

Lumian's right hand, gripping the metal canister, surged with crimson flames.

It absorbed the engulfing cloak of fire that adorned his body, swiftly condensing into a blazing white boxing glove.

In the next instant, Lumian raised his right fist and hammered it against the hilt of Fallen Mercury, resembling a blacksmith forging a weapon.

A thunderous boom erupted as the incandescent white boxing glove detached from Lumian's hand and detonated at the rear end of Fallen Mercury.

Boom!

Lumian's left palm, holding the dirk, was charred and mangled in several places. As for Fallen Mercury, propelled by the force of the explosive impact, it managed to break through the first layer of bark and penetrate into the core trunk of the Tree of Shadow.

Chapter 256 - 256 Crack

256 Crack

The searing pain in Lumian's left palm from the explosion nearly caused him to instinctively draw his pewter-black dirk, which had already been plunged into the core trunk of the Tree of Shadow.

Drawing upon his resilience and experience with similar injuries, he fought to control his body's reflexive reactions.

As his mind cleared from the stimulation, he managed to shake off the two desires imposed by Susanna Mattise.

Pain and rationality entwined, engulfing his mind, followed by a terrifying torrent of scenes.

These were the accumulated experiences of the Tree of Shadow over the past millennium, countless fragments of desire that had nourished and formed its trunk. They represented the potential futures of this malevolent tree.

They converged in a mercury-colored illusory river, flooding Lumian's thoughts like a deluge.

Not only were there an overwhelming number of scenes that could overpower any Low-Sequence Beyonder, but some scenes compelled Lumian to instinctively ignore or overlook them, unable to muster the courage to look or discern.

Just when he thought his intellect would be crushed by the immense torrent and reduced to a blank canvas, he realized that he had endured it. It was as if there existed an additional space capable of accommodating countless scenes beyond the limit.

Lumian wasted no time in choosing the fate he wished to exchange.

Guided by his intuition for danger and spiritual instincts, he selected a scene:

A brownish-green root extended towards the depths of an ancient structure, devoured by an unseen flame that silently burned in the darkness, casting an eerie glow over the area.

With a crack, the tree root snapped and descended into the shadows. Purple flames surfaced, swiftly transforming into a color indistinguishable to the naked eye. In an instant, it dissipated, leaving no trace behind.

Lumian withdrew Fallen Mercury and exerted all his strength to pry open this fate, but it remained unresponsive.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Brownish-green tree trunks, not excessively thick, hurtled towards Lumian like javelins precisely thrown by a platoon of soldiers. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Each one possessed the potential to impale and skewer a target upon the gnarled tree roots.

In the ethereal canopy of the tree, Susanna Mattise's emerald eyes widened as she attempted to employ various abilities related to desires—be it for sex, food, greed, or acting—but all in vain. Opting for the tree spirit's powers, she aimed to deliver a physical blow.

Bound to the Tree of Shadow, the methods available to her were far more potent than those of her counterparts who relied on ordinary trees as companions.

Though she still doubted that the so-called Cursed Blade could harm the Tree of Shadow, Lumian's confidence and performance left her somewhat uneasy. Subconsciously, she believed it wiser to disrupt whatever he was doing.

She would rather err on the side of believing it to be seriously harmful and take excessive precautions in advance than be careless and witness unforeseen changes and the possibility of failure.

The former would at most waste a certain amount of strength and energy, delaying the completion of the ritual a little. The latter might bring about changes she didn't want to see and an outcome of failure.

Even if the probability was low, she had to take preventative measures. She couldn't wait until it happened before attempting to rectify it.

The flesh robe enveloping Lumian's body abruptly contracted, diminishing his size and evading the majority of the javelin-like tree trunks.

Two of them landed on Lumian's left and right shoulders, leaving him unable to dodge or evade.

The flesh and blood constituting the robe acted as disciplined soldiers receiving an order. They surged towards the impending strike, constructing layers of blood-colored cushions.

With a resounding impact, the layers of flesh were pierced by the two brownish-green tree spears. More flesh surged forth, hurriedly filling the void.

Although Mr. K's finger had transformed into a robe of flesh and blood to mitigate the damage, Lumian's legs buckled under the force akin to that of a sledgehammer, causing him to tumble backward.

In that moment, he felt the fate of the brownish-green tree root, which had been burned by the invisible flames, loosen its grip.

The illusory power prying it loose didn't solely belong to Lumian, but also to his left chest, emanating from an unknown source.

Gritting his teeth, Lumian utilized the momentum of his fall to laboriously stir up that fate. With great difficulty, he transformed it into a droplet of mercury and exchanged it with the fate of encountering the Montsouris ghost, stored within the pewter-black dirk.

With a crisp crack, fractures spread across Fallen Mercury, as if it struggled to bear the burden of fate. Some fractures were unnaturally long, others were delicate, and some ran straight through the blade.

With a thud, Lumian collapsed onto the coiled tree roots entrenched in the ground, freeing himself from the lingering forces of the brownish-green tree javelins.

His shoulder throbbed with pain, but he remained physically unharmed. The robe woven of flesh and blood began to disintegrate, trickling down, obstructing the pale-colored flower and the brownish-green crack as they unfurled their “mouths” in an attempt to devour Lumian. When he collapsed, he crushed them.

With a resounding boom, crimson flames erupted, consuming the malevolent entities. Seizing the opportunity, Lumian swiftly rolled over and maneuvered to a relatively safe position.

Only then did Lumian recall a crucial issue. Amidst dodging attacks from trees, branches, leaves, vines, roots, and flowers, and taking whiffs of the Mysticism Smelling Salts, he whispered amidst sneezes,

“Encountering the Montsouris ghost… Achoo! …doesn’t necessarily mean that the Montsouris ghost will attack immediately!”

If it took a while, what was the point of his previous efforts?

Disregarding the fact that the Montsouris ghost would assault the Tree of Shadow every month or two, even if it attacked every four to five minutes, Lumian found it despairing. When the time came, the preparations for the ritual would surely be complete. The sacrificial ceremony would have already commenced. Under the watchful eyes of the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire, there was a high likelihood that the Montsouris ghost would choose to wait a while before returning, based on its previous patterns.

Termiboros’s majestic voice resonated within Lumian’s body and ears once again.

“It approaches. It is a destined fate.”

In the ethereal canopy of the tree, Susanna ceased her attacks on Lumian. Utilizing the Tree of Shadow, she remotely guided Charlotte in controlling the sacrifice while delving her consciousness into the brownish-green tree, searching for any potential issues resulting from

the pewter-black dirk's assault.

The sooner she discovered it, the sooner she could resolve it and propel the sacrificial ritual forward!

Upon hearing Termiboros's words, Lumian couldn't help but inquire, "Can the Montsouris ghost truly destroy the Tree of Shadow?"

Although both entities were malevolent, the giant tree that had been rooted in Trier's soil for over a thousand years, nourished by countless desires, and linked to a hidden evil god, appeared loftier, more menacing, and more wicked.

Termiboros's deep voice resounded, "No. However, it possesses the ability to influence the Tree of Shadow to some extent, creating an opportunity for you to escape."

Just as Termiboros finished speaking, Lumian caught sight of a sudden black shadow beside him.

The figure stood slightly hunched, resembling an elderly man burdened by the weight of life.

The Montsouris ghost!

It had bypassed numerous restrictions and obstacles to arrive in the alternate space occupied by the Tree of Shadow.

With a single stride, the stooped figure reached the edge of the brownish-green trunk. Susanna and Charlotte noticed its presence.

They instinctively sensed a threat, yet they didn't connect the black shadow to Trier's legend of the Montsouris ghost.

Frantically, they stirred up the various desires of the Montsouris ghost, but their efforts were like stones cast into an unfathomable abyss. There was no response whatsoever.

For the first time, Lumian beheld the true appearance of the Montsouris ghost.

It was neither an elderly man nor even human. It more closely

resembled a viscous black shadow taking on a human form, hunching its back.

The Montsouris ghost fixed its gaze upon the Tree of Shadow for two seconds before pressing itself against the brownish-green trunk.

In an instant, it transformed into a malevolent, pitch-black liquid that corroded the layers of tree bark.

A sizable pool of moist darkness spread across the surface of the massive tree trunk, steadily contaminating its surroundings and expanding its reach.

Within moments, the entire lower portion of the Tree of Shadow was overtaken by the black shadow, rendering Susanna Mattise and Charlotte Calvino's attacks futile.

The next second, the oil-painting-like blue sky and white clouds, along with the ground intertwined with tree roots, trembled visibly as if experiencing a violent earthquake.

Faint illusory cracks appeared on the surface of the tree trunk, the ground, and even in the sky. Some of them slowly widened, revealing glimpses of the street beyond—a distorted microcosm of chaos influenced by branches, vines, and desire.

"Be prepared," Termiboros's grand voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

Realizing that she couldn't halt the Montsouris ghost and that the situation was rapidly deteriorating, Susanna Mattise wore a resentful expression and recited an incantation in ancient Hermes, "Son of the God who should never have been born, you are a cage for the imprisoning curse, an evil that erodes history. I implore your assistance."

The instant Susanna Mattise finished speaking, the branches beneath the ethereal tree crown began to "secrete" a viscous, pitch-black liquid.

It bore a striking resemblance to the black liquid assumed by the Montsouris ghost, but there was a significant distinction. It possessed a greater degree of chaos, frenzy, and wickedness.

Almost simultaneously, pale-white, malformed skulls, yellowish eyeballs entwined with thick veins, scarlet tongues dripping with repulsive pus, and indescribably grotesque objects that induced madness by mere sight sprouted from the liquid secreted by the tree trunk.

…

In the untamed wilderness, where Madam Judgment and Lady Moon engaged in their fierce battle, Rue Anarchie and other locations lay scattered. The brownish-green tree swayed ominously, while tiny cracks that appeared to pierce the very fabric of reality spread across its surface and surroundings.

Suddenly, an illusory door materialized in the sky, layer upon layer.

From the midst of these doors emerged a lady clad in an orange dress, her appearance exuding a languid aura. Worms emitting resplendent starlight wriggled in and out of her visage, obscuring her true features from discernment.

With purposeful strides, the woman approached the brownish-green tree, extending her hands to grasp the sides of an invisible crack, as if intent on tearing it open!

Chapter 257 - 257 The Unfortunate

257 The Unfortunate

Transparent maggots, shimmering under the starlight's embrace, wriggled out from the lady's relaxed palm, their movements concealed within an elusive crack. The crack, once invisible, now bore the hue of starlight.

With a vigorous pull, the transparent veil veiling this world let out a terrifying groan, unable to bear the weight. It parted forcefully, yielding to the unstoppable momentum.

Amidst an indescribable shattering, the crevice ripped apart, transforming into a colossal cavity adorned with glimmering starry specks. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

It resembled the entrance to a tunnel leading to an unknown realm.

In a mere instant, the woman in the orange dress vanished from the wilderness.

Seated within the cradle carriage, Lady Moon's expression flickered. She commanded the Demon-like creatures pulling the carriage to follow her into the tunnel.

Madam Judgment trailed closely behind.

…

In a world where tree roots intertwined and ethereal clouds resembled oil paintings.

As the branches of the otherworldly tree secreted viscous black liquid

and peculiar entities sprouted, Lumian felt his mind teetering on the edge of madness, despite Termiboros's warning not to gaze skyward.

His skin prickled, and the flesh beneath twitched unnaturally, as if masses or tumors were about to form.

At that moment, pure starlight bathed the world, casting its radiance upon Lumian's eyes.

Not far from him, a minuscule crack instantaneously expanded into a mystical and enigmatic door of starlight.

"Shut your eyes and rush through the doorway," Termiboros's resonant voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian clutched Fallen Mercury tightly with his bloodied left hand and sprinted toward the starlit door.

Squeezing his eyes shut, Lumian relied on a Hunter's instinctual understanding of spatial location and precise distance, reaching his destination within a few strides. Unperturbed by the changes around him or the lurking dangers, he leaped into the unknown.

After a brief bout of dizziness, Lumian sensed as though he had ascended from the depths of a profound lake, his entire being easing.

He opened his eyes and beheld the brownish-green silhouette of the Shadow Tree not far away, Auberge du Coq Doré, and other buildings cloaked in branches and vines. He witnessed streets divided by peculiar forces in various sections of the wilderness, merchants and passersby indulging in their individual desires, and Franca gracefully leaping from a second-story window of Auberge du Coq Doré.

He had departed from the alternate realm within the Tree of Shadows, yet he had not returned to the tangible world.

Franca also caught sight of Lumian nearby. She exclaimed with excitement, "Hurry, find the exit!"

Although she had "summoned" Madam Judgment and felt a measure of confidence, she desired no lingering stay in this place.

How could a mere Sequence 7 like herself partake in a battle involving demigods? Even observing from a distance posed significant risks.

Lumian nodded and sprinted toward Franca, scanning his surroundings for any signs of an exit.

The more he surveyed, the more he sensed the resemblance to Paramita, a boon from the Great Mother. However, there were no hordes of undead or Demons casting sinners into the abyss.

Could it be that the Bliss Society's operation involved the followers of the Great Mother? Lumian swiftly formed a hypothesis and shouted to Franca, who was mere inches away, "To the edge of the wilderness!"

Drawing from his experience, if this place was indeed Paramita, they should be able to escape from the wilderness's periphery.

Franca nodded slightly and followed, without questioning his instruction.

Suddenly, the wilderness convulsed with a violent quake, and a low rumble echoed from within the brownish-green tree.

The sky darkened, and the world itself teetered on the brink of collapse.

The branches and vines that had ensnared the buildings and streets swiftly withdrew. Vendors, pedestrians, and residents, caught in the grip of their desires, snapped out of their dazed states.

They ceased their ravenous feasting, released their grip on their partners, and rose in fear. Bloodied and bewildered, they halted their savage violence and looked around in a state of confusion…

In Auberge du Coq Doré, the bickering eloping couple ceased their romp. Oblivious to the wrongness of their actions, they were perplexed as to why the sky had darkened so drastically, as if evening had descended upon them.

Anthony Reid, trembling beneath a wooden table, regained his

composure. He emerged and peered out the window, his expression darkening.

Gabriel, who had been frantically signing his name, suddenly regained his senses. He wondered if the stress had taken its toll on his sanity while he polished the Lightseeker script, incorporating the theater manager's feedback.

Pavard Neeson, owner of the underground bar, set aside his paintbrush but couldn't tear his gaze away from the drawing board. Though he had only sketched it hastily, he felt it was the most remarkable work he had ever produced. It surpassed even his loftiest standards. Unconsciously, he yearned to return to that state, but he couldn't.

In the blink of an eye, all the branches and vines retracted into the Tree of Shadows. Most of the vendors, pedestrians, and residents, who had regained their senses, beheld the ominously terrifying brownish-green tree.

They didn't understand what had transpired, but fear propelled them to swiftly flee from the Tree of Shadows, heeding their instinctual warnings.

In that moment, Susanna Mattise, her turquoise hair flowing, materialized atop the ethereal tree crown. Below her stood Charlotte Calvino, wearing an expression of disappointment, frustration, and hatred.

The escape of the sacrificial offering signaled a temporary failure in their sacrifice. They promptly departed the alternate realm to evade the repercussions of the demigod-level clash.

Susanna Mattise, beset by the backlash and the influence of godhood, appeared increasingly ethereal, as if she could dissipate at any moment.

Lumian and Franca, racing toward the wilderness's edge, flickered in her weakened gaze, yet she lacked the power to influence them.

Under normal circumstances, her fusion with the Tree of Shadows

granted her the ability to exert her powers from a distance. However, the backlash from the interrupted ritual and the uncontrolled corruption following the Son of God's descent had nearly claimed her life. She was now in an extremely feeble state.

The tenacious and evil spirit that she was, Susanna Mattise refused to surrender so easily. She yearned to capture Lumian and drag him back into the Tree of Shadows to resume the unfinished ritual.

Once again, the branches and vines of the Tree of Shadows swiftly extended, ensnaring a hapless vendor and hoisting him aloft. Their thorns pierced his flesh, absorbing the vital essence that could rejuvenate Susanna.

It was akin to utilizing the Tree of Shadows to enter a dream-like state, draining energy to gradually lead the target to their demise through a sinister encounter. However, the process had become crude and expedited—an accelerated ordeal!

Vendors, pedestrians, and residents trapped within the wilderness erupted in terrified screams as they frantically fled upon witnessing the surge of brownish-green branch and vine monstrosities and their companions being hoisted into the air.

The eloping couple, wrapped tightly in a blanket, darted out of Auberge du Coq Doré, following in Anthony Reid's wake toward the wilderness's edge. Behind them trailed Gabriel, Pavard Neeson, and the tenants who hadn't yet departed for work. Before them swarmed vendors and pedestrians in a chaotic scramble.

One by one, fleeing escapees were snatched up by tree branches and vines, their cries for help piercing the air.

The peddler, who had once served Lumian extra Whiskey Sour, stumbled over a rock on the ground. In utter despair, he witnessed turquoise vines creeping up his body, layer upon layer, engulfing him entirely.

Sensing the commotion, Lumian turned his head and fixated on the scene for several seconds before gradually slowing his pace.

Upon witnessing this, Franca cursed, “Do you plan to go back and save them? Dammit! Know your place. You’re just a wanted criminal, a mob leader!”

Lumian didn’t come to a halt, but he didn’t hasten his steps either.

He and Franca drew ever nearer to the edge of the wilderness.

In that very moment, Lumian’s ears resonated with the majestic voice of Termiboros.

This time, the angel of Inevitability did not deliver sentences one by one. Instead, He injected a lengthy paragraph into Lumian’s consciousness at intervals.

“Have you not come to terms with your destiny?

“After enduring the might of Inevitability, there shall naturally be a corresponding corruption.

“From the moment Cordu was obliterated, you became the unfortunate one.

“It was not I who exerted influence over you in many past matters; rather, it was your hapless fate playing its part.

“As an unfortunate soul, not only shall you suffer ill fortune, but so too shall those around you and those close to you.

“If it were not for your lack of knowledge in mysticism, which allowed Susanna Mattise to uncover the issue within your body and begin contacting Hugues Artois about employing the chemical plant explosion for the sacrificial arrangement, Jenna’s mother would not have taken her own life, and Jenna’s brother would not have descended into madness.

“If you had been cautious enough, when Flameng regained consciousness and drank with you, you would have remembered to seek an opportunity to engage a genuine psychiatrist. He may not have chosen the path of suicide.

“If you had not merely forewarned Ruhr, but also restricted his

movements, he would not have succumbed to the illness once more and met a swift demise. Michel would not have lost her will to live.

“All this misfortune has been brought upon them by you.

“My existence is not solely a trump card that grants you boons and the power to deter others, but also an inescapable curse.

“Only by bowing to Inevitability and releasing me from my seal can your misfortune come to an end.

“If you continue on this path, you shall be unable to save those whom you wish to save. You shall be unable to protect those whom you wish to protect. You shall only amplify their misfortunes.

“When the time comes, those pleading for help here shall perish.

“Gabriel shall perish.

“Charlie shall perish.

“Jenna shall perish.

“Franca, too, shall meet her demise.”

Lumian came to a sudden halt, his countenance twisted in anguish. He could no longer conceal the pain that consumed him.

Franca called out once more, “Get a grip! It’s all well and good to do good deeds when everything is fine. But now, we need to escape and seek help from official Beyonders! Who knows what will come of those demigod battles? Susanna is now like an empowered Sequence 5 with some godlike abilities. She’s not someone we can handle!

“Those people don’t expect assistance from a villain who enjoys playing pranks on them!”

In the vicinity of the brownish-green tree, numerous individuals already dangled from its branches.

With a swoosh, Gabriel was hoisted up by a few green vines, and the scattered pages of the Lightseeker script fluttered to the ground.

Pavard Neeson, the owner of the underground bar, stood beside him, his body impaled by a protruding spike.

Among the eloping couple, the woman stumbled and ran slower, eventually tripping over a branch and becoming ensnared by the vines.

The young man wrapped in a blanket grew alarmed and continued onward. However, after a few steps, he abruptly halted, cursing himself.

“Dogsh*t!”

Before he could finish his sentence, he had already spun around and dashed back toward his partner. Clenching his teeth, he sought to tear at the vines and help her free.

Desperate cries and terrified screams reverberated through the wilderness.

Lumian’s fists clenched involuntarily.

Suddenly, he let out a chuckle and spoke.

“Then, are you considered close to me? After all, you reside within my body. Will you also encounter misfortune?

“I know I will face countless failures, yet I will persist again and again in pursuit of that elusive and seemingly insignificant hope!

“If I had chosen to surrender, I would have been defeated long ago!

“And now, there is still a chance for success.”

With that, Lumian took another step and continued his sprint toward the edge of the wilderness.

Although Franca couldn’t comprehend his mutterings, she was glad to see that he had made a wise decision.

Two to three seconds later, the two of them reached the wilderness’s edge. Lumian deliberately maintained a distance from Franca, then

suddenly extended his arms and pushed her out.

Caught off guard, Franca watched in shock as her body gradually left the wilderness. She turned to gaze at Lumian.

Lumian smiled and spoke gently, “Once, I shared their despair, pain, and longing for aid. And during that time, someone extended a helping hand to me.”

With those words, he pivoted and sprinted toward the brownish-green tree.

In the dim expanse of the wilderness, crimson flames ignited upon his body. This time, the fiery cloak no longer isolated him from his garments, scorching his skin and flesh.

He intended to use the constant pain to resist the diverse desires he would encounter next!

As he ran, his gaze locked onto Susanna, her turquoise hair entwined. Yet, he “saw” not only the Fallen Tree Spirit, but also the figure etched in his memory.

The one who had illuminated his path.

Chapter 258 - 258 Assassin

258 Assassin

Susanna's eyes fixed on Lumian as he dashed towards her, his body engulfed in crimson flames. She absorbed energy from the surrounding crowd, including peddlers, pedestrians, and tenants hanging from the trees. Her goal was to restore her combat abilities as quickly as possible.

She wasn't worried about Lumian causing her harm. Positioned at the top of the tree crown, she knew he couldn't reach her. Moreover, she was one with the Tree of Shadow, making her nearly invulnerable. Without godhood, any attack would only cause minor injuries, incapable of killing or severely harming her.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Lumian sprinted into an area where tree branches and vines entangled, with a hundred to two hundred humans dangling from above.

The brownish-green foliage tried to ensnare and pierce him, but his fiery aura forced them to retreat in panic.

Suddenly, a rumbling sound shook the ground. The brownish-green tree descended rapidly, shrinking its height to seven to eight meters.

The violent tremors across the wilderness made it difficult for Lumian to advance.

…

Rumble. A tremor like an earthquake shook the crystal chandelier in the banquet hall. Terrified expressions appeared on the faces of most people present. Quick-thinking individuals sought shelter under the long table draped in a white tablecloth.

The team assigned to protect Hugues Artois consisted of Imre, a mixed-blood individual, Valentine, and a Warrior pathway Beyonder named Antoine.

Sensing the anomaly simultaneously, they tacitly sent Imre to investigate. He rushed to the window and peered out, trying to locate the source of the disturbance.

Imre observed that several houses in Rue Anarchie, Rue du Rossignol, and Rue des Blouses Blanches had tilted to a certain degree, but they had not collapsed. Their surfaces were covered with brownish-green branches and vines.

In comparison, the prominent feature was the brownish-green tree, situated roughly on Rue Anarchie. It descended, adorned with numerous tree tumors and flowers.

The scene lasted only a few seconds before returning to normal, as if an unsuccessful painting had been replaced by another work.

“What’s happening?” Hugues Artois calmly approached the window and inquired.

Imre didn’t hold back any information. He lowered his voice and replied sincerely, “Anomalies have occurred on Rue Anarchie, Rue du Rossignol, and Rue des Blouses Blanches.”

Rue Anarchie, Rue du Rossignol, Rue des Blouses Blanches… As Jenna, who had approached a nearby window but missed witnessing the scene, heard the street names, her feet froze in place.

Two names immediately surfaced in her mind: Ciel, Franca…

Had they encountered the anomaly? Jenna’s heart sank, and she instinctively looked at Hugues Artois.

She noticed a curl forming on the member of parliament’s lips, as if he couldn’t hide his delight.

It’s him… It’s him and his group of heretics! Jenna’s mind instantly reached a conclusion. Darkness enveloped her, and despair surged through her uncontrollably.

Could Franca and Ciel withstand the planned attack by the heretics and survive this anomaly?

Should I rush to their aid with my current strength? Or will I only bring harm to them?

At that moment, Jenna felt as if the pillars supporting her—her two friends who had always stood by her side—were about to crumble, just as she had lost her mother.

And it was all the fault of the heretics, of Hugues Artois!

Her thoughts drifted to Franca's words when she consumed the potion and transformed into an Assassin, warning Jenna to avoid contact with evil gods.

"Contact with evil gods will bring nothing but disaster.

"Not only will it drive a person to madness and strip away their true self, but it will also drag everyone around them into darkness, whether they know them or not.

"If we don't eliminate those individuals, the influence of the evil gods will persist. The pain will return again and again, unending."

And now, Hugues Artois stood at the center of all the market district's disasters.

Jenna lowered her head, unable to meet Hugues Artois's gaze, afraid that her eyes would betray the pain and hatred within.

Hatred consumed her!

Yet, she could only remind herself that her brother Julien was still alive, albeit with a certain mental ailment that could be cured. If he lost his sister next, he might truly spiral into irredeemable madness.

After the banquet concludes, after the factory owners provide their "compensation," and after I settle all our debts, I'll take Julien and leave the market district and Quartier du Jardin Botanique. We'll find another place to live, far from the ensuing pain… Jenna repeated these words to herself, desperately trying to contain her emotions.

“Why is there another anomaly?” Hugues Artois questioned Imre, Valentine, and Antoine.

Imre offered a bitter smile and replied, “I witnessed that tree. It has appeared multiple times in Trier’s history, but it has never been fully resolved.”

Ever since joining the Purifier team in Trier, he had learned about the hidden dangers lurking beneath the ground that couldn’t be entirely purified. The brownish-green tree was one of them.

He, his superiors, and his teammates couldn’t fathom why Trier had been established atop such things in the first place.

Without giving Hugues Artois time to question their capabilities any further, Imre added,

“Now that the anomaly has been discovered, it won’t be long before it’s suppressed.”

As a member of the elite Purifier team, he knew that Trier differed from other countries’ capitals. Due to the perpetual underground dangers, both the former royal family and the current parliamentary government had agreed to the two Churches’ secret dispatching of an angel each or placed Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts in Trier to prevent any mishaps.

Of course, during periods when the royal family and government held immense power, the Church’s angels refrained from interfering. For example, during Emperor Roselle’s reign.

Once the anomaly caused by the peculiar tree was exposed, it would swiftly face a devastating blow. Although it couldn’t be completely eradicated, it would be kept under control for a considerable time.

… This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

After the swift and violent descent of the Tree of Shadow, the wilderness stabilized. Gabriel, Pavard Neeson, and the others remained suspended from the branches, their faces growing pale and blackened, as if drained of energy.

Lumian regained his balance and continued sprinting towards the nearby brownish-green tree, still engulfed in crimson flames.

At that moment, Susanna Mattise had regained a significant portion of her strength. Lumian's figure appeared in her eyes, awaiting his approach within the range of her current abilities.

Behind Lumian, a shadow detached itself from its owner and stealthily lunged at his back.

It was Charlotte Calvino, "acting" as a shadow!

Having not been the host of the ritual and being far from the treetop, she had not suffered the backlash or intense corruption, thus her strength had not waned. Seeing Lumian turn around, she quickly hid herself, and put to show her acting abilities, ready to execute a surprise attack

Suddenly, a gunshot pierced through the air in the distance.

The iron-black bullet was too distant and lacked precision. It grazed Charlotte's body, but it disrupted her plans.

Wearing a blouse, light-colored breeches, and red boots, Franca emerged at the edge of the wilderness, clutching a brass revolver. She cursed at Lumian's retreating form and shouted, "F*ck, don't you think I'm on your team?"

…

Noticing that the street had returned to its "normal" state, Hugues Artois made his way back to the center of the banquet hall, holding a glass of light-gold champagne. Standing before the gathering, he began his speech as usual.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor to have you join us for this condolence banquet. Please join me in a moment of silence to honor those who have tragically departed…

"As you can see, yet another accident has occurred in the market district. We cannot continue like this. We must establish a more efficient and adaptable system to handle such situations.

“I understand that many of you harbor anger and fear in light of the recent accident. Your loved ones may have lost their lives, sustained severe injuries, or perhaps experienced agitation, mental breakdowns, and madness as a result of this…”

Jenna’s head shot up upon hearing these words, her gaze fixed on Hugues Artois once more.

He had just mentioned “agitation, mental breakdowns, and madness” in such specific detail.

Under normal circumstances, such elaboration would not be necessary. A simple reference to insanity would suffice.

Did Hugues Artois know that someone would suffer a mental breakdown due to the chemical plant explosion and go mad? And was he deliberately mentioning it in his speech, as if a criminal returning to the crime scene, reveling in his sinister handiwork? An absurd mix of hatred and fear consumed Jenna’s heart.

If her suspicions were correct, Julien’s mental breakdown might have been influenced by the heretics!

Could he be cured? Could he be saved?

If I don’t sever the source, even if I leave the market district with Julien, there might still be hidden dangers and lingering problems in the future! The feeling of desperation overwhelmed Jenna, as if she were trapped in an inescapable darkness.

Her pupils dilated, reflecting Hugues Artois’s figure with a chilling clarity.

Imre, Valentine, and Antoine’s expressions darkened, their gazes falling, as they heard Hugues Artois’s implicit accusations against the two Churches.

…

The alternate space that accompanied the Tree of Shadow lay in ruins. Some areas were coated with pitch-black mucus, while others bore gaping holes, as if swallowed by an endless void.

Suddenly, a glimmer of light emerged from the shrunken door of starlight.

It grew brighter and brighter, akin to a transformed sun, illuminating every nook and cranny with an eerie clarity, banishing all shadows.

A female figure draped in a white robe adorned with golden threads emerged from the radiant source. She appeared to be crafted from pure light, translucent and ethereal. With emerald green eyes and flowing blond hair, she exuded beauty and a divine aura.

The guardian angel of Trier, Saint Viève.

…

Amidst the applause, Hugues Artois, having concluded his speech, mingled with the families of the victims, champagne glass in hand. He displayed enthusiasm, friendliness, and a trustworthy demeanor.

Jenna closed her eyes and wandered towards the long table dressed in a white tablecloth. She picked up a plate and placed some food on it, then grabbed a long silver fork and began to eat.

As she ate, she slowly approached Hugues Artois in a daze.

Drawing near, just two meters away, she assumed a stance that suggested a conversation with Monsieur Member of Parliament.

Surrounded by his team and guarded by official Beyonders, Hugues Artois noticed Jenna. He smiled warmly, anticipating her approach.

Jenna passed by Secretary Rh?ne and positioned herself a step away from Hugues Artois.

Before their conversation could commence, the ground trembled once more, accompanied by a resounding rumble. Rue Anarchie and Rue des Blouses Blanches seemed to brighten significantly.

Cassandra, Hugues Artois, and the others turned their bodies instinctively, gazing out of the window, their concern evident.

Witnessing this, Jenna closed her eyes once more. Then, she took a

step forward, raising the silver fork in her hand towards Hugues Artois!

All the emotions suppressed within her heart erupted.

You wretched politician, the bringer of disaster and darkness to the market district!

You heretic, your conscience devoured by a dog!

You are the bastard responsible for my mother's death and my brother's descent into madness!

Perish now!

Without your demise, the suffering in the market district shall never cease. Darkness shall engulf this place, preventing the dawn from breaking.

Indeed, with heretics surrounding you and the protection of official Beyonders, anyone attempting to confront you would meet their demise here, dissuaded by the risk.

But what if an assassin has no intention of leaving alive?

Jenna channeled all her hatred, outrage, and pain into the long-handled silver fork in her grasp. She unleashed an Assassin's Mighty Blow, aiming for Hugues Artois's exposed right eye as he turned his body.

In that moment, she glimpsed the surprise, confusion, and fear etched upon his face. She witnessed Hugues Artois frantically glancing towards Cassandra, pleading for assistance.

Cassandra's line of sight was obstructed by Purifier Imre, who had subtly stepped diagonally, leaving her unaware of the imminent danger.

With a squelching sound, the long-handled silver fork in Jenna's right hand plunged deep into Hugues Artois's eye socket, piercing into his brain.

Hugues Artois's expression froze. The fear, confusion, and terror remained etched on his visage. Time did not permit much change, only revealing a profound sense of despair.

Jenna watched as crimson blood gushed forth, and Hugues Artois's countenance gradually crumbled under the lights. Surrounding her, red sparks erupted, whether from firearms or supernatural abilities. She closed her eyes with a serene smile, surrendering to her fate.

Mother, I see the light.

Chapter 259 - 259 Awe

259 Awe

Hugues Artois's initial reaction was one of surprise and confusion as he beheld the glimmering silver light emanating from the long-handled fork, thrusting menacingly towards him.

He found it hard to fathom that someone would attempt to assassinate him, a well-protected member of parliament, under these circumstances.

The assassin didn't appear particularly formidable.

Despite being a retired veteran, he had left military service five years ago to pursue a career in politics. His combat skills were no longer honed. With the adversary a mere step apart, evading the attack effectively seemed impossible.

Disregarding him, even a Sequence 9 or even a Sequence 8 Beyonder would likely struggle to dodge a Mighty Blow from an Assassin, especially one who had stealthily approached them. It all depended on whether their abilities could help them avoid vital areas or reduce the damage, thus preventing instant death.

Naturally, some Sequence 8 or 9 Beyonders possessed the ability to sense danger or hostility ahead of time, thwarting the approach and attack of Assassins.

In an instant, Hugues Artois cast his gaze upon the red-haired Cassandra, the three official Beyonders, and his subordinates Rh?ne, Margaret, and Boduva, feeling intense fear grip him.

However, what met his eyes was Cassandra's red hair—her body and line of sight obscured by the mixed-blood Imre—as well as the calm and indifferent gazes of the official Beyonders, Imre and Antoine.

Valentine had reacted immediately but restrained himself, and Rh?ne, Margaret, and Boduva, though eager to use their Beyonder powers to save him, dared not expose their boons obtained from the evil gods.

At that moment, Hugues Artois was overwhelmed by a profound sense of despair.

You all, save me!

Save me!

With a squelching sound, the long-handled silver fork plunged mercilessly into Hugues Artois's right eye, propelled with all the force Jenna could muster. It pierced through the eye socket, penetrating the brain, with only a small portion of the handle protruding outside.

Hugues Artois's thoughts became hazy.

He yearned to reach out and grasp something, but his arm wouldn't even rise.

I haven't become president… I haven't witnessed the arrival of great existences… I haven't received the boon of godhood… I cannot die like this… Slain by a feeble Assassin… I-I don't wish to perish… A barrage of thoughts flashed through Hugues Artois's mind as gunshots resounded in his ears.

His body slumped to the ground, and darkness enveloped his vision once more.

Thud. Hugues Artois, member of parliament for Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, collapsed onto the ground, his heart ceasing to beat.

Jenna, her eyes shut and a smile adorning her face, was struck by bullets fired by nearby Bureau 7 agents.

One bullet struck her shoulder, and another pierced her ribs from the opposite side.

The pain contorted her expression instinctively. Her body

involuntarily recoiled, as if she wished to curl up into a protective ball.

She opened her eyes and beheld Rh?ne and the other devotees of the evil gods glaring at her with hatred and an unnatural panic, yet refraining from attacking.

In the next instant, a golden revolver, its chamber loaded, pressed against Jenna's head. Imre surveyed the room and declared, "I have already subdued the assassin. Verify if Monsieur Member of Parliament can be saved and maintain order. No one should leave for the time being."

He made it clear that he intended to escort Jenna back to église Saint-Robert or inquire on the spot about the motive behind the assassination and the mastermind, preventing Cassandra and the others from venting their rage.

…

As the Tree of Shadow descended, the various streets reverted to their original state, yet they remained engulfed in wilderness.

Lumian perceived that Susanna Mattise could no longer stir his desires from a distance as she did before. So, he turned around, intending to confront Charlotte first.

The crimson flames enveloping his body burned with intensity, scorching his garments and searing his skin and flesh to varying degrees, inflicting constant pain.

This torment stimulated his mind, allowing him to maintain a certain level of clarity. He could also rely on the endurance bestowed by the Alms Monk boon to sustain his thoughts and actions, instead of merely focusing on enduring the agony.

Even for Pyromaniacs, such incineration posed a threat. Moreover, as time passed, the damage would worsen, eventually endangering their lives.

Of course, long before that point, Lumian's spirituality would likely crumble. He could only allow the flames to extinguish on their own.

Were it not for the Alms Monk boon and the internal struggle within the Tree of Shadow, his spirituality would have been strained by the self-immolation.

Upon seeing Lumian turn and observe “Red Boots” Franca dashing toward her with a brass classic revolver, sliding across a layer of frost formed beneath her feet, Charlotte abandoned her plans for a surprise attack. Instead, she readied herself to return to the Tree of Shadow, where she could exploit the environment and enhance her abilities to confront the enemy.

Her body instantaneously grew pliable, as though secreting a slimy substance.

She “acted” as a serpent-like creature, utilizing the intertwining vines and branches to swiftly retreat toward the brownish-green tree.

At that moment, Charlotte’s body froze.

It was akin to facing a dragon head-on, confronting a predator at the apex of the biological hierarchy. She couldn’t help but tremble with fear and overwhelming panic.

She circled her immediate vicinity and ran haphazardly, as if fleeing from an unseen adversary.

Not far from her, Anthony Reid, the information broker, emerged from behind an iron-black gas street lamp post, suspended by the vines and branches of the Auberge du Coq Doré.

At some point, his dark brown eyes had transformed into a pale golden hue, adopting a vertical orientation.

He was a Psychiatrist, a Sequence 7 Psychiatrist of the Spectator pathway.

He had just employed Awe!

In ancient times, it was referred to as Dragon Might!

The brownish-green vines and branches surrounding Anthony Reid, manipulated by Susanna rather than the Tree of Shadow, cowered

and retreated from him.

Observing Charlotte's descent into madness and confusion, rendering her unable to evade Lumian's attacks, Susanna, who desperately absorbed vitality, narrowed her eyes and cursed, unable to conceal her deep-seated hatred.

"You shall all perish. Today, you shall all meet your demise!"

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! On the Tree of Shadow, new tree trunks distinct from the main body shot forth like javelins, aimed at impaling Lumian in the midst of the wilderness.

Apart from utilizing the abilities of the Fallen Tree Spirit, Susanna Mattise had not yet regained sufficient strength to affect targets dozens or even nearly a hundred meters away.

Lumian had foreseen this. With a roll, he positioned himself within the area where Charlotte aimlessly fled.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The tree trunk javelins impaled the ground nearby, pounding the wilderness like hammers.

Lumian rose to his feet, engulfed in crimson flames. He extended his arms slightly and let out a boisterous laugh.

"Bring it on, kill me!"

If Susanna were to blanket the area with relentless assaults once again, he could still find a way to evade them. However, Charlotte, lost in her state of confusion, would undoubtedly meet her demise!

As he bellowed, half-illusory crimson Fire Ravens materialized behind Lumian. They circled and traced multiple trajectories, fixating their sights on Charlotte Calvino.

The branches and vines on the ground surged wildly, swiftly ensnaring Charlotte, shielding her from harm.

A series of thunderous sounds resounded as the crimson Fire Ravens descended upon Charlotte, shattering tree branches and igniting vines, systematically stripping away layer after layer of the Actor's

outer shell.

Bang!

Franca, who had closed the distance, stepped in and extended her right hand, firmly squeezing the trigger.

An iron-black bullet flew from the classic brass revolver and struck Charlotte's head with precision, piercing through the gap created by the Fire Ravens.

The enchanting, pure, and delicate visage instantly shattered, with red and white fluids splattering forth from her eyes, nose, and mouth.

With only its severed head remaining, the lifeless body stumbled a few steps in confusion before finally collapsing to the ground.

"Go to hell!" Susanna roared.

With that cry, brown branches, green vines, thick limbs, and pale-colored blossoms surged forth in a multitude of forms, converging upon Lumian, Franca, and Anthony.

Despite the nightmarish scene unfolding before them, Lumian sensed no immediate peril.

Until Susanna Mattise regained a certain level of strength, an attack that consumed a significant amount of spirituality posed no true threat.

Lumian charged forward once more, carrying the crimson flames that devoured his flesh, venturing deeper into the primordial forest-like setting.

Vines ignited, flowers turned to ash, branches charred, yet none impeded the enemy's advance toward the Tree of Shadow.

Suddenly, the objects recoiled, drawing the suspended human captives back into the embrace of the Tree of Shadow.

Susanna had thought it through. There was no need to squander energy merely to vent her rage. It was wiser to await the approach of

the three prey, luring them into the range where desire could take hold, before employing her most formidable abilities to deal with them.

She could not accept her current weakness. That was one of the reasons why she refrained from invoking the incantation to seek assistance initially.

Before dragging the offering into the Tree of Shadow, the Son of God dared not reveal Himself in Trier. In the future, Susanna possessed a measure of confidence and needed to push the offering to a certain extent, securing the protection of the ritual. Only then could she utilize her fusion with the Tree of Shadow to confront the Son of God.

The Son of God was astonishingly deranged. He would never restrain the corruption He might inflict upon His subordinates.

As for Lady Moon, she had merely pledged to intercept potential saboteurs temporarily. Susanna dared not permit devotees of other deities to enter the Tree of Shadow. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Thud, thud, thud. Lumian raced through the abruptly vacated wilderness and dilapidated streets, sprinting toward the brownish-green tree. Franca and Anthony each selected their respective angles of attack and followed suit from different directions.

The fortunate vendors, pedestrians, and tenants who had yet to be ensnared by the branches and vines seized the opportunity to flee the wilderness, making their way towards the outskirts.

Chapter 260 - 260 Cracking

260 Cracking

It didn't take long for Lumian, Franca, and Anthony to approach the Tree of Shadow, stepping within the effective range of Susanna's powers.

One of them had run out of Mysticism Smelling Salts and was consumed by crimson flames. His skin grew numb, but his flesh still burned with pain. Another moved gracefully, constantly shifting positions. Every now and then, she would inhale the scent of the metal canister in her hand and let out a sneeze. The third employed the Psychiatrist's Placate ability to pacify his emotions and desires.

In the ethereal crown of the tree, Susanna Mattise, positioned only four to five meters above the ground, grunted. Franca, dressed in a blouse and light-colored trousers, saw her reflection in Susanna's eyes.

Suddenly, intense fear gripped Franca.

Yet, this fear didn't arise from the outside world or grow abnormally intense. Rather, it originated from her understanding of the current situation and her desire to survive.

Susanna Mattise, fused with the peculiar tree, couldn't be treated as a mere Sequence 5. She ought to be regarded as a weakened Sequence 4, one lacking an incomplete Mythical Creature form!

Franca believed that Susanna Mattise would swiftly dispatch her, Lumian, and the information broker.

Before saving anyone, she had to save herself!

Franca halted, her yearning for life impossible to suppress.

She struggled, torn between the urge to flee and the nagging feeling that she shouldn't abandon her teammates.

Susanna Mattise's emerald eyes shifted toward Anthony Reid.

The information broker, his emotions and desires now stabilized, shuddered suddenly, an all-too-familiar fear surging from the depths of his heart.

A Spectator afflicted by severe mental deficiencies is all too easy to deal with… Anthony Reid fully comprehended his predicament, yet he lacked the power to resist.

A helpless sigh escaped his lips. When his Placate failed, he trembled and retreated to a corner, succumbing to overwhelming fear.

Swiftly, Susanna Mattise incapacitated Lumian's two companions, leaving them unable to offer aid for the moment.

Then, she directed her gaze at Lumian, who stood less than ten meters away from the Tree of Shadow.

As an evil spirit, Susanna possessed boundless extremism and persistence. She still sought to capture this sacrifice.

Despite the ritual causing a great uproar, prompting numerous saints and even angels to rush and intervene, making its success unlikely, the Tree of Shadow could not be destroyed. It wouldn't even suffer significant harm. Unless the Eternal Blazing Sun or the God of Steam and Machinery were willing to bury the millions of people residing in Trier and expose even graver underlying problems underground, there would always be another opportunity, even if the present one failed.

As long as Lumian remained within her grasp, the sacrificial offering that perfectly sealed an angel, it wouldn't take long for Susanna to attempt the ritual once more!

Hence, the malevolent spirit, Susanna Mattise, desired to capture Lumian alive.

In an instant, Lumian's pace slowed, his mind consumed by the same

thoughts.

I mustn't die. I mustn't die. If I perish, Aurore will have no hope of revival…

I must survive and uncover the truth behind the Cordu disaster. I must understand why Aurore believes in Inevitability…

These people have no connection to me. What does it matter if they die? Don't countless lives perish every day in this world? Can I even prevent that?

"…"

Lumian's pace grew sluggish, his expression contorting in agony.

The fiery crimson flames that engulfed him continued to burn, inflicting pain while also sharpening his senses.

But the more aware he became, the stronger his desire to survive.

This time, Susanna's influence over his desires had not faltered.

The Fallen Tree Spirit summoned an array of vines, branches, and tree trunks from the Tree of Shadow, ensnaring Lumian within a small circular perimeter of less than ten meters. The once open space transformed into a dense, ancient forest teeming with vegetation.

Damp, pale-hued flowers sprouted from the roots, vines, and branches, releasing odorless anesthetic gases that threatened to lull the surroundings into a deep slumber.

In that moment, Lumian's yearning for life aligned with his other thoughts.

To escape this dire predicament and survive, he had to press forward and defeat Susanna Mattise!

Lumian surged forward once more, gathering semi-illusory crimson flames behind him, spiraling them toward Susanna Mattise, who hovered merely four meters above the ground.

He didn't expect this assault to harm the Fallen Tree Spirit. After all, Susanna Mattise had merged with the Tree of Shadow, granting her formidable defenses and vitality. Moreover, she wasn't a mindless foe who couldn't dodge attacks or employ superpowers to safeguard herself.

Lumian's objective was to momentarily disrupt Susanna Mattise's focus and impede her from inciting another desire immediately.

This time, the crimson Fire Ravens managed to breach the ethereal barrier. They passed through the weakened defenses and hurtled toward Susanna Mattise.

Layers of brownish-green vines and branches encased Susanna Mattise, enveloping her in a wooden sphere, her pair of green eyes the only feature visible.

Amidst the rumbling, the plant-like encasement exploded, replaced swiftly by fresh growth.

Meanwhile, less than ten meters slipped away in the blink of an eye for Lumian.

Vast amounts of slumberous gas corroded his body, but they were swiftly consumed and evaporated by the searing crimson flames. The charred scent of his flesh neutralized the remaining fumes, leaving only a small portion to infiltrate Lumian's nostrils.

His thoughts slowed, his head spun, yet his movements remained unaffected for the time being.

Harnessing his momentum, Lumian alternated between his left and right feet, launching a forceful kick against the brownish-green trunk. He propelled himself forward by a couple of meters before leaping high into the air, his gaze fixed upon Susanna Mattise.

Behind him, a colossal fireball gradually took shape. His eyes reflected the wooden sphere and Susanna Mattise's emerald-green gaze.

It seemed as though he intended to hurtle himself at the treetop, obliterating the encasing of plants with the mighty fireball.

This particular stance bore an evident element of showmanship. Lumian's desire to perform had been subtly provoked by Susanna Mattise, even if his ceaseless pain could only be slightly suppressed.

Susanna Mattise grinned, allowing sharp brownish-green tree trunks to emerge from the surface of the encasement like a porcupine baring its spikes, ready to impale any unsuspecting prey.

Once Lumian sustained grave injuries, the vines and branches forming the sphere would unfurl, taking complete control of their captive.

As the massive fireball solidified, Lumian began his descent.

Yet, instead of lunging at Susanna Mattise, he regarded her with an air of superiority, eye to eye. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Still, he refrained from attacking. He continued his descent. Susanna Mattise wore a puzzled expression, perplexed by his failure to walk into her trap.

Only when Lumian touched down below the treetop did he make his next move.

The massive, incomplete fireball detonated, propelling him toward the trunk of the Tree of Shadow like a cannonball.

In his left hand, he wielded Fallen Mercury, now adorned with cracks.

Right from the start, Lumian hadn't set his sights on Susanna Mattise, who possessed freedom of movement and the advantages of being a Sequence 5. It would be highly risky, with little chance of success and much danger involved.

His sole objective was to strike the Tree of Shadow with Fallen Mercury, a single strike!

Without the enhancement of Termiboros, Fallen Mercury alone wouldn't be enough to alter the fate of the brownish-green tree. However, Lumian was confident that Susanna Mattise had fused to

some extent with the Tree of Shadow. As the name “Fallen Tree Spirit” implied, a tree was necessary to embody a tree spirit.

This understanding derived not only from Lumian’s observations but also from Franca’s speculations and Susanna Mattise’s own admissions and actions.

In essence, when Fallen Mercury pierced the Tree of Shadow, there was a strong possibility that it would alter the fate of Susanna Mattise, who had merged with it, rather than the fate of the Tree of Shadow itself!

Lumian’s actions were intended to deceive Susanna Mattise into overconfidence, ensuring she wouldn’t impede his approach to the Tree of Shadow or hinder him from gathering a fireball for propulsion.

And Susanna Mattise’s manipulation of his desire to perform only fueled Lumian’s confidence further.

Though acting was a waste of time and could potentially lead to missed opportunities, it also served as a cover for one’s true intentions!

With a loud crash, Lumian and Fallen Mercury collided with the brownish-green trunk. Ribs cracked, wrist snapped, his entire body battered by the explosion and impact. But he managed to drive the pewter-black dirk through the outer bark and into the second layer.

As expected, Lumian didn’t “see” the torrent of historical scenes. Instead, he sensed the illusionary river, shimmering with a mercury hue, that belonged to Susanna Mattise.

In the next instant, his desire was manipulated once again, and a barrage of javelins rained down from the ethereal tree crown.

Releasing his hold on the pewter-black dirk, Lumian entrusted the rest to Fallen Mercury.

He plummeted to the ground, using the pain to reclaim consciousness. With a swift roll, he evaded the tree javelins that impaled the earth.

When Susanna Mattise realized Lumian's true intent, she felt vexed, angry, and somewhat fearful.

The previous use of the pewter-black dirk had left a deep impression on her.

However, she wasn't overly concerned for her safety. With her connection to the Tree of Shadow, it would be arduous for her to be slain, even if she encountered a saint. Her worry lay in the possibility of severe injury, which would thwart her chance of capturing her prey once more.

At that moment, Fallen Mercury shattered into pewter-black fragments, silently descending to the ground.

Long worn and weakened, it could no longer endure.

However, its destruction also brought an end to the fate exchange, which should have taken several minutes to complete. It didn't stir any fate within Susanna Mattise. It merely bestowed upon her the fate stored within the blade.

Normally, this would be impossible as Fallen Mercury had to adhere to corresponding rules. But now, shattered and fragmented, it couldn't care less.

Susanna Mattise froze, purple flames erupting from her body.

Fallen Mercury had bestowed upon her the fate of the Tree of Shadow's root being consumed by an unseen underground fire. As a tree trunk akin to the Tree of Shadow, she couldn't escape this fate!

In a mere second, the purple flames vanished, leaving Susanna Mattise reduced to ashes, her eyes filled with disbelief and astonishment.

A tree trunk erupted in flames, cracking and collapsing.

Chapter 261 - 261 Escape

261 Escape

The branches and vines pursuing Lumian swiftly withdrew, as if responding to an unseen command. A javelin-like tree trunk crashed down, causing the rest to vanish into thin air.

Gasping for breath, Lumian cast his gaze upward as he sprinted onward.

At that moment, his eyes fell upon the incinerated form of Susanna Mattise, consumed by the vegetative sphere that had enveloped her. Not far off, he witnessed an unfamiliar tree trunk snap and succumb to fiery destruction.

She's dead! Relief flooded Lumian's being. She's dead! The burden of his struggle lifted, and he crumpled to the ground, no longer able to hold on.

The crimson flames that had enveloped him abruptly extinguished, unveiling his charred and disfigured body.

With great effort, Lumian struggled to prop himself up, his back pressed against the vine- and branch-adorned wall of the Auberge du Coq Doré. He resembled a forsaken vagabond, abandoned by the world, a hint of derision in his voice as he observed the Tree of Shadow sinking deeper and deeper into the earth.

Moreover, he witnessed the vines and branches retracting into the main trunk, the once-suspended individuals released from their tethers and descending to the ground from varying heights.

Among the initial group of victims, whose essence had been drained, three to four individuals remained suspended nearly three meters above the ground. Already weakened, most of their remaining vitality

escaped as they suffered the harsh impact, causing them to lose consciousness on the spot. Perhaps there was still hope for their salvation, or perhaps they were beyond rescue. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The hundreds who had been suspended but had not yet lost a significant portion of their essence sustained various injuries from the fall. Though their lives were not immediately endangered, they hurriedly rose to their feet, driven to escape to the fringes of the wilderness.

Gabriel's complexion turned pale, bruises marring his hands and feet. Rather than fleeing, his initial instinct led him to stoop and collect the scattered Lightseeker script from the ground. The eloping couple, entwined together in their suspension, exchanged curses for being a hindrance, but they supported one another as they limped forward, their legs injured from the fall. They joined the fleeing throng, vanishing into the distance. Pavard Neeson, the proprietor of the clandestine underground bar, suffered relatively minor injuries. Grasping the freshly drawn draft, he raced ahead…

Charred and weary, Lumian settled on the street, leaning against the Auberge du Coq Doré, situated perilously close to the Tree of Shadow. Tilting his head back against the wall, he wore a faint smile while observing the energetic exodus of peddlers, passersby, and inhabitants of modest abodes as they fled towards the outskirts of the wilderness.

…

Within the confines of the Tree of Shadow, Lady Moon beheld a tumultuous clash unfolding, with numerous angels and saints joining the fray. Her faction faced mounting pressure due to reinforcements from the two Churches and Bureau 8. An overwhelming sense of retreat washed over her.

Should this continue, the two Churches might resort to drastic measures, beseeching divine intervention! Lady Moon swiftly resolved.

Deprived of several abilities and ensnared by various Prohibitions,

she pressed against the bulge in her abdomen and parted her lips.

An ear-piercing Shriek erupted within this alternate realm, causing the nearly two-meter-tall Tree of Shadow before her to undergo an instantaneous metamorphosis.

Upon the branches and mist-shrouded bark, which depicted scenes from the past, figures born from diverse desires, now lifeless, sprang back to existence, save for Emperor Roselle.

Many were demigods, emerging from their respective “histories” with vacant, icy expressions and an aura of chilling darkness.

Resurrection!

Empowered by the Divine Fetus nestled within her womb and the unique essence of the Tree of Shadow, Lady Moon temporarily revived the accumulated desires from over a millennium in their original corporeal forms.

Though the revival would be short-lived, and the resurrected beings notably weaker than before, the sudden influx of demigods into the battle within mere seconds could profoundly impact the unfolding chaos.

It was precisely due to the timely aid of the Divine Fetus that Lady Moon dared to linger behind, partaking in this tumultuous clash. Without it, having only agreed to provide cover and hindrance to those from the Bliss Society, she would have already sought refuge elsewhere.

In eerie silence, the resurrected phantoms disintegrated beneath the scorching sunlight. Lady Moon seized the opportune moment to summon Paramita, which had not yet fallen into complete disarray, merging with it and vanishing from sight.

…

On Avenue du Marché, inside the khaki-colored four-story building that housed the parliament member’s office.

Imre, the mixed-blood individual, refrained from immediately

questioning Jenna, an assassin. Instead, he directed two agents from Bureau 7 to tend to Jenna's wound, staunching the profuse bleeding and applying bandages. He conveyed the impression that allowing the culprit to succumb to her injuries would hinder their ability to gather crucial clues. Valentine, Antoine, and the other agents observed and interrogated the remaining participants of the banquet, including Cassandra and Rh?ne, who belonged to Greg Artois's team.

Rumble!

Once again, the ground beneath their feet trembled. Those near the windows caught glimpses of Rue Anarchie, Rue du Rossignol, and Rue des Blouses Blanches, intermittently flickering with light. Approaching them were clergymen garbed in white robes embellished with golden threads, wielding various contraptions.

This development disrupted the interrogation of Imre, Valentine, and the others. After a while, Angoulême de Fran?ois strode into the banquet hall, clad in a coat adorned with golden buttons, accompanied by a grayish-white humanoid mechanical creation. Several additional team members and a contingent of police officers followed suit.

Upon hearing Imre's report, Angoulême cast a glance at Jenna and instructed Travis Everett, "Bring all the attendees of the banquet to headquarters for separate interrogations.

"Leave the assassin here. We shall handle her questioning. Hmm… also keep the members of Monsieur Member of Parliament's team. There are matters we must clarify."

Everett raised no objections. The organization's constables escorted the anxious onlookers away from the khaki-colored building housing the member of parliament's office.

As the hall emptied, Angoulême turned to the two Bureau 7 agents standing beside Jenna and instructed them, "Escort the assassin to the lounge. We must ensure she does not overhear our conversation and withhold any truths."

With Jenna escorted to the lounge facing the back alley, Angoulême

approached Cassandra, Rh?ne, and the others, speaking in a deep voice, “Hi there, there is information we must acquire.”

A faint smile adorned his face.

“Indeed, Monsieur Member of Parliament has met his demise. According to the law, his position is immediately vacated.

“In other words, you are no longer part of Monsieur Member of Parliament’s team. The immunity you once enjoyed is no more.

“So, before we engage in our discussion, let us proceed with some notarizations.”

Upon hearing Angoulême’s words, Cassandra and the others’ expressions underwent a marked change.

Meanwhile, in the lounge, Jenna, who had calmed herself after assassinating Hugues Artois, heard a tumultuous commotion emanating from the hall.

One of the armed agents from Bureau 7, tasked with keeping watch, hastened to the door to investigate.

Seizing the opportunity, Jenna’s heart skipped a beat as a plan materialized in her mind.

Her countenance transformed, and she gazed past her remaining guard with a mix of surprise and fear.

Though extensively trained, the agent possessed an understanding beyond that of ordinary individuals. Today, an abnormal occurrence had unfolded on Rue Anarchie, culminating in the assassination of Monsieur Member of Parliament. Reports indicated a battle involving supernatural forces transpiring within the hall. It was only natural for him to worry about potential repercussions reaching the lounge and an unseen threat lurking behind him.

Subconsciously, he entertained the notion of turning around, but halfway through the motion, caution compelled him to remain vigilant.

Yet, this proved to be the only opening Jenna needed.

Already restrained by handcuffs, she balled her fists and struck the agent's shoulder and neck with force, sending him sprawling to the ground. His revolver slipped from his grasp.

Before the agent near the door could react, Jenna positioned her hands on the windowsill, propelling herself upward. She crashed through the glass and descended into the back alley with the grace of a feather.

Suppressing the pain from her gunshot wound, she sought refuge in the shadows of a nearby corner and swiftly departed the khaki-colored building.

…

Lady Moon weaved through different directions, employing various abilities until she finally emerged from Paramita.

At that moment, she found herself in Quartier éraste, northwest of Trier. Before her stood a magnificent building adorned with golden steeples.

Lady Moon cautiously surveyed her surroundings and discreetly let out a sigh of relief.

Had the Tree of Shadow's deeper intrusion into the Fourth Epoch's Trier served the Great Mother's interests, she wouldn't have joined the Bliss Society's mission. She had no desire to reveal herself. It was well-known that those who controlled desires often fell prey to their own desires. The chances of failure were not insignificant.

Without delay, Lady Moon slipped into the beige building from its side entrance.

A few hundred meters away, a golden retriever sat silently beside a woman dressed in green.

They observed Lady Moon's every move and the grand structure with its numerous steeples, their expressions solemn.

It was the Sacred Heart Cloister of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

…

In the wilderness where Rue Anarchie, Rue du Rossignol, and the buildings on Rue des Blouses Blanches crumbled, Lumian witnessed the Tree of Shadow on the brink of sinking into the ground. He couldn't help but taunt Termiboros.

"Well, I'm not that unlucky after all. I've actually succeeded."

Hardly had the words left his lips when Franca, who had regained her senses, rushed over and hissed, "Are you trying to play the role of a charred corpse?"

As she spoke, she retrieved the Healing Agent she had obtained from the Poison Spur Mob, intending to offer Lumian half a canister.

Lumian's injuries weren't as severe as they seemed. Fatal burns for most Low-Sequence Beyonders would require no more than a month or two for Pyromaniacs to recover from. As for fractures, explosions, and impacts, none of them could claim the life of a Hunter immediately. Enduring until tomorrow would naturally bring about recovery.

Considering the potential pursuit of official Beyonders after the wilderness completely vanished, Lumian didn't tempt fate and consumed half a vial.

Soon, he felt his body rapidly regenerating.

At this moment, the wilderness teetered on the edge of collapse. The streets had returned to their original positions, and many people had already rushed in.

Franca surveyed her surroundings and spoke swiftly, "Can you still move? We must leave this place swiftly."

"Alright." Lumian rose to his feet.

He took a couple of steps to the side, intending to retrieve the charred tree trunk that had been part of the Tree of Shadow before

departing.

Just as Lumian grasped the trunk, something caught his peripheral vision.

Within the depression left behind by the Tree of Shadow's submersion, a hazy and translucent creature darted past.

Lumian's pupils dilated, struggling to believe what he had witnessed. He yearned for a clearer view.

It was a diaphanous, indistinct figure resembling a lizard!

It bore an uncanny resemblance to the elf he had encountered in his dream!

It was the very creature that had emerged from Aurore's mouth!

Chapter 262 - 262 Review

262 Review

Lumian had always held the belief that the lizard-like elf he saw was merely a figment of his dreaming mind. Symbols and metaphors held a deeper significance than the tangible reality.

Yet now, before his very eyes, the diaphanous and elusive lizard-like creature revealed itself in all its existence!

It was undeniably real!

Moreover, it had appeared in Paramita, emerging from the deep chasm left by the Tree of Shadow—a most peculiar event involving formidable powers!

Could it be that the lizard crawling out of Aurore's mouth was not a fabrication? What did it symbolize, and what were its intentions? Lumian's brow furrowed as he contorted his expression, experiencing a mix of pain, shock, confusion, and withdrawal.

This agitation stirred something within Lumian, making him feel that he could regain some of his memories and determine their authenticity. Yet, this time, the scenes didn't flicker through his mind as they did during psychiatric treatments or after hearing Madame Pualis's words. The dream still lingered in his memory.

In that moment, Termiboros's resonant voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

"Do you truly believe that I am responsible for all the anomalies and misfortunes surrounding you?

"Do you think you can escape Susanna Mattise, who is nearly a demigod with a backup plan, by relying solely on the efforts of the

sealed me and a Sequence 7 Beyonder like yourself? nove(l)bi(n.)com

“Do you believe that Susanna Mattise’s failure is solely due to her being an evil spirit, extremism, impatience, and lack of preparation before the ritual? Is there no other underlying reason?”

These words overlapped and resounded in Lumian’s mind, allowing him to grasp their meaning within a short span of time.

Lumian was taken aback, feeling as if he had been plunged into an icy lake, experiencing the transition from early summer to winter.

He blurted out, “Then what is it?”

Termiboros remained silent, as if sensing and comprehending something.

In an instant, Lumian’s joy surged. He felt the heavy burden on his shoulders dissipate significantly.

Does this mean that Aurore truly fell under the control of that peculiar lizard-like creature?

Was that why she remained oblivious to any abnormality when awake, seeking assistance from the outside world alongside me?

No, perhaps she sensed that something was amiss. The correct interpretation of the letter’s order should be: “We are getting weirder. The people around us need help as soon as possible!”

Franca nudged Lumian.

“Why are you lost in thought? Hurry, let us leave this place swiftly. The official Beyonders and clergymen have arrived!”

Lumian shook off his daze and dashed with Franca to the far end of Rue Anarchie, his singed clothes clinging to his body, along with the tree trunk originating from the Tree of Shadow—not Susanna’s later creation.

During this process, two revelations suddenly dawned upon him.

As an angel of Inevitability, Termiboros also displayed an astute understanding of various matters. It is inconceivable for Him to remain oblivious to Susanna Mattise's offering Him as a sacrifice to the Mother Tree of Desire with me as the primary vessel without unsealing the seal. He is no novice to the mystical world like me!

Therefore, He never anticipated the outcome of Susanna Mattise breaking the seal from the very beginning. He made those claims purely as a bluff, coercing me to seek His aid and agree to certain unequal terms, creating an opportunity for Him to truly escape.

What He didn't foresee was my choice to deceive Susanna Mattise, compelling Him to provide me assistance based on the information she provided. No, He must have considered this possibility, but he had nothing to lose by attempting it. What if I had not devised a swift solution at that critical moment?

Dammit, His intentions are far too sinister! I could have fallen victim to His deception with the slightest carelessness!

Likewise, Susanna Mattise is no paragon of honesty.

Since she sought guidance from the Mother Tree of Desire and acknowledged the possibility of an angel being sealed within me, why wouldn't she contemplate the potential transmission of power through the seal? Subsequently, she prayed for power capable of withstanding the influence of Termiboros's leaked power, or even surpassing it. I failed to perceive it then and came dangerously close to corruption despite being distant.

Had I not escaped the Tree of Shadow in the nick of time, I would have succumbed to corruption.

Why didn't Susanna Mattise seek assistance right from the start? Could it be that corruption poses a threat to her as well?

Indeed, despite unforeseen circumstances during the Cordu ritual, the padre, as the host of the sacrificial ceremony, was shielded by the power of Inevitability. He did not transform into a monstrous entity or merge into the three-headed giant like the others and successfully escaped… Susanna Mattise also planned on relying on the protection

of the ritual to resist corruption?

Hence, she bought time, awaiting the completion of the ritual's preparations!

She did not target and control me initially because she knew that pushing too hard would prompt Termiboros to intervene prematurely, introducing too many uncertainties.

Thus, she endeavored to create an illusion for me, fostering the belief that resistance and escape were within reach. Only when I broached the subject of the angel did she stall for time, stringing together a series of seemingly revealing words. She concealed her true trump card, biding her time for me to make the wrong choice with Termiboros's aid and fall into her prearranged trap.

Although she did not anticipate the attack from the Montsouris ghost, had it not been for an external intervention exploiting the crack created by the ghost, I would have remained trapped within the Tree of Shadow's depths. Moreover, she was on the verge of officially activating the ritual and gaining protection.

Dammit! Beautiful Actors truly possess the knack for deceiving others!

As Lumian and Franca sprinted ahead, their surroundings suddenly transformed into a surreal spectacle. Vibrant layers of colors intertwined with indescribable, fantastical creatures.

His head spun, and his vision became hazy.

When his sight cleared, Rue Anarchie was nowhere in sight, and the vibrant palette had vanished.

Instead, he found himself standing on a verdant hillside, facing Madam Magician, adorned in an orange dress.

She's here too… Lumian glanced around but couldn't spot Franca.

As if sensing his unspoken question, Madam Magician smiled and spoke, "The Two of Cups departed with her Major Arcana card to attend to some matters."

“The Two of Cups?” Lumian was perplexed.

“That’s Franca. She is one of us. Her code name is Two of Cups, just as you are the Seven of Wands,” Madam Magician casually explained. “You have officially joined our ranks. Speak to the Two of Cups later and have her introduce our organization. I won’t say much.”

Not only is Franca a member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, but she is also part of the secret organization utilizing tarot card codenames? Lumian felt a mix of surprise and elation.

This meant that he and Franca were true comrades.

Madam Magician scrutinized Lumian’s charred countenance and fragmented attire. From somewhere, she produced a simple brown suit tailored for a man and tossed it to him.

“Change into this later. While it’s not particularly scandalous for Trieriens to roam the streets nude, one mustn’t entirely succumb to the surroundings. You must maintain your true self. Only then can you resist the potion’s corruption and minimize the risk of losing control.”

Lumian caught the clothes, and Madam Magician pondered for a moment before speaking, “Tell me in detail what has transpired recently. Although I knew you would encounter followers of the evil gods and become entangled with them, I did not anticipate you getting embroiled in such weighty matters directly.”

Lumian recounted the events, starting from his arrival in Trier to his use of the Summoning Dance to lure Susanna Mattise. He focused on the sacrificial ritual, Termiboros’s involvement, and the enigmatic lizard-like creature.

As Madam Magician listened, her expression grew solemn. Once Lumian finished speaking, she nodded slightly and said, “This is highly abnormal. Both Termiboros and that elf are far from ordinary.”

She gazed at Lumian, speaking in a direct manner, “It wasn’t Termiboros who aided you in enhancing Fallen Mercury’s abilities

within the Tree of Shadow and allowed the Montsouris ghost to arrive early."

"Not Him?" Lumian had speculated the issues that Madam Magician might uncover, but he never expected her to address this matter so clearly.

If not Termiboros, then who else could it be?

Moreover, the subsequent changes only occurred after the compromise of the Inevitable angel.

"I don't have the answers either." Madam Magician shook her head slowly. "What I can affirm is that the seal of that great existence wouldn't allow Termiboros to unleash such power. If that were possible, He would have long manipulated you to assist Him in breaking the seal."

Observing Lumian's perplexed expression, Madam Magician continued, "All Termiboros can do is influence your judgment and choices. After all, He is sealed within you, and your fates are intertwined to a certain extent.

"To put it simply, concerning Charlie's situation, Termiboros couldn't expedite Susanna Mattise's recovery. He couldn't dictate when or how she planned to find Charlie. He could merely utilize this situation to instill in you the intention of employing the Luck Transference Spell to alter Charlie's fate and augment the corresponding likelihood.

"From this standpoint, do you believe He possesses the capability to enhance Fallen Mercury's abilities and allow the timely arrival of the Montsouris ghost?

"However, it is plausible for Him to aid you in shouldering the burden of the past scenes within the Tree of Shadow.

"Hence, I have consistently advised you to seek my counsel beforehand on critical and perilous matters rather than making decisions on your own."

Lumian's heart surged like a tumultuous ocean.

He recollected the incident where Rentas took Charlie underground and realized that Madam Magician's words held truth.

Charlie's gruesome plight and destiny stemmed from two factors. Firstly, the threat posed by the Bliss Society through Rentas, and secondly, Lumian's own choice at the crossroads of fate. Thus, once Rentas was slain by their hands, Charlie's fortune merely improved marginally. Only when Lumian made the correct decision did everything revert to normalcy. There were no indications of Termiboros's influence.

If He could sway Charlie's path in the same manner He manipulated the Montsouris ghost, Lumian would have fallen victim long ago.

Moreover, why would Susanna Mattise entertain the idea of capturing me alive, knowing that I can receive indirect assistance from an angel after she departed from the Tree of Shadow and was in a weakened state, despite being aware of Termiboros's limited influences?

Unless Susanna Mattise, who possesses a trace of godhood due to the Tree of Shadow, had already deduced that Termiboros was impotent in exerting influence and remained tightly sealed following the internal conflict within the Tree of Shadow. There must be another origin to this quandary! And that origin did not depart alongside her! Dammit! I had presumed that even if my judgment faltered or the fate exchange prolonged, Termiboros would never allow Susanna Mattise to capture me alive, as it would render Him a sacrificial pawn. Little did I know, He lacked the capability entirely… Lumian postulated, obtaining a more rational explanation for the recent turn of events.

"What exactly happened?" he inquired, a tinge of anguish and anger coloring his tone.

Madam Magician pondered for a few seconds before responding, "Taking into account those misfortunes, I suspect that Termiboros has allies in the outside world. In other words, there may be a Beyonder lurking around you who possesses the ability to influence fate. He secretly accomplished tasks in accordance with the ideas transmitted by Termiboros, but he did so with subtlety to avoid exposure."

A word suddenly flashed across Lumian's mind: Sufferer!

In his dream, after entering the underground altar with Ryan's team, they had become tainted by the aura of a Sufferer!

As for the owl and the other "him" within the Warlock's tomb, prior to their unveiling, they always gave him the impression that they were the root of the problem and the mastermind behind it all.

Could these be symbolic as well?

Chapter 263 - 263 Choice

263 Choice

Lumian had always believed that his dream self represented his darker side, a twisted persona born from the corruption of Inevitability.

But now, it seemed there was more to it.

There was no problem with his understanding of his own essence, but was he, along with the owl hidden in the Warlock's tomb, also serving as a symbol?

A representation of the puppet master behind the scenes, the true orchestrator of the lizard-like creature and the grand ritual in Cordu?

And now, he was lurking in the shadows, attempting to collaborate with Termiboros in order to break free from the seal.

However, Termiboros's attitude towards the lizard-like creature seemed to suggest otherwise…

Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before sharing his speculations in detail with Madam Magician.

The Magician listened attentively, pondering for a moment before speaking.

"I initially believed that by undergoing progressive psychiatric treatment and recalling forgotten events one by one, the truth of Cordu Village would become clear to you. It wouldn't be any different from what I already know."

"But hearing what you've just said, I suspect that some of the symbols and metaphors in your dreams hold deeper, hidden secrets."

“But regardless, those symbols and metaphors are projections from my actual experiences. It’s impossible that I still can’t decipher them after regaining my memories, right?” Lumian objected.

Madam Magician smiled and replied, “That might not be the case.”

Seeing Lumian’s confusion, she explained simply, “On the one hand, you may not have directly experienced those events, but your spirit and subconscious sensed danger and abnormalities, projecting them into your dreams with symbolic elements.

“On the other hand, Termiboros is sealed within you. Your fate is intertwined with His. Your subconscious might have detected something unusual through this connection.”

Lumian grasped Madam Magician’s meaning to some extent and pondered for a moment.

“After completing the full psychiatric treatment, can Madam Susie directly awaken my subconscious and inquire about the meaning of the different symbols?”

“It’s extremely risky. When the time comes, we’ll have to rely on the joint opinion of the two Psychiatrists to decide if it’s worth attempting,” Madam Magician replied thoughtfully. “But that’s a long way off. Before then, I can assist you in finding Beyonders skilled in decrypting symbolism to see if we can accurately interpret it without relying solely on your subconscious. Would you like that?”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed eagerly.

Then, he asked with concern, “What about the potential Termiboros ally lurking nearby? Are we not going to do anything about them?”

Madam Magician remained calm as she answered, “Now that we have sensed this possibility, I don’t think they will risk staying close to you. Of course, I will continue to keep watch.”

She then inquired, “Do you plan to continue the mission assigned to you by the Aurora Order? Many people probably witnessed you charging toward the Tree of Shadow. This will raise Gardner Martin’s suspicions.

“If you don’t want to take the risk, inform Mr. K about it. He will likely be delighted that you’ve slain a Fallen Tree Spirit and thwarted the Bliss Society’s plan. He can assign you a new mission.

“If you wish to proceed, I can arrange for someone to blur the memories of those who saw you. In any case, it’s normal for your exact appearance and physical characteristics not to be clearly discerned in that environment.”

Without hesitation, Lumian declared, “I wish to proceed.”

Gardner Martin, a Sequence 6 or Sequence 5 of the Hunter pathway, commanded a formidable group of Hunters. If Lumian continued to interact with him and joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order, there was a high chance of acquiring the potion formulas and main ingredients after Pyromaniac.

Through these experiences, Lumian had gained a profound understanding of the disparities between Sequences, the terror of powerful individuals, and his own limitations. He felt an urgent need to enhance his strength. It was a sharp contrast to his initial nonchalance upon arriving in Trier, where he sought hope amidst confusion.

Only by becoming strong enough could he withstand misfortune and unveil the truth behind the catastrophe in the perilous world of mysticism. Only then could he discern whether various propositions using Resurrection as bait concealed sinister intentions!

Madam Magician nodded slightly, granting Lumian’s request.

Prompted by their previous conversation, Lumian inquired with curiosity, “Has the Tree of Shadow been dealt with?”

“How could that be?” Madam Magician scoffed. “Even if both Churches requested divine intervention, the Tree of Shadow would remain unresolved. Heh heh, it’s not impossible, but the price is exorbitant, deterring anyone from paying it.”

“What sort of price?” Lumian pressed further.

As if taking a leisurely stroll, Madam Magician moved two steps to

the side of the hill.

“After being nourished and exerting influence for over a thousand years, the Tree of Shadow has become one with Trier. It’s akin to its shadow, its dark aspect. Unless we obliterate the entire city and exterminate every inhabitant, not even a true deity could fully eradicate it.

“Of course, we could relocate Trier elsewhere and resettle its entire population. Then, after five to six years, when the Tree of Shadow has weakened due to the loss of nourishment, we could uproot it. However, by doing so, the other perils lurking beneath Trier would become uncontrollable.”

There are other dangers? Lumian furrowed his brow.

Isn’t the underground of Trier too daunting?

Perplexed, he asked, “Why wasn’t the Tree of Shadow destroyed when it was first planted?”

Madam Magician chuckled.

“Well, wasn’t it due to the urgency of constructing the city and countering certain underground threats? They failed to notice someone secretly planting the Tree of Shadow.”

She didn’t divulge details about the dangers, implying that Lumian didn’t need to know them at present.

Lumian keenly sensed this and sealed his lips.

Madam Magician looked at him and let out a self-deprecating laugh.

“Are you unhappy that I sent you directly to Trier and involved you in a series of perilous affairs without providing corresponding assistance?”

“No,” Lumian replied, puzzled by Madam Magician’s question.

From his perspective, accepting missions, completing tasks, and reaping rewards seemed fair enough. And throughout this process,

Madam Magician would offer guidance through letters.

Apart from the past few years of adoption, Lumian had long grown accustomed to not relying entirely on others and making full use of the various resources at his disposal to achieve his goals.

Madam Magician chuckled.

“Didn’t you see the Major Arcana card summoned by the Two of Cups? It happened because she was coincidentally in Trier. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have been so effortless and effective.”

She paused for a moment before continuing, “If I were to treat you as an extension of my eyes and hands, a loyal subordinate devoid of your own will, I could allow you to recite my name and provide ample assistance to ensure your safety most of the time. However, you chose the Hunter pathway. It’s a path that demands combat and a strong sense of self.

“A flower nurtured in a greenhouse cannot become a qualified Hunter. It’s immensely challenging for a Hunter, who always fights within their comfort zones with a patron, to attain godhood and become a saint. In due time, they will have to invest more time and pay a higher price to compensate for their present deficiencies.

“What kind of person do you aspire to be?”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before responding, “I want to be the one who makes those scoundrels tremble.”

His answer was unequivocal.

Madam Magician nodded in satisfaction. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Of course, that doesn’t mean I won’t care about you. I will still reply to your letters, provide my opinions, and even extend assistance upon request. However, I don’t want you to feel perpetually shielded.”

Lumian nodded, signifying his understanding.

He recalled Susanna Mattise’s swift recitation of certain words to seek

high-level assistance. Combining that with the keywords mentioned by Madam Magician, he spoke thoughtfully,

“Can reciting the honorific name of a specific entity draw their attention and receive corresponding aid through prayer?”

“Yes,” The Magician nodded subtly. “However, it requires the sufficient goodwill of the other party. Once you reach a certain stage, I will also disclose my name to you. Yes, you are aware of Mr. Fool’s honorific name, but without a ritual, simply reciting it will be difficult to elicit an effective response. It may even have adverse consequences. This is because Mr. Fool is contending with an ancient deity. The outcome will determine the fate of us all and whether this world can survive the apocalypse.”

Mr. Fool? The abbreviation for that mighty existence is The Fool? Truly befitting of a secret organization that employs tarot cards as their codenames… When Lumian heard of The Fool, he instinctively connected it to the tarot cards he encountered daily, rather than associating it with the honorific name. It seemed more like a description.

Madam Magician changed the subject and glanced at the tree trunk in Lumian’s hand.

“This is a valuable item. Attacks without godhood cannot harm it, and upon striking a target, it may trigger a particular desire.

“If you acquire Beyonder characteristics that align with it, you can find a way to employ a saint-level Artisan to combine them, turning it into a mystical item.

“You shouldn’t carry it with you at all times, though. Otherwise, your desires will gradually spiral out of control. It poses great danger for Beyonders who consume potions.”

Just as she finished speaking, Madam Magician turned her head slightly, as if listening to something. Then, she addressed Lumian, “That will be all for today.”

In the blink of an eye, Lumian’s vision filled with a blend of vibrant

colors and ethereal, indescribable creatures.

In the next moment, Rue Anarchie appeared before him, riddled with cracks.

Madam Magician had vanished,

leaving Lumian bewildered as he hastily donned the clothes and pants he held in his hands.

His attention was then drawn to Franca, standing not far away.

Simultaneously, the two of them exchanged smiles.

Before they could convey their shared sense of being part of the same secret organization, Jenna emerged from the alley shadows, dressed in a grayish-blue gown.

Lumian and Franca instinctively went on guard.

Jenna winced, gripping her wounded ribs, yet expressed joy, "Dammit! You guys are alright!"

She appears genuine… Franca mumbled and approached her, concern etched on her face. "What happened to you? Why are you injured?"

Jenna cast nervous glances around and lowered her voice.

"I assassinated Hugues Artois and ended up getting shot."

"Dammit! You succeeded? And you managed to escape?" Franca exclaimed, taken aback.

Even she didn't believe she could pull off such a feat.

What was this called? This was the embodiment of a true assassin!

Lumian noticed a few passersby on Rue Anarchie, so he interrupted Jenna.

"We can discuss it once we reach Auberge du Coq Doré. I'll extract the bullet and treat your wounds."

“I still have half a vial of Healing Agent,” Franca chimed in happily.

She supported Jenna and, following the shadows along the roadside, they made their way back to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As they neared their destination, they encountered Anthony Reid, the information broker.

Lumian chuckled derisively.

“I thought you’d have escaped.”

“I still have some unfinished business in the market district,” Anthony Reid replied vaguely.

The four of them took a few more steps and laid their eyes upon the beige five-story building.

Auberge du Coq Doré leaned a little more than before. Cracks marred its walls, intertwined with withering vines and branches.

As the remaining tenants had yet to return, it exuded an indescribable dilapidation and silence.

…

It had been some time since the catastrophe.

Amidst the crowd, a young man dressed plainly disembarked from the steam locomotive, carrying an old suitcase. He left the platform behind and strolled all the way to Rue Anarchie.

There, he laid eyes upon the beige five-story building, its surface adorned with streaks of vibrant red paint.

“Auberge du Coq Doré,” he murmured, reciting the name of the establishment. He reached into his pocket, feeling the banknotes and coins, realizing it was likely within his means.

To his surprise, Auberge du Coq Doré was much cleaner than he had envisioned. While certain areas were plastered with outdated newspapers and cheap pink paper, there were no signs of the

ubiquitous bedbugs, repugnant phlegm, or various types of rubbish.

After renting Room 302 for 15 verl d'or, the young man climbed the stairs with his suitcase, feeling content.

It's even more affordable than I thought. A clean motel like this costs only 15 verl d'or per month…

Once he had stowed away his suitcase in the cramped room, he decided to treat himself to a drink using the money he had saved.

In the Capital of Joy, one had to play the part!

He made his way to the underground bar, immediately engulfed by the lively clamor as he stepped inside.

A man in a shirt and bow tie, beer in hand, flailed his short arms, energetically expounding to the people around him. Others reveled, singing and dancing, refusing to be subdued.

At the bar counter, a few patrons sat with an intriguing contraption.

Curiosity piqued, the young man approached, examining the rubber hose and glass canister of the device. He asked with fascination, "What is this?"

A handsome customer with blond hair streaked with black turned his body and responded with a bright smile,

"It's called the Idiot Instrument that tests an individual's intelligence. Or you could say that it measures a person's foolishness."

(End of Volume Two—Lightseeker)

Chapter 264 - 264 Secret Organization

264 Secret Organization

Volume Opening: Everyone is a hunter, and everyone is prey. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Deputy Director of Loen Kingdom’s MI9 Spotted in the Crossfire of Market District Terror!”

“Fiery Debate at National Convention: Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Role in Hugues Artois Assassination!”

“Shocking Malpractice!”

“Negotiating the Limits: Two Churches in Talks Over Parliamentary Immunity Restrictions”

“No Oath, No Immunity: Debating the Rights of Unsworn Members”

“National Convention or Heretic Haven?”

“Hugues Artois Shielding Heretics Behind Market District Terrorism!”

The headlines from different newspapers stood out, capturing Jenna’s attention under the blazing afternoon sun. She scanned the newspapers’ headlines, witnessing the fervent debate taking place from different angles.

Jenna’s gaze eventually settled on the wanted posters adorning the newsstand’s side.

“Guillaume Bénet…”

“Pualis de Roquefort…”

“Lumian Lee…”

“Celia Bello…”

Jenna stared at her own poster, finding it peculiarly enchanting.

The portrait displayed bore no resemblance to her; her features were almost reversed, except for her undeniable beauty. Even her brother Julien would fail to recognize her as his sister, let alone any bounty hunters.

And so, Jenna continued her studies at the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons by day, and entertained audiences with her voice at the Salle de Bal Brise by night, making ends meet. Her life remained unchanged, just as it had been.

If it weren’t for the daily newspaper debates surrounding Hugues Artois’s demise and the ensuing conflicts, Jenna would have doubted whether her act of assassinating him was merely a dream born out of emotional turmoil.

Based on Franca’s findings and her own speculations, the official Beyonders seemed to appreciate Jenna’s elimination of Hugues Artois. They believed she had made a significant contribution in eradicating a group of heretics. Had it not been for the pressure from the National Convention and the various restrictions in place, they might have even considered honoring Jenna with a medal.

Hence, they intentionally spread misleading information, crafting a wanted poster that deviated from reality. They employed an investigation as a pretext to aid Jenna’s brother, Julien, in purging the malicious powers that had destabilized his emotions. They cured his latent psychological illness and provided him with a legitimate occupation as a fitter, all under the guise of humanitarianism and support for believers.

For Jenna, aside from the necessity to avoid her neighbors whenever she encountered Julien, her life remained relatively unhindered. She pursued her studies in theater acting and transformed into Showy Diva whenever the need arose.

Drawing from Franca's experience, if Jenna lingered in the market district for a few more days, the Purifiers of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church would likely approach her, sharing common knowledge and taboos to prevent any accidental disasters caused by her wild Beyonder powers. They might even attempt to recruit her as an informant.

If it were a Beyonder from the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, they might choose to observe her covertly, trailing her steps and uncovering the source of her Beyonder characteristic. Depending on the circumstances, they would determine whether to apprehend her immediately and transform her into an informant or play the long game to capture more significant players. The Purifiers, on the other hand, would likely adopt a more transparent approach, considering Jenna's substantial assistance in their cause.

Jenna paid little mind to these matters. If the official Beyonders sought her capture, she would flee. If they wished to recruit her as an informant, she would comply. And if they disregarded her altogether, she would continue working to repay her debts and save for next year's tuition.

Retracting her gaze, Jenna, dressed in a grayish-white gown, stepped out of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. She turned towards Rue des Blouses Blanches, seeking some rest before adorning her face with smoky and decadent makeup, preparing to become the captivating Showy Diva at the Salle de Bal Brise.

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca, clad in a blouse, light-colored breeches, and wooden slippers, warmly greeted Lumian.

"Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons proves more profitable than anticipated!"

At the heretic's estate charity auction for the post-disaster reconstruction, Gardner Martin had acquired Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons for 50,000 verl d'or and entrusted its management to Franca. Most of the profits were left in her hands as his mistress.

During the auction, he had also secured Auberge du Coq Doré for 2,000 verl d'or. Occasionally, he dispatched individuals to conduct peculiar investigations, as if seeking to uncover the truth behind the disaster.

Lumian undoubtedly took charge of the daily operations.

As the weather warmed, Lumian embraced the change by donning a light brown pair of trousers, a crisp white shirt, and a black waistcoat. He didn't bother with a coat.

Rather than inquire about the profits of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Lumian surveyed the surroundings and posed a question.

"I wish to know more about the secret organization we've joined."

He had initially assumed Franca would inform him at an opportune moment. However, after waiting for several days, it seemed Franca had forgotten about the matter, leaving Lumian no choice but to seek answers himself.

Franca was taken aback, her surprise evident as she blurted out, "You don't know?"

You joined without any knowledge of the organization?

Had it not been for Madam Judgment's confirmation that Lumian was a member, Franca would have suspected he was bluffing and hadn't actually joined.

Lumian explained sincerely, "I was on probation before, and after passing the assessment, my Major Arcana card left it to you to reveal the details."

Franca accepted the explanation, recalling her own limited knowledge during her early days with the organization.

She settled back into the recliner, crossing her legs and straightening her posture.

"We are all members of the Tarot Club."

Tarot Club… Upon hearing the name, Lumian, already seated on the opposite sofa, showed no surprise. After all, members of this clandestine group adopted tarot cards as their code names. The core members were associated with the Major Arcana cards, while ordinary members bore the Minor Arcana cards.

Franca's face gradually lit up with pride.

"Our Tarot Club is the most exceptional secret organization in the entire world. One could even argue it is among the most powerful."

"That's because our leader is a supreme entity standing at the apex of all deities. In other secret organizations, the deities they serve merely watch over and provide divine insight. They do not actively participate. However, before Mr. Fool descended into a deep slumber, He regularly convened gatherings in His divine kingdom for the Major Arcana cardholders. What do we call it? A true Divine Council! Other Churches may have so-called Divine Councils, but at best, they are meetings held under the watchful gaze of a deity. It is not a gathering conducted in the presence of a deity with the deity's direct involvement."

Franca pressed a hand to her chest and offered a slight bow.

"Praise The Fool!"

Lumian had contemplated the Tarot Club's potential. After all, Madam Magician exuded an air of mystery and power. Yet, he never anticipated that the great existence she spoke of would be the leader of the Tarot Club.

This shattered his preconceived notions of deities.

After a moment of contemplation, he voiced his thoughts.

"Is Mr. Fool called 'The Fool' because He holds The Fool card from the Major Arcana?"

So He, too, is a member of the Tarot Club?

"That is partly the reason," Franca replied after a brief pause. "However, no one can confirm it. I suspect it is because 'The Fool' is

one of the many honorific names bestowed upon Mr. Fool. Hence, when establishing the secret organization, He chose the name 'Tarot Club' and assigned different tarot cards to each member."

"But can we really address Him directly as 'Mr. Fool'?" Lumian questioned, finding it somewhat blasphemous or disrespectful to refer to a deity using the honorific 'Mr.' It seemed too ordinary and lacked the necessary sanctity.

Franca smiled and assured him, "There is no issue. It is said that Mr. Fool Himself quite enjoys this form of address."

Seeing that Lumian had no further inquiries, Franca continued.

"In many ritualistic magics, if you are unable to find a suitable recipient for your prayers, you can seek aid from Mr. Fool. Although the process may differ from your expectations, it will invariably lead to the desired outcome in a wondrous manner."

"The only caveat is that Mr. Fool is in a deep slumber, and we must not disturb Him too often. According to my Major Arcana card, we should not do so more than once a month unless absolutely necessary. Reciting His honorific name alone will not draw attention or assistance. In fact, it may result in failure and pose a certain risk. The power inadvertently released by a slumbering deity is capable of obliterating us countless times over. Thus, we must perform a ritual to ensure our safety."

Madam Magician had mentioned this before, but as per her explanation, Mr. Fool's slumber holds more significance than mere sleep… Franca seems unaware of the details? Lumian contemplated this as he asked thoughtfully, "What kind of deity is Mr. Fool?"

Franca cleared her throat and replied, "My lecture wouldn't do it justice. Haha, I don't remember all that much. I suggest you visit Mr. Fool's cathedral and listen to the bishop's sermons."

"Mr. Fool's cathedral?" Lumian exclaimed in surprise.

Was there a cathedral dedicated to Mr. Fool in Trier?

Weren't there only two Churches in Intis?

Franca explained, “Mr. Fool’s Church primarily resides in the Rorsted Archipelago of the Sonia Sea and some locations in the Southern Continent. However, due to the beliefs of many merchants, sailors, bounty hunters, and treasure seekers at sea, we often encounter followers of Mr. Fool at Lavigny Docks in the square district.”

“Later, for certain reasons, the two Churches agreed to construct a small cathedral there for Mr. Fool’s Church, allowing passing sea merchants to offer their prayers. However, proselytizing or preaching outside the cathedral is strictly prohibited. Most Trieriens are unaware of its existence.”

The square district lay on the north bank of the Srenzo River, west of Trier. Lavigny Docks bustled with various goods arriving from numerous seaside ports. Sea merchants frequently passed through, while sailors sought to experience the vibrancy and prosperity of Trier.

To the west of Lavigny Docks stood Trocadéro Town, renowned for its Trocadéro liquor.

Lumian nodded and said, “I shall find time to visit and listen.”

With that settled, he asked curiously, “What is the connection between Mr. Fool’s Church and our Tarot Club?”

Chapter 265 - 265 The Major Arcana Cards

265 The Major Arcana Cards

Franca, sitting cross-legged in the recliner, had long pondered over this question. After careful consideration, a smile curved on her lips as she spoke,

“Mr. Fool’s Church is akin to an independent subsidiary of our Tarot Club.”

Observing Lumian’s bewilderment, she went on to explain, “Each of our Tarot Club’s Major Arcana Cards represents an influential figure in the world, be it in reality or mysticism. I suspect that the Pope of The Fool’s Church is one such figure. As for the other Major Arcana Cards, they may lead different organizations. While these organizations might not believe in Mr. Fool, they can provide assistance to certain operations of the Tarot Club.”

“To put it simply, the Tarot Club is the highest governing body directly overseen by Mr. Fool. Each holder of a Major Arcana card possesses a distinguished status and their own sphere of influence. And one such holder is The Fool’s Church,” Franca elaborated.

Lumian grasped Franca’s meaning roughly and inquired, “How many Major Arcana cards do we have?”

Franca shook her head and replied, “I cannot provide an exact number as the identities of the Major Arcana card holders are kept confidential. The only card we interact with the most is the Major Arcana card to which we are subordinate. Well… mine is Madam Judgment.”

“Mine is Madam Magician,” Lumian added.

Franca chuckled, “It seems that these two cards often appear together. Yes, our Tarot Club has a habit of scattering the entire deck of tarot cards at the scene after completing a task. We also place the card that represents us in the most prominent position…”

“Isn’t that wasteful?” Lumian interrupted Franca.

“What harm is there in using a deck of tarot cards? Don’t you find such actions cool?” Franca muttered. “You can leave the card that represents you, but what use is a deck without one? You’ll have to buy a new one next time. If you visit the factory and customize a large number of tarot cards with just one card, you’ll become an easy target.”

“I can draw it myself,” Lumian proposed, already formulating a solution.

While he couldn’t replicate the printed quality, he could capture the main characteristics of the Seven of Wands.

Franca fell silent for a moment, then said, “Wouldn’t something you draw have a mystical connection? Wouldn’t you have to expend energy to counter divination?”

“Sigh, we don’t have to scatter them every time. We don’t have to scatter them when working with non-Tarot Club members. We don’t have to scatter them during stealth missions, such as the one we’re on now. And we don’t have to scatter them when we’re under suspicion.

“Dammit! How did we get off track? What I wanted to convey is that due to the Tarot Club’s customs and traditions, I’ve learned from various newspapers and mystical gatherings about the more active Major Arcana cards.

“Madam Justice has appeared multiple times on the Midseashire coast, in Trier, and Backlund. Mr. Hanged Man has made appearances at sea. We have Madam Hermit and Mr. Sun, as well as Mr. Moon and Mr. Star from the Southern Continent. As for any other Major Arcana card holders, I’m unaware.”

Madam Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, Mr. Sun, Madam Hermit, Mr. Star,

Mr. Moon… Lumian realized that the names possessed an air of mystery and sophistication, unlike the mundane-sounding Seven of Wands and Two of Cups.

After pondering for a while, he recognized a crucial point mentioned by Franca: Madam Justice had been seen in Midseashire, Trier, and Backlund.

Apart from Madam Judgment and Madam Magician, this was the only Major Arcana card with confirmed sightings in Trier.

Lumian distinctly recalled that Madam Susie had mentioned the possibility of people from the West Midseashire Coast being Beyonders of the Spectator pathway.

This implied that she had a good understanding of the West Midseashire Coast.

Considering that she and the other Psychiatrist were in Trier, their areas of activity overlapped by at least two-thirds with Madam Justice's.

Furthermore, when Madam Magician mentioned that the two Psychiatrists were equals and that his psychological problem involved matters at a higher level, Lumian suspected that one of them was Madam Justice.

Based on the fact that both Madam Magician and Madam Judgment preferred to address themselves with tarot cards and conceal their true names, it was more likely that the enigmatic lady sitting across from him was the holder of the Major Arcana card, Justice. Susie, on the other hand, seemed to be her subordinate Minor Arcana card.

With these thoughts in mind, Lumian glanced at Franca, who had adjusted her sitting position, and spoke, "Were you planning to find a genuine Psychiatrist for Jenna's brother from within our Tarot Club?"

Franca, confused by Lumian's sudden change of topic, was taken aback.

"No, I intended to approach members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

“I try my best not to contact my Major Arcana, Madam Judgment unless it’s a particularly critical or serious matter. Although she always appears composed and willing to help, do you know? She’s a true demigod and a prominent figure with godlike status. I can’t burden her with trivial matters frequently. She says she doesn’t mind, but who knows if she’s truly honest. Each insignificant problem might decrease her favor towards me.

“When her favorability drops to a certain extent, a demigod has numerous ways to make your life unbearable. Besides, you won’t even know why it’s happening.

“I usually handle things on my own. If that fails, I turn to Gardner Martin or the members of the Research Society. And if that doesn’t work, I consider reaching out to Madame Judgment.”

Lumian shared the same sentiment, but he had the excuse of reporting the mission’s situation and suppressing Termiboros’s influence. He could write to Madam Magician from time to time to gather information.

In any case, he was already in the process of writing a letter. There was no harm in asking!

Observing that Franca’s Psychiatrist wasn’t the same as his own, Lumian didn’t mention Susie. He nodded gently and replied, “Same here.”

Franca glanced around and lowered her voice.

“However, don’t hesitate to seek help when you need it. The resources and influence wielded by Major Arcana card holders exceed your imagination. What you find difficult can be resolved with a mere command or thought.

“Wasn’t my mystical item, the Ring of Punishment, incredibly powerful? Madame Judgment granted it to me directly upon my request. She even allowed me to owe an equivalent exchange for a period of time.

“Uh… I see how you obtained the Pyromaniac potion formula and its

main ingredient so quickly!”

You’re not wrong… Lumian smiled, conveying to Franca that she had hit the mark.

He believed that if he could acquire Beyonder characteristics that complemented the Shadow Branch, he could genuinely seek the help of Madam Magician in finding a saint-level Artisan to craft the corresponding mystical item.

Compared to him, who was only a Sequence 7, Madam Magician, already a demigod, was more likely to be acquainted with a high-level Artisan!

Franca exhaled and continued the conversation.

“Every bearer of a Major Arcana card is a demigod, with a high probability of being a saint. At the very least, the more active ones don’t seem to be at the level of Grounded Angels. However, Madam Judgment told me that the Tarot Club has more than one angel!”

At least eight saints, and more than one angel? They’re even stronger than the Aurora Order… Truly befitting the most extraordinary secret organization… Lumian sighed, wondering if the Tarot Club’s core members were exaggerating to instill a stronger sense of belonging among their subordinates.

With a yearning expression, Franca added, “My current dream is to progress step by step to Sequence 5, then advance to Sequence 4 of the Hunter pathway and become a demigod. That would grant me the right to obtain a Major Arcana card.

“Not only would it mean greater strength and a sense of security, but it would also allow me to participate in the Divine Council and ask Mr. Fool about things once he awakens.”

According to Madam Magician, obtaining a Major Arcana card isn’t dependent on advancing to Sequence 4 and becoming a demigod… Lumian dealt Franca a blow to prevent her from having overly high expectations.

However, Franca didn’t mind at all. She smiled and said, “In any

case, my question will have to wait until Mr. Fool wakes up. When the time comes, demigods will undoubtedly be more qualified than other members to obtain a Major Arcana card."

At this point, she looked at Lumian and continued, "Apart from us, there are four more Minor Arcana cards active in Trier. In total, there are 23 cards in the world, but there might be fewer. Many Beyonders find it fashionable to scatter tarot cards at the scene of an incident and intentionally imitate us. They might do it to misdirect the official Beyonders' investigation.

"In Trier, the most renowned card is the Knight of Swords. At the beginning of the year, he detonated a warehouse belonging to the Southern Continent's terrorist organization, the Rose School of Thought. The warehouse concealed a significant amount of explosives, and non-human remains were found at the scene…"

Lumian listened attentively to Franca's account, gaining a better understanding of the Tarot Club and the Major Arcana and Minor Arcana cards.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he asked, "Do Minor Arcana cards have gatherings in the world of mysticism?"

"No," Franca shook her head again. "Unless we meet in person, like we have, we can only communicate through our respective Major Arcana cards. Yes, regular gatherings do take place between Major Arcana cards in Mr. Fool's divine kingdom!

"However, Madame Judgment mentioned once that in urgent situations, with the assistance of our Major Arcana, we can communicate in a way that transcends reality, but such occurrences are rare."

Lumian had no further questions. After chatting for a while, he heard Jenna's footsteps ascending the stairs.

He stood up, preparing to leave.

"Where are you going?" Franca asked, puzzled. The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

At this hour, there was nothing for him to do in Salle de Bal Brise, so he might as well stay and play Fighting Evil, the game Emperor Roselle had “invented.”

Lumian smiled, a mix of emotions in his expression.

“To the catacombs.”

The ashes of the lunatic Flameng and the Ruhr couple were finally being laid to rest in the catacombs.

Chapter 266 - 266 Catacombs

266 Catacombs

Outside the police headquarters in the bustling market district, Lumian, donning the enigmatic Prying Glasses, climbed aboard the carriage adorned with painted irises.

Two ordinary constables, clad in black uniforms, occupied the seats opposite, their feet resting beside three somber urns. The names of the departed flickered in fluorescent ink.

Taking his place across from them before the carriage slowly steered forward, Lumian caught the older constable's inquisitive gaze.

"What brings you here? What's your connection to these departed souls?"

He remembered that two of the deceased had neither kin nor friends, and the remaining one had distant relatives who trembled at the mere mention of the name Flameng. Not only were they unwilling to come and collect the ashes and relics, but they also reluctantly admitted that they were related by blood or marriage.

Lumian responded calmly.

"I'm their landlord, in a manner of speaking."

"Just the landlord?" The older constable appeared skeptical.

"Officer, a landlord is a person too. They can feel for others!" Lumian chuckled. "I've shared a drink or had a chat with them. Accompanying their remains into the catacombs isn't a big deal."

The younger constable feigned disinterest, gazing out the window, while the older constable exuded an air of familiarity.

“Youth suits you well. But in the motel or apartment business in the market district, you must guard against developing attachments to tenants. Otherwise, you’ll either be deceived or heartbroken. After a few more such experiences, your enthusiasm for others will wane.”

Lumian offered a perfunctory reply, and the constable broached another subject.

“We still have Flameng’s belongings. His kin refuse to collect them. Would you like them? If not, we’ll handle it ourselves.”

“I’ll take a look when I return from the catacombs,” Lumian replied nonchalantly.

During the journey from the market district to the Place du Purgatoire in Quartier de l’Observatoire, the older constable chatted away, alternating between engaging Lumian and attempting to draw his colleague into conversation. His chatter seemed ceaseless.

Finally reaching their destination, Lumian disembarked from the carriage, cradling Ruhr’s ashes in his arms. Despite his outgoing nature, Lumian felt a newfound relief, as if his ears had been granted respite.

The catacomb administrator, whom Lumian had encountered before, awaited their arrival.

In his mid-thirties, of average build, with curly brown hair, a thick beard, and slightly upturned eyes, he sported yellow pants, a white shirt, and a blue vest.

“Kendall, why is it you again?” the older constable greeted him warmly.

Kendall held an unlit carbide lamp and smiled.

“Robert, I heard you were coming, so I made sure to delay my other duties and be here for you.”

As Kendall spoke, he scrutinized Lumian and emphasized, “You didn’t forget to bring the white candles, did you?”

“That will be the last thing I forget!” Robert, clutching Flameng’s urn, fumbled in his pocket and retrieved three white candles. He tossed one to his colleague and another to Lumian.

With everything in order, Kendall ignited the carbide lamp and turned around, leading them deeper into the darkness, down the stone staircase comprising 138 steps.

Along the way, they passed a heavy wooden door engraved with two imposing Sacred Emblems and traversed a hushed corridor where even the sound of their breaths seemed amplified.

Lumian was no stranger to such a foreboding atmosphere, but the young constable displayed signs of nervousness. He clutched Madame Michel’s urn tightly, seeking solace.

After traversing a broad avenue, illuminated by gas street lamps, the quartet arrived at the catacombs’ entrance.

The natural cavern, subsequently modified, stood silently in the dim yellow glow. Skulls, skeletal arms, sunflowers, and reliefs depicting steam elements adorned both sides. Beyond them, an impenetrable darkness loomed.

Etched on the lintel were two inscriptions in Intisian:

“Halt!

“The Death Empire lies ahead!”

Although Lumian had witnessed this sight before, he still felt a profound sense of reverence.

Unlike his previous curiosity and confusion, he now keenly grasped the gravity conveyed by these warnings and the surrounding environment.

Beneath Trier’s surface lurked countless perils capable of obliterating the entire city and even Intis itself. These dangers included, but were not limited to, Trier, the Tree of Shadow, and invisible flames from the Fourth Epoch. The catacombs, situated here, were unlikely to be innocuous.

According to Osta Trul, a Secrets Suppliant, visitors who descended into the catacombs with lit white candles invoked the protection of a concealed entity, akin to a ritual.

Lumian couldn't help but suspect that opening such a place to the public served to suppress some subterranean peril, much like the new city erected upon Trier in the Fourth Epoch.

Kendall turned to Lumian and the others.

"It's time to light the candles. We must ensure they don't go out before we leave the catacombs.

"If we happen to get separated, don't panic. Look for a road sign. If you can't find one, follow the black line above you until you reach the exit."

With Kendall holding the carbide lamp, Lumian and the two others ignited their white candles, casting a soft yellowish glow.

As the four candles flickered gently, Kendall extinguished the carbide lamp and led the way through the boulder gate, entering the realm of the Death Empire.

Lumian followed closely behind, clutching the urn in one hand and the white candle in the other.

Suddenly, a chill swept over him, sending shivers down his spine.

But the cold didn't originate from his surroundings; it emanated from deep within his heart, causing his hair to stand on end.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt eyes fixed upon him, their gazes piercing his soul.

Using the flame of his candle, he looked to his right and saw pits carved into the stone wall, each one containing a ghastly skeletal corpse.

The hollow-eyed skulls stared at him lifelessly, devoid of emotion.

Lumian didn't avert his gaze as he carefully observed the corpses. He

realized that the eerie sensation of being watched didn't stem from them, yet the feeling remained.

An instinctive urge to activate his Spirit Vision surged within him, but he had changed since arriving in Trier. He had encountered enough to know that many warnings were inscribed with blood and tears by those who came before him.

I shouldn't look at what I shouldn't… Since it poses no danger to me, there's no need to search for the source of this abnormality… Lumian silently muttered, turning his attention to the police officers beside him.

They seemed oblivious to any anomaly and continued following the tomb administrator, Kendall, as if everything was normal.

This made Lumian suspect that the experience was a result of the qualitative change in his spirituality after his advancement to Pyromaniac.

It's good that you can't feel it… Lumian couldn't help but sigh.

Under the weight of countless gazes, his skin erupted in goosebumps.

He cautiously looked up and saw a thick black line painted on the top of the tomb, with an arrow pointing toward the exit.

As he advanced, Lumian noticed that both sides of the path were lined with bones. Some were nestled in pits along the stone walls, others were piled by the roadside, and some were covered by tattered garments. Some lay bare, stripped of all burial items, their skulls coated in a layer of dark green mold. The air carried a diluted scent of decay.

The catacombs were divided into multiple chambers, each designated by name, ensuring visitors could locate specific remains.

Lumian and his companions followed Kendall through the narrow passage between the tomb chapel and the tomb memorial pillar. Ahead, they saw dozens of yellowish candles.

At times, the flames clustered together like fireflies in the night,

while other times they formed a river of dim starlight.

Lumian glanced around casually and spotted a bride, her face veiled in white, adorned in a sanctified gown. Beside her stood a groom in a black tailcoat, a floral handkerchief adorning his chest pocket. Surrounding them were 30 to 40 youths, holding lit white candles and laughing merrily.

“What’s happening?” Lumian couldn’t hide his confusion.

Kendall scoffed and explained, “It’s part of a wedding ceremony.

“Since last year, newlyweds have been bringing young guests into the catacombs, crossing paths with the deceased. It’s become a popular tradition in Trier. Young folks are always daring, taking pride in their courage and delighting in scaring others. I’ve seen guests purposely pick up skeletal hands and pat the bride and groom on the shoulder, nearly causing them to faint in fear.”

Oh, you Trierians… Lumian shook his head in amusement.

It didn’t take long for the four of them to reach their destination, the Tomb of Lights.

In the center stood a black pedestal, atop which an obelisk painted white bore the emblem of the Sun. At its peak rested an ancient, extinguished oil lamp. The walls and floor were filled with bones, urns, and countless tear bottles.

Upon entering, Lumian realized a problem.

“Where are Flameng’s relatives?”

He had wanted Flameng to rest alongside his children, wife, and parents.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Lumian suddenly understood why Flameng hadn’t specified the location of his kin’s remains.

He felt guilty and self-reproachful. Flameng desired to be with his family, yet he didn’t dare approach them. He intended to stay in the same chamber and watch over them from a distance.

An indescribable sorrow enveloped Lumian as he stood silently, choosing to honor Flameng's final wish. He found an empty spot and gently placed the urn of the troubled soul.

Once Robert and the others had arranged the urns of the Ruhr couple, the four of them offered simultaneous prayer, either uttering "Praise the Sun" or "By Steam."

On their way back, they encountered the newlyweds and their young entourage.

As Lumian brushed past them, he noticed a young couple in the group. Seizing the moment when the tomb administrator's attention waned, they impulsively attempted to blow out the white candle in their hands, curious to see what would happen.

Whoosh!

They had indeed done it.

The two yellowish flames were extinguished.

In that instant, Lumian's mind turned adrift.

Quickly regaining his composure, he realized the young couple had vanished without a trace.

They're gone… Lumian's eyes widened as he tried to comprehend the situation.

A few seconds later, he accepted the undeniable truth.

The young couple had truly vanished!

Lumian then shifted his gaze back to the entourage.

Whether it was the newlyweds leading the way, the attending guests, or those at the rear, no one seemed to notice anyone missing. They continued to smile, joke, and move forward.The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Chapter 267 - 267 Remains

267 Remains

For a moment, Lumian thought he must be seeing things.

There was no sign of the couple, nor any attempt to put out the candle flames!

If Lumian hadn't witnessed it himself and been well aware of the dangers lurking in Underground Trier, he might have questioned whether the problem was with his own mind rather than searching for any trace of the couple's existence.

The people behind the couple hastened their steps and caught up to the person in front, closing the sudden gap in the procession.

They showed no surprise, fear, or confusion.

Everything appeared normal.

Lumian, already aware of the countless unseen gazes fixed upon him, felt the goosebumps on his skin intensify.

Subconsciously, he glanced at Kendall, the tomb administrator, who led the way with two police officers, to gauge his reaction to the recent events.

Clad in yellow trousers and a blue vest, Kendall held an extinguished carbide lamp in one hand and a quietly burning white candle in the other. He walked directly toward the exit of the catacombs, seemingly oblivious to the strange happenings surrounding the entourage.

Suddenly, Kendall turned around and met Lumian's gaze.

"Is something the matter?" Kendall's deep voice reverberated through

the passageway, echoing in the nearby skull chambers.

Lumian maintained a composed demeanor and replied calmly, “I’m afraid I might get lost.”

Kendall nodded almost imperceptibly.

“Then I’ll slow down.”

He continued toward the exit, deliberately reducing his pace. He staggered slightly, remaining silent, resembling a zombie from a horror novel.

Lumian held the flickering yellow candle and passed by the laughing wedding party participants, who occasionally made eye contact with the white skulls. Thoughts raced through his mind.

They truly didn’t notice that someone was missing…

When they leave the catacombs, will the families of the man and woman discover their absence?

I’ve always wondered. The catacombs are open to the public, and university students often take risks and dance among the bones. Are there truly no issues?

Even visitors guided by the catacomb administrators disobey the warnings, let alone youngsters who venture in with a solitary white candle…

Initially, I believed there were safety measures or that accidents were infrequent enough not to deter those individuals. Now, it seems to be a different matter altogether…

Lumian suspected that not only would the body of the person “consumed” by the catacombs vanish, but even the memory of their existence would be erased from the minds of friends and relatives!

Why can I remember them? Could it be because Termiboros is sealed within me, connecting my fate to His to some extent?

Why do the government and the two Churches continue to open such

a perilous place to the public? Do the catacombs require a constant flow of living people to keep something suppressed? Are those who disregard the warnings deemed necessary sacrifices? The more Lumian dwelled on it, the more his hair stood on end. He forced himself not to delve further into the analysis.

Without sufficient information, he couldn't explore the matter any deeper. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Regardless, there was nothing worth investigating within the catacombs. Visiting occasionally posed no threat as long as he adhered to the rules!

Once they entered the catacombs, the "talkative" police officer, Robert, fell silent, clearly uncomfortable in the environment.

With his silence, the conversation ceased. In an indescribable silence, the quartet retraced their steps to the natural entrance adorned with intricate reliefs and emerged back into the open.

As soon as Lumian crossed the threshold, he sensed the countless invisible gazes vanish.

The chill in his body dissipated, and his skin quickly returned to normal.

"Phew…" Robert exhaled deeply. "I always feel uneasy whenever I'm in the catacombs. Kendall, how can you go in more than ten times a day and still be so cheerful?"

Kendall chuckled and replied, "Do you think we remain unaffected? If we're not on night duty, those with families rush to find their wives. If not, they head to places like Rue de la Muraille and bask in the warmth of others."

"To be honest, after spending so much time here, I feel as if I'm slowly turning into a corpse."

As they conversed, Kendall lit the carbide lamp and extinguished the candle in his hand.

Returning to the surface, Robert glanced at the police headquarters

carriage parked outside the entrance building and sheepishly smiled at his colleague and Lumian.

“That prolonged discomfort makes me need to use the loo. Wait for me. I’ll go to the restroom first.”

With that, he headed toward the two-story building, painted a muddy gray, which served as the ticket office for the catacombs.

Lumian gazed at the stone-engraved dome and positioned himself by a pillar at the edge, absentmindedly observing the pedestrians on Place du Purgatoire. The other police officer boarded the carriage and settled in to wait.

At that moment, Lumian felt a sudden chill.

It resembled the sensation he experienced upon entering the catacombs, though not as intense.

Instinctively, he warily turned around and saw Kendall, the tomb administrator, standing behind him, wearing an expressionless face.

“What’s the matter?” Lumian calmly inquired.

Kendall, with his thick brown beard, spoke in a deep voice, “What were you looking at?”

Lumian’s heart sank as he responded with a mixture of sincerity and pretense,

“Which aspect are you referring to?”

“When we passed by that group of people on our way back.” Kendall’s tone remained neutral.

Lumian acted as though a light bulb had switched on.

“I find the concept of a wedding among the dead quite intriguing. They seemed unafraid and were enjoying themselves.”

Kendall scrutinized him for a couple of seconds before nodding.

“Don’t imitate them.”

With that, the tomb administrator carried the unlit carbide lamp and made his way toward the muddy gray building that housed them.

Before long, police officer Robert jogged back, and the carriage departed for Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

…

In the Evidence Room deep within the corridor on the first floor of the market district’s police headquarters, Robert led Lumian to a wooden frame divided into multiple compartments and pointed to one of them.

“Here, Flameng’s belongings.”

Among the items, there was a dark suitcase, a fountain pen, paper, an ink bottle, and several large books crammed inside.

Lumian pulled out one of the books and quickly skimmed through its pages. He realized it was a mineralogy textbook focusing on Trier’s underground rock formations. As an unschooled youth, the content proved challenging, with numerous unfamiliar words that were exclusive to mineralogy.

The other books were also mineralogy texts, some containing basic teaching materials while others comprised complex collections of papers.

Confirming this, Lumian retrieved the suitcase, placed it on the floor, and opened it.

Inside, along with two sets of clothes and daily essentials, the suitcase was filled with small grayish-white cloth bags. Each bag had a different name written on it with a fountain pen:

Flower, Sedge, Sheep…

These are the names Flameng mentioned, referring to the various rock strata beneath Trier… Could these bags contain corresponding mineral specimens? Lumian briefly recollected Flameng’s words and

formed a rough idea of what the cloth bags contained.

Despite his madness, Flameng hadn't forgotten to bring along his research subjects!

But all of this held little significance for Lumian, and he began contemplating letting the police headquarters handle them.

Just then, Termiboros's magnificent voice resonated in his ears.

"The cloth bag on the far right."

Oh, so a loser like you is finally speaking up again? Lumian's initial reaction was to mock Termiboros. However, he turned his gaze toward the cloth bag hinted at by the Inevitability angel, feeling a mix of surprise and suspicion.

The cloth bag rested on the far right side of the suitcase, sandwiched between Flameng's socks and his razor. Dark blue ink formed a combination of terms on its surface:

"Earth Blood."

Earth… Blood… Lumian, crouching beside the suitcase, silently muttered as he calmly picked up the cloth bag in front of the police officer, Robert, and opened it.

Inside the bag was a brown rock pockmarked with potholes. Each depression contained dark-red speckles, resembling blood seeping from the earth.

For some reason, just looking at it filled Lumian with a sense of frustration.

He refrained from touching the mineral specimen with his bare hands. Instead, he securely tied the cloth bag and placed it back in the suitcase.

He swiftly skimmed through the book detailing the materials found in Trier's underground rock formations, searching for answers.

With a clear target in mind, he quickly discovered the answer.

“Earth Blood rock stratum lies between 55 and 56 meters underground in Trier and has a thickness of approximately 0.76 meters… This is the deepest mineral we can gather. Beyond lies the forbidden Ancient Ruins Reserve…”

Beside this textbook description, Flameng’s familiar handwriting jotted a few words:

“A small number of ores within the Earth Blood rock stratum are more peculiar than the others. They are suspected to contain volatile toxins that can induce irritability and lead to a mental illness known as mania.

“A researcher suddenly went berserk and slashed his colleague.

“To handle specific mineral specimens from the Earth Blood rock stratum, one must wear corresponding protective gear.”

Earth Blood is a rock stratum near Fourth Epoch Trier? It’s undeniably peculiar… No wonder Termiboros made me pay attention… As Lumian pondered, Robert urged, “Do you want them or not? Make a decision quickly!”

“Yes,” Lumian responded, rising to his feet.

Even though he only desired the mineral specimen from the Earth Blood rock stratum and the mineralogy textbook detailing Trier’s underground rocks, he signed and took possession of all of Flameng’s belongings to avoid arousing suspicion.

Upon returning to Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian neglected to wash off his enigmatic makeup. He whispered to Termiboros, “What makes this mineral specimen so special?”

Termiboros’s voice echoed in Lumian’s ears once more.

“Don’t tell me you think it’s normal for the Montsouris ghost to spare Flameng?”

Chapter 268 - 268 Possible Encounters

268 Possible Encounters

Upon hearing Termiboros's question, Lumian felt a jolt of alarm.

He had never suspected that there might be something amiss with Flameng's prolonged stay at Auberge du Coq Doré, evading the clutches of the Montsouris ghost.

From Lumian's perspective, Flameng's immediate family and wife had already met their demise, and it was only a matter of time before he met a similar fate. The archives at Psychic's headquarters revealed instances where victims had been slain by the Montsouris ghost up to 11 months after encountering it. While Flameng's circumstances were rare, they were not unprecedented.

In an instant, Lumian's mind seized upon an intriguing detail.

The previous victims had all met their end within the same year of their encounter, whereas Flameng had crossed paths with the ghost last year. He had even sought the sanctuary of the clergy during the New Year festivities.

Although less than a year had passed since Flameng's encounter with the Montsouris ghost and his subsequent suicide, it was an unprecedented delay compared to the other cases.

"Could this Earth Blood ore be responsible for protecting Flameng, causing the Montsouris ghost to repeatedly postpone its actions and disrupt its usual patterns?" Lumian asked Termiboros, his voice hushed, seeking confirmation.

Termiboros was a true angel, devoid of power due to a perfect seal

but possessing remarkable insight, knowledge, and level made Him capable of deciphering many matters.

Termiboros replied in a majestic voice, “It instills fear and repulsion in the Montsouris ghost, but it holds no power of its own. For you, this could be a crucial key.”

“A key?” Lumian swiftly made numerous connections. “The key to a hidden chamber in Fourth Epoch Trier?”

Termiboros responded in an unusually deep voice, “You will inevitably enter Fourth Epoch Trier. It is where your destiny, both treacherous and serendipitous, awaits you.

“Rather than remaining passive, it would be wiser to explore proactively, leveraging the insights gained from each venture to better prepare yourself.”

“Aren’t you revealing your intentions too quickly?” Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle. “Are you trying to hasten my demise? So that you may utilize the unique underground environment to block the signal of the collapsing seal and ensure your own safe escape?”

Given that the Tree of Shadow hadn’t taken root in Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian held no interest in venturing underground.

Without awaiting Termiboros’s response, he left the room and made his way to the nearest washroom, eager to wash off the mystical makeup that concealed his true identity.

Having eliminated the latent threat, Lumian settled at a wooden table and began to write.

It was clear that both Flameng and the Earth Blood ore were extraordinary cases. He couldn’t simply follow Termiboros’s directives; consulting Madam Magician was imperative.

If he lacked knowledge and blindly believed the words of an angel tied to an evil deity, he would inevitably suffer dire consequences, even risking his life.

Termiboros’s voice resonated once more.

“Can you truly trust this Magician, this Tarot Club, as they claim?

“They sealed me within your body instead of seeking my eradication. I fear they have ulterior motives, intending to exploit you for their nefarious purposes.”

“They cast you into Trier, the very heart of the storm, yet they displayed no concern nor made any inquiries about your well-being. Don’t you find this suspicious? It cannot be explained away as mere training.”

Lumian beamed and said with a sigh, “Have you never deceived or manipulated others in the past, relying solely on your status and abilities to achieve your goals?

“Would you like me to purchase a copy of the Art of Persuasion and read it aloud daily for your instruction?

“Allow me to enlighten you. Such tricks wouldn’t have ensnared me during my early teenage years. I am well aware of those I can depend on, my true friends, my adversaries, and those I must remain wary of.”

Termiboros fell silent, seemingly contemplating whether to acquire the art of rhetoric.

Lumian swiftly penned a letter to Madam Magician, detailing the recent developments, and entrusted it, along with the Earth Blood ore, to the puppet messenger he had summoned. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

In due time, a reply arrived from Madam Magician, who returned the mineral specimen.

“I’m relieved to see that you remained cautious and didn’t fully trust Termiboros’s words.

“However, there is some truth to what He said. The ore lacks inherent power, but it carries remnants of unknown auras and characteristics, mostly dissipated. It won’t aid you directly, but it seems destined to bring about encounters in the future, which could be either beneficial or detrimental. Its current state is highly chaotic,

making it difficult to provide an accurate interpretation.

“What Termiboros intentionally misled you about is that the fortuitous encounter He spoke of might not necessarily occur in Fourth Epoch Trier, but somewhere underground.

“If, in the future, you wish to explore the potential encounters and are prepared to take risks, carry it with you whenever you venture into Underground Trier. Alternatively, if you wish to avoid the risk, keep it safely stored in your room.

“The symbolic elements I mentioned previously have already begun to unfold. A friend of mine mentioned that he possesses great proficiency in deciphering such matters. Once he completes his current tasks, I will arrange for you to meet him…”

Suddenly, a blaze erupted from Lumian’s hand, reducing the letter to ashes.

Contemplating the words of both Madam Magician and Termiboros, Lumian couldn’t help but believe that the Earth Blood ore before him could trigger some kind of mutation within Underground Trier. It could lead to a fortuitous encounter or even claim his life.

For now, it’s best not to take unnecessary risks, Lumian thought, aware of his current strengths.

As a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, he had overcome any deficiencies in both close-quarters combat and long-range attacks, excelling in hand-to-hand combat and spellcasting. He had surpassed the limitations of an ordinary individual. However, Hunters leaned more towards conventional battles and lacked the peculiar abilities and methods to deal with the peculiarities of Underground Trier.

Lumian decided to wait until he had fully digested the Pyromaniac potion and obtained the Contractee boon. Then, he would consider carrying the Earth Blood ore based on the information he had gathered about Underground Trier.

It would be even better if he could transform the Shadow Branch into a mystical item before that.

Suppressing his thoughts, Lumian took the mineral specimen to Rue des Blouses Blanches and concealed it in his safehouse.

Before the afternoon sun waned, he delved into Aurore's grimoire, meticulously studying its contents alongside Franca's teachings and his own experiences with fire spells, searching for any potential issues.

After more than an hour, Lumian stumbled upon a section about summoning creatures from the spirit world and forging contracts.

His mind immediately turned to White Paper, Aurore's contracted creature.

The fragile spirit entity possessed the ability to withstand a specific ability of the contractor.

I wonder if the contract between Aurore and White Paper has been severed. According to the notebook, aside from the designated ritual, the contract can only be broken if one of the parties is completely deceased.

Regrettably, contracted creatures can only be summoned by the contractor and not by others like a messenger. Otherwise, I could utilize White Paper to determine if Aurore is truly deceased…

Hm… Is it possible that Aurore left behind any information with White Paper?

Lost in thought, Lumian's mind shifted to another matter that had previously escaped his notice.

Considering that Aurore occasionally gained clarity and assisted him in cutting up the livre bleu, reassembling letters, and seeking aid from the authorities, and since her initial response in the dream was to summon the messenger of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's Vice President, Hela, to seek her counsel, why didn't she occasionally summon the messenger when she was lucid and inform Madam Hela about her predicament?

In Madam Hela's earliest response to me, she clearly seemed unaware of the situation.

What prevented Aurore from making such an attempt?

Or could it be that she did summon a messenger, and Hela is concealing it?

Lumian narrowed his eyes. Without the accompanying memories, he couldn't discern the source of the problem.

For now, he wasn't overly suspicious of Hela, believing there must be another explanation.

It was worth noting that Hela's messenger knew Lumian's exact location. If the woman was truly entangled in Cordu's affairs and played a dishonorable role, she would undoubtedly wish to eliminate the final "survivor" without leaving any loose ends. Yet, all this time, she not only refrained from making any substantial moves but also kindly provided knowledge and suggestions.

For a moment, Lumian considered writing down his questions and sending them to Hela to gauge her response. However, he restrained himself, fearing that it might expose the king's new clothes and lead to unfavorable outcomes.

He decided to first have a conversation with Franca and gather opinions from her teammates in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and the Tarot Club regarding Hela's trustworthiness.

If Franca believed Hela to be reliable and had shared information about the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society with her Major Arcana card, Lumian would request Madam Magician to keep a watchful eye before sending inquiries to Hela.

He forced himself to regain composure and resumed studying Aurore's grimoire. Only when evening arrived did he leave Rue des Blouses Blanches, making his way onto Avenue du Marché and entering his Salle de Bal Brise.

"Good evening, Boss!" Greetings echoed from all directions as Lumian nodded in acknowledgement and led Louis and Sarkota to the second floor.

Before he could settle in at the café, René, the dance hall manager,

approached him.

The slender middle-aged man pressed a hand to his chest and bowed respectfully.

“Monsieur Ciel, Monsieur Martin requests your presence at Rue des Fontaines tomorrow at 10 a.m.”

Boss wants to see me? Lumian was both surprised and delighted.

He was taken aback that Gardner Martin had sent for him despite the recent lack of incidents. Yet, he couldn’t help but feel a sense of joy at the prospect of further interaction with Gardner Martin and the opportunity to gain his trust to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Chapter 269 - 269 Islander

269 Islander

“Alright.” Lumian nodded at Manager René.

Lumian dabbed his mouth with a napkin and rose to his feet. He strolled towards one of the café’s balconies, casting his eyes over the nocturnal scenery of Avenue du Marché.

The gas street lamps cast a soft, golden glow, illuminating the carriages and pedestrians that traversed the road.

At that moment, people streamed into Salle de Bal Brise one after another, joining the revelry within.

To be honest, Lumian preferred the cozy atmosphere of the basement bar at Auberge du Coq Doré to this place. It allowed him to unwind and find enjoyment.

From his perspective, the patrons of Salle de Bal Brise were excessively self-indulgent. They cared little for their families or their futures. All they sought was a night of revelry, drowning themselves in alcohol, beauty, dance, and uproar. In contrast, the regulars at the basement bar were mostly tenants of Auberge du Coq Doré. They would return around 9 or 10 p.m. and had to be in bed by 1 a.m. They drank, sang, boasted, and frolicked, making the most of those fleeting two to three hours to find their own slice of joy.

Only then did they gather the courage to face the arduous tasks of the following day and embrace the promise of a new dawn.

It was akin to kerosene lamps that required regular refueling to continue casting their light.

Lumian surveyed Avenue du Marché for a few minutes before his

attention was abruptly drawn to a familiar figure.

There stood Charlie, adorned in a white shirt and blue waistcoat, embroiled in a street brawl, his formal coat casually slung over his arm.

Now we're talking… Lumian smiled, a touch of nostalgia and sentimentality washing over him as he used an expression that had recently gained popularity.

Pressing his right hand against the balcony, Lumian gracefully leaped from the second floor, landing nimbly at the edge of Avenue du Marché. With a few brisk strides, he reached the scene of Charlie's altercation.

He made no move to intervene or assist Charlie. Instead, he observed the fight with keen interest.

The other party engaged in this scuffle with Charlie was a slender young man in his mid-twenties, possessed of dark skin and sunken eyes. His lips were thick, and his slightly curly black hair marked him as a descendant of the Fog Sea Islander lineage. However, compared to his fellow islanders, he appeared somewhat more presentable.

"Cheat! You damn cheat!" Charlie spat out, his curses interwoven with their tussle.

The Islander, donning a blue shirt with a fountain pen tucked in his breast pocket, deftly dodged Charlie's onslaught while offering an explanation.

"I didn't want this to happen either. I, too, fell victim to deceit!"

"Dogsh*t!" Charlie's kick missed its mark.

The two engaged in their amateurish scuffle until their breath grew ragged. Simultaneously, they slowed their movements and eventually ceased their struggle.

Only then did Charlie notice Lumian standing beside him, observing the brawl with a smile.

“Ciel, it’s Monette! That swindler! The one who conned me out of 10 verl d’or, nearly leaving me to starve!” Charlie’s face lit up as he eagerly revealed the identity of his Islander adversary. “Praise the Sun for granting me this encounter!”

The Islander whom Charlie deemed deserving of a dire fate… Lumian chuckled to himself.

“You’re partly to blame as well. Haven’t you heard the saying? ‘Never trust an Islander.’”

“I thought we were friends,” Charlie muttered, his frustration evident.

How could you be so na?ve and easily swayed? You too possess a certain knack for mischief… People like you can be easily ensnared by scheming individuals, falling into their traps without gaining either the affection or the riches you desire. Ah, you’ve already fallen victim… Lumian chastised, shifting his gaze towards the Islander named Monette.

Monette responded with an obsequious smile.

“I genuinely intended to help Charlie find employment, but I, too, fell prey to a scam and lost all my money.

“I couldn’t face Charlie, so I secretly departed from Auberge du Coq Doré.”

As he spoke, he reached into his pocket and withdrew a stack of banknotes, counting three 5 verl d’or bills. He handed them over to Charlie.

“I returned to the market district to find you and return your money, along with interest.”

Charlie’s emotions eased considerably as he verified the authenticity of the three banknotes under the glow of the street lamps. He asked, still somewhat suspicious, “Are you someone who gets scammed easily?”

Ever since Charlie had encountered Monette until his departure, he

had only witnessed him conning others. He had never seen him on the receiving end of such deals. True to his Islander identity.

Monette sheepishly smiled and replied, “Not only was I swindled once, but I fell for it a second time.

“The first instance, I encountered a group of people who claimed that Salle de Bal Unique in Quartier de l’Observatoire wanted to expand and were offering shares for sale. Each lot cost a mere 200 verl d’or.

“You all know how lucrative the dance hall is. I couldn’t resist dipping into my savings, but the share subscription certificate I received turned out to be counterfeit!

“I confronted them, only to be swindled once more.”

Salle de Bal Unique… Lumian’s eyelids twitched involuntarily.

The bankrupt merchant, Fitz, residing in Room 401 of Auberge du Coq Doré, had previously been duped out of 100,000 verl d’or by the owner of Salle de Bal Unique, Timmons. Fitz had sought Lumian’s aid in recovering the sum, but Lumian had investigated and consulted several sources. He found the dance hall’s practices dubious, possessing a formidable network. They appeared to wield considerable power, causing Lumian to abandon the commission.

Now, he had encountered another victim of Salle de Bal Unique.

“You were swindled by them once before. How did you fall for it a second time?” Charlie couldn’t fathom such foolishness.

Monette cleared his throat twice. nove(l)bi(n.)com

“They openly confessed to being a group of swindlers and refused to return the money. They even said that reporting them to the authorities would be futile. Impressed by my skills, they asked if I was willing to learn the art of deception from them, allowing me to recoup my losses.

“In the end, they merely taught me what I already knew. They only gave me something else.”

“What was it?” Charlie was always a curious one.

In the blink of an eye, Monette retrieved a transparent monocle from his pocket.

He smoothly placed it into his right eye socket.

For some reason, Lumian sensed an inexplicable change in Monette as soon as he wore the monocle. It was as if he had transformed into a different character altogether.

The corners of Monette’s mouth curled slightly as he positioned the monocle over his right eye. He glanced at Charlie first, then turned his gaze towards Lumian. His eyes shifted from Lumian’s face to his chest and hands.

Lumian felt a subtle unease, but he detected no immediate danger.

Monette smiled and said, “Are you Ciel, the mastermind behind the Idiot Instrument?”

“Yes.” Lumian did not deny it and remained silently cautious.

Monette adjusted the monocle on his right eye.

“Quite adept at pulling pranks, I must say.

“Would you like this monocle? It’s of no use to me. I could exchange it for some cash. With it, you can disguise yourself as a member of Salle de Bal Unique and earn a good amount of money there.”

Do I look like a fool to you? Lumian promptly rejected Monette’s suggestion without hesitation.

“I have no interest in donning monocles.”

He had always been skeptical of the peculiar rules of Salle de Bal Unique, keeping his guard up.

Disappointed, Monette redirected his gaze, removed the monocle, and turned to Charlie.

“I’ve given you the money and the interest. If you ever need anything in the future, come find me at Salle de Bal Unique.”

Charlie scoffed dismissively.

He still harbored suspicions that Monette had intended to scam him in the past.

After the Islander left Avenue du Marché, Lumian turned to Charlie.

“Remember to keep your distance from that fellow. Otherwise, you might end up encountering the same situation with Susanna Mattise.”

The latter part of his statement was a fabrication, primarily to instill fear in Charlie and ensure he took the advice seriously.

Charlie was instantly alarmed. Without questioning further, he hastily nodded and replied, “Alright, alright!”

…

At midnight, Lumian and Jenna, the latter wearing a sparkling red dress, exited Salle de Bal Brise and made their way towards Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Jenna did not inquire about the reason for their route. After a moment of silence, she spoke up.

“Have you ever felt like nothing matters? Lost and devoid of motivation?”

“Definitely,” Lumian replied casually, his gaze fixed on the street ahead. “In such moments, you must rediscover the meaning of life and determine what truly matters to you.”

Jenna fell silent once more. After a while, she asked, “Have you ever experienced something akin to an illusion shattering within you? A mysterious cosmos materializing, adorned with stars of varying sizes?”

“No,” Lumian replied after a brief pause.

He had experienced the sensation of illusory objects abruptly disintegrating. It occurred every time the potion was completely digested. However, he knew nothing of the mysterious cosmos or the glimmering stars of different magnitudes.

Jenna remained silent, deep in thought about the implications of this phenomenon or contemplating other matters.

Soon enough, they arrived at Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca was already back and regarded them warily as they entered side by side.

Before she could inquire, Jenna brought up the topic of the shattered illusions and the appearance of the mysterious cosmos.

Franca was taken aback but spoke joyfully, “Your Assassin potion has been fully digested! Assassinating a parliament member in public and under heavy security certainly facilitated the digestion process.”

Is this a sign of potion digestion? Lumian couldn’t hide his surprise and perplexity.

Why do I experience only the first half and not the second?

Franca scrutinized him suspiciously.

“You’ve never experienced it before? How did you advance then?”

Not only is the seal on me restraining Termiboros, but it also restricts some of my mystical senses? That’s right. The seal resides within me. It’s impossible for it to have zero impact… Lumian formed a vague hypothesis and casually brushed it off.

“It wasn’t as pronounced.”

Franca, more concerned about her female companion, did not press the matter further and curiously asked Jenna, “So, have you managed to summarize the principles of acting?”

“Acting principles?” Jenna pondered for a moment. “After the

assassination, I learned many principles. Yes, assassination is a matter of risking one's life. It is the ultimate form of punishment, a calamity for those criminals…"

Enthusiastically delving into the "acting method" and discussing acting principles with Jenna, Franca suddenly remembered Lumian's presence.

"What—what's the matter?" She glanced at her male companion, who had settled onto the sofa.

Lumian met her gaze and indicated that they needed to speak privately.

Jenna instantly understood, excused herself to change clothes, and retreated into the guest bedroom.

Lumian lowered his voice and addressed Franca, "What do you make of Hela? What kind of person do you think she is?"

Chapter 270 - 270 Agreement

270 Agreement

“Madame Hela? How do you know her?” Franca’s immediate reaction was one of surprise and astonishment.

She quickly remembered that Lumian’s sister, Muggle, was also a member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. She hastily added, “Did your sister mention Madame Hela to you?”

Lumian nodded.

“Not only did she mention her, but she also gave me the incantation to summon Madame Hela’s messenger.” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

“Did she suggest seeking help from Madame Hela when you faced trouble?” Franca speculated. “Are you planning to summon Madame Hela’s messenger and ask if she can be trusted?”

“Sort of,” Lumian affirmed. “I’ve already established a connection with Madame Hela and summoned her messenger, but today I realized that some of my sister’s actions during the disaster in Cordu were unusual. It seems to be connected to Madame Hela. I don’t know if I should question her directly.”

Observing that Lumian hadn’t provided further details about the disaster in Cordu or Aurore’s abnormal behavior, Franca understood why and refrained from prying. She pondered and replied,

“Personally, I trust Madame Hela. Dammit, you’ve established a connection with her without even telling me!

“Well… She’s one of the most advanced members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society on the paths of the divine. There are

suspicions that she belongs to the Corpse Collector pathway."

"Not only does she willingly share her knowledge and experience with us, but she also offers assistance whenever possible. The items she trades are only slightly more expensive than their cost price."

"To many of us, including your sister and me, Madame Hela is like a dependable older sister. She has rescued us from helplessness, anxiety, and indecision. We trust her implicitly."

"Understood," Lumian sighed with relief. "I'll have an honest conversation with Madame Hela to uncover the true cause of the problem."

At this point, he changed the subject.

"Does your Major Arcana card know about the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society?"

"I haven't mentioned it to her directly. All I said was that I joined a secret organization that provides mutual assistance. However, she seems to be aware of the Research Society's situation," Franca lowered her voice unconsciously. "I suspect I'm not the only member of the Tarot Club in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society."

With his lingering doubts cleared, Lumian turned around, smiling, and waved his hand.

"I'm going to summon Madame Hela's messenger."

"Hey, it's still early. Want to play Fighting Evil for a couple of hours before heading back?" Franca, who wasn't fond of going to bed early, tried to find some entertainment.

Lumian rejected her without hesitation.

When he returned to Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian didn't rush to summon Hela's messenger. Instead, he unfolded a piece of paper and wrote to Madam Magician once again.

He briefly mentioned the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and informed the demigod that Aurore was willing to seek help

anonymously from the authorities when she was lucid. However, she hadn't summoned Hela's messenger for advice, which didn't align with her behavior in Lumian's dream. He didn't know if Aurore was under another restriction or if there was an issue with Hela.

Before long, Madam Magician replied with a simple line: "Based on the information we have, Hela is trustworthy."

Phew… Lumian relaxed and began writing a letter to Madame Hela.

In the letter, he candidly pointed out Aurore's abnormality and asked if she had missed receiving any letters.

Skilled in the process, Lumian made slight adjustments to the altar and changed the ingredients. He swiftly summoned a human skull that appeared to be made of pure silver.

As he gazed at the pale-white flames silently burning in the skull's eye sockets, Pyromaniac Lumian felt a greater sense of danger emanating from it than ever before.

It was no less intense than the feeling he got from Madam Magician's puppet messenger!

The pure silver skull clamped onto the letter and vanished into the dense darkness around it.

Lumian didn't rush to tidy up the altar. He patiently waited.

As time ticked by, a letter suddenly materialized on the wooden table in front of him, and he hadn't sensed its arrival until the end.

Of course, this was a significant improvement from before. Previously, he only noticed it after the pure silver skull had placed the letter.

Lumian unfolded the letter and swiftly scanned it under the glow of the two yellow candles on the altar.

"I haven't received any letters from Muggle since February of this year.

“I understand that a one-sided story lacks credibility, but if you carefully consider it, you should find some details that support this matter.

“I suspect that some force had influenced Muggle, causing her to refrain from seeking help from me for some reason. In fact, if she had written to me before the catastrophe completely unfolded, I could have arrived earlier than the official Beyonders. I might have been able to save Muggle and prevent the catastrophe.

“Often, letters and exchanges fail to inspire insights, making it difficult for us to engage in broader and more profound discussions. I will be in Trier in the coming days. If you are willing, we can arrange a time and place to meet and discuss your sister’s encounter and the disaster in Cordu in detail. Perhaps, then, I can offer you useful suggestions.”

Lumian pondered for a few seconds before recalling a detail from his dream.

Aurore had attempted to summon Hela’s messenger but ultimately refrained from doing so. She was afraid of triggering a loop that would cause Cordu to restart frequently.

This likely meant that she had given up summoning Hela’s messenger in reality or that she had tried but failed for some reason.

After realizing this, Lumian replied to Hela’s suggestion, “No problem. We’ll arrange a time and place when you arrive in Trier.”

After sending the letter, concluding the ritual, and tidying up the altar, Lumian realized it was getting late. He quickly washed up, lay on the bed, and drifted off to sleep.

The following morning, Lumian awoke naturally to the resonating sound of the cathedral bell.

After visiting the washroom, he embarked on his usual morning jog along familiar streets like Rue Anarchie and Avenue du Marché, fully energizing his body.

During his routine, he discovered an empty space in the square

outside église Saint-Robert and spent nearly an hour practicing combat techniques.

Returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian enjoyed a meatloaf breakfast while sipping a Whiskey Sour. On his way, he passed the Suhit steam locomotive station, where new vendors were already selling photos of street ma?tresse d'ateliers.

Lumian scanned the scene and caught sight of Baron Brignais.

The Savoie Mob leader, adorned with a diamond ring and smoking a mahogany pipe, appeared gentlemanly with his half top hat and the absence of any accompanying thugs.

Holding a seven- or eight-year-old child, he made his way from the steam locomotive station towards a carriage parked by the roadside.

The child donned a caramel coat with brass buttons, a black-and-white checkered shirt, and a linen coat. His black strapless leather shoes and white socks paired with a dark-red school bag that appeared somewhat heavy and solid.

With yellow hair, brown eyes, and a sturdy physique, the child had noticeable baby fat on his face and exuded an air of simplicity and honesty.

Baron Brignais's child? He usually resides in other provinces and visits Trier for summer vacations? No wonder they don't seem too familiar… Lumian muttered to himself, redirecting his gaze and continuing his stroll.

…

11 Rue des Fontaines, within Gardner Martin's grayish-white three-story villa.

Lumian arrived in the exclusive carriage of Salle de Bal Brise. He passed through the hall adorned with weapons and armor, arriving at a room filled with bookshelves.

Gardner Martin, displaying his amiable disposition, deep facial features, and brownish-red eyes, sat in an armchair at the back of the

study. Standing before him were the short “Rat” Christo, with his gray-black hair, dark-blue eyes, and mustache, and the towering “Giant” Simon, measuring over 1.9 meters, his light-yellow hair closely cropped, clad in an unusually tight black suit.

Sensing Lumian’s entrance into the study, “Giant” Simon and “Rat” Christo turned to regard their colleague.

“Giant” Simon’s eyes displayed caution and defiance as he instinctively raised his head.

He believed that Ciel, who had defeated “Hammer” Ait, shouldn’t be underestimated. However, he also believed that he himself was unquestionably stronger than that fool and might not lose to Ciel.

“Rat” Christo showed no evident emotions, but the right pocket of his dark brown shirt suddenly stirred, as if something alive resided within.

Christo slipped his right hand into his pocket, his expression abruptly changing.

His gaze upon Lumian grew intense with fear, and he couldn’t help but smile obsequiously.

Wh… Lumian felt a tad uneasy.

After pondering for a moment, he suspected that “Rat” Christo had used an item in his pocket to “see” that Lumian had advanced to Sequence 7 and become a Pyromaniac.

In contrast, “Giant” Simon clearly lacked such intuition, failing to notice the subtle shifts in his colleague.

“Good morning, Boss,” Lumian energetically greeted Gardner Martin.

A few days ago, he had informed the boss of the Savoie Mob that he had consumed the potion and advanced to Pyromaniac.

Gardner Martin nodded slightly, shifting his gaze from Lumian’s face to “Rat” Christo and “Giant” Simon.

After nearly ten seconds, he spoke in a low voice, “I have a mission for all of you. At precisely noon, retrieve something from Underground Trier and bring it to Rue des Fontaines.”

Mission? Lumian’s eyebrows twitched, sensing a potential trap.

As a new Beyonder to the Savoie Mob, trust between him and Gardner Martin was still lacking. Why would he be assigned such a crucial and confidential task?

With these thoughts racing through his mind, Lumian had two conjectures: either he was mere cannon fodder or this was a test.

Chapter 271 - 271 Acting

271 Acting

With this in mind, Lumian's gaze automatically drifted over "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon, taking them in.

He sensed that the chances of them becoming expendable pawns were slim. Potion-consuming Beyonders, unlike the Blessed relying on divine favors from evil gods, were a rarity. They couldn't be simply stockpiled at will. Firstly, the ingredients required were specific, and secondly, ample time was needed. At the Mid-Sequence, luck and mastery of the acting method played a role.

If he were to use them as mere pawns in this mission, the likelihood of reclaiming the Beyonder characteristics would be greatly diminished. It constituted a substantial portion of Gardner Martin's control over the underground world in the market district.

As a member of the secretive organization, the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Gardner Martin could indeed bear such a loss, but he wouldn't make such a colossal sacrifice for something insignificant.

And if the mission was of sufficient importance, sending only one Sequence 7 and two Sequence 8 Beyonders was clearly inadequate. Shouldn't Gardner Martin be concerned about failure?

With this realization, Lumian swiftly revised his conjecture.

Either this was a preliminary test, a low-risk mission designed to assess him, regardless of whether "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon were aware of it, or it was indeed a crucial and perilous operation. While using them as pawns, there would be powerhouses present as a safety net. This was also a test.

With this in mind, Lumian's initial reaction was to gaze at Gardner

Martin and accept the mission, projecting an image of an ambitious young man striving to climb the ranks.

If it was the first possibility, this was his best chance to prove himself. If it was the second possibility, Lumian still had Mr. K's finger quietly nestled in his pocket as a trump card. When the time came, if he needed to divulge his affiliation with the Aurora Order to ensure his survival, he could abandon the Iron and Blood Cross Order's mission.

As long as he remained alive, he could await another opportunity!

After the catastrophe caused by the Tree of Shadow, Lumian visited Psychic's headquarters and met Mr. K before Gardner Martin could conduct an investigation.

He concealed his experience with the Tree of Shadow, merely mentioning that something had occurred in the market district, trapping them in a peculiar wilderness. Then the brownish-green tree descended, and Susanna Mattise appeared, draining everyone's energy. To combat the Fallen Tree Spirit, he used the finger to fashion a robust defensive flesh robe, but he didn't receive additional assistance.

Later, with the aid of the tree's further descent, Susanna Mattise's weakened state, and the involvement of the other two present Beyonders, he barely overcame the enemy and vanquished her using his Pyromaniac abilities and the Fallen Mercury from Cordu.

He spoke the truth, albeit blurring the sequence of events, time, and location, as well as omitting a few details. The logic remained intact. Mr. K harbored no suspicions after hearing the account; instead, he sighed and cautioned Lumian not to overly rely on the finger since there were multiple ways to sever the mystical connection between him and it.

Satisfied with Lumian's advancement to Pyromaniac with Gardner Martin's assistance, Mr. K plucked another finger for him.

This led Lumian to believe that, as long as he didn't encounter extraordinary environments like Paramita or the Tree of Shadow and

wasn't entangled in the perilous affair of confronting a godlike entity head-on, with Mr. K's finger, even if he couldn't completely reverse the situation, he still had a high chance of escape.

Just as Lumian was about to express his stance to the boss, he suddenly sensed that he shouldn't push his acting too far.

That was what Jenna would occasionally say.

According to Franca, Boss is at least a Sequence 6 Conspirer. I can't underestimate his intelligence and discernment…

My background is undeniably evident. I'm young and hail from the countryside. I was once entangled in a Beyonder catastrophe and lacked knowledge. I wanted to change my fate, but I've spent a considerable time in the market district, openly and covertly accomplishing much. Even with what the Boss only knows, it should be enough for him to perceive that I'm not an ignorant country bumpkin who acts rashly and mercilessly.

Based on today's incident, the impression the boss has of me should be someone capable of detecting mission abnormalities and potential dangers. Simply agreeing without reason or observation would only raise suspicions of ulterior motives or reliance on something.

That would be troublesome…

A whirlwind of thoughts raced through Lumian's mind. He immediately shifted his gaze to "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo, eagerly awaiting their reactions and attitudes toward the mission.

It remained unclear whether "Rat" Christo was recalling the incident involving the "mirror person" or his brother's demise due to it. His expression grew nasty, tainted with fear and apprehension.

Doubt and wariness flickered across "Giant" Simon's face, yet he didn't voice any objections.

After a few seconds, they nearly spoke simultaneously.

"Yes, Boss!"

Observing this, Lumian deliberately hesitated before continuing, “Yes, Boss!”

With keen eyes, Gardner Martin observed Lumian, Christo, and Simon, assessing their expressions and demeanors.

After their unanimous agreement, the boss of the Savoie Mob grinned with satisfaction and said, “I shall now disclose the mission details.”

He reached into a drawer and retrieved a scroll made of faux goatskin, laying it out on the desk before them.

Approaching, Lumian and his companions beheld a map revealing a section of Underground Trier!

The map measured a meter in length and 50 centimeters in width. The upper level depicted the Underground Trier, formed by the municipal department through the excavation of various tunnels and reinforcement of the quarry cave. It corresponded to the streets and squares above ground.

The map focused solely on the underground areas of Quartier du Marché, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Quartier du Jardin Botanique, and Quartier de l’Observatoire. However, it was intricately detailed, as if copied from the original by infiltrating the municipal department.

Lumian could clearly discern extensions on both sides, although the drawing did not continue.

In the middle of the map lay quarry caves, ancient catacombs, and underground river tributaries, scattered in a haphazard manner and connected to the upper level through visible or concealed tunnels.

This portion contained numerous gaps and omissions. Beside these areas were inscriptions such as “to be investigated,” “to be explored,” and “to be searched.” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The lower levels of the map encompassed collapsed mines and more missing information, as if veiled in a shroud of fog. Even the Iron and Blood Cross Order, a secret organization, lacked comprehensive knowledge.

Numerous passageways extended downward from this level, but the map did not indicate their connections.

Fourth Epoch Trier? The place referred to as the Ancient Ruins Reserve by the authorities?

It's evident that this map is a copy of a more comprehensive one…

A complete version includes Fourth Epoch Trier?

The Iron and Blood Cross Order possesses extensive knowledge of the underground… Lumian speculated as he committed the incomplete map to memory.

After his three subordinates had taken a cursory glance at the map, Gardner Martin pointed to a location and said, "This is your destination."

It marked a collapsed mine, yet there remained some open space.

Situated at the lowest level of the map, it was near Fourth Epoch Trier.

Above it, corresponding to Avenue Sèlbù, Rue des Mauvais Enfants, and Place de la Forêt, lay the intersection between Quartier de l'Observatoire and Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

"It's called the Albert Mines," Gardner Martin introduced. "To reach it, you must traverse two privately-bored tunnels. It remains unknown to the authorities and most people who travel underground."

As he spoke, Gardner Martin traced the tunnel with his finger and instructed Lumian, Christo, and Simon on the correct entrance.

Finally, he sighed with a tinge of emotion and added, "Six years ago, Albert Goncourt, the leader of the rebellion and the mastermind behind the uprising, relied on this mine, which he discovered and named, to elude the army, police, and official Beyonders who were searching the underground. He survived."

Six years ago… Rebellion… Uprising… Lumian instantly recalled

what he had witnessed and heard.

During the war with the Loen Kingdom, prices in Trier skyrocketed, leaving people in despair due to the exorbitant cost of food. This triggered a massive protest that swept through the city, resulting in various conflicts.

From Gardner Martin's words, it was evident that the protest wasn't purely spontaneous. Someone had planned and guided it. Was the Iron and Blood Cross Order also involved? Lumian continued to gaze at the map, lost in thought.

Concluding his explanation, Gardner Martin said, "Your task is to reach the Albert Mines before noon and await the arrival of a trader who will hand you a box.

"You need not give him anything, nor do you need to communicate with him verbally.

"On your return journey, you must not open that box, as doing so would expose you to immeasurable danger.

"As long as you strictly follow my instructions, the mission poses minimal risk. While you may encounter peculiar phenomena concealed underground or face Beyonder monsters, good teamwork will resolve those challenges."

After providing them with additional guidance, Lumian, Christo, and Simon each took a carbide lamp and departed from 11 Rue des Fontaines, making their way to the nearest entrance to Underground Trier.

Casting a final glance at the now-out-of-sight grayish-white villa, Lumian considered the impression Gardner Martin had of him.

With a smile, he casually inquired of "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon, "Have you undertaken similar missions before?"

"Rat" Christo fell silent for a few seconds before answering, "Thrice."

"Once," "Giant" Simon replied in a slightly buzzing voice.

Lumian chuckled.

“Well, the fact that you’re still alive suggests that such missions aren’t too perilous.”

“Rat” Christo remained silent, as though he had fallen into a grim recollection. “Giant” Simon reassured himself, echoing Lumian’s words.

“You’re right. Perhaps this is a test from the boss. Those who pass may have an opportunity to advance further.”

Lumian smiled.

“And what about those who fail? Do they perish on the spot?”

Chapter 272 - 272 Charismatic Artist

272 Charismatic Artist

“Giant” Simon found himself momentarily speechless, struggling to find the right words. After a few seconds of contemplation, he finally spoke up.

“Are you out of your mind? If you fail, the worst outcome would be missing an opportunity.”

“Rat” Christo chimed in.

“If the mission is truly important, the Boss wouldn’t hesitate to handle it personally. He wouldn’t send us. And if it’s not a significant task, the risk won’t be too high.”

This train of thought mirrored Lumian’s initial concerns.

Lumian glanced towards the nearby entrance of Underground Trier, intentionally wearing a smile.

“Perhaps we are merely bait in this scenario?

“For instance, the Boss suspects that a faction is secretly watching us, so he has deliberately devised this mission. If everything goes smoothly without any abnormalities, he can deactivate the alarm and consider it a test. However, if he does catch something, he can follow the trail of clues to uncover the truth and eliminate any hidden dangers. As for us being the bait and potentially getting caught, it’s not his concern. As long as we ultimately achieve his goal, losing a few Low-Sequence Beyonders falls within his level of tolerance.”

“Rat” Christo’s face turned pale upon hearing these words, while

“Giant” Simon fell into silence.

Although they lacked experience with mysticism, their years as mobsters and leaders had honed their basic analytical skills. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

They couldn’t help but admit that Ciel’s theory made sense.

This, naturally, brought about a deep sense of fear for their lives.

Especially for Christo, memories of his brother Erkin’s death and the pained expressions of his wife and children flooded his mind.

If it weren’t for the Boss assigning him another task and excluding him from the smuggling operation, he might have been replaced by the so-called “mirror people” and met a tragic end somewhere underground.

And as for his wife, his dogs, and the other animals he cared for, the “mirror person” would have had the opportunity to enjoy them for a while!

With these thoughts weighing on their minds, the three of them ignited their carbide lamps and descended the steel stairs in silence.

Christo scanned the dark tunnel with the bluish-yellow light, his voice trembling as he spoke.

“The Boss wouldn’t purposefully send us to our deaths.

“Even as Low-Sequence Beyonders, we still have our uses. If we perish underground, it might take the Boss half a year or even a whole year to groom a replacement.”

The “mirror people” incident came to his mind, the Boss’s request for him to undertake a different task being a clear attempt to protect him without revealing anything.

“Everything comes at a price. Perhaps the stakes involved this time are more valuable than the three of us combined.” Lumian held the carbide lamp emitting a yellowish glow, walking steadily through the dark and slightly damp passageway. He sneered and said, “I hope this

mission won't be as perilous as the Boss claims, but we can't afford to be naive. We must prepare for the worst."

Noting Ciel's significant improvement, Christo couldn't help but ask, "What should we do?"

From his perspective, Ciel was the most reliable person in this mission—a lifeline in critical moments.

Surprised by Christo's sudden timidity, "Giant" Simon turned towards him.

When did the "Rat" become so fearful?

As a leader under the Boss, why would he choose to display weakness and worry in front of Ciel?

Where is his pride and self-esteem? Wasn't he afraid that Ciel would overshadow him and encroach upon his smuggling business?

This was precisely the effect Lumian intended. He genuinely spoke up.

"The Boss has helped me multiple times, and I'm more than willing to carry out missions for him. However, the risk involved should not be excessively high, leaving us with only the option of 'death.' Damn it, I haven't lived long enough!

"That's why my stance is to attempt the mission if possible. If it becomes too dangerous, I won't hesitate to abandon it and ensure my own survival. This might require the three of us to let down our guard against each other and cooperate fully to overcome any hidden threats."

Such an attitude struck a chord with Christo and Simon, prompting visible or imperceptible nods from them.

No one was entirely selfless. Taking a calculated risk for the Boss was already a testament to their loyalty!

Accepting this attitude and genuinely cooperating to resist danger seemed to be the only viable choice, at least on the surface.

“How should we collaborate?” Christo swiftly made up his mind.

He didn’t want another “mirror people” incident.

Lumian smirked once more.

“First and foremost, we must understand each other’s abilities so that we can complement one another more effectively.”

Christo pondered for a moment before speaking up, “I’m a Beast Tamer, a Sequence 8 of the Apothecary pathway. I can directly confront and communicate with various beasts to a certain extent. I have the ability to gradually tame them and make them my assistants.

“I’m also skilled in treating illnesses and providing comprehensive medical care…”

At that moment, he couldn’t help but cast a questioning glance at Ciel, as if hinting at his need for a remedy to improve his performance in bed and replenish his physical stamina.

Word had gotten around about Ciel being quite a libertine. Not only was he involved with Jenna, “Red Boots’” mistress, but he had also been linked to nearly ten dancers. He had arranged for them to receive acting lessons at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, allowing them to earn money without having to accompany customers.

An Apothecary? If only I had known that “Rat” Christo was an Apothecary, I would’ve gotten him to give plenty of medicine to Jenna’s mother… She would’ve made a quick recovery and returned home that very night… Lumian silently sighed and nodded approvingly in the flickering light of the carbide lamp.

The more “Giant” Simon listened, the more astonished he became.

He began to suspect that “Rat” Christo had lost his mind by divulging the secrets of his Sequence!

Until now, apart from Gardner Martin, nobody knew Christo’s Sequence or the pathway he belonged to. After all, there were plenty

of people in Trier who had a fondness for pets—some even had a large number of them or formed intimate relationships with animals, as occasionally seen in the newspapers.

In a flash, an idea struck Simon.

“Rat” Christo was in charge of the smuggling business and had completed most of the Boss’s secret missions. Perhaps he knew something and had become pessimistic about this operation, hence his sincere cooperation with Ciel.

Christo let out a sigh and continued, “I’ve been unlucky. I haven’t managed to tame a genuine Beyonder creature yet. Otherwise, I wouldn’t be powerless against Mid-Sequence Beyonders even if I encountered them.

“This mission was sudden and we didn’t have time to prepare. I only brought a few companions with me. Is he afraid that we won’t die quickly enough?”

As he spoke, he raised his right hand.

A colorful snake-like creature with a triangular head emerged from his sleeve.

Soon after, Christo had the snake retreat back into his sleeve. He reached into his pocket and produced a palm-sized rat.

This rat was different from the ordinary kind. Its fur was pale white and distinct, with eyes as bright as rubies.

“This is Taffy. It’s a unique creature I discovered underground during my smuggling days. It can’t be used as the main ingredient for any potion, but it has the ability to sense hidden dangers,” Christo briefly introduced.

“It can also sense the approximate strength of others, right?” Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Christo looked at Lumian with surprise and hesitated for a moment before replying, “Yes.”

Recognizing that Christo had already divulged enough information, Lumian didn't press further, despite suspecting that he possessed other abilities or other animal companions. Instead, he shifted his gaze to "Giant" Simon.

Simon hesitated for a moment, recalling his earlier speculation. In a muffled voice, he said, "I'm a Sequence 8 Pugilist of the Warrior pathway. Like 'Hammer' Ait, I excel in face-to-face combat and various fighting techniques. I carry a gun, a dagger, a bayonet, and boxing gloves."

His explanation was brief, as Pugilists didn't possess any extraordinary abilities.

No mystical item? That's true. It's indeed challenging for mobsters groomed by secret organizations to acquire such items… Lumian chuckled to himself.

"You're stronger than 'Hammer' Ait because you're intelligent and can read the situation clearly."

These words left Simon unsure whether to feel angered or proud.

Holding the carbide lamp, he looked at Lumian and said, "What about you? Which Sequence 8 pathway are you from? Hunter?"

Since they were working together, Ciel couldn't keep his Sequence a secret!

Lumian smiled, raising his right hand in front of him.

Silently, a crimson flame emerged from his palm and hung in the air, burning silently.

"You're a Pyromaniac?" Simon exclaimed in surprise.

Among Trier's mystical circles, the most common information concerned Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Hunter pathway, especially those below Sequence 6.

Lumian didn't respond, opting to maintain his smile instead.

Simon suddenly understood why “Rat” Christo’s attitude towards Ciel had undergone such a drastic change and why he appeared to seek his assistance.

Sequence 7 was the starting point for Mid-Sequence Beyonders. Compared to Low-Sequence Beyonders like themselves, their strength had undergone a qualitative transformation. They were countless times more powerful!

With his attention now diverted from the pocket of “Rat” Christo, Simon asked Lumian in surprise and suspicion, “Does the Boss know that you’ve advanced to Sequence 7?”

“The Boss provided me with the necessary supplementary ingredients,” Lumian truthfully replied, dissipating the crimson flame in his palm under the yellowish glow of the lamp.

Wha… Simon’s pupils dilated.

Lumian looked around and continued, “That’s why, if I can complete this mission, I will do everything in my power to see it through.”

With those words, he pulled out an iron-colored canister and tossed it to Simon.

“This is Scorpion Poison that I obtained from ‘Hammer’ Ait. You can apply it to your weapon.

“Increasing your strength will increase our chances of survival.”

Simon caught the canister, momentarily taken aback.

Though Ciel disgusted him and they were at odds, his knowledge, intelligence, strength, and approach to things made him seem reliable. Unconsciously, he found himself listening to him and following his lead.

Lumian, who was walking ahead without turning back, let out a sigh of relief.

He had exaggerated the risks and instilled fear to dampen the spirits of “Rat” Christo and Simon, plunging them into a state of worry.

Then, by revealing his own strength, offering convincing suggestions, and providing small favors, he would establish himself as the team's leader.

Only then could he fully harness the team's combined strength without exposing his hidden trump cards and effectively combat any potential threats.

Chapter 273 - 273 Trader

273 Trader

Holding the carbide lamp aloft, “Giant” Simon trailed behind Lumian for a few steps, his keen eyes picking up on the inconsistencies in Lumian’s words.

“Ciel, the Boss knows you’ve turned into a Pyromaniac. He won’t just toss you aside recklessly, will he?”

Lumian gazed ahead at the tunnel bathed in the yellowish glow, a smile playing on his lips as he posed a question without turning around.

“How long have I been with the Savoie Mob?”

Both “Giant” Simon and “Rat” Christo had a moment of enlightenment and found themselves in agreement with Lumian’s explanation.

It was true that Lumian, a Beyonder with a dubious past who had recently joined the mob, had brought with him a crucial ingredient for a potion. Such a person couldn’t be trusted right off the bat. They had to undergo a series of tests in the form of missions.

And if Lumian were to meet his demise during one of these missions, it would simply be chalked up to his ill luck. Losing a foreign Beyonder was far less painful for the Boss than losing a subordinate he had meticulously groomed.

The two leaders of the Savoie Mob hesitated no longer. They cautiously followed Lumian, maintaining a distance of two to three steps. It was a familiar arrangement, much like when they traveled with a few mobsters stationed at similar positions behind them.

In the midst of their journey, “Giant” Simon donned gloves and applied a small amount of Scorpion Poison to his dagger, bayonet, and boxing gloves. He then returned the canister to Lumian.

The trio descended into the tunnel marked on the map. Despite their soft steps, the special environment caused their footfalls to echo faintly in the dark, eerily silent underground.

Nearly 45 minutes later, they passed through the area marked as an ancient tomb and arrived at the entrance of a concealed passageway.

It led to an abandoned quarry cave that had lain dormant for ages. The ground was uneven, covered in moss. In the distance, the sound of an underground river could be heard, occasionally accompanied by the rumbling of a steam subway passing by.

Lumian observed for a moment, clenching the ring of the carbide lamp between his teeth. With both hands, he grasped a protruding stone wall and climbed to the cave’s summit.

Then, extending his right hand, he pushed an apparently ordinary stone behind him, wedging it between the side wall and the cave roof.

A pitch-black hole materialized, allowing someone as tall as Simon to bend over and crawl through.

The hidden tunnel had been fashioned using a long-forgotten ventilation system that already existed in a nearby quarry.

The three of them hunched over and strode deeper into the underground tunnel. Gradually, the sounds of the underground river and the steam subway faded away.

Apart from their own breathing and footsteps, the surroundings were silent as a tomb.

After nearly half an hour, Lumian and his companions followed the markings on the map and leaped from an exit, emerging into an already existing underground cave.

From high above, stalactites dangled like the menacing teeth of a

terrifying beast lurking in the darkness.

Lumian didn't rush to enter another hidden tunnel at the cave's base. Instead, he turned to "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo, who had accumulated a fair amount of dust on their heads. Wearing a grave expression, he spoke.

"Before we proceed, let's confirm something to avoid any mishaps. We won't have time for verbal communication."

"Alright." Both "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon accepted Lumian's words without question.

With a subtle nod, Lumian replied, "Firstly, from the moment we enter the second tunnel until we return here, no one is allowed to speak. Make use of physical gestures as much as possible. If that's not feasible, you must obtain my permission before uttering a word."

This precautionary measure stemmed from Gardner Martin's advice regarding the lack of need for communication with the trader. Lumian had expanded its scope and made it absolute to prevent any potential mishaps.

Christo and Simon recalled the Boss's counsel and nodded in agreement.

Observing their response, Lumian pressed on, "Secondly, no matter what anomalies occur, unless something attacks both of you, stay calm and act in accordance with my lead.

"Thirdly, I won't force you, but if you wish to survive, it's best to heed my instructions."

These two requests were met with resistance from "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon. They would be entrusting their safety to Lumian's intelligence, skills, reactions, and knowledge. It was a departure from their usual reliance on their own wild Beyonder instincts.

After a few seconds of hesitation, "Rat" Christo forced a smile, recollecting Ciel's strength and previous performances.

"I'll follow your arrangements, but if you fail to react in time and

Taffy warns me of danger, I'll take matters into my own hands.

"Dammit, the longer I've been in this smuggling business, the more I dread Trier's underground." The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

"Giant" Simon chimed in, "I'm with you on that, 'Rat.'"

Lumian felt a sense of satisfaction, having successfully "tamed" the two Beyonders who also served as leaders in the Savoie Mob. He didn't push further and simply nodded in agreement.

"No problem.

"Fourthly, I will be the one to make contact with the trader later and retrieve the box the Boss desires."

Upon hearing this, "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon looked at Lumian as if they were seeing Ciel in a new light.

They had expected the Pyromaniac to leverage his strength and authority to assign one of them to interact with the trader and handle the riskiest part of the mission. Alternatively, they thought Lumian might suggest drawing lots to determine who would handle the task. To their surprise, Lumian volunteered to take on the responsibility himself.

Ciel is quite fair… "Giant" Simon couldn't help but sigh.

He knew he wouldn't be able to do the same if he were in Lumian's position.

This realization made both "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon less resistant to following Lumian's instructions.

Though the lighting was dim, Lumian managed to observe his two colleagues' reactions.

He couldn't help but sneer inwardly.

If it weren't for the fact that you two Beyonders lack mystical knowledge and might cause trouble during the box exchange, I wouldn't be taking such a risk myself.

Lumian sighed from the depths of his heart. Sometimes, weakness could be an advantage.

Emphasizing that they were to maintain silence, Lumian picked up the carbide lamp and made his way to the bottom of the cave. He gestured for “Giant” Simon to embrace a rock about half his height and move it aside.

The rock was incredibly heavy, posing a challenge even for Simon’s strength. It took him some time to shift it, revealing the deep entrance to the hidden tunnel.

The tunnel wasn’t particularly long, and it took them only seven to eight minutes to crouch down and make their way through. They arrived at a mineral cave that had suffered significant collapse, leaving only a limited space.

This was their destination—the Albert Mines.

Lumian surveyed the cluttered gray-black stones and turned to “Giant” Simon, who was dressed in a black formal suit. He pointed at his chest.

Understanding the unspoken request, Simon produced an iron-gray pocket watch and opened it with a snap.

The dial revealed numerous tightly clenched gears, exuding a sophisticated yet cold mechanical beauty.

“Giant” Simon held up his pocket watch, showing it to Lumian and “Rat” Christo, indicating that there were still over ten minutes until the designated time of the transaction—noon.

Lumian nodded and remained silent, patiently awaiting the appointed hour.

After a while, he subtly turned his head, listening intently for any signs of movement around them.

He sensed an unusual sound emanating from underground, as if a multitude of people were screaming, roaring, and fighting.

Beneath the illumination of the carbide lamp, Lumian glanced at Simon and Christo, noticing their similar reactions, as if they too had caught wind of the commotion.

Observing Simon and Christo's gazes fixed on him, Lumian lowered his right hand, signaling them to refrain from being affected.

Intermittently, they could hear peculiar movements. The three of them stood at the edge of the Albert Mines, silently waiting.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps echoed from the other side of the mine, as if someone in leather shoes was approaching from an unusually quiet tunnel dozens of meters away.

Is that the trader? Lumian mused, casting his thoughtful gaze in that direction.

The footsteps paused and then resumed, resonating through the Albert Mines.

When they were merely a few meters away from the entrance, they mysteriously ceased altogether.

After a brief wait, Lumian and his companions spotted a figure emerging from the opposite mine entrance. It was a man over 1.8 meters tall, donning a white shirt, yellow vest, black formal suit, and dark pants. He clutched a small brown leather suitcase in his hand.

The man wore a silk top hat pulled low, casting a shadow over his face. However, Lumian's Hunter eyesight allowed him to discern the man's appearance with the aid of the three carbide lamps.

The man had short auburn hair, brownish-red eyes, slightly unkempt and thick beard, and thick eyebrows. He resembled a starved male bear, exaggeratedly thin.

The collar of his shirt was tightly fastened, as if he dreaded the cold.

Lumian held the carbide lamp and was about to approach the man.

But then, Christo tugged at his arm.

When Lumian turned his head, Christo anxiously and fearfully pointed at his right pocket.

Does this mean that Taffy, the peculiar rat, has issued a warning of danger? But judging from Christo's behavior, the threat hasn't materialized yet and is still manageable. Otherwise, he would have already turned and fled… Lumian interpreted the signs and nodded at Christo, indicating that he would proceed with caution.

Christo didn't stop him. He watched Lumian with concern as he advanced toward the trader.

As he closed the distance, Lumian's gaze carefully assessed the man's physique, analyzing every detail.

His clothes are slightly oversized, as though they don't quite fit him… He seems fearful of something, yet his eyes hold anger and hatred… His hands don't extend beyond his sleeves, and they're concealed within, including the handle of the suitcase… His feet…

Lumian's pupils dilated as he noticed that the trader wasn't wearing shoes but rather a pair of gray socks.

This contradicted the sound of leather shoes they had just heard!

Could it be that the footsteps didn't belong to him but someone else? Lumian grew increasingly vigilant.

With limited space remaining in the Albert Mines, he swiftly arrived in front of the trader.

The man, resembling a starved bear, chuckled and inquired with a hint of amusement, "Did Gardner Martin send you?

"Was he scared out of his wits after receiving a message from his companion, who went underground to search for the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier, months after disappearing, claiming to possess an important item to deliver to him."

Chapter 274 - 274 Escape

274 Escape

The entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier? The Iron and Blood Cross Order is hunting for it? This person reappeared after vanishing for months? Lumian's mind raced upon hearing the trader's words.

He kept in mind the warning not to speak and tried his best not to. Leaning forward slightly, he extended his right hand to receive the small brown leather suitcase.

The man, resembling a starved bear, didn't refuse and chuckled.

"If I were Gardner Martin, I'd pray I never find out what's in this box."

What does this mean? Lumian wondered as his palm touched the suitcase.

At that moment, his eyes narrowed as he noticed the trader's right palm was absent from the suitcase's handle, floating as if held by an invisible force.

Following the handle, Lumian saw there was no arm in the sleeve. It was empty, supported by something invisible!

No arm! His heart tightened as he glanced up at the trader. His brownish-red eyes, accentuated by his thick beard and eyebrows, were as cold as a wild beast's, filled with undisguised hatred and fear.

Various thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as he forced himself to control his reaction. He calmly took the suitcase, not inquiring or observing. He didn't instinctively defend or attack, as if he hadn't noticed anything.

The trader's emotions seemed to shift slightly, and his laughter carried a hint of sorrow.

"Tell Gardner Martin that it won't be long before he goes underground too!

"All the pain and torture I've endured, he too will experience them!"

Lumian didn't say a word. He picked up the small suitcase and was about to turn around and leave the Albert Mines with "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo.

Suddenly, footsteps echoed from the other entrance behind the trader.

Compared to earlier, it became much clearer, almost within arm's reach.

Lumian felt more certain now; he could hear the distinct sound of leather shoes approaching from the silent tunnel!

In an instant, a figure emerged before Lumian, Christo, and Simon.

It was a man, completely naked, his head missing, blood oozing from the neck wound.

He wore only dark-blue shorts and strapless black leather shoes.

With two swift steps, the headless monster reached the trader from behind, stretching out its hands, seizing his head, and yanking it upwards.

"Save me! Save me!" cried the trader, unable to hide his panic and fear.

Almost simultaneously, his entire head was lifted, exposing a blood-stained spine dangling below. The spine was unusually long, swaying gently like a tail.

Silently, the trader's shirt, vest, pants, and formal attire lost support and collapsed to the ground.

He had no body left, only his head connected to the bloody spine.

“Save me! Save me!” The trader struggled with all his might, but the headless monster held him tightly, seemingly attempting to stuff him into its empty neck.

Although Lumian had encountered many terrifying and warped creatures in Cordu, this was the first time he had come across something so bizarre and terrifying.

Without hesitation, he turned around and dashed towards the entrance of the hidden tunnel, ignoring the trader’s pleas for help.

“Giant” Simon and “Rat” Christo, who had been frightened from the very start, finally lost control. Like cyclists hearing the starting signal, they bent down and hurried into the tunnel.

Lumian caught up with them in a few strides, the echoing voice of the Albert Mines haunting their trail.

“Save me! Save me!”

“If I die, you guys can forget about living!”

“Help!”

With their carbide lamps in hand, the trio silently made their way through the hidden tunnel, their hearts constricting at the screams left behind.

A few minutes passed, and the shrill cries suddenly ceased, leaving an eerie silence that enveloped the Albert Mines.

Then, the echoing sound of tapping leather shoes reverberated through the hidden tunnel.

“Rat” Christo, being the shortest, found it easiest to keep his back bent as he moved forward. In a state of fear, he frantically pointed at his pocket with his right hand, as if he had seen death itself.

Has that peculiar rat given us a perilous warning? Lumian glanced at Christo’s left chest and nodded reassuringly, indicating that he would

cover their rear. All they needed to do was run with all their might.

As the tapping sounds drew nearer, Lumian and the others grew tense.

Though they had to bend their backs to navigate the concealed tunnel, it only slightly reduced their escape speed. After all, they were skilled Beyonders, their physical abilities notably enhanced.

With each passing moment, Lumian felt a chill down his spine. Just as the sound of the leather shoes approached to within a few meters, the trio finally reached the tunnel exit and burrowed out.

Seeing “Giant” Simon about to flee on his own, Lumian, who had already returned to their agreed position, could no longer stay silent. He lowered his voice and growled, “Block the door!”

As he spoke, he turned around and abandoned the carbide lamp and small suitcase, attempting to push the heavy rock beside the exit.

“Giant” Simon subconsciously ignored Lumian’s command, but his heart still trembled from the low shout.

Throughout their journey, he had grown accustomed to following his instructions, as if it were the only way to ensure his survival.

He found himself caught in a dilemma.

After a brief moment of hesitation, “Giant” Simon suspected that if he ran away and left Ciel to fend for himself against the monster, Ciel might very well attack him and kill him as a deserter once he survived the attack!

“Rat” Christo had similar thoughts, but he believed that if they both didn’t help, Ciel wouldn’t waste time blocking the tunnel exit. When the time came, whoever ran the slowest would become the monster’s first target, buying enough time for the other two to escape.

After evaluating each other’s pathway characteristics and Sequences, Christo realized he was definitely the slowest. Moreover, he couldn’t injure “Giant” Simon and “Lion” Ciel in a short period of time, meaning he couldn’t slow them down and overtake them.

Without hesitation, he stopped fleeing and returned to the tunnel exit, assisting Lumian in pushing the stone to block the door.

Taking a cue from the “Rat,” “Giant” Simon chose to obey and turned around.

Together, in just a few seconds, the trio secured the entrance to the hidden tunnel.

The sound of footsteps faded into nothingness.

Simultaneously, “Rat” Christo couldn’t contain his surprise and delight, exclaiming, “Everything’s fine now!”

There was no more visible movement in his pocket, where the rat named Taffy resided.

Lumian didn’t share Christo’s exuberance. He picked up the carbide lamp and small suitcase, speaking in a deep voice, “Let’s talk when we get back to the first underground level.”

“Giant” Simon and “Rat” Christo’s relaxed minds tensed up once more. Instinctively, they followed Lumian up the rock wall and turned into another hidden tunnel.

Along the way, they didn’t encounter any attacks, but being underground meant they were surrounded by either complete silence or occasional strange sounds. After their recent fright, the environment was far from pleasant for them. If Lumian hadn’t remained calm and composed, “Giant” Simon and “Rat” Christo might have resorted to drastic measures.

Upon returning to the area corresponding to the streets and squares above ground, “Rat” Christo reached into his pocket to comfort Taffy and let out a long sigh.

“When I saw that monster, I thought we were going to die right there.”

Though he and Simon had killed over ten people, interacted with other Beyonders, and even fought them, they had never encountered a monster like the headless one before. It was an abnormal horror

they had never experienced.

This was even scarier than the horror stories they had heard in their youth!

Lumian smiled. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Didn’t the Boss say that there won’t be much risk if we don’t communicate or open the box?”

However, in such a situation, most people couldn’t stay calm! “Giant” Simon and “Rat” Christo gained a newfound appreciation for Ciel’s mental fortitude.

Thanks to the shock brought about by the trader and the headless monster, Lumian and his companions weren’t interested in what lay inside the box. They hurriedly left the underground and returned to 11 Rue des Fontaines, where they met Gardner Martin in the study.

Gardner Martin took the small suitcase and examined it casually. He smiled and said, “Very good. You’ve all done well. I’ll reward you later.”

After praising them, the Savoie Mob boss looked at Lumian and nodded gently.

“I have a message for you. If you wish to progress further on the Hunter pathway, you must remember this sentence:

‘The Demon is our friend, and hell is someone else’s.’”

The Demon is our friend, and hell is someone else’s… Lumian couldn’t fully grasp the true meaning of this sentence, but Gardner Martin didn’t provide further explanation.

As his three subordinates left the study, Gardner Martin turned to the door connecting to the activity room.

The door creaked open, and a man in a half top hat, white shirt, yellow vest, black suit, and dark pants approached.

He had short auburn hair, brownish-red eyes, a thick, messy beard,

and thick eyebrows, resembling a starving bear. He was the trader who had given the small suitcase to Lumian and the others and been dragged back by the headless monster.

“Olson, any thoughts on him?” Gardner Martin inquired.

The trader addressed as Olson replied with a smile, “Simple background, clear origins, smart, bold, and decisive. He could bring together a few people who were originally unrelated into a team in a short period of time. Isn’t that what you want?

“As for loyalty, that’s the least of my worries. When the time comes, even if he’s not loyal, he’ll become loyal.”

Gardner Martin nodded slightly.

“Observe him for a while longer and see who he interacts with.”

After discussing this topic, Gardner Martin looked at the small suitcase on the table and asked curiously, “What’s inside?”

“Like I said, you’d better pray you never find out.” The trader known as Olson smiled, picked up the suitcase, and left the study.

After taking a few steps in the hall, he suddenly found his head a little tilted. He raised his hands, held his head, and straightened it with a snap.

Chapter 275 - 275 Poaching

275 Poaching

In the carriage heading back to the market district, Lumian stared out the window, reflecting on Gardner Martin's actions after completing the mission.

He felt that the Savoie Mob's boss didn't seem too concerned about the suitcase they risked their lives for. The boss merely glanced at it casually and placed it on the desk.

Was it really some kind of test? The Iron and Blood Cross Order possesses information about the spine-dangling head and headless monster. As long as I stick to the prescribed procedure and don't act independently, they won't really come after me?

But the Boss used to be a Conspirer. Perhaps he just wanted us to see the suitcase, but it might not reveal his true intentions…

Regardless, the head-only trader and the headless humanoid monster are real. What do they symbolize? Can I trust the words of the former? He disappeared for months searching for the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier and experienced terrifying events. His head and body got separated, and both gained consciousness?

When Boss said, "The Demon is our friend, and hell is someone else's," it felt like he was warning me not to trust others easily… Did he mention this because he was satisfied with my performance on the mission?

Has he sent someone to secretly follow and observe us in detail? Or maybe "Giant" Simon or "Rat" Christo are not as scared as they seem and one of them is secretly working as a spy for the Boss?

Since the Boss didn't keep me here, the "audit" isn't over yet. Could

someone be tailing this carriage and lurking in the shadows?

Heh heh, Mr. K and his subordinates love doing this too. It'd be amusing if they ran into each other…

In the carriage, "Rat" Christo and "Giant" Simon, who were using the Salle de Bal Brise's carriage to return to the market district, grew a bit uneasy as Lumian remained silent and gazed out of the window.

After five minutes of indescribable silence, Christo forced a smile and asked, "Ciel, what are you looking at?"

"It's too cramped," Lumian sighed, disregarding the question.

Christo and Simon exchanged glances, thinking that Ciel might be mocking them for taking up space in the carriage.

After hesitating for a moment, Christo decided to share his intentions.

He lowered his voice and said, "Ciel, I want to use this opportunity to talk to you. Damn it, I didn't expect Simon to join us!"

"Son of a sow. I was the one who suggested borrowing the carriage in the first place!" "Giant" Simon retorted.

Ignoring him, Christo continued, "Ciel, this mission has allowed me to reacquaint myself with you. Apart from Boss, you are the most intelligent, powerful, and calmest Beyonder around me."

The calmest? You haven't seen me when I'm impulsive… Lumian teased, deliberately provoking. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

"Is that so? Am I more intelligent than Brignais and stronger than Franca?"

"Rat" Christo was at a loss for words. After a few seconds, he said, "Uh, well… what I mean is, in the future, when the Boss assigns me secret missions, I want your help to analyze and figure out what to do. I don't want to be flustered when facing a similar monster next time."

Oh, intel has come knocking on my door? Lumian smiled and replied, “I don’t mind helping, but aren’t you afraid the Boss will be angry if he finds out?”

Christo glanced at Lumian, then at “Giant” Simon beside him, and his tone turned cold.

“If you keep quiet, and we keep quiet, the Boss won’t find out.”

Simon’s eyelids twitched, and he added, “My thoughts align with Rat’s.”

He didn’t want to die on the next secret mission either.

Lumian pondered for a moment and grinned.

“Alright, I can assist, but I can’t guarantee I’ll uncover the truth or find a way to avoid danger based solely on your descriptions. Also, I might make some small requests.”

“No problem!” “Rat” Christo agreed without hesitation.

Today’s encounter alone wouldn’t have pushed him to this state. He had just escaped the mirror people incident, and his nerves were on edge.

“Giant” Simon also expressed his agreement. Then, he looked at Lumian and cursed himself softly,

He cleared his throat and said, “Ciel, my Big Bro, I apologize. I wasn’t too friendly before, and I even encouraged you to deal with ‘Red Boots’ when you were new to the Savoie Mob and knew little about us.

“I’m a rough and unrefined guy. I can’t say pleasant words, but I hope you can accept my apology. In the future, I, Simon, will follow your lead!”

Wow, you’ve grasped the situation so quickly, and you’re so humble… This fellow is quite a talent… Lumian pretended to be nonchalant and replied, “I’ve already forgotten about the past. Besides, have I targeted you or sought revenge recently?”

With that said, Lumian added inwardly, Well, it's mostly because I'm too busy to bother with a mere mob leader like you…

Simon breathed a sigh of relief, convinced that Ciel wasn't too petty.

Lumian smiled and questioned, "Why do you call me Big Bro? I'm much younger than you."

Simon smiled sheepishly.

"You're already a Sequence 7. In terms of strength, I should call you Big Bro."

Lumian couldn't help but jest, "If you stick to addressing someone by their Sequence, will you have to call me 'Uncle' once I reach Sequence 6?"

Simon hesitated for a moment before clearing his throat.

"If you wish…"

Damn it, isn't this guy too shameless? Is he like this even when talking to the Boss privately? "Rat" Christo turned his head in surprise and looked at the burly man, who stood more than 1.9 meters tall, as though this was the first time he had met this giant.

Simon continued, "But I believe I'll reach Sequence 7 before you hit Sequence 6.

"You must have just become a Pyromaniac. It might take years, even decades, to fully master the power of flames and withstand the next potion."

He was implying: "Haha, I was just joking. Perhaps we'll both be Sequence 7s soon, and you'll still be my Big Bro."

Upon hearing this, Lumian's mind wandered back to the moment he had used invisible flames to burn Susanna Mattise to death, feeling the potion digesting a little inside him.

However, he couldn't be sure as he hadn't yet completed the first acting principle, making the degree of digestion unclear.

Combining past experiences and recent events in the market district, Lumian sensed that the first acting principle was close to being revealed, but it always fell short. His thoughts lacked clarity, and he had a feeling that he needed to wait for the right opportunity.

His mind then shifted to Gardner Martin's possible covert observations and subsequent tests.

As a result, Lumian decided to postpone his plans to attend Mr. Fool's bishop's preaching at Lavigny Dock in the square district the day after tomorrow. He felt it would be better to wait until he passed the test and officially joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

But what about my psychiatric treatment scheduled for tomorrow afternoon? Should I still go?

I believe my mental state and emotional control have improved over the past few days, but I'll need the two ladies to confirm it. Yes, they always use Psychological Invisibility. Madam Justice is a true demigod, so it's unlikely for Gardner Martin or his subordinates to see her. As a Hunter, it's normal for me to have an interest in studying plants. After visiting the botanical garden, I'll have a coffee and take a break. No one can accuse me of anything… Lumian made a quick decision to continue the psychiatric treatment the next day.

However, before heading to Mason's café, he planned to spend two to three hours exploring the nearby botanical garden.

Once the carriage stopped at Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian went upstairs to enjoy a cup of coffee while watching "Giant" Simon and "Rat" Christo leave Avenue du Marché.

Around 4 p.m., he put on a dark wide-brimmed round hat and left the dance hall. His destination was Franca's place at Rue des Blouses Blanches to discuss the peculiar mission and Gardner Martin's behavior in the afternoon.

As Lumian strolled along Avenue du Marché, a sudden thought struck him.

If Boss is indeed sending someone to watch my actions during this

period, he might think I'm having an affair with Franca if I frequent her apartment on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

But maybe, as a Trierien, he wouldn't mind?

Right, there's already a rumor about me having an affair with Jenna. I'm going to Rue des Blouses Blanches to find Jenna, not Franca. He won't be suspicious…

Lumian calmed himself and arrived at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. He knocked on the door of Room 601.

Franca, who was wearing her usual blouse and light-colored pants, snapped, "Why are you here again?"

At that moment, Lumian noticed peculiar drawings on her face—a turd on the left side and a dark green turtle on the right.

"Lost at cards?" Lumian raised an eyebrow.

Franca had mentioned playing cards with Jenna and her dancers, involving strange punishments without money being at stake.

Franca glanced back and lowered her voice, "Jenna has been in a bad mood lately. I'm trying to find a way to cheer her up."

Lumian followed her gaze and noticed that Jenna's face was also decorated with strange drawings—moles and a pig's mouth. The lead dancer had similar marks.

"In that case, I'll wait for you to finish," Lumian said as he entered the living room.

Assuming Ciel was there for Jenna, the lead dancer hurriedly got up, washed her face, and left Apartment 601.

Being in a better mood, Jenna teasingly asked Lumian, "Are you here for me or Franca?"

That came out wrong… Lumian replied honestly, "Boss assigned me a strange mission, and I want to consult Franca."

Curious, Franca asked, “What mission is it?”

Lumian briefly recounted the noon encounter, including how he managed to keep “Rat” Christo and “Giant” Simon in check, making them follow his instructions.

Both Franca and Jenna were scared by the head-only trader and the headless monster, and they fell into silence for a moment.

After a few seconds, Franca clenched her teeth and said, “Gardner Martin, that son of a bitch!”

“What’s wrong?” Jenna didn’t understand why Franca suddenly cursed the Boss.

Franca explained vaguely, “I suspect this mission is Gardner Martin’s way of testing Ciel. He wants to see if Ciel is fit to enter the core group.

“Dammit, f*cking hell, I’ve been with him for so long, and he still doesn’t trust me. He doesn’t even want to test me!”

Chapter 276 - 276 The Disappointed Susie

276 The Disappointed Susie

Jenna, who had no experience in relationships and was clueless about the truth, didn't know how to respond to Franca's complaint.

Lumian roughly understood Franca's anger and disappointment.

We're all here to infiltrate the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Why is the test scheduled just a month after your joining? I've been here for nearly a year, and I'm almost giving birth to Gardner Martin's child, yet there's still no progress!

This makes me look like a failure!

After carefully considering Franca's thoughts, Lumian replied earnestly, "This might not be an opportunity, but a danger.

"The fact that they want to 'audit' me so quickly suggests they might see me as expendable. Or perhaps my Beyonder pathway is just right and could be useful for something recent."

Jenna found Lumian's explanation reasonable and quickly advised Franca, "Maybe the Boss didn't 'audit' you because he cares for you and doesn't want you involved in dangerous matters."

"…" Franca's expression turned odd. "That's not right…"

This made her feel guilty for deceiving others.

When Madam Judgment arranged for her to be an undercover agent in the Savoie Mob and wait for an opportunity to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order, she had been explicitly instructed not to sacrifice

herself by seducing the target. The Tarot Club didn't engage in such tactics. Later, as a Witch, she wanted to experience a romantic relationship with a man, and Gardner Martin happened to be interested, so they became lovers.

From Franca's perspective, this was a pure, joy-sharing relationship that didn't involve any emotional aspects. They wouldn't have real expectations of each other. After the mission was completed, they would part ways without hesitation and continue with their exciting lives.

Of course, at that time, the Iron and Blood Cross Order might have already suffered a setback. It remained unknown if Gardner Martin could continue with his exciting life.

If Franca had enough strength, she would have rehearsed the scene of a cold assassin killing her lover.

After a few seconds, Franca exclaimed, "Impossible, impossible!"

"That guy is very chauvinistic and discriminates against women. Him not auditing me must be because he thinks that a woman should just manage the dancers well and have the ability to protect herself. She should just bear a child sometime later. She doesn't need to be qualified to join the core group!

"Dammit! Did I fail because of my gender?"

What she didn't want to admit was that the undercover mission had likely failed because she took a chance, which led her to form a stronger bond with Gardner Martin.

Cannon fodder didn't matter if they were male or female!

It didn't matter if the expendables of a secret organization were male or female either!

Jenna and Lumian exchanged glances and pursed their lips. Then, they turned to Franca and asked curiously, "How can you tell that the mission is a test?"

Those two monsters were undoubtedly terrifying and dangerous!

Jenna didn't think she was as foolish as Lumian had teased her, but she knew she lacked experience in mysticism and playing these kinds of games. Subconsciously, she yearned to learn more.

Franca smiled again and said confidently, "I deduced it from the whole process and final outcome.

"Think about it. Does this matter really require Ciel, Simon, and Christo's involvement?

"Find a couple of core members who understand the situation roughly. Follow the procedures and precautions, and you can escape the monsters and retrieve the box successfully. Moreover, there's no need to worry about leaks or give them any special reminders.

"No matter how dangerous the darkness around us seems, the fact that nothing happened this time suggests that there's a way and people to resist them. If someone else were to go, they could still complete the transaction."

Jenna pondered Franca's analysis for a while and exclaimed in admiration, "That's true… Dammit! Why didn't I think of that just now?"

Hearing this, Franca and Lumian exchanged smug and pleased glances.

The fact that Jenna could curse meant she was gradually feeling better!

Lumian had also considered this before concluding that the Boss was "auditing" him.

So, it was very likely that there were observers around him during this period.

After some thought, Lumian asked Franca, "Do you know what those two monsters are?"

They lurked underground and were suspected to be related to Fourth Epoch Trier. Lumian might have to venture underground in the future using Earth Blood mineral. Knowing about the terrifying

monsters he might encounter would help in his preparations.

Franca appeared thoughtful.

After a while, she said uncertainly, “Neither I nor anyone I know has encountered such monsters, but I’ve heard rumors from sailors.

“On the Sonia Sea, there’s a port called Bansy. Once, a humanoid monster with a spine and no head appeared there. It sounds quite similar to what you described, but the port is now abandoned, likely due to damage caused by a high-level power.”

Bansy? Lumian wasn’t unfamiliar with the term.

Madam Magician had used it once to illustrate Cordu’s likely fate. It had been severely corrupted and directly destroyed by the Church, leaving a deep impression on Lumian.

After chatting for a while, Lumian and Jenna returned to Salle de Bal Brise. Jenna had changed into a beige fluffy short dress and transformed into Showy Diva.

Late at night, upon returning to Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian drew the curtains and unfolded a piece of letter paper. He penned down his encounter, thoughts, and Franca’s analysis, preparing to send it to Madam Magician.

Shortly after, he arranged the altar, creating a wall of spirituality, and summoned the arm-height puppet messenger.

In the faint blue candlelight, Lumian gazed at the pale-white spirit world creature in a light-gold dress, with light-blue eyes and pure golden hair. A sudden idea struck him, and he asked thoughtfully, “Is there someone monitoring me nearby?” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The messenger spoke in an ethereal and illusory manner, “Yes.”

There really is… Lumian wasn’t surprised and pressed further, “Can he or they discover that I’m summoning you?”

The messenger’s eyes flickered as she replied disdainfully, “They’re

not worthy."

Relieved, Lumian thanked Miss Messenger and watched her vanish into the candlelight with the letter.

Before long, a neatly folded reply appeared on the desk in Room 207.

Lumian skillfully opened it and began reading.

"It's not a good thing to be chosen so quickly and be tested.

"From now on, especially after becoming an official member, you have to be more careful. Once you're assigned a mission and feel that things aren't simple, something that even Mr. K might not be able to handle, find an opportunity to summon my messenger and inform me.

"The two monsters you encountered are indeed similar to those in Bansy, but they are quite different. They seem to have their own consciousness.

"As for what abilities and characteristics they can display, since Bansy Harbor has already been destroyed, I can't give you any useful information.

"I believe most of what the head said is true. What it didn't say was that it and its body might have entered Fourth Epoch Trier during the months he was missing.

"There's a high chance they possess a method to enter Fourth Epoch Trier. You need to pay special attention to this matter.

"By the way, the Sequence after Alms Monk is a Contractee. You need to sign a contract with different creatures and obtain one of their abilities. When the time comes, don't be in a hurry to choose. Write a letter and tell me that you already have the corresponding power. I can give you a pile of information on spirit world creatures for you to choose from. I have significant knowledge in this area. I'll also give you a copy of Sights in the Spirit World."

Madam Magician truly possesses a deep understanding of the spirit world… Lumian gleefully crumpled the letter and watched it fuse

with the crimson flames.

…

On the sunny Sunday afternoon, Lumian satisfied his hunger and hopped into a public carriage headed for Trier's botanical garden. After buying tickets, he leisurely strolled through the vibrant flora.

He marveled at the sight of many plants he had only encountered in books, newspapers, and magazines, including the Donningsman Tree, which the Intisians mocked as Loen's national tree.

These trees originally thrived in the rainforests of the Southern Continent. Legend had it that the sap from these trees could promote hair growth, a tempting prospect for many Loenians lacking significant hair volume.

Around 3:30 p.m., Lumian made his way to Mason café and settled into Booth D. He ordered a cup of Reem espresso, eagerly anticipating the arrival of Psychiatrist Madam Susie.

Before long, he heard a familiar, gentle female voice.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Lumian Lee."

Without turning around, Lumian smiled and replied, "Good afternoon, Madam Susie."

Susie commented, sounding surprised, "Your mental state seems better than I expected."

Lumian smiled wryly.

"Perhaps it's thanks to my previous treatment that I've regained some inner strength.

"As the saying goes, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Susie expressed her curiosity, asking in a conversational tone, "I wonder if you're willing to share your experiences?"

Lumian pondered for a moment before looking ahead and muttering

to himself, “Are you in the same organization as Madam Magician?”

“Yes,” Susie confirmed.

Relaxing, Lumian leaned back on the sofa, sipped his espresso, and began recounting his ordeal.

From capturing Louis Lund to taking down Susanna Mattise and saving the lives of most people involved in Paramita, he concluded,

“Since that day, my mental state has significantly improved. It’s like a fire still burning within my heart.”

Susie responded gently, “Sometimes, life itself plays the role of a psychiatrist. Those experiences indeed triggered your inner strength and improved your condition. However, it also requires resilience and a suitable personality. Otherwise, one might easily descend into a state of collapse, despair, self-blame, and abandonment.”

“And this vulnerability might be exploited by the angel sealed within you.”

At this point, Susie’s emotions were complicated. She added with a hint of disappointment, “Your remarkable progress has rendered the treatment plan I prepared for today useless.”

Chapter 277 - 277 Guidance

277 Guidance

Susie's words elicited a chuckle from Lumian. "Isn't that a good thing?"

Susie replied, smiling, "That's a good thing. One of the happiest moments for every psychiatrist is to see their patient gradually emerge from their trauma."

Lumian probed, "Can we move on to the next stage of treatment?"

"Let's have a chat first. I'll assess your mental state." Susie's voice was gentle, and her demeanor remained calm.

"About what?" Lumian had already shared most of his recent experiences.

Susie verbally ruminated for a few seconds before responding, "We can talk about what else you're confused or troubled about."

Lumian fell silent momentarily before continuing, "Am I really the unlucky one? Will I bring disaster to the people around me?"

This time, it wasn't Susie who answered, but the other lady.

She said with a soothing chuckle, "If disaster is the inevitable fate of those around us, it isn't your fault. If it comes because of you and fate turns sour, it just means that destiny isn't set in stone.

"The entity sealed inside you by Mr. Fool isn't the entity named Inevitability—just an angel from the same realm. He can't use His powers and can only rely on others, so He can't determine a changed fate."

"So, you're saying I had a chance to change their fates, but I blew it

all?" Lumian sipped his espresso, his voice unconsciously deepening.

The woman maintained her tone.

"First, we gotta be sure that the person who messed with their fate and caused their doom is the companion of that Inevitability angel lurking around you. He came for the seal and Termiboros. It's got nothing to do with you.

"Your only issue is that you didn't do good enough, but nobody can guarantee perfection in everything."

At this point, the woman spoke with a hint of self-deprecation,

"I get your feelings. Over the years, I've tried my best to do many things, but many of them failed. I even ended up hurting others despite my good intentions. It hit me hard and made me feel real guilty. I felt like running away and never coming back.

"Thankfully, during that time, I managed to achieve a lot. I helped people, stopped disasters, and rooted out corruption. That gave me confidence and motivation, strengthening my beliefs and ideas.

"Later, whenever I felt confident and positive about what I wanted to do, I'd remember my mistakes and failures. It would remind me not to be careless, not to be biased, and not to underestimate anyone.

"Likewise, when setbacks and guilt hit me, I'd remember the people I helped and the disasters I prevented. It reminded me that I'm not all bad, and my beliefs and ideas have a positive side.

"Our past experiences are both a burden and a source of strength, motivation, and growth."

Lumian listened intently, finally facing the guilt in his heart and not suppressing it anymore.

Maybe some tragedies could've been avoided if I knew more about mysticism.

It is my problem, but I'm not the one causing the disaster. I just haven't done a good enough job. I need to fix this weakness. I gotta

strive to improve and be more careful in the future. I can genuinely save those who want help and bring disaster to those bastards who intentionally cause harm…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian recalled the peddlers, pedestrians, and tenants who had fallen from the Tree of Shadow. He remembered how he had watched with a smile.

Phew… He let out a slow breath, leaning back against the sofa.

“I feel much better now.”

He scoffed and said, “The person who helped Termiboros and messed with my fate and the people around me couldn’t have guessed that the pain he caused didn’t break me, make me despair, or give up. Instead, it led me to get excellent psychiatric treatment, improving my mental state significantly.

“I really want to find him and ‘thank’ him in person.”

The lady chuckled.

“That’s why I keep telling Susie that psychiatric treatment is tricky and subtle. If you’re not careful, it could lead to the opposite outcome. You can’t just be fearless because you’re a Beyonder.

“Hmm… Let me remind you of something.

“We can’t assume the target’s current intentions solely based on their original image and goals without sufficient evidence.”

Lumian didn’t quite understand.

“What do you mean?”

The lady explained in a gentle voice, “Many people are deceived because they always assume the other person remains the same, believing that their personalities and thoughts won’t change due to the environment, experiences, and circumstances.

“Take what you just said as an example. Have you considered another possibility? Termiboros’s companion might have deliberately

brought those misfortunes not to make you collapse, but to stimulate you and awaken the power in your heart, allowing you to break free from your mental cage and regain your mental state?"

"How is that possible?" Lumian responded subconsciously.

Could Termiboros's companion be so benevolent?

She smiled and replied, "Just because I'm giving an example doesn't mean it's true.

"But why is that impossible? Perhaps that person initially wanted to cooperate with Termiboros and use various methods to influence your state and create an opportunity for Him to escape the seal. However, gradually, he realized that this was an opportunity that could turn him into an angel.

"As he receives more boons and sees the angelic-level door, he can extract Termiboros's power by controlling you. He can even undo the seal and devour Him while He is weak.

"And to increase the probability of success, he has to ensure that you're in good condition. You can extract Termiboros's power time and time again, weakening Him.

"How is it? Does he have a motive to help you improve your mental state?"

Lumian fell silent.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized that from a human's perspective, this was an undeniable possibility.

After a few seconds, he retorted, "Is that person not afraid of angering the entity known as Inevitability?

"The power from boons is definitely more influenced by the higher-ups. They are proud to carry out Their will and wouldn't have any blasphemous thoughts." This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

The woman in Psychological Invisibility laughed meaningfully and said, "The being known as Inevitability desires an obedient angel to

descend upon this land. Whether it's Termiboros or another bestower, I reckon He holds no particular preference or inclination."

That's true. If someone devours Termiboros, they might become an angel of the Inevitability domain. Perhaps this is what Inevitability expects. If Termiboros can make it here, so be it. If He fails and faces a seal or purification, other bestowers will seek a way to devour His relic and become an angel. Ultimately, an angel in service of Inevitability will emerge on Earth. But the identity of this angel is not crucial… Lumian pondered as he nodded gently.

Suddenly, a wave of inspiration washed over Lumian. He considered the lady who was suspected of wielding the Justice card. Was she not only using this opportunity to teach him, but also conveying these words to Termiboros?

Could she be creating a rift between Termiboros and Inevitability, making Him distrust His companion?

If I can think of this possibility, surely Termiboros can as well…

Uh, He could have figured this out, but since His companion has been discovered, he wouldn't dare to show himself for a long while, nor would he communicate with Him. In such times, suspicions would easily grow between them.

Once the seed of suspicion took root and flourished, it would prove difficult to uproot in the future!

A Spectator is truly terrifying…

Lumian sighed and said sincerely, "I understand."

The lady smiled and said, "So, we can't assume that people won't change; they can evolve over time. We need to pay close attention to their circumstances and thoughts.

"Other Beyonders might not need to think so deeply, but your next Sequence is a Conspirer. You have to learn to analyze human nature."

Lumian nodded, gaining a fresh perspective on Gardner Martin's teachings. "The Demon is our friend, and hell is someone else's."

Continuing the discussion, he smiled and asked, “Is it possible that Termiboros’s companion intended to help me improve my mental state from the beginning?”

“That’s a possibility,” Susie replied, “but what would be the reason?”

“Why?” Lumian inquired.

His expression suddenly changed, and he sat up straight, trembling slightly.

“Maybe, just maybe, she wanted to help me. She’s…”

The lady, suspected to be the holder of the Justice card, interrupted gently.

“Your memories are unlikely lying to you.”

Lumian let out a long sigh and relaxed against the sofa once more.

The lady’s voice remained soft as she continued, “However, in the world of mysticism, there are cases where a person’s death might not be their true end.

“The world of mysticism holds too many mysteries.

“Once, I encountered a follower of an evil god. He suddenly died just as I was about to eliminate him. It felt too coincidental, so I examined his corpse, his fate, and various mystical connections. Everything seemed in order; he was truly dead, and his family and friends believed so as well.

“Later, when I was eradicating a subsidiary branch of an evil god cult, I came across him again. He had assumed a new identity with a new fate and mystical connection.

“This time, he met his final end. From him, I learned the Sequence name of an evil god pathway—Deceased. They can use death to escape their original fate.”

This is similar to the Substitution Spell, but it seems simpler and lacks prerequisites. Moreover, after the substitute’s demise, the

original identity and fate appear irretrievable… Lumian pondered on this, recalling a ritualistic magic that came with Alms Monk.

Chapter 278 - 278 Consultation

278 Consultation

The lady believed to hold the Justice card fell silent, and it was Susie who spoke up.

“Your mental state has improved significantly. If you’d like, I can guide you back into the dream to awaken those forgotten memories.”

“No problem.” Lumian leaned against the sofa and closed his eyes.

Unbeknownst to him, he dozed off. He found himself in Cordu, bathed in sunlight amidst the mountains, surrounded by turquoise alpine pastures. White-gray sheep roamed like clouds, creating a painting-like scene.

The events unfolded like an art exhibition. Lumian alternated between experiencing them firsthand and observing as a bystander, his thoughts deeply immersed in the unfolding drama.

As the events progressed, the weather mirrored Lumian’s mood, turning increasingly gray and devoid of sunlight. Occasionally, the fog lifted, revealing an azure sky.

These memories confirmed Lumian’s suspicions. An anomaly had been brewing in the village from May to June of last year.

Initially, he didn’t pay much attention, but by the end of the year, he realized the seriousness of the issue. Aurore didn’t take his concerns seriously, dismissing them without investigation.

He later discovered skeletons in Louis Lund’s closet and extracted information from him. In the new year, more villagers began revealing certain problems, leading some unaffected ones to sense that something was wrong. As a result, Ava, Reimund, Naroka, and

others were silenced.

During this process, Lumian stumbled upon Pons Bénet and his crew burying a corpse and sought revenge, gravely injuring the villain's lower body. However, he couldn't take on the thugs alone and ultimately failed.

Pons Bénet almost crippled him, but Aurore arrived just in time to rescue him.

Only then did Lumian realize that something was amiss with his sister. She was suspected to be part of the padre's group and held a high status.

Most of the time, she appeared cold and indifferent, which was completely different from the sister Lumian knew. Only rarely did she show her true self. Worried for both her and her brother's future, she sought help.

However, she never mentioned summoning the messenger of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's vice president, Hela. The information in Lumian's dream likely came from her soul fragment.

What followed matched Madame Pualis's account. Aurore stopped her, and Guillaume Bénet, the padre, led a large group of bestowers to attack the administrator's castle, dismantling her setup. She had no choice but to abandon the "territory" she had built up for a long time and leave Cordu with her remaining subordinates.

The only difference was Madame Pualis's claim that she had only given birth to one child whose father was the padre—he eventually perished in the attack. However, Aurore, a Blessed of Inevitability, stated that Madame Pualis had personally given birth to two children. One of them vanished after the administrator's castle was destroyed.

In the end, it wasn't Aurore who knocked Lumian out and brought him to the altar. It was the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, who also had a lizard-like elf crawl out of him in his dream.

Lumian blinked open his eyes, taking deep breaths to steady himself.

He had anticipated this moment, but the emotional upheaval still left him reeling.

Emerging from the nightmarish life of a street urchin, he had finally found a true, warm home with new friends and boundless joy. Even the villagers' chase and occasional beatings for his pranks couldn't dampen his spirits during those moments of triumph.

However, his idyllic life began to unravel as the people around him changed. The constant anomalies he noticed clouded his heart with growing unease and uncertainty. He tried to persuade his friends, Aurore, Reimund, Ava, and others, to leave Cordu and move to Dariège, but Aurore always delayed, thwarting his plans.

Amidst his fear and disappointment, tragedy struck his friends. To his dismay, he even noticed disturbing signs in his own beloved sister.

In that moment, his mind plummeted into a dark abyss, much like when his grandfather had died. He felt terrified, helpless, sorrowful, and in pain.

But this time, he also felt a profound sense of despair.

Had it not been for the occasional glimmer of hope when Aurore briefly regained her true self, Lumian might not have held on till the end.

Even now, recollecting the past few months felt unbearable. It was as if he was trapped in a suffocating cage, surrounded by darkness and misery, unable to escape. It was suffocating, painful, and full of despair.

Phew, phew… Taking deep breaths, Lumian gradually regained his composure and offered a bitter smile.

"Just as I suspected."

He hadn't personally experienced the remaining pieces of the puzzle concerning the catastrophe. He needed to decipher the dream's symbols or find the padre Guillaume Bénet to obtain the missing information.

Susie spoke in a gentle tone, “You’ve shown tremendous resilience and faced your past head-on. It’s a sign that your psychological struggles have improved significantly. Now, the rest of the healing process lies in your own hands.”

“If everything goes as planned, we should only have one more psychiatric session. After you find padre Guillaume Bénet and communicate with him, I’ll need to evaluate your psychological state once again and conclude the treatment.”

“Thank you, Madam Susie. Thank you…” Lumian hesitated before adding, “Madam Justice.”

The woman in Psychological Invisibility didn’t deny it and smiled, saying, “Just because we have only one session left doesn’t mean we won’t be in touch again. I might need your assistance with certain matters in the future.”

Lumian smiled back, saying, “I’m only a Sequence 7. I doubt I’ll be of much help.”

“We should never underestimate anyone,” the lady replied with a knowing smile. “Besides, different people can have unique impacts on different matters.”

Lumian nodded and said, “No problem.”

He pondered for a moment before changing the subject.

“Ladies, after the Cordu disaster, my sister pushed me away and instructed me to take note of her grimoires. Given your understanding of human nature, what might be hidden in her notebook, and where could it be?”

Though Lumian had studied Aurore’s entire grimoire multiple times, he still couldn’t grasp many aspects or find anything suspicious.

Susie responded promptly, “Aurore wouldn’t have intentionally left any messages or clues in her grimoires. If there were, she would have told you directly or hinted at it once she regained consciousness.”

Lumian nodded slowly, accepting her explanation. Aurore could have

sought help from Hela's messenger, but she chose not to.

Susie continued, "I believe there might be something in the notebook that Aurore once considered normal, but later suspected was amiss. So, identifying any abnormalities through superficial observation alone would be challenging."

No wonder I've been stumped for so long… Lumian asked anxiously, "Then how can I figure out if there's a problem?"

The holder of the Justice card seemed lost in thought as she spoke, "Since you've deduced that the anomaly began in May or June of last year, focus on that particular time frame to find the root of the problem.

"If the source truly lies with Aurore, she must have encountered something before that period that caused her transformation. So, pay special attention to the grimoires six months prior. It's likely to contain something significant that triggered her change.

"Additionally, the grimoires from the last three months might reveal Aurore's true intentions. They are an essential part of the castle in her heart.

"If you analyze these two time periods, you're most likely to find something relevant."

January to June last year, and January to March this year… Lumian mentally noted Madam Justice's advice.

As Aurore's grimoire spanned over five years, narrowing down the suspected content would save Lumian a considerable amount of time and effort.

If he focused solely on the notebooks from those two periods, his workload would decrease by 90%, enabling him to analyze and consider them more effectively.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Lumian expressed his gratitude once again.

"Thank you, Madam Susie. Thank you, Madam Justice."

After their discussion, the psychiatric treatment came to an official close. Lumian finished the remaining espresso and left Mason café, waiting for the public carriage by the roadside.

In Trier, dark clouds gathered to the northwest in the distance, while raindrops cascaded down like threads. To the southeast, the sky remained azure, and pure white clouds were tinged with golden light.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

“Let’s attend a gathering,” Franca said to Jenna.

“What gathering?” Jenna, who hadn’t yet put on her smoky makeup, asked with confusion.

Franca rarely invited her to such events.

Franca chuckled.

“A mysticism gathering. Now that you’ve digested the Assassin potion, you should consider advancing to Instigator. Attending mysticism gatherings, gathering materials and information, and earning money and supplies are compulsory tasks for every wild Beyonder.”

“Advancing?” Jenna was bewildered, as the term was unfamiliar to her. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Franca clicked her tongue and explained, “An important figure told me that the number of evil god believers will increase in the foreseeable future. The same goes for various mysticism-related disasters.

“If you wish to protect yourself, your brother, and the people you care about, you must progress step by step on the divine paths and grow stronger.”

Jenna fell silent for a few seconds before finally nodding and saying, “Okay.”

“Then let’s go.” Franca smiled again.

However, Jenna hesitated for a moment before adding, “Should we invite Ciel? It seems like he also needs to attend mysticism gatherings.”

“…” Franca’s expression froze.

Chapter 279 - 279 Deep Valley Cloister

279 Deep Valley Cloister

After a moment, Franca forced on a reassuring smile and spoke, “Don’t worry about him. He’s got his own mystical gatherings.”

Jenna nodded and didn’t say much more.

With disguises, masks, and a bit of makeup, they left 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches and made their way to Avenue du Marché. They hopped on Subway Line 2, which connected the bustling market district’s Suhit steam locomotive station to the elegant cathedral district’s Northern Trier Train Station. Their destination was Quartier 9, the renowned Quartier de la Maison d’Opéra in the Northern Continent.

They arrived at the world’s largest and most vibrant arcade, surrounded by department stores and fancy shops. The colorful glass dome above, supported by steel frames, painted the sunlight with a touch of grandeur, showcasing scenes of sacredness and epic tales.

To make up for the dimness from the stained glass, new kerosene lamps on the iron-black street lamp poles burned brightly, emitting a dazzling white light.

They were called draft lamps that utilized the heat they generated to turn kerosene into steam, spraying it onto the scorching mantle around it, creating a bright white light.

In terms of illumination, they were far superior to conventional gas street lamps or regular household kerosene lamps, a modification of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery.

Jenna followed Franca into the public washroom in the middle of the Opera House arcade. Each found a stall, changed their clothes, and applied simple makeup to downplay their looks.

After that, they headed underground through a nearby entrance.

Unlike other districts in Trier, the underground street beneath the Opera House arcade was bustling with people. Cafés, galleries, beer houses, and small shops filled the space, making it feel anything but dark, cold, or confined.

Only when they left the area did Jenna find her usual impression of Underground Trier.

As Assassins, they could see in the dark. However, to avoid exposing their Sequence abilities to those attending the mysterious gathering, they each held a carbide lamp that cast a bluish-yellow light ahead.

Studying Franca's actions closely, Jenna mimicked her and donned a silver metal mask that covered the upper half of her face. Silently, she ventured deeper into the damp tunnel.

After walking for a while, Franca pointed to a fork in the road and smiled.

"There's a legend of ghosts in that direction."

"What's the legend?" Jenna asked, playing along.

Franca grinned and replied, "They say people in the opera house often hear strange male voices coming from underground. They hired several bounty hunters to investigate, but none of them returned."

"Didn't the official Beyonders intervene?" Jenna inquired, puzzled.

"They did, but they found nothing. That's because it's a legend we made up," Franca chuckled. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Jenna was even more perplexed.

"Why make up such a legend?"

For amusement?

Franca assured her, smiling, “To prevent the people of Underground Trier from meddling with our gathering.”

Jenna finally realized the reason behind it.

“So, you scared them off, and they wouldn’t dare come here?”

“No.” Franca shook her head with a serious expression. “No, it’s not about scaring them away. It’s about diverting their attention to that area, so they don’t bother with the surroundings. In simpler terms, it gives the adventurous Trier citizens and university students something to keep them occupied.”

Having grown up in Trier, Jenna fell silent. After a few seconds, she muttered, “Dammit! The Trieriens around me are nothing like this!”

Everyone worked diligently. They just liked to go to bars, dance halls, and other places to drink, sing, dance, or vent their emotions by cursing each other after a busy day.

“People from Trier can be different,” Franca said, clicking her tongue and shaking her head.

As they talked, they squeezed through a gap and entered a new tunnel, arriving at a quarry cave overgrown with dark green moss.

Outside the quarry cave stood a white skeleton, its face hidden behind an iron mask, its eye sockets dark and empty.

Jenna, who had never encountered anything related to mysticism before, couldn’t help but feel her heart race with fear.

Franca raised her hand and greeted, “You always send a skeleton. Is all this caution really necessary?”

“Dammit, you even put a mask on the skeleton. What’s there to be embarrassed about?” she added.

The white skeleton spoke with a voice that sounded like metal rubbing against metal, “I like a line from The Adventurer series:

‘That’s basic courtesy.’”

With its eye sockets devoid of flames, it looked at Jenna.

“Who is she?”

“My friend. I brought her here to take a look,” Franca simply replied.

The skeleton didn’t push for more information. It cracked its neck, signaling that they could enter the quarry cave at the back.

Inside, Jenna saw many people in various disguises, either sitting on rocks or standing in a corner. Silence enveloped the place.

After scanning the area, Jenna lowered her voice and asked Franca, “They’re letting me in just like that?”

Isn’t this too easy?

Aren’t they concerned about my trustworthiness or safety?

Franca smirked and replied, “I trust him, and he trusts me.”

“Is that so…” Jenna nodded, but she sensed something strange. “How did that skeleton know it was you? Weren’t you disguised?”

“He has a special way of recognizing people,” Franca vaguely explained.

Fifteen minutes later, more people arrived one after another. By the time the iron-masked skeleton announced the official commencement of the trade gathering, nearly twenty people had gathered in the quarry cave.

Jenna observed the transactions with curiosity, absorbing the new terms as Franca whispered them to her.

During this process, she couldn’t help but be shocked by the prices of potion formulas, mystical items, Beyonder weapons, and various ingredients. Even the cheapest ones required an entire week’s salary as an underground singer. As for the expensive ones, she felt that she had no hope in her life.

The last third of the trade gathering focused on commissions. Jenna sat up straight, hoping to find one that could earn her a large sum of money.

A man dressed in a black robe, resembling a Warlock from horror stories, spoke in a deliberately shrill voice, “I have a mission worth 20,000 verl d’or.”

20,000 verl d’or? All eyes in the room turned to the entrustee.

Jenna was no exception. She had never seen such a large sum of money in her life.

The man glanced around and said, “The gatekeeper of the Deep Valley Cloister in the hill district has been missing for three days. I hope you can help me find him or his corpse.

“I can’t verify the authenticity of the clues, so only those who bring him or his corpse back to the Deep Valley Cloister can claim the 20,000 verl d’or reward.

“Alternatively, you can bring him here.”

The Deep Valley Cloister belonged to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, where ascetic monks devoted themselves to the study of machinery and steam. They didn’t marry, have children, or preach.

Located in the hill district, Quartier 19, it was bordered by the cathedral district of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery’s cathedral and the Northern Trier Train Station to the west, and Quartier 20, the cemetery district, to the east.

Seeing no immediate response, the man continued, “The authorities have already investigated, but they found nothing.

“You can all take this commission and investigate Deep Valley Cloister as bounty hunters. Don’t worry about suspicion. I’ll post notices in bars, dance halls, and beer houses in various districts.”

I can give it a try. It won’t cost me anything if I come up with nothing. At most, it’ll take some time from me making money… Jenna turned to Franca, tempted.

Franca nodded, agreeing that they could take on this mission.

She was curious about the case, and she wanted Jenna to gain some experience before resorting to dangerous assassinations. If they sensed any danger or discovered something amiss, they could retreat in time.

Of course, the high bounty was also appealing.

After a brief silence, the participants began asking questions one after another.

They wanted to gather enough information before starting their investigations.

The entrustee's responses were brief. He informed everyone that the missing cloister's gatekeeper was Pinker, a resident of nearby Deep Valley Town in his early fifties. He was a devout believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, and he had never married. With a fanatical passion for machinery, he became a gatekeeper at Deep Valley Cloister after owning fields.

He returned home once a week, spending one day each time, but he didn't disappear at home.

One night, while the monks were testing a steam contraption in the courtyard, they spotted Pinker standing at the door of the gatekeeper's hut, watching with interest. But the next morning, he was gone.

Jenna took note of the information just like during her acting studies.

Before long, the mysticism gathering concluded, and the participants departed in groups.

…

A few nights later, Lumian sat at the bar in Salle de Bal Brise, savoring his favorite absinthe and watching Jenna sing and dance.

Just then, Louis approached him and whispered in his ear, "Boss, the Big Boss is here. He's waiting for you at the café on the second floor."

“Boss came personally?” Lumian was slightly surprised.

Without saying a word, he downed the rest of the green liquid, stood up, and headed towards the stairs.

At that moment, Gardner Martin stood near the window, dressed casually in a dark brown jacket and a wide-brimmed hat, as if he had just come from the docks or the depot.

He looked at Lumian with his brownish-red eyes for a moment before motioning for the others to leave.

Soon, only Gardner Martin and Lumian remained in the café.

The Savoie Mob boss smiled and said, “I’ve expressed my admiration for you more than once, haven’t I?”

“Indeed, thank you, Boss.” Lumian nodded.

Gardner Martin’s expression turned serious.

“Are you interested in joining my circle? This will allow you to come into contact with more Beyonders, stronger powers, and abundant resources.”

Is that all for the audit? Lumian wondered, not hiding his puzzlement.

“What’s the price?”

Gardner Martin smiled again.

“The price is that you might encounter more danger and have to follow orders to complete certain missions.

“However, as long as you do well, you will definitely progress rapidly. Perhaps in a few years, you can take my position.”

Lumian pretended to hesitate and pondered for a moment before saying, “I don’t have a problem with that.”

Gardner Martin nodded solemnly.

“Before that, you need to undergo a test.

“Go to 13 Avenue du Marché now and stay there until the sun rises.”

13 Avenue du Marché? Lumian frowned, doing his best to recall.

Finally, he remembered where that was.

Osta Trul, the Secrets Suppliant, considered it the most dangerous place in the market district.

It was the burned-down building that had yet to be demolished!

Chapter 280 - 280 The Knocker

280 The Knocker

As Lumian thought of 13 Avenue du Marché, his first instinct was that Gardner Martin intended to do him harm.

The place is abnormal, a mystery even to official Beyonders. Why are you asking me to spend the night there?

The image of the dark, charred building he had seen through the Mystery Prying Glasses still lingered in his mind, with a blurry face staring back at him through the empty eyes behind a window.

It had given him an uneasy feeling, as Osta Trul had warned it was a dangerous place. However, Lumian had no interest in exploring it and wouldn't have triggered any anomalies due to him lacking an adventurous spirit, so he put it aside.

Amidst his thoughts, Lumian dismissed the idea that Gardner Martin would set a trap in the charred building to harm him.

As a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order—a secret organization—a powerful Beyonder likely at Sequence 5 or at minimum a 6, Gardner had other, more direct methods to deal with subordinates with ulterior motives.

Simultaneously, Lumian recalled everything he had seen and heard recently.

The charred building stood close to Rue des Blouses Blanches. Each time he passed it while going to his safe house from Salle de Bal Brise or searching for Franca, he would see vagrants seeking refuge from the rain inside. Never had he witnessed any official Beyonders or patrolling police shooing them away, nor had he heard of any fatalities occurring there.

For three reasons, Lumian considered the charred building highly perilous. Firstly, Osta Trul's spiritual perception had urged him. Secondly, its existence remained intact, as if some mysterious force prevented its demolition. Thirdly, his experience with the Mystery Prying Glasses had left him with a certain feeling.

Combining all these signs, Lumian couldn't help but think there was indeed a problem. And it wasn't some trivial matter either. Though under normal circumstances, these abnormalities were unlikely to be triggered; they required specific conditions.

But if there wasn't any trouble, why would Gardner Martin arrange for me to spend the night there? Is it some kind of courage test? That's pointless, Lumian thought to himself. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

He believed that the most striking impression he left on Gardner Martin and the others was that of his boldness.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Lumian stared at Gardner Martin, showing his concern and suspicion.

"13 Avenue du Marché? I've heard there's something strange going on there."

"If nothing were amiss, what kind of test would it be to send you there for a night?" Gardner Martin replied with a smile. "As long as your response is flawless, I believe you'll come out of it unscathed."

So, this is a test to see how I handle a 'sudden' abnormality without any prior information? Lumian nodded in understanding, but the situation left him even more puzzled.

If that's the case, why did Gardner Martin come here in the middle of the night and ask me to go to 13 Avenue du Marché immediately? Couldn't he have waited until daytime for me to do this? Then, he could test my ability to gather information and see who I'll contact…

Now, I won't have the chance to summon Madam Magician's messenger and seek her opinion or possible help, allowing me not to face the hidden danger of the charred building alone…

But Gardner Martin doesn't know that I can summon a demigod's messenger. That's probably not what he's worried about… If he suspects that I have another faction backing me, he wouldn't have given me a chance to infiltrate the core— in other words—the Iron and Blood Cross Order. He would have already found a way to make me completely 'disappear'…

Yes, if he really suspects me, he'll give me ample time to see where I go and who I contact to determine if there's a problem…

He must have some hidden motive for making things so urgent…

Giving me time to prepare means I might go back on my word. Instead of heading to 13 Avenue du Marché, I might turn around and sell information about this charred building's possible connection to the Iron and Blood Cross Order to the authorities?

But the problem is, even if I manage to stay until the sun rises, I can still go back on my word or betray them… I'll be apprehended right then and there and forced to sign a contract?

After careful consideration, Lumian still couldn't decipher Gardner Martin's true intentions.

The test was likely just one aspect, but there had to be a hidden motive!

The only thing Lumian was sure of was that Gardner Martin wasn't planning to kill him—at least not for the time being. This mission might be life-threatening, but the real danger lay elsewhere.

With various thoughts racing through his mind, Lumian finally made up his decision.

"Alright, I'll go now."

Gardner Martin grinned.

"Excellent. If you'd agreed too quickly, it would have disappointed me.

"One of the most crucial traits for those who join our core is

intelligence and the ability to think. Otherwise, why wouldn't I just purchase a few new steam robots from the God of Steam and Machinery Church?"

Are you suggesting that Franca is smart, but not very much so? She thinks, but not holistically? Lumian couldn't help but criticize inwardly.

Of course, he knew that this wasn't the reason why the Boss refused to let Franca join the core team.

After his inner critique, Lumian responded to Gardner Martin with a smile, "I'm looking forward to experiencing the core you've described, Boss."

As he spoke, he turned around and prepared to head downstairs to 13 Avenue du Marché.

Gardner Martin casually called out to him, "Don't reveal this to anyone, not even to those sleeping with you, like Jenna, who's singing downstairs."

"Alright," Lumian said, though he didn't give it much thought.

He had to share this with Franca and Jenna!

However, the two of them had been busy investigating the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister's gatekeeper and hadn't paid much attention to the affairs of the Savoie Mob.

After leaving Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian touched his left chest.

Then, he drew a triangular Sacred Emblem, as if praying to the God of Steam and Machinery for good luck.

There was still water on the ground from the rain. Lumian followed the iron-black street lamps and reached the intersection near Rue des Blouses Blanches at a moderate pace.

A pitch-black six-story building stood diagonally in front of him. Many of the walls had collapsed, as if pairs of empty, pitch-black "eyes" had grown out of the house.

At that moment, two or three tramps were sleeping on the ground floor, devoid of doors or window frames. It was strewn with blackened bricks and charred wood.

Lumian stood by the roadside and observed for a while, but he couldn't find the blurry face pressed against the window.

Must I wear the Mystery Prying Glasses to "see" it? Without hesitation, Lumian passed through the filthy doorway and entered the target building.

He felt no abnormalities from his body to his soul.

Walking around the tramps, Lumian found what appeared to be the activity room.

There was a small room inside. The wooden door was charred and wobbly, but it remained intact. Beyond the shattered glass window lay an alley behind Avenue du Marché.

Lumian walked in and carefully closed the wooden door.

Then, he sat by the window, ready to climb out of the abnormal building at a moment's notice.

Amidst the inevitable torment, time ticked by, and the night deepened. Lumian remained oblivious to any abnormalities. It was so quiet that only the tramps' occasional coughs echoed.

Suddenly, he straightened his back.

He heard sluggish footsteps.

The footsteps drew nearer, knocking on the dilapidated wooden door that couldn't be locked, instantly tainting the quiet night with an uneasy atmosphere.

At that moment, Termiboros's magnificent voice echoed in Lumian's mind.

"Don't respond."

Don’t respond… Lumian’s hair stood on end.

Although he couldn’t fully trust the Inevitability angel, considering the current situation, he chose to look at the door silently after weighing the pros and cons.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

The knocks on the door echoed one after another, the intervals long, slow, and heavy.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

After a while, the person outside finally spoke.

“Help me. I was the one sleeping outside.

“Help me, help me. A murderer has barged in!”

This fabrication is absurd… Lumian calmed his tense nerves by entertaining himself.

He didn’t respond, acting as though there was no one in the small room.

The voice outside grew more intense, but the pace slowed. There was an indistinct, strange pause.

“He’s. Here! He’s. Here! I’m. About. To. Be. Killed!

“The next one. Is. You!”

As soon as he finished speaking, the person knocking on the door suddenly let out a scream.

Lumian heard a dull thud.

Thud! It was as if someone had fallen to the ground.

Then, a heavy object outside the door was slowly dragged further away.

Before long, a bone-chilling cutting sound filled the room,

accompanied by the sound of gnawing and loud chewing.

An image suddenly surfaced in Lumian's mind: A shadowy figure squatted on the ground, dividing a human corpse with an axe and other items. Occasionally, it would pick up an arm and take a few bites.

After a while, the similar commotion vanished.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

There was another knock on Lumian's small room.

"If you don't. Open the door. I'll. Come in. Myself." It was the same person who had asked for help.

Lumian gazed at the shaky wooden door and had an idea.

As long as I don't respond, the abnormality outside won't be able to open this door and truly threaten me?

This door is clearly unlocked and was burned by the fire. It's very fragile, but it can't open it…

It doesn't have the ability to open any door. Does it require a response from the person behind the door to establish a connection in the mystical sense?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian gained a deeper understanding of the current situation and felt more confident.

Knock. Knock. Knock. Amidst the knocking, the person outside spoke in a staccato manner, "I am not. Lying.

"I really will. Open the door. And come in.

"I'll give you. Another. Ten seconds."

Lumian scoffed, feeling increasingly certain.

He wanted to mock the other party in his heart and tell it to open if it had what it took, but he was worried that it would also be considered

a response, so he suppressed those thoughts.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Three more knocks separated by a long pause.

Suddenly, Lumian heard an inaudible creak.

Then, he saw the rickety wooden door slowly pull back, revealing a dark crack.

It was opening.

Chapter 281 - 281 Reflection

281 Reflection

As the charred and decrepit wooden door creaked open slowly, Lumian felt a shiver down his spine, like ice water trickling over his scalp.

Wasn't it impossible to open the door?

Was my guess wrong?

If it could open the door, why did it take so long and talk so much?

Just get on with it! Is there something wrong with its brain?

Although Lumian had become a Pyromaniac and had experienced various dangerous situations, his heart couldn't help but race at this moment. It felt like a steam locomotive hurtling on tracks and pillowwood. If he weren't worried about Gardner Martin or other members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order lurking nearby, he would have set up an altar then and there, summoning Madam Magician's messenger or praying to Mr. Fool.

Instinctively, Lumian prepared to summon Fire Raven and create a cloak, readying himself for a battle. But Termiboros's warning echoed in his mind once more: Don't respond.

This was entirely different from just not opening the door! Lumian couldn't shake the feeling that something fishy was going on. Why would the creature knock on the door, threaten him, and then open it itself? So, he restrained himself, staying silent and staring at the door like a statue.

The charred wooden door continued to swing open, and the dark gap gradually widened, enough for one person to pass through. But there

was nothing outside the door. The room, far from the window, was engulfed in darkness. The crimson moonlight seeping through the broken glass barely revealed any outlines.

Where was the fellow that knocked on the door? Lumian's first instinct was to activate his Spirit Vision to see if there was an invisible monster. But he held back, afraid that it would count as a response.

The wobbly door came to a halt, and nothing emerged from the darkness outside. No wriggling shapes, just silence. Lumian remained motionless in his sitting position, gazing in that direction. This whole situation was incredibly bizarre. He couldn't even target an enemy if he wanted to set them on fire.

Silence took over, and time seemed to stand still. Then suddenly, a drop of liquid fell from the ceiling, landing in front of Lumian. His eyelids twitched, and under the crimson moonlight, he saw that it was bright red, resembling blood.

Drip. Drip. Blood dripped, gradually staining a large area red.

Lumian couldn't shake the unease that crept over him.

Drip!

Another droplet landed on Lumian's right cheek. It was cold, sticky, and silky. It didn't seem like human blood, but it wasn't tainted by darkness either. The pungent smell of blood filled Lumian's nostrils, making him want to roll to the side, stand up, and leap out of the window instinctively.

Don't respond. He recalled Termiboros's words once again.

Lumian took a deep breath, allowing the viscous liquid that smelled like blood to hit his face and head. Gradually, he felt his body grow heavier. He quickly examined his exposed hands.Cold, viscous blood dripped onto his hands, silently merging into one, as if encasing him in a blood-colored glove.

Lumian began to suspect that he was trapped in a mucous blood membrane, making him feel heavier and heavier. Instinctively, he

thought about reaching into his pocket to pull out Mr. K's finger. He wanted the Aurora Order Oracle, skilled in blood-related spells, to help him resist this strange mucous blood membrane.

"Don't respond." This time, the Inevitability angel's powerful voice echoed in Lumian's mind, instead of him reminding himself of Termiboros's earlier warning.

Lumian managed to regain control of himself, but he could feel his body growing heavier, and his breathing became labored. Slowly, the strange blood began to seep into his skin, as if it had a life of its own, determined to enter his body and consume him from the inside out.

As the blood infiltrated him, his thoughts grew hazy, and a surge of violent tendencies flooded his mind. The urge to kill and burn everything—this place, Trier, the entire world—overwhelmed him!

Dammit! Could Termiboros be using this opportunity to deceive me and use the strange power here to take control and escape the seal. He couldn't help but question the effectiveness of Termiboros's "don't respond" and the true intentions of the Inevitability angel.

Despite wanting to resist and break free from the burned-down building, Lumian couldn't shake the feeling that there was something mystical about the "abnormality" and the creature's persistence in knocking, talking, and asking for permission.

If he hadn't harbored those suspicions, he wouldn't have fully trusted Termiboros, an enemy rather than a friend. He wouldn't have endured until now. With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Lumian decided to hold on a little longer and observe what would happen next.

His head felt heavy, and his thoughts grew increasingly chaotic. A grinding sound rang in his ears, and his body seemed to ache from a distant pain. It was as if he was slipping into a semi-conscious state, while someone took the opportunity to dismember him, severing his limbs and tearing his body apart.

Then, suddenly, Lumian's consciousness withdrew. It was as if his spirit had separated from his body. He watched himself sitting by the

window, covered in blood, with his eyes strangely empty. In front of him squatted a charred figure, brandishing a bloodied axe and hacking at his thigh, splitting the bone in half.

Uh… Lumian slowly realized that something was amiss.

He instinctively looked down and saw that his body remained whole!

He was still sitting by the shattered window, but the scene he witnessed was no longer the crumbling charred wooden door. Instead, he saw a "reflection" of his surroundings and his own dismemberment by the burnt shadow.

Compared to his severed legs and extracted bones, the most striking aspect was his empty, lifeless eyes.

After a brief daze, the horrifying and bloody vision disappeared, and the open, dilapidated wooden door returned to his sight.

He knew it wasn't an illusion because he felt as if he had surfaced from water, and his entire body relaxed.

If I had responded, what would have happened? Would the nightmarish scenes I saw have become real? Would that response have established a mystical connection, allowing those terrifying and almost illusionary encounters to materialize? Lumian exhaled slowly, fear still lingering in his heart.

He placed his hand on his left chest, lowered his voice, and chuckled.

"Temiboros, you truly are remarkable."

Indeed, a worthy angel. Even in His sealed state, He easily discerned the essence of the abnormality.

Termiboros's voice echoed, overlapping as if from multiple sources. "The abnormality here is considered minor."

"Minor?" Lumian couldn't believe it. "If you hadn't reminded me not to respond and if I hadn't been determined enough, something terrible might have occurred. That Gardner Martin, that vile scoundrel, really wants me dead!"

Termiboros replied in a thunderous voice, “You won’t die. The abnormality will merely transform you, leading your thoughts to become fanatical about certain things while rejecting others.”

Lumian pondered the explanation, finding it a bit hard to grasp.

Just then, Termiboros added, “It’s like being conquered, both physically and mentally.”

Suddenly, realization dawned on Lumian, and he spoke quietly, “Gardner Martin wanted me to stay here overnight so he could use this anomaly to control me and eliminate any potential threats.

No wonder he came to Salle de Bal Brise so late and didn’t give me time to think!

Termiboros confirmed Lumian’s suspicion, “Have you only just realized how shallow you are?”

Lumian cursed under his breath and thought to himself, Even if he succeeds, I won’t be under Gardner Martin’s control; I’ll be manipulated by the power of this place. Isn’t he worried that something might go wrong?

The abnormality here is connected to the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Is he not concerned about that?

With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Lumian furrowed his brow and asked Termiboros, “Since I won’t be affected or altered abnormally, will Gardner Martin notice something off about me when I leave tomorrow morning?”

Termiboros’s voice boomed.

“If such a level of corruption was easily detectable, Gardner Martin and his allies would have been eliminated by the official Beyonders long ago.

“Unless the source of corruption provides direct information, they can’t tell that you’re unaffected.”

Hmm… As Lumian contemplated the situation, he suddenly realized

a hidden truth in Termiboros's words—Gardner Martin and the members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order were already corrupted!

They were under someone else's control!

Hiss… The more Lumian thought about it, the more he found it terrifying.

After a few seconds, Lumian tried to get more information from Termiboros, asking, "When I meet Gardner Martin, how should I display my fanaticism, and which beliefs should I reject?"

Termiboros surprisingly replied, "Show fanaticism towards war and chaos and reject belief in other deities."

Lumian nodded, but another concern arose. "Considering the intensity of the recent abnormality, shouldn't everyone who enters and stays here be corrupted?"

Termiboros clarified, "Only two specific pathways inevitably trigger the abnormality here. The rest require specific actions at precise times before the anomaly will occur. The officials only recognize the latter situation and secretly prevent others from entering this building at those specific times." The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"Two special pathways… Hunter and Demoness?" Lumian could roughly guess.

Termiboros didn't deny it.

As Lumian recalled the entire incident, he couldn't help but smile, saying, "Termiboros, it seems you've truly understood your situation and positioned yourself wisely."

Termiboros remained silent this time, providing no response.

In the following hours, Lumian encountered two more abnormalities. One almost broke his neck, while the other caused an explosion that sent his organs flying.

Remembering the words "don't respond," he endured the trials,

eventually returning to his unharmed body.

Finally, a tinge of reddish-gold appeared on the horizon as the sun rose. Lumian stood up, basking in the morning light for a moment before leaving 13 Avenue du Marché.

There, he saw Gardner Martin sitting in a carriage opposite. Their eyes met, and in the next moment, Gardner Martin smiled.

Lumian smiled back.

Chapter 282 - 282 Treacherous

282 Treacherous Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Gardner Martin stepped out of the carriage and warmly embraced Lumian.

Oh, his attitude changed instantly… Lumian criticized as he returned the hug. After the embrace, Gardner Martin let go and smiled, declaring, “From now on, we’re true brothers.”

True brothers? Can I inherit your estate if you die? Lumian, whose mental state had improved significantly and had successfully passed the difficult “test,” held back his teasing thoughts.

“You’re still my boss,” Lumian said, his habitual loyalty shining through in his words.

He thought that while it might have been a bit over the top, the gesture didn’t feel insincere or out of place.

Gardner Martin laughed.

“In the future, when there’s nobody else around, you can call me ‘CO Sir.’”

“CO Sir…” Lumian found the title a little strange.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order was a secret organization, not an army.

Gardner Martin didn’t offer any explanation; he just smiled.

“Come to 11 Rue des Fontaines at 8 p.m. tonight. That’s when your initiation ritual will take place.”

With that, he gave Lumian’s shoulder a reassuring pat.

“Rest well now.”

Lumian acknowledged his words with a nod and bid farewell to the boss of the Savoie Mob. He made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré and drew the curtains of Room 207.

It was already past 6 a.m., so Lumian didn’t need to catch up on sleep. He sat at the wooden table and began writing to Madam Magician. He recounted the previous night’s encounter and Termiboros’s performance. Finally, he inquired about how to report this matter to Mr. K.

Alone, Lumian couldn’t avoid the peculiar “abnormality” in the abandoned building. He needed to explain the situation convincingly to Mr. K without revealing that he possessed The Fool’s seal and an angel from the Inevitability domain.

After neatly folding the letter, Lumian set up a ritual and summoned the “doll” messenger in the light-gold dress.

The messenger lowered her head and nodded with satisfaction upon seeing the square-shaped letter.

As she levitated the letter, she warned Lumian, “Someone is still monitoring you.”

Huh? I didn’t notice it at all… His tracking, concealment, and observation skills are impressive… Lumian prided himself on being a skilled Hunter with strong anti-tracking abilities. Yet, he had failed to detect the presence of the monitors!

Mr. K’s subordinates? No, if Miss Messenger felt the need to warn me, it couldn’t be the Aurora Order… The monitors sent by Gardner Martin must still be lurking, even after passing the test and facing that abnormal corruption last night. I’ve let my guard down after being informed about my induction, and that’s made me vulnerable… Damn, how cunning! Lumian realized he had been too naive and not cautious enough compared to Gardner Martin.

If he hadn’t pretended to be exhausted from sleep deprivation and torture, drawing the curtains to sleep would’ve been an obvious red

flag. It would have definitely raised suspicion among the monitors.

At the same time, Lumian was grateful that Madam Magician's messenger seemed powerful enough not to be detected by the monitors.

After sending off the "doll" messenger, Lumian lay on the bed, waiting for a reply. When it finally arrived, he read the message carefully.

"As a secret organization with a history spanning two to three centuries, the Iron and Blood Cross Order doesn't recruit members so readily. The fact that they are allowing new members to be corrupted goes against the test I know of.

"It appears that the Iron and Blood Cross Order has undergone some negative changes over the years. Don't rush to uncover the reasons behind this just yet. Take it step by step and focus on protecting yourself for now.

"When Termiboros offered help and warned you, it was likely because He didn't want you to be corrupted or perish outright. That would have an impact on Him. At the same time, He probably wants to earn your trust before revealing His true intentions at a critical moment.

"Always remember that an evil god's angel is a true madman. He will surely bring disaster to you and those around you. Stay vigilant at all times. You must both use Him to your advantage and guard against His treachery.

"As for Mr. K, it's simple. Just explain that you recited that entity's honorific name at a crucial moment, and miraculously, you remained untainted.

"Don't worry about him verifying the authenticity of your claim with that entity. Devout believers wouldn't do such a thing. Besides, even the entity Himself might not be certain if He responded to your prayers."

Wh— Lumian felt a bit bewildered by the last part.

How could a deity not know if He had responded to a specific believer?

Isn't that too absurd?

In an instant, Lumian recalled something Madam Magician had once told him.

If he used anything other than the three-line honorific name to pray to Mr. Fool, she couldn't guarantee that the response would be from that great being. It could be very dangerous.

Something similar to this situation? Matters involving deities are truly unfathomable. And any mistake could lead to a situation more tragic than death… Could Aurore have faced the same problem? Lumian's thoughts drifted.

For the past few days, he had meticulously combed through Aurore's grimoires, copying everything from the two highlighted time periods that Madame Justice had pointed out. His plan was to show it to the vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Madam Hela, when the opportunity arose.

Franca had already read through the corresponding content and found no suspicious details. The unconventional mysticism knowledge was just ordinary spells that could only be cast by a Warlock or Beyonder of the corresponding domain. Neither of them could practice it.

The only issue they found was that since the beginning of the year, Aurore's grimoires had gained a significant amount of ritualistic knowledge related to sacrificial rituals and secret deeds. These were obtained from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, but they didn't point to any evil god or hidden existence. They were more basic applications.

A crimson flame engulfed the letter, turning it to ash in Lumian's hand.

He lay down and pretended to sleep, but his mind was busy contemplating the grimoires and planning his next steps.

The most important thing to him was that the one-month deadline set by the Prophecy Spell was approaching. Guillaume Bénet, the padre, would appear somewhere in Quartier de la Princesse Rouge.

…

In the hill district, at the entrance of Deep Valley Cloister.

Franca, dressed as a typical bounty hunter with a fake mustache and a top hat, sighed to Jenna,

“There’s really no clue at all.”

Jenna was disguised in a white shirt, brown vest, dark pants, and black boots, with a brown beret. She had altered her features slightly to look more ordinary, without any moles or smoky makeup.

As they gazed at the peculiar iron-black building with steel components and massive chimneys resembling steeples, it felt more like a special factory than the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery cloister.

At that moment, white smoke billowed from the chimneys, accompanied by a loud mechanical roar.

“It’s mainly because those monks don’t want to interact with outsiders…” Jenna replied, feeling frustrated.

For the past few days, they, like other bounty hunters and private detectives, were only allowed to enter the first-floor courtyard. They could only inquire with the new gatekeeper and a few other servants.

The ascetic monks only provided a list of relevant personnel’s statements.

Franca diverted her gaze and clicked her tongue.

“This won’t be an easy case. Otherwise, the official Beyonders would have figured it out by now.

“Since we can’t find any clues in the cloister, let’s take a look around.”

“Alright.” Jenna lacked experience in such investigations and was still learning from Franca.

They strolled around the cloister in the valley, occasionally encountering other investigators drawn by the high bounty.

After about fifteen minutes of walking, they came across a mountain wall showing signs of collapse and new trees growing.

On the side of the mountain wall, there was a cave sealed by a heavy wooden door. A man in his forties sat beside it, seeking shelter from the wind and rain.

He flipped through old newspapers with comic strips, occasionally chuckling. A brass key hung from his waist.

Franca approached and asked in a deliberate hoarse voice, “What’s this place?”

The plain-looking, slightly ragged man glanced up at Franca’s face and frowned a bit.

His gaze quickly shifted to Jenna, and he seemed more at ease.

“This is the entrance to the Deep Valley Quarry.

“I’m a gatekeeper.”

“Why is there a door, and why is it locked?” Jenna had seen a real quarry south of the market district.

“This place is abandoned and could collapse anytime. We can’t allow anyone daring enough to disturb a sleeping tiger,” the gatekeeper of the Deep Valley Quarry explained with a smile.

“Is this place not connected to Underground Trier?” Franca inquired.

The quarry’s gatekeeper shook his head.

“It’s on the verge of complete collapse. How could it be connected? I’m about to lose my job!”

With that, he looked at Jenna and tried to be friendly.

“Do you want some work? I’ll pay you to have some fun with me—just once.”

“You Trierians…” Franca tutted and shook her head.

Jenna responded with her usual catchphrase, rejecting his proposition.

…

8 p.m., 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Lumian followed Gardner Martin’s butler, Faustino, across the lawn and through the hall until they reached a windowless room.

Inside, there was a dining table, but it didn’t resemble a lavish villa restaurant. Instead, it appeared quite plain, almost empty.

Lumian glanced around and noticed three rows of dishes neatly arranged on the table. The first row held various utensils, the second row contained cups and bottles, and the third row displayed prepared dishes and unlit candles.

The setup was meticulously symmetrical, forming three parallel lines.

Chapter 283 - 283 Idea

283 Idea

Gardner Martin's butler, Faustino, didn't leave the room after guiding Lumian in. Instead, he opened his arms with a smile.

"Welcome, new brother."

You're also a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order? Lumian was taken aback at first, but then he accepted it as a matter of fact.

A butler, as the master's eyes, ears, and limbs, likely knew many of Gardner Martin's secrets. So it made sense that he either promoted Faustino to be a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order or had a member of the Order become his butler.

Lumian observed Faustino's slightly gray temples, sunken eyes, and light-blue eyes, then embraced him warmly.

"Thank you."

Faustino, dressed in his butler attire, went to the dining table and pulled out a chair at the west end, saying to Lumian, "Sit here."

Lumian nodded and settled down, feeling strangely at home.

Of course, thanks to Aurore's education, he had avoided the habit of raising his legs and crossing them at the edge of the dining table.

Faustino seated himself beside Lumian and briefly explained, "A few more brothers will come later."

Fifteen minutes later, the rest of the Iron and Blood Cross Order members arrived. Following Faustino's introductions, Lumian embraced each one.

They were:

Vincent Lorraine, representing Gardner Martin in the Rist dock operations, was under 30 years old with a typical Intis look—black hair, blue eyes, refined appearance, and slender figure. He didn't strike Lumian as a Beyonder of the Hunter pathway as he didn't differ much from ordinary white-collar workers, but that begged the question—how did he survive the vigil?

Parsifal, who helped Gardner Martin manage the depot and freight company, appeared as an average middle-aged man with slightly disheveled brown hair and amiable brown eyes when he smiled. However, his emotionless gaze gave Lumian chills, making him wary.

Not in charge of specific matters, Albus seemed to operate in the dark and had a hint of red in his hair. His sharp brown eyebrows and eyes made him rather handsome, but he had a less likable appearance.

There was also an acquaintance of Lumian's, "Blood Palm" Black of the Savoie Mob.

As the manager of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, he was dressed formally, had brown hair and blue eyes, and enjoyed a cigar with a warm smile.

Lumian had suspected that the Savoie Mob had an official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order secretly monitoring the market district and their activities. However, he hadn't expected it to be "Blood Palm" Black, who didn't stand out at all.

Lumian had initially thought it might be Baron Brignais or "Rat" Christo, but it turned out differently.

Strangely, Black bore a resemblance to Gardner Martin.

With Faustino and Lumian, there were now six members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order present.

In the past, Lumian had criticized, "Isn't it too much for a regional mob like the Savoie Mob to have five or six Beyonders?" But now, he found it unsurprising.

As a secret organization with a long history, it was normal for the Iron and Blood Cross Order to have such influence and heritage. Even its subsidiaries enjoyed abundant resources.

After exchanging pleasantries, Butler Faustino introduced the items on the table to Lumian.

“In the ensuing ritual, the goblets will be our weapons. They can also be used as cannons. Red wine will be ordinary explosives, white wine will be potent explosives, food will be the components, and knives and forks will be sharp swords…”

Lumian listened quietly, wondering if there was something odd about their thinking.

Are they too self-aware?

Or is there some mystical significance to this?

By the time Faustino finished speaking, Gardner Martin, now wearing his tailcoat and an Iron Cross medal embedded with a ruby over his chest, entered the room.

He stood on the east side of the long dining table, facing the six seated members on the west side. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

With a swoosh, the five members, excluding Lumian, stood up in unison.

Oh… Lumian inwardly sighed as he rose to his feet.

“Good evening, CO Sir.” Faustino, Black, and the others greeted him in unison. Lumian was slightly slower to respond.

Gardner Martin motioned for everyone to take their seats and smiled.

“We’ll officially begin the ritual when the Supervisor arrives.

“Ciel, let me tell you what the core you’re about to join represents.”

Gardner Martin locked eyes with Lumian, his tone growing more serious.

“We are all members of a secretive organization with a history spanning centuries.

“It’s known as the Iron and Blood Cross Order.”

Lumian didn’t show any intentional surprise or dismay. After all, the name sounded rather ordinary.

Albus, the young man with dark-red hair sitting at the edge of the dining table, seemed about to speak, but Gardner Martin shot him a stern look.

The Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order turned his attention back to Lumian.

“Nearly 300 years ago, a few influential figures established the Iron and Blood Cross Order. They believed that deities were merely powerful Beyonders, and no matter how you look at it, even the weakest Beyonder is fundamentally different from ordinary people.

“Our philosophy is that regardless of how one obtains Beyonder powers, they should be recognized and treated with a status above ordinary people. However, the two Churches and the government only acknowledge the Beyonders they nurture. They also insist that supernatural powers should be concealed from ordinary folks as much as possible.

“This goes against nature and the course of history. We must change it.

“This also means we have to oppose the government and the two Churches, but there’s no need to fear. We possess sufficient strength and true demigods.

“In the future, if the two Churches are willing to accept wild Beyonders and acknowledge their statuses, we might consider cooperating with them.”

In other words, the ultimate goal is to overthrow the government and establish a country where Beyonders hold positions at all levels? Lumian interpreted Gardner Martin’s words from his own perspective.

Gardner Martin glanced at the six members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order seated opposite him and smiled once more.

“Our Iron and Blood Cross Order’s strength is mainly concentrated in Intis, with over a third of our members based in Trier. As you can see, we have many powerful brothers in the market district alone, and even more Beyonders under our control.

“I am the CO, or Commanding Officer, responsible for leading you and handling various matters in the market district. Above me are several branch presidents, also referred to as ‘Deputy Brigade Commanders.’ Each of them is a true and powerful demigod.

“Above the branch presidents is our Iron and Blood Cross Order’s president, also known as the Brigade Commander. He is a mysterious and formidable figure.

“Below me are NCOs. When we have more than ten brothers in the market district, I’ll appoint two NCOs to assist me in management. NCOs receive additional resources and support.”

Is this some kind of military game? Lumian guessed from the titles of the different levels within the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Gardner Martin turned his gaze to the door and spoke, “Apart from that, we also have many Supervisors. Each Supervisor acts independently and patrols the areas under the jurisdiction of different commanding officers.

“In the future, if anything happens to me and I exhibit any abnormalities, you must find the Supervisor immediately and report the situation to him. Similarly, if you discover that the Supervisor has done something abnormal, inform me immediately.”

Gardner Martin grinned playfully at Lumian and said, “Ciel, let me introduce you to Olson, the Supervisor in charge of the market district.”

Perplexed, Lumian followed Gardner Martin’s finger and looked at the door.

In the next moment, a tall, thin man in a blue vest and black suit

entered the room.

The man had short auburn hair, reddish-brown eyes, thick eyebrows, and a wild beard. He resembled a famished bear.

As Lumian recognized Supervisor Olson, his pupils widened.

It was the trader he, Christo, and Simon had encountered underground!

Lumian vividly remembered that he had been nothing but a head and a blood-stained spine. He had been pursued by another headless monster, both of which were extremely dangerous. Yet, here he was, underground and appearing at Gardner Martin's house!

Lumian couldn't help but glance at Olson's hands, noticing his fair skin and the small suitcase he carried.

He has a body again? Has he merged with the headless monster? Lumian's mind raced as he observed Olson approaching Gardner Martin.

He began to suspect that the two monsters they had encountered during the transaction were illusions created by Olson. There was nothing abnormal about him.

Since the transaction had been a test, it wasn't surprising that the monster had been fake.

But was it not too realistic? Lumian watched with suspicion as Gardner Martin and Olson each took a goblet and addressed everyone present, "Load the explosives!"

Albus, Parsifal, and the other members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order placed a goblet in front of them and poured alluring red wine into them.

So this is how you load explosives? Lumian recalled Faustino's words about goblets being weapons or cannons, and wine being explosives.

After filling the "cannons" with "explosives," Gardner Martin called out, "Attention!

“Port arms!”

In an instant, everyone stood up and placed their right hands on the goblets filled with red wine.

“Present arms!” Gardner Martin gave another command.

In unison, he raised the goblet to his chest.

Lumian marveled and followed suit, imitating the actions of the other members around him.

Chapter 284 - 284 Entering the Order

284 Entering the Order

Gardner Martin observed the Iron and Blood Cross Order members opposite him and nodded with satisfaction.

“Aim!”

At this command, Faustino and the others raised their goblets to their lips.

Is this what aiming means? Lumian almost laughed, but the seriousness of the other Iron and Blood Cross Order members stopped him.

He had grasped the essence of the ritual and had an idea of what would happen next.

Just then, Gardner Martin issued a new order.

“Fire!”

Almost simultaneously, Parsifal, Black, and the others downed a third of the red wine in their goblets.

“Fire!”

Gardner Martin called out the word again.

Lumian lifted his head slightly and downed another third of the red wine.

Gardner Martin followed suit.

He then continued, “Attack!”

The Iron and Blood Cross Order members present finished the remaining red wine.

Gardner Martin removed the goblet from his mouth with a serious expression.

“Ground arms!”

As he spoke, he raised the goblet above his eyes, pressed it against his forehead, and then placed it back on the dining table.

Vincent Lorraine and the others followed suit.

Then, they straightened their backs, slapped their left chests with their right hands, and shouted together, “War! War! War!”

As they shouted in unison, Lumian felt a subtle shift in the room’s atmosphere, as if it had been filled with enthusiasm, excitement, and passion.

The atmosphere infected the Iron and Blood Cross Order members, connecting their hearts and minds, making them feel like true brothers.

Even without being influenced by any abnormality or fanatical thoughts, Lumian couldn’t help but be affected by the environment and atmosphere. He felt a surge of excitement[1].

He had previously criticized the initiation ritual of the Iron and Blood Cross Order for lacking mystique and not living up to the title of a secret organization. Now, he realized that it was merely different in quality from the Aurora Order.

Besides, the more mystical part was the vigil at 13 Avenue du Marché.

Gardner Martin gestured with his right hand, prompting Faustino, Albus, and the others to stop and fall silent.

He smiled once again and said, “Let us welcome our new brother,

Lumian Lee!”

This time, he used Lumian’s real name, indicating that the Iron and Blood Cross Order knew the members’ situations very well.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order members, including Supervisor Olson, applauded one after another. Lumian stood up and poured himself a goblet of red wine, which he downed in one gulp as a sign of respect.

This fully showcased his characteristics as a regular customer of Ol’ Tavern.

“Very good. We’re all brothers. There’s no need to stand on ceremony,” Gardner said as he took a seat. While Faustino distributed plates and cut bread, Gardner smiled and continued, “I’ve already explained the history and philosophy of our Iron and Blood Cross Order. Now, let’s talk about what we want to do.”

His smile vanished as he grew more serious.

“The most important thing we’ve always been working towards is to overthrow the current government, establish a country ruled by Beyonders, and transform this world. For this, we’ve been plotting and experimenting. We’ve established multiple branch organizations to prepare for chaos.

“Specifically, as for me, I’ll use companies and mobs to control dockworkers, construction workers, porters, handymen, and laborers in the market district. When necessary, I’ll let them take to the streets and use barricades to fight the police and army.”

Lumian furrowed his brow and asked in confusion, “Isn’t it said that Beyonders are fundamentally different from ordinary people? Beyonders are superior to ordinary people. Why make controlling and using workers a goal?”

He found it ironic that the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s philosophy and actions were completely inconsistent.

Although this could be considered normal—concepts were concepts and slogans were slogans—and they couldn’t be equated to reality,

Gardner Martin could always address these matters at a later time. It didn't feel right for his words to contradict himself just seconds later.

If he hadn't just joined this secret organization, Lumian's tone would have been even more mocking.

Gardner Martin grinned.

"Very perceptive. You've noticed a very important problem.

"Before this, only Albus suggested it. Everyone else naturally accepted it."

Not only is he using ordinary people to create chaos, but he also has other intentions? Lumian turned his head to glance at Albus, who was sitting at the edge of the dining table. He realized that the dark-red-haired young man's posture was rather casual. His right leg was crossed, and he kept shaking his ankle.

Gardner Martin explained simply, "First, you need to understand something. Why did those deities establish Churches and spread Their teachings?

"You probably don't buy the words 'God loves the world.' If They truly had love, the market district wouldn't be like this, and Intis wouldn't have so many tramps."

Lumian agreed with this. He nodded slightly and didn't interrupt the Commanding Officer.

Gardner Martin smiled and said, "We reckon that deities require believers, and we've proven this over the centuries.

"The more common folk we influence, the greater our resources to strike fear into the hearts of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. This'll weaken their support for the current government and boost our chances during the riots.

"Eventually, it'll become a crucial bargaining chip to make them agree to us, if not outright support us."

“They’re all just bargaining chips…” Lumian’s eyes flickered.

The people he knew and interacted with were distinct individuals—unique families.

Gardner Martin let out a sigh.

“If we aim to control more workers and citizens, we need the government and the National Convention to cooperate with us.

“I’ve always known what kind of person Hugues Artois is and the forces behind him, but I still decided to support his bid for parliament. I knew he’d inevitably create plenty of chaos in the market district. Being associated with the National Convention and the government, the worse he performed, the more people would flock to our side. Unfortunately, this piece of trash was assassinated just a few days after being elected.”

So, that’s why the Savoie Mob supports Hugues Artois… I thought there was an evil god backing you, and the evil gods all support Hugues Artois… Lumian realized.

Without Gardner Martin’s personal explanation and a proper understanding of the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s philosophy, Lumian couldn’t possibly fathom the secret organization’s true intentions behind supporting Hugues Artois’s candidacy for parliament.

Gardner Martin summarized, “Hence, in the market district, we place great importance on docks, depots, warehouses, freight companies, and construction firms. The Savoie Mob’s purpose is to interact with various individuals and gather crucial information, all while contributing to the organization’s funds.

“Naturally, mobs also serve as a vital tool to control ordinary people.”

No wonder he poured so many resources into the Savoie Mob… Lumian glanced at the intense “Blood Glove” Black and inwardly mocked him for being better at acting than himself.

Haven’t you heard the Boss’s words countless times? Why are you

still looking so focused?

Look at Albus, constantly eating, drinking, and shaking his leg.

After Lumian nodded, Gardner Martin took a sip of red wine and said, “One more thing we’re doing is exploring the underground to find the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier.”

Lumian couldn’t help but glance at the silent Supervisor Olson.

The lanky man, looking like a hungry bear, was slicing a medium-rare steak and devouring the juicy meat.

Lumian’s eyes scanned Olson’s neck several times, but there were no signs of sutures.

Could it be that the state of having only his head and spine is just an illusion created by some power? Lumian wondered to himself.

However, this was in line with the legend of Bansy Harbor!

Either Olson has a deep understanding of the unforeseen events in Bansy Harbor, or he encountered similar monsters elsewhere…

Even if it’s an illusion, it can’t be something he imagined. It must be based on his experience and knowledge…

Madam Magician said most of his words were likely true. She even suspected that he disappeared for a few months because he entered Fourth Epoch Trier…

Where did he encounter a monster with only its head and spine?

If he already entered Fourth Epoch Trier, why is Gardner Martin still searching for the entrance? Is Madam Magician’s suspicion off? Lumian’s thoughts raced as he made a series of guesses.

Looking at Gardner Martin, he asked in confusion, “Why search for Fourth Epoch Trier’s entrance?”

Gardner Martin grinned.

“To other Beyonders, it’s hell, an abyss. It’s a calamity they can’t approach, but to Hunters, it represents a massive treasure trove.

“And our Iron and Blood Cross Order is dominated by Beyonders of the Hunter pathway.”

“A treasure trove?” Lumian thought of the Tree of Shadow and the invisible sea of flames that could incinerate a portion of the tree roots.

Gardner Martin continued, speaking solemnly, “I don’t know how much you know about the history of the Fourth Epoch, but I can tell you that in that era, deities once walked the earth, and angels often appeared. It was known as the Age of the Gods.

“In the Northern Continent, there were three powerful countries during the Age of the Gods, and one of them was the Tudor Empire. Its capital, Trier, had sunk underground.

“The Tudor Empire’s Emperor, Alista Tudor, was known as the Blood Emperor. He was a true deity who controlled the Hunter pathway! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“He perished in a battle of gods. His remains are in Fourth Epoch Trier!”

Blood Emperor Tudor’s remains? Lumian instantly recalled some of the contents of Aurore’s grimoires. Aurore didn’t delve deeply into the history of the Fourth Epoch, only having a rough understanding. She mentioned the Solomon Empire, the Trunsoest Empire, and the Tudor Empire. She also mentioned titles like the Blood Emperor, the Night Emperor, the Emperor of the Underworld, the Black Emperor, and the War of the Four Emperors.

According to Aurore’s description, the Blood Emperor was as powerful as a deity.

[1] Adapted from a ritual conducted by the Les Neuf S?urs.

Chapter 285 - 285 Maxim

285 Maxim

The Blood Emperor's remains, the remains of a deity… Does it hold the Beyonder characteristic of Sequence 0? No wonder the Iron and Blood Cross Order dreams of entering Fourth Epoch Trier…

But what's this got to do with me? As a Sequence 7, I don't even dare think about becoming a demigod. Advancing to a Sequence 6 Conspirer is beyond my consideration for now. All I can focus on is digesting the Pyromaniac potion. I've got nothing better to do than contemplate High-Sequences or deity-related items!

Besides, Madam Magician warned that such items always come with negative effects. Tsk, negative effects involving godhood can easily kill me…

Lumian, with vast knowledge of high-end mysticism, remained unfazed by Gardner Martin's provocation. Thoughts raced through his mind, and he sneered inwardly.

Looking at Gardner Martin, he asked innocently, "If Fourth Epoch Trier truly contains the remains of The Blood Emperor Tudor, why didn't the Eternal Blazing Sun and God of Steam and Machinery Church take it away instead of leaving it for our Iron and Blood Cross Order?

"Even if only Hunters can enter safely, it's just a matter of time before they nurture a High-Sequence Hunter with the resources they have. The Fifth Epoch has been around for over 1,300 years."

Gardner Martin fell silent for two seconds before responding, "There are other factors restraining them, but they won't be a problem for us.

“I’ll tell you all the details once we find the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier.”

Isn’t that just saying, “I don’t know why, but we have to give it a try?” Uh, maybe the Boss knows the reason, but he’s afraid of scaring us if he reveals it. He can’t directly tell the present members that there are many dangers hidden underground that even deities can’t resolve—the kind that requires rebuilding a Trier above the Fourth Epoch ruins as a seal. That’s why the two Churches won’t attempt to enter. Heh heh, who would dare to go underground when they’re not seriously corrupted? Lumian tried his best to control his gaze and posture, so as not to show any air of superiority.

Compared to the members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order here, him having a rough understanding of the underground situation and having seen the Invisible Sea of Fire, the Tree of Shadow, and the bizarre catacombs indeed made him qualified to be superior.

Of course, he had no idea how well Commanding Officer Gardner Martin and Supervisor Olson knew about the underground situation.

Perhaps the latter, suspected to have entered Fourth Epoch Trier, knew more secrets.

Gardner Martin didn’t continue discussing the Blood Emperor and the Fourth Epoch. Instead, he turned to Lumian and asked, “Is there anything you need these days?”

Oh, are you about to hand out the membership perks? Lumian’s spirits lifted as he replied with sincerity, “I’m in need of a mystical item with peculiar properties to compensate for my deficiencies in Beyonder powers.

“And if there are no relevant mystical items available, perhaps you could provide me with the corresponding Beyonder… ingredients. I’ll try to find an Artisan to craft them.”

He had almost mentioned the term “Beyonder characteristics” but quickly changed it to “Beyonder ingredients” after a pause, feigning embarrassment.

Though people often spoke of Beyonder characteristics at Trier's mysticism gathering, they usually referred to the fusion of two main potion ingredients.

Of course, some people had long discovered that Beyonders were also Beyonder creatures, capable of producing ingredients for potion concoction, hinting at the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility.

Typically, Lumian's mention of Beyonder characteristics wouldn't attract suspicion or attention, but he needed to be cautious not to arouse suspicion from a Conspirer like Gardner Martin.

"Heh, you really dare to ask?" Albus mocked Lumian, shaking his feet with crossed legs.

Even Parsifal, Vincent Lorraine, and the others wore strange expressions.

None of them had dared to make such a bold request when they joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Undeterred, Lumian sneered back at Albus, "Why not? I'm not like some piece of trash who can't handle a reward. What the organization gives me today, I'll repay tenfold in the future!"

With a whoosh, Albus lowered his right leg and glared at Lumian with fiery intensity, clearly displeased with his response.

The others, except for Faustino who maintained his butler demeanor, also showed discontent.

Lumian's snide remark had included them as well.

"Enough," Gardner Martin intervened, smiling at Lumian. "As the Commanding Officer, I must be fair. I can't grant you a mystical item right now, as others will protest. But don't worry; our Iron and Blood Cross Order is not stingy. Once you complete a few missions and accumulate enough merit, I'll provide you with a few mystical items to choose from.

"Meanwhile, before each mission, suitable mystical items will be

temporarily provided to the participating members, ensuring their safety and mission completion."

Lumian nodded, accepting the response. He hadn't expected much, but he still made the request in case Gardner Martin was in a generous mood.

After a brief consideration, Gardner Martin added, "I'll inform René that the advance you received was my reward to you. You'll still get your share from Salle de Bal Brise in the future."

"Thank you, CO Sir," Lumian expressed his joy openly.

This meant his membership door gift was 12,000 verl d'or, a significant sum.

Hence, most of the money he spent on advancing to Pyromaniac came from the Aurora Order and the Iron and Blood Cross Order's "financing." His gratitude was genuine, as he had only contributed less than a third of the expenses himself.

Gardner Martin cut into a medium steak, chewing and swallowing before asking, "Any other questions?"

Deliberately, Lumian inquired, "How can I quickly master the Pyromaniac potion?"

He wanted to see if the acting method was common knowledge within the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Gardner Martin chuckled and replied, "That's an excellent question.

"To master a potion, you need to start with its name. Get close to it, understand it, and embody it. In addition, I have to tell you a maxim: flames can both incinerate others and harm yourself." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian listened attentively and got a rough idea of the situation.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order kept the precise interpretation of the acting method hidden from ordinary members, using vague descriptions, regulations, warnings, and maxims to guide them

without revealing everything.

This approach allowed ordinary members to avoid certain risks while gradually gaining insights by sticking close to the potion's name. They could speed up their progress but couldn't fully grasp a more suitable acting principle for themselves,

In other words, it was easier for them to "master" the potion than wild Beyonders and advance in shorter periods. However, other than the talented, those who stuck close to the acting requirements couldn't compare to Beyonders who knew the acting method.

Lumian suspected that he would only learn the entire acting method once he became an NCO and received greater attention from the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

He believed that such a secretive organization spanning centuries must possess the acting method.

In contrast, Madam Magician of the Tarot Club had already given him extensive high-end mysticism knowledge, including the acting method.

As for Mr. K, Lumian was unsure if he had forgotten to teach the method due to devotion to his prayers and work or if he believed Lumian would naturally encounter it at the Iron and Blood Cross Order and exposing him to this knowledge too early would put him at risk of exposure.

"Pyromaniac is all about setting fires! Just go to the National Convention building and set it ablaze. You'll master the potion in no time," Albus taunted Lumian, pushing the matter.

Lumian scoffed and replied, "I'm a Pyromaniac, not an Arsonist. Meaningless acts of arson will only harm myself."

Albus sneered, "How do you know it's meaningless? Burning is the meaning."

Lumian clicked his tongue.

"Then why don't I burn your hair too?"

After engaging each other for a while in an argumentative manner, Gardner Martin intervened in the conversation, which was becoming increasingly meaningless and close to a personal attack.

Lumian shifted the conversation to probe the Iron and Blood Cross Order's knowledge of the underground.

"I went to the catacombs some time ago and sensed something amiss, but I couldn't figure out what it was. CO Sir, do you know anything about it?"

Gardner Martin glanced at Supervisor Olson beside him and finally replied, "That has nothing to do with our actions. You don't need to know.

"All I can say is that the danger lurking there is as serious as that in the Fourth Epoch Trier."

Lumian nodded thoughtfully and continued asking questions while enjoying the delicacies.

During the process, he noticed that Vincent Lorraine remained relatively quiet, and Parsifal and "Blood Palm" Black were amiable but guarded with their words, revealing little valuable information. Faustino seemed to play the role of a butler instead of the secret organization's official member.

Only the dark-red-haired Albus, despite his malicious and mocking comments, gave Lumian some useful insights.

By 10 p.m., the initiation concluded, and Lumian was the last to leave 11 Rue des Fontaines, boarding the carriage belonging to Salle de Bal Brise.

As the carriage moved, Lumian's heart skipped a beat as he looked up at the seat opposite him. At some point in time, another person had joined him—Supervisor Olson, who looked like a hungry bear.

The trader who played the underground monster!

Chapter 286 - 286 Magic Mirror Divination

286 Magic Mirror Divination

Ignoring Lumian's tense state, Olson spoke in a deep, raspy voice, "As per tradition, I must speak to you in private as Supervisor."

Lumian let out a relieved breath. "About what?"

Olson placed the brown suitcase beside his left leg.

"If you discover anything suspicious about your Commanding Officer, Gardner Martin, or any abnormal occurrences, report them to me immediately."

That's only right. A spot will be vacated only if something happens to the Boss… Lumian thought silently with a hint of mockery before asking, "How do I contact you?"

Olson looked into Lumian's eyes and said, "Leave the information in the basement of 13 Avenue du Marché."

13 Avenue du Marché… The Iron and Blood Cross Order is indeed linked to the burned-down building… Olson might have entered Fourth Epoch Trier and is likely seriously corrupted. Does he have a way to exploit the anomaly at 13 Avenue du Marché? Lumian recalled the previous night and felt that Supervisor Olson was even more mysterious than Commanding Officer Gardner Martin.

He suspected that Olson was secretly monitoring his movements at 13 Avenue du Marché. Gardner Martin was clearly unwilling to enter unless necessary.

Combined with the burning of 13 Avenue du Marché over a decade

ago, Mr. K had mentioned that the Iron and Blood Cross Order had drifted from the other organizations that believed in that entity in recent years. Madam Magician had mentioned that the current vigil ritual wasn't the Iron and Blood Cross Order's usual test. Lumian vaguely formulated an incomplete sequence of events in his mind.

He believed that 13 Avenue du Marché hadn't been burned down by the Iron and Blood Cross Order. However, they had subsequently discovered the secret there and suffered the corresponding corruption, evoking an abnormality.

Of course, it could be the other way around: perhaps some members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order had been corrupted elsewhere, allowing them to grasp the anomaly at 13 Avenue du Marché.

"Alright." Lumian nodded in agreement.

As Lumian's mind raced with questions, he turned to Supervisor Olson, a look of puzzlement on his face.

"Was the trader I saw in the Albert Mines really you? Can your head leave your body and survive autonomously? Or was that an illusion you created?"

Olson let out a husky chuckle before responding, "Coincidentally, as Supervisor, I have three things to tell you. Firstly, what the eyes see may not be true. Secondly, we will eventually enter the Fourth Epoch's Trier. It is an inevitability. And thirdly, don't readily trust in the words of others."

Don't readily trust in the words of others… Interesting. Should I believe your first point? What I saw in the Albert Mines was actually real? Heh heh, it's fine to talk about inevitability in front of me, but will Termiboros tolerate it? Lumian pondered, resisting the urge to place his right hand on his left chest.

Seeing Olson pick up the small brown suitcase again, Lumian couldn't help but ask,

"What's in there? Why do you keep carrying it?"

Olson smiled.

“If I were you, I’d pray I never find out the answer.”

With that, Supervisor Olson opened the carriage door and leaped into the darkness, disappearing instantly, without intentionally concealing himself as he had done when he first arrived.

“Acting all mysterious…” Lumian muttered under his breath.

Taking the carriage back to the bustling market district, he resisted the urge to hurry to Auberge du Coq Doré or the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches to contact Madam Magician’s messenger and report his official admission into the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Instead, he made his way to Salle de Bal Brise.

His concern grew as he suspected that the treacherous members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order might be taking advantage of his relaxed state to continue their final, clandestine surveillance.

Although they couldn’t locate Madam Magician’s messenger, Lumian knew better than to return to Room 207 or the safe house at this time; it would surely raise suspicions.

Taking a seat at the bar counter, Lumian ordered a glass of Kirsch. As he savored the drink, he immersed himself in the lively song and dance happening on the stage.

Jenna had the night off, and the performers tonight were two other Showy Divas and a male underground singer known for his high-energy songs.

…

Hill District, outside the Deep Valley Cloister.

Wearing a silver-white half-mask, Jenna regarded Franca, who had donned an assassin’s outfit, with concern.

“What are we going to do tonight?

“Don’t tell me you’re thinking of infiltrating the cloister for an investigation?”

“Of course not!” Franca denied vehemently. “The Deep Valley Cloister is one of the most well-known cloisters of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. They have powerful Beyonders and hide mysterious artifacts crafted by Artisan monks. With our abilities, we’d only be walking into a trap… or worse.”

Franca couldn’t help her mind from wandering.

She had heard rumors that though the monks in the cloister were focused on steam and machinery and didn’t marry or have children, it didn’t mean they refrained from sex with others.

The Church of the God of Steam and Machinery didn’t prohibit such interactions!

Some said that some monks would seek out street girls from time to time to relax, while others engaged in affairs with colleagues or men who sold their bodies.

There were still a large number of people who had mechanical fetishes or were truly undergoing ascetic training, capable of controlling themselves.

Of course, Trieriens tended to exaggerate and embellish these rumors with their own ideas. It likely strayed far from the truth. Franca didn’t entirely believe it, but she couldn’t dismiss it entirely either.

She believed that some monks might have such inclinations, but they were likely not the majority. Nonetheless, infiltrating a cloister as a wild Beyonder was dangerous. They could be accidentally killed by machinery, used as experimental subjects, or become playthings for a select few monks. The chances of success were slim.

In short, whether male or female, anyone below Sequence 4 or lacking enough confidence ought to forget about infiltrating the Deep Valley Cloister.

Behind her hood, Franca smiled and explained in a good mood, “We scoured the area today, but found no clues. But there’s one place we haven’t checked.”

Jenna thought for a moment and asked, “That Deep Valley Quarry?”

“That’s right,” Franca affirmed with a grin. “Tonight, we’ll infiltrate it and conduct a search.”

In truth, she didn’t expect they would find anything since the official Beyonders had likely completed their investigations. Franca wanted to guide Jenna through the process and acquaint her with such matters.

“Okay.” Jenna nodded slightly.

Franca saw this as an opportunity to instruct her, “Before we officially infiltrate, there’s some preparatory work we must do.”

“For Assassins, it’s about familiarizing themselves with the environment, gathering information, and observing locations and routes. As for Witches, they must perform divinations beforehand.”

With that, Franca took out a palm-sized mirror she always carried.

Jenna immediately focused.

She had long been intrigued by mirror-related Witch abilities.

Previously, after she assassinated Hugues Artois and fled to Auberge du Coq Doré, Franca heard that she had left blood at the scene. Franca had swiftly used Mirror Substitution to sever the mystical connection between Jenna’s true self and the spilled blood.

Franca surveyed the area and spoke in hushed tones under the cover of evening shadows.

“When you become a Witch, you’ll naturally master Magic Mirror Divination and Staff Divination. Learning other divination methods is easy for Witches.

“The key to successful Magic Mirror Divination is choosing the right entity to pray to. The mystical symbol of the mirror connects you to an unknown being, and their answers can be obtained through this connection. However, if the unknown entity holds malice or is in a state of madness, they may influence the divination or provide a result that traps you, putting you in danger.

“When the time comes, I’ll give you a few relatively safe entities to pray to. These have been verified. Among them, the one with the most accurate divination results will require you to pay a corresponding price. Unless the matter is extremely critical and urgent, I usually avoid praying to him.”

“What price?” Jenna’s curiosity was piqued.

Franca cleared her throat awkwardly and said, “The price could lead to you experiencing social embarrassment or something not as severe, but it will certainly be uncomfortable.”

She recalled the first time she prayed to that entity for Magic Mirror Divination. In front of Madam Judgment, she was asked, “When you’re masturbating, do you occasionally fantasize about certain men and feel tempted to try new experiences?”

That question almost made her shatter the intermediary mirror. At the time, she had recently become a Witch and still identified fully as a man, even though her body had already transformed into a woman’s. It was natural that she would occasionally fantasize, but this revelation made her feel guilty and ashamed. Yet, she was forced to answer honestly in front of a demigod.

Even now, Franca couldn’t help but cringe at the memory, wanting to bury her head in the sand and avoid any recollection. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

What was social death? This was it!

Franca believed that this incident had affected her when she subsequently approached Gardner Martin to give it a shot. This caused a crack in her psychological defense and make her give up on herself.

Embarrassment… Social death… Jenna understood the implication behind Franca’s words. Though Jenna had her thoughts, she chose not to voice them aloud.

Franca provided a brief explanation of Magic Mirror Divination, concluding with a demonstration. She gently caressed the surface of

the mirror and recited the name of a safe entity.

As an aqueous light shimmered in the mirror, she posed a serious question, “Will exploring Trier’s Deep Valley Quarry tonight be dangerous?”

Since it was a question-based divination, the requirements for the statements weren’t too stringent.

Under Jenna’s curious and hopeful gaze, a deep, old voice emanated from the mirror, as if it had emerged from the depths of a river. “There is a certain level of danger.”

Chapter 287 - 287 Key

287 Key

Franca finished the Magic Mirror Divination and then turned to Jenna, giving her interpretation of the answer.

“Normally, this means it’s dangerous, but we can handle it. If we’re careful, we should be fine.”

Jenna asked in surprise, “I thought the divination results would be straightforward.”

Surprisingly, such a brief sentence came with such a long explanation.

“It’s straightforward!” Franca emphasized with a smile. “If you visit the Divination Club in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative and find amateurs, their readings will be even vaguer. It makes it easier for them to interpret any result. Oh, have you never had anyone do divination for you before?”

Jenna nodded frankly.

Performing a divination cost a fortune!

Franca looked thoughtful, her eyes darting around.

“You can subscribe to Psychic, Lotus, Arcane, and Hidden Veil. While they have their problems and errors in specific applications, they offer valuable basic knowledge about mysticism.

“Ah, right. Ciel often buys those magazines. You can… Uh, I’ll help you borrow them!”

“Alright.” Jenna had only heard of mysticism magazines but had never bought one.

Having obtained satisfactory divination results, the duo, who had observed the route and surroundings during the day, swiftly arrived at the entrance of Deep Valley Quarry under the cover of the night.

The gatekeeper, who seemed to be in his forties, was sleeping in a small hut made of rocks. Wrapped in a dirty, old, and thin felt cloth, he leaned against the mountain wall.

Suddenly, a slender, smooth palm reached out from the shadow beside him, covering his mouth with a white handkerchief.

The gatekeeper didn't struggle. Within seconds, he went from slumbering to unconsciousness.

Franca, wearing a black hood, emerged from the shadows and clicked her tongue, sighing.

"The Bliss Society's sedative is really effective. It saves me a lot of trouble."

For this operation, she had borrowed Rentas's sedative from Lumian.

Jenna couldn't understand. "Couldn't we just knock him out?"

"That would work," Franca explained casually, "but that would leave traces. It won't be easy to make it seem like he's still asleep. Many bounty hunters and private detectives are involved in this mission. We shouldn't be the only ones targeting this quarry. So, it's better to be cautious and avoid leaving any loose ends."

Jenna, who had lived in Quartier du Jardin Botanique and the market district for many years, roughly understood Franca's point. She pondered for a moment and asked, "Are you worried that the bounty hunters and private detectives will have ill intentions if they find us entering the quarry ahead of them in the dead of night?"

Franca nodded, satisfied with her response.

"That's right. Many bounty hunters and private detectives switch to becoming bandits, robbers, and even murderers, depending on the situation and their surroundings.

“They take risks for money, not for justice. Since there are no leads for this mission and the current environment is suitable, it’s in line with their style to steal from their peers and eliminate competition. After all, there’s no one else here.

“Of course, with our strength, we don’t have to fear bounty hunters and private detectives. But what if we make a similar mistake in another situation or face something more dangerous? That’s why we have to be mindful from the beginning.”

What Franca didn’t say was that, being women, they might likely suffer more.

Jenna nodded slowly, agreeing with the reasoning.

She had seen criminals kill an old man living alone for just 5 verl d’or.

Franca smiled and teased, “Did you want me to knock him out to get back at him for asking if you wanted to join the street girl business this morning?”

“Dammit! Am I such a petty person?” Jenna couldn’t help but curse.

Whether it was during her years helping her mother with chores or when she was a local singer in the market district, she had been asked if she wanted to be involved in the street girl business so many times that she was used to it. She was a little angry, but not too much.

To show her magnanimity, Jenna exhaled and said, “When you use that sedative on others, it reminds me of what happened to me.”

She had also been drugged and nearly became a victim that disappeared. Fortunately, she had encountered Lumian.

Franca simply acknowledged her words.

“I understand your feelings, but since you’ve embarked on the path of the divine and intend to become stronger, you’ll have to use various means to deal with your enemies in the future. You can’t give up on a better option just because you feel a little repulsed.”

Jenna knew Franca had a point, but she couldn't help asking, "Can't a Beyonder lead a quiet, ordinary life without being drawn into conflicts and battles while protecting loved ones?"

"In the past, maybe it was feasible, but nowadays it's exceedingly challenging. The more you advance, the harder it gets until it's virtually impossible," Franca replied with a sigh.

Jenna fell silent for a moment before saying, "Could it ever be possible in the distant future, I wonder?"

Franca glanced at the "slumbering" gatekeeper and answered, "That prominent figure once told me that such a life might be attainable at the end of the Fifth Epoch and the beginning of the Sixth Epoch, if there's even a Sixth Epoch at all."

Sixth Epoch… Those words made Jenna reflect for a few seconds before she burst into laughter at herself.

"I guess it's just wishful thinking on my part. Achieving that kind of life is simply an illusion. At least, it is for me. With superpowers and a history of attempted assassination, I know I'd be unable to stand idly by if my family and friends faced hardship. I'd feel compelled to use my abilities to tackle problems that go beyond what the law and police can handle."

Franca nodded in agreement. "That's just the way it is."

She hadn't simply digested the Assassin and Instigator potions hoping her attire alone would do the trick, nor had she only encouraged her friends by instigating them.

Without much ado, Franca bent down and picked up the brass key from the gatekeeper.

"There's just one door. Why are there so many keys? Are they all for his house?" Franca muttered as she exited the hut and walked toward the entrance of Deep Valley Quarry. She tried each key, one after the other.

In the end, she muttered to herself in shock and suspicion, "None of it is right…"

“None of them are right?” Jenna hadn’t expected such a possibility.

If not a single key could unlock the entrance to Deep Valley Quarry, what was the point of watching the door?

Franca said, partly instructing and partly thinking aloud, “Perhaps this set of keys is a decoy. The real key must be hidden somewhere else.”

She then said to Jenna, “Search the area. I’ll take a look at the gatekeeper.”

Jenna didn’t object. With her Night Vision, she began searching the nearby bushes and crevices starting from the hut.

Franca squatted beside the gatekeeper and meticulously searched his body from head to toe.

When she reached his crotch, she bent her finger and flicked it firmly. She sneered and whispered, “Jenna may not be petty, but I am!”

After their search, the two of them met at the heavy wooden door, shaking their heads to signal they had found nothing.

Franca clicked her tongue and said, “There’s definitely something wrong with this quarry.

“That guy is truly a gatekeeper. He’s only meant to watch the door but lacks the ability to open it!”

“Are we still going in?” Jenna asked hesitantly.

“I’ll give it another shot.” Franca extended her right hand to the copper lock embedded in the heavy wooden door.

Thick frost emerged from her palm, filling the keyhole.

The frost continued to accumulate and compress until it finally solidified into ice. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Franca skillfully extracted the ice block, revealing a transparent key.

That works? Jenna was surprised and eager to see what happened next.

Sensing her gaze, Franca said smugly, “I have a friend, you see—I really have a friend—one who’s quite skilled at picking locks. We had a conversation about using a Witch’s power for such purposes.”

Once she made the ice more solid, Franca inserted it into the keyhole again and twisted it gently.

With a click, the heavy wooden door swung open.

Franca retracted the ice key and allowed it to melt, erasing all traces.

Before venturing into Deep Valley Quarry, the Witch hung the brass key back on the gatekeeper’s waist and adjusted his posture to make him appear asleep.

With that done, Franca fetched a pouch of coins and took out a thick iron-colored ring adorned with tiny spikes.

“This is the Ring of Punishment I mentioned before. You’ll wear it today. I’ve already explained how to use it and its taboos. One thing to remember: you can’t use it more than three times within an hour. Also, take it off immediately after the operation and put it back in this coin bag.”

“Alright.” Jenna extended her left hand and allowed Franca to put the iron-colored ring on her middle finger, keeping their skin in contact.

Franca couldn’t contain her inexplicable joy as she adjusted her hood, confidently pushed open the creaky wooden door, and stepped into Deep Valley Quarry.

Once Jenna joined her inside, she made sure to close and lock the wooden door behind them.

This made it nearly impossible for anyone outside to detect their presence within the quarry.

As skilled Assassins with night vision, Franca and Jenna didn’t rely

on carbide lamps, yet they could easily see everything within the tunnel.

The passageway was in a state of disrepair, covered in moss, and with cracks running along the stone walls, giving an ominous feeling that any moment, a piece might collapse.

A short distance ahead, they noticed an empty hole, no different from the other underground ones they had seen before.

For almost half an hour, Jenna and Franca diligently searched the small area, looking for any signs of suspicious activity, but their efforts yielded no results.

“Something’s definitely not right,” Franca whispered, her voice barely audible, as they returned to the spot near the tunnel entrance.

The complete absence of anything unusual happening made them even more suspicious about the gatekeeper not having the key to unlock the door.

Jenna pondered for a moment and then suggested, “Maybe he’s afraid that someone might storm in and cause the mine to collapse, so he decided to keep the key away. A gatekeeper’s job is only to intercept, not to open the door.”

Before Franca could say something, they heard a distinct click.

It was the sound of the Deep Valley Quarry’s door opening!

Franca and Jenna exchanged glances and quickly found cover not far from the exit of the tunnel.

The quarry door creaked open, and the soft bluish glow of a carbide lamp spilled out, pushing back the darkness in the tunnel.

Franca and Jenna peeked out and caught sight of a man in a gray robe.

The man had a white apron wrapped around his waist, a typical garment worn by ancient stonemasons. The hood of his robe rested at the back of his neck, not covering his head.

Such attire was commonly associated with ascetics or monks of the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

Holding a lit carbide lamp, the monk had dark, short hair. His left eye was a mesmerizing combination of iron-gray gears, screws, and springs, all supporting an emerald-green crystalline false eye.

Chapter 288 - 288 Self-Recommendation

288 Self-Recommendation

In the city of Trier, prosthetic eyes were not a common sight, but there were still a fair number of people who wore them. But Jenna and Franca had never seen anyone take mechanizing a quarter of their faces for a prosthetic eye to this extent.

However, when they recalled that the monk was suspected to be from the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, it made sense. Fanatical devotion to machinery was their hallmark!

Carrying a carbide lamp and wearing a white apron like a stonemason, the monk entered the tunnel step by step. His emerald-green prosthetic eye, surrounded by gears and springs, seemed to possess a life of its own as it rotated left and right, scanning the surroundings.

Franca tugged at Jenna, signaling for her not to look towards the tunnel. She was to quickly avert her gaze to avoid detection.

The two of them slunk deeper into the shadows, hiding beyond the reach of the carbide lamp's light.

The gray-robed, hooded monk from the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery advanced slowly, surveying his surroundings as he approached the bottom of Deep Valley Quarry, the area that had collapsed and been buried.

Thanks to their Assassin abilities and the cover of darkness, Jenna and Franca remained undetected. They waited until the monk was far away before quietly peeking out from their hiding spot, eyes fixed on his back.

The monk stopped beside the collapsed area, extending his right palm which glinted with an iron-like metallic sheen, grasping a protrusion on the wall.

A grinding sound echoed as if multiple massive gears were slowly rotating and meshing.

The stone wall cracked open as metal chains extended out from behind each rock. The rocks bloomed like flowers, revealing a dark cave behind.

With the help of the monk's carbide lamp and their eagle-eyed Assassin vision, Franca and Jenna could see a thin white fog inside the cave and arms and legs embedded in the rock walls—human arms and legs!

Some were still fresh while others had shriveled, but there were no signs of decay.

Jenna and Franca exchanged shocked and fearful looks.

As the monk entered the cave and triggered a mechanism, the metal chains relaxed, allowing the rocks to return to their original positions, leaving only faint cracks as signs of the hidden entrance.

So that's how it is… I assumed the cracks were from a collapse, so I didn't inspect them… Franca realized why they hadn't noticed anything amiss before.

She tugged Jenna's arm and whispered, "Let's get out of here first and come back another time."

Having discovered the secret and knowing how to open it, there was no need to confront the monk from the God of Steam and Machinery Church directly. They could return later!

Jenna nodded slightly, twirled the Ring of Punishment on her finger, and crouched down. She followed Franca away from their hiding spot and back through the tunnel to the entrance of Deep Valley Quarry.

Seeing Jenna about to open the door, Franca quickly stopped her and whispered, "No hurry."

“Why?” Jenna asked, puzzled.

Franca straightened instinctively and smiled.

“Just because one monk went in doesn’t mean he’s alone. Perhaps there are two companions outside, guarding against intruders. If we stroll out casually, we might expose ourselves and get attacked! Besides, the gatekeeper could be awake already.”

Jenna looked a little abashed. “You’re right.”

Franca consoled her immediately, “It’s just experience. Now you know better for the future.”

She took out a palm-sized mirror and handed it to Jenna. “Help me carry this. I’ll scout ahead. If I get ambushed, take the chance to hide in the shadows by the door and sneak out with the mirror.”

Realizing Franca intended to use Mirror Substitution, Jenna agreed without hesitation.

Franca carefully opened the heavy wooden door a crack and peeked out.

The only sounds were chirping insects and frogs. All was still otherwise.

The door opened wider and Franca slipped out into the darkness beyond the crimson moonlight’s reach.

Jenna gripped the mirror tightly, tense and ready.

After more than ten seconds, Franca returned and whispered, “It’s clear, let’s go.”

Jenna exhaled in relief and darted out, closing the door silently behind them.

As they left the quarry, they glanced at the rock-walled “hut” and saw the gatekeeper still asleep, but in a different posture.

From a distance, Franca noticed a red and swollen mark under his

ear. “He was knocked out, not drugged…” she murmured with a frown.

Jenna recalled the cybernetic-eyed monk and pointed at the quarry door. “The one inside did it?” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in). (com)

Franca nodded gently. “Very likely. He doesn’t want the gatekeeper to know he’s here. Poor man, he probably fainted again before the sedative wore off.”

Jenna smiled. “Or someone else knocked him out before we got here. Someone might have used some other method to knock him out.”

“…” Franca paused, then sighed sympathetically. “If so, I feel bad for him.”

Oblivious to each other, every group had dealt with the gatekeeper their own way. As a result, the poor man remained unconscious repeatedly.

Wasting no time, Jenna and Franca slipped away under the cover of the night.

…

Avenue du Marché, Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian returned to the café upstairs, ordered a glass of red wine, and sipped it slowly.

After a while, Louis came up and whispered, “Boss, some bounty hunters are causing trouble at Salle de Gristmill, demanding a cut of the profits.”

With the Poison Spur Mob’s upper ranks destroyed, some remnants had been arrested, some had fled, some joined other mobs, and some found legitimate work. Their former businesses had been taken over at low prices by various factions.

The Savoie Mob got the largest share but now lacked manpower. Some industries operated fairly independently. Occasionally,

opportunists tried to take advantage of the “power vacuum.”

Lumian cracked his knuckles and grinned. “Send word asking if they want to be my enemies or my dogs.”

He realized that after becoming a Pyromaniac, he had grown more aggressive. Itching for a fight after so long, his hands twitched in anticipation.

Furthermore, for someone to dare challenge a dance hall nominally belonging to the Savoie Mob, there might be one or two Beyonders among the bounty hunters. Lumian’s Shadow Branch lacked a corresponding Beyonder characteristic.

“Yes, Boss!” Louis replied eagerly before hurrying downstairs to send the “invitation.”

Lumian had planned to return to Auberge du Coq Doré to write Madam Magician but now waited patiently.

In less than half an hour, Louis returned with a man.

He appeared to be in his mid-thirties, wearing a cheap suit and black top hat. With brown hair, brown eyes, refined features, and a burly build, he could have been a protagonist at the Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons

Seeing Lumian, the man smiled, doffed his hat, and greeted, “Good evening, Boss.”

“Who are you?” Lumian asked with an amiable smile.

The man replied solemnly, “Boss, didn’t you ask me to be your dog?”

“…” Momentarily stunned, even the quick-witted Lumian needed a few seconds to respond.

He had said it purely to provoke them and see if they would retaliate.

After recovering, Lumian chuckled. “I told you to be a dog, and you’ll really do it?”

“This is my big chance!” The man didn’t seem ashamed at all, rather honored. “I believe following you will let me achieve my true worth. In time, I could even become your godson!”

How old are you? You’re more fawning than “Giant” Simon… Interested, Lumian asked, “Why do you think I’ll give you a chance?”

The man didn’t answer immediately but glanced meaningfully at Louis and Sarkota, hinting for them to leave.

Unworried about assassination attempts, Lumian had them exit before smiling at the man. “Go on.”

The man cleared his throat. “My name is Lugano Toscano, a Beyonder.”

“Which pathway? What Sequence?” Lumian’s eyebrows rose.

Lugano forced a smile. “I’m a Planter, Sequence 9.”

Earth Mother Church’s pathway? Lumian nodded thoughtfully. “From Feynapotter?”

“No, Riston Province,” Lugano replied, smiling. “A few years ago, some friends and I became bounty hunters. I got to know a Feynapotter Beyonder and later acquired his belongings when he passed away.”

A fellow countryman… Did you kill him or just conveniently profit from his death? Lumian gestured for him to continue.

Lugano chuckled. “I can now advance to Sequence 8 Doctor but lack funds for the potion ingredients. I’ve heard of your exploits, Boss, and believe you to be a powerful Beyonder. I also know the Savoie Mob lacks manpower, so I caused some trouble to meet you. I hope to work for you, help manage your estates, and earn money through hard work. Doctors are useful for ordinary people and Beyonders alike.”

Chapter 289 - 289 Late Night Visitors

289 Late Night Visitors

“Doctor?” Lumian recalled the two canisters of Healing Agent obtained from the Poison Spur Mob.

Their healing effects were quite impressive indeed.

Leaning back in his chair, Lumian gazed intently into Lugano Toscano’s eyes, pondering silently for some time.

Gradually Lugano grew uneasy, his body tensing up.

Finally Lumian smiled.

“Salle de Gristmill isn’t my property. I’m just managing it for the Boss.

“I’m not sure you can handle it, but I’ll give you a chance.”

Lugano visibly relaxed and smiled. “Boss, I won’t let you down!”

Lumian raised his voice to call Louis over.

“From now on, you’ll be Lugano’s deputy at the Gristmill. Manage it together.”

Is this for real? But why give an untested new recruit such an important post? Before Louis could react, Lumian had already turned to Lugano.

“You have two months. You and your friends will be the dance hall’s protectors for now. Take a portion of the profits; negotiate the details with the manager.”

He deliberately left the profit distribution vague, especially his own cut. He wanted to see what Lugano would do.

“Thank you, Boss!” Lugano’s joy was unconcealed.

He nearly blurted out, “Once I’m a Doctor, I’ll treat any illness or injury you have.” But that felt like cursing misfortune upon Lumian, so he quickly sealed his lips.

Watching them leave while discussing the dance hall, Lumian’s smile faded.

Lugano’s fawning and zeal made him suspect ulterior motives, like him with Baron Brignais and the fake diamond necklace.

But Lumian had cowed the Baron by showing his might and madness. The key was proving the value of exploiting him. Lugano was more focused on ingratiation. Of course, he had revealed his usefulness too.

That’s why Lumian decided to give him Salle de Gristmill for two months—to monitor any abnormalities and act quickly if the bounty hunter had hidden motives. Or gain a Doctor cheaply if he was clean.

Either way, it wouldn’t cost Lumian anything. Salle de Gristmill belonged to the Savoie Mob; he would just lose some of his own share. That could be offset by Lugano stabilizing the unruly dance hall.

After sitting awhile, Lumian left for Room 207 at Auberge du Coq Doré. Drawing the curtains, he sat at the table and began writing.

“Esteemed Madam Magician,

“I’ve officially joined the Iron Blood Cross Order.

“The initiation ritual was…

“I’m puzzled. The Order has members clearly not from the Hunter pathway. How did they pass the vigil? Assassins? Or did Gardner confirm their trustworthiness some other way, bypassing corruption?”

He almost asked about entering 13 Avenue du Marché at special times, but that was surely monitored by official Beyonders. It was unlikely anyone could approach then.

After neatly folding the letter, Lumian summoned the doll messenger on the altar.

Wary, he asked, “Am I still being watched?”

“No,” the doll slowly shook her head.

Relieved, Lumian scheduled reporting to Mr. K and heading to The Fool’s cathedral for a sermon.

After nearly fifteen minutes, Madam Magician replied:

“I once heard from Mr. Fool’s Oracle that a friend of his was originally in the Iron and Blood Cross Order but couldn’t stand it and fled to sea.

“I didn’t understand at first, but now I see—it’s been hard on you.”

It wasn’t so bad. Watching them perform was rather interesting, a study in human diversity… Lumian didn’t see an issue with it.

Something else concerned him more.

When mentioning the Oracle, Madam Magician didn’t say “one of.”

Lumian suspected Mr. Fool had only a single Oracle! This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Meaning the Major Arcana card holders of the Divine Council weren’t considered Oracles.

Pondering this, Lumian read on:

“They might be Assassins or used another corruption method.

“Remind the Two of Cups—if accepting the vigil, bring the ancient underground mirror. Other than keeping in mind not to respond, it’s best to bring the ancient mirror that provides entry into the

underground mirror world. Hunter/Demoness corruption likely differs. It may help."

That mirror… Mulling it over, Lumian swiftly burned the letter in crimson flames.

Just as he was about to wash up, he sensed something and glanced at the door.

A series of knocks promptly came.

"Who is it?" he called.

A strained voice answered, "Guess who I am."

Seated, Lumian looked helplessly at the bedbug-free ceiling. "Come in."

As expected, it was Franca and Jenna, dressed as Assassins.

"Here to play Fighting Evil?" he joked.

Franca scoffed, "I don't play cards with sore losers like you."

Having tricked many into drinking excessively over card games recently, Lumian had been winning at Fighting Evil with the ladies and mocking their poor skills. Suspecting cheating, Franca had intensely coached her dancers the past few days.

Entering, Franca added, "We're here to borrow mysticism magazines."

Lumian sneered. "Nice try. Why come so late just for that? Is waiting till morning not an option? Jenna doesn't seem the studying type."

He smiled. "What's really going on?"

The two gritted their teeth in sync.

After Franca shut the door, Jenna glanced around and whispered, "Are the walls too thin here? Could neighbors overhear us?"

Lumian smiled approvingly. "You're learning—thinking about

eavesdroppers now. Not like before, blabbing recklessly without a care."

Before… Franca's suspicious gaze shifted from Jenna to Lumian, then from Lumian to Jenna.

"Dammit! "We didn't discuss anything important!" Jenna defended. "Why not mention Charlie? He spills secrets immediately."

Charlie? Franca's frown faded.

"It was fine—others were asleep or gone. That's why I didn't stop him." Lumian stood, ritual dagger in hand. Letting spirituality flow from the blade, he enveloped the room in a wall of spirituality.

The singing and rowdiness on the streets and the inn's noises instantly grew distant and muted.

Jenna was amazed. Franca pursed her lips and said to Jenna, "A basic wall of spirituality ritual. Once you become a Witch, you'll naturally master it."

At this point, she couldn't help but imagine what Witch Jenna would look like.

The two ladies sat side by side by Lumian's bed and discussed the missing Deep Valley Cloister gatekeeper, focused on their quarry findings tonight.

"What's down there? What should we do?" Franca returned Lumian's sedative.

Lumian smiled at his companion who wasn't wearing red boots. "Don't you have an answer already?"

With Franca's experience, she surely had a plan by now.

Franca smiled awkwardly. "Just wanted your thoughts."

"My thoughts?" Lumian joked, "Sneak in while the monk's away for that 20,000 verl d'or!"

Jenna looked around warily. “Meaning it’s too dangerous to investigate further?”

Having heard Lumian’s mockery countless times now, she could distinguish sarcasm, well-meaning teasing, and jokes.

“Right,” said Franca. “Recalling the client, there seems to be an internal Deep Valley Cloister conflict—someone hiding, someone exposing. Meddling in an orthodox Church’s internal conflict is dangerous for any Beyonder.”

“Internal conflict?” Jenna was startled.

Lumian chuckled. “A missing gatekeeper, and some random person offers 20,000 to find him, even just the corpse? And said corpse needs to be carried to the Deep Valley Cloister. Clearly wants someone to see it.”

Jenna was almost convinced, but she still had a lot of doubts. “B-but the limbs in the cave seem too sinister for an orthodox Church.”

Chapter 290 - 290 Lavigny Docks

290 Lavigny Docks This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“Er…” Franca deliberated briefly before telling Jenna, “When it comes to losing control and madness, orthodox or wild Beyonder—all are equal. Those monks can become monsters too, or have mental problems and walk the abyss.”

Jenna grew grave as she listened.

It wasn’t the first time Franca had said something similar, but without personal experience, the full cruelty and horror of those words never quite sunk in. Seeing the limbs in the dark cave had driven home the visceral reality of losing control and madness.

Lumian added meaningfully, “That’s why the acting method is so important.”

“But never forget you’re only acting. You should know very well being a theater actress—you mustn’t lose yourself in a role. Even without being a Beyonder, that path leads to mental issues.” Franca and Lumian educated the newcomer one after another.

Jenna nodded solemnly.

Franca returned to the missing gatekeeper. “My plan is this—reveal the cave anonymously to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church via my sources. How they handle it is their affair. Even if they suppress it, they’ll be vigilant against trouble now. I’ll also inform the client and see his reaction. We might get paid for our work.”

She chose the Eternal Blazing Sun Church over the God of Steam and Machinery Church Beyonders, unsure which side was trustworthy in

this internal conflict.

“No objections here,” Jenna conceded after hearing their advice, shelving her longing for the 20,000 verl d’or reward.

Franca turned to Lumian. “I’ve found a buyer for Harvest Sacrifice, but the deal isn’t finalized yet. Offer is 10,000 verl d’or. I gave you 4,000 already, and can give you another 1,000 in two days.”

“Very efficient.” Lumian smiled approvingly.

“Can’t tell if that’s praise or mockery,” Franca muttered.

Jenna listened enviously. 10,000 verl d’or was casual business for them, while her family struggled to pay 7,000-8,000 for the treatment of her mother.

This is what it means to be a Beyonder… Her understanding grew clearer.

Glancing at the curtains, Lumian didn’t get Jenna to leave. “Last night, I completed the test and officially joined the Boss’s inner circle.”

“What kind of test?” Still aggrieved, Franca had already vented her anger once, leaving mostly curiosity.

Lumian described Gardner’s late visit to Salle de Bal Brise, how he was requested to stay the night at 13 Avenue du Marché, and him overcoming the abnormal corruption until sunrise.

He concealed Termiboros, portraying himself as intelligent, decisive, perceptive and steadfast—grasping the crux with just a few details and adhering to the principle of no response despite the influences.

Lumian excelled at fabrication.

Franca still felt lingering fear and suspicion. “You really didn’t waver at all?”

Jenna agreed—she would have responded the moment the door opened. Franca might have lasted until her face bled.

Lumian chuckled. “I definitely felt some uncertainty, but I trusted my judgment more.”

Franca sized him up doubtfully. “You really thought of not responding by yourself?”

“No.” Lumian ended the fiction honestly.

“…” The ladies were stunned.

Lumian seized the chance to divert attention, smiling. “Don’t be daft. A recently graduated mysticism novice like me could never think of that. I got intelligence beforehand of course. If you do the vigil, remember—do not respond, and take the mirror that provides entry into the underground mirror world. 13 Avenue du Marché’s abnormalities may differ by pathway.”

Enlightened, Franca grasped his source. She muttered, “No girlfriend for you with that attitude!”

She had almost been provoked just now, let alone a real woman. Relieved, Franca thought the rascal Ciel had no romantic prospects currently.

While still irked by the mockery, Jenna also regained confidence.

She had thought her intelligence irredeemably inferior to Ciel’s.

Admirably, he had firmly trusted the intelligence and not wavered.

She pursed her lips and said, “I’m seeing more of the mysticism world’s horrors.”

The 13 Avenue du Marché abnormality was even more terrifying than the Deep Valley Quarry’s secret cave scene. By comparison, her underground ordeal with Hedsey seemed just a criminal case.

“There will be more such occurrences in the coming years.” Franca seized every chance to motivate Jenna’s advancement.

Lumian then mentioned his guess that Avenue du Marché 13 only affected Beyonders of the Hunter and Demoness pathways at specific

times.

Discussing a while longer, the ladies left with a stack of mysticism magazines, returning to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

…

At 3 p.m. the next day, Lumian, who had been playing the part at Salle de Bal Brise all day, arrived at Lavigny Docks in the square district by taking multiple public carriages, ready to hear The Fool bishop's sermon.

It was a lively inland river port, teeming with steam ships emitting white fog. Countless dockworkers used various tools and their strength to move crates of goods and stack them on flat surfaces along the tracks.

Massive machines towered over the docks, some standing more than ten to twenty meters tall, made entirely of steel components. Operated by massive steam engines and controlled by technicians, they effortlessly lifted steel crates that would be impossible for humans to move.

Lumian observed the chaotic and bustling scene, a mix of spectacular sights and grimy realities.

He strolled around the dock, acting like a carefree tourist rather than inquiring about The Fool cathedral's location from suspicious foreigners.

Buildings surrounded the harbor, housing bars, motels, warehouses, beer houses, cafés, restaurants, and dance halls. Street vendors loudly peddled their goods along the paths.

Lumian also noticed frosted glass windows with green shutters, indicating licensed brothels.

After taking a long detour, Lumian finally arrived at Mr. Fool's cathedral.

It looked like an ordinary four-story house with a bell tower and pointed roof, completely black. Engraved on the outer wall was the

familiar mystical symbol: Mr. Fool's symbol, a silvery-white symbol composed of an incomplete Pupil-less Eye and a portion of Contorted Lines.

Before entering, Lumian took his time, continuing to explore the area as if he were casually shopping.

As a Hunter, it was second nature for him to assess his surroundings when he had the chance.

After walking for a while, Lumian chose a bar called Sea Breeze to gather information about The Fool cathedral from merchants, sailors, and locals.

The interior of Sea Breeze was decorated like a cabin, with taxidermied fish, rudders, and sail fragments adorning the walls. The air was thick with the scent of liquor and cheap cosmetics.

Some sailors sat together, engrossed in a card game, while others were seen in the company of street girls. At the bar counter, a few were enjoying drinks and boasting.

Lumian scanned the area and noticed a man who immediately caught his attention.

This man sat in an armchair near the bar, exuding an air of arrogance as he casually rested his hands on the chair's back. He occasionally sipped his wheat beer, propping his legs up on the small round table.

It wasn't just the man's demeanor that intrigued Lumian, but the way the other sailors behaved around him.

They either kept their distance, giving the area a wide berth, or approached with deferential expressions. Even if they were teased by the man, they seemed honored to be in his presence.

A significant figure from the sea, perhaps? Lumian speculated silently as he subtly studied the man.

The man appeared to be in his thirties, dressed in a linen shirt, a brown vest, dark brown pants, and sturdy black leather boots. His eyebrows and hair were charred yellow, like they had been kissed by

flames. His bright, dark blue eyes and facial features hinted at a southern Intis heritage.

Feeling Lumian's gaze on him, the man smiled and lifted his wheat beer in a toast.

Returning the smile, Lumian made his way to the bar counter, ordering a glass of Lanti Proof, a favorite among pirates and sailors.

Taking a sip of the flavorful and potent malt liquor, Lumian couldn't contain his curiosity. He nodded towards the nearby armchair and asked the bartender in a hushed tone,

"Who is that?"

The bartender's expression turned serious as he responded in a deep voice, "You don't know him?"

To him, not recognizing that individual was rather surprising.

Chapter 291 - 291 Important Figure

291 Important Figure

Lumian set his glass down and flashed a smile, speaking in Intisian but with the accent of the Riston Province.

“I arrived in Trier just two days ago. Came to Lavigne in search of work.”

Thanks to Aurore’s help, he could speak like a local from Trier, shedding his Riston Province Dariège accent. Having spent six years in Cordu, he had a knack for learning, imitating, and adapting to new dialects effortlessly.

The tired bartender looked around as if he hadn’t slept well and spoke cautiously, “That’s the famous Blazing Danitz, a significant figure at sea!”

“I’ve never heard of him,” Lumian replied bluntly.

The bartender cleared his throat, reminding Lumian to watch his tone and attitude. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

“Have you heard about the six Pirate Kings and nine Pirate Admirals?”

“A little,” Lumian honestly admitted.

His knowledge about the Pirate Kings and Pirate Admirals came from newspapers and adventure novels, and he was aware of Gehrman Sparrow hunting down a few. He knew that the great adventurer’s servant, Dubois, had once served as a pirate on Vice Admiral Iceberg’s ship. He knew of Ailment Maiden or Vice Admiral Ailment,

and the frequent change of Pirate Admirals. As for the Pirate Kings, they were well-established and had held their positions for so long that no one could remember when they first came to power.

Realizing Lumian wasn't completely ignorant, the bartender breathed a sigh of relief.

"That individual used to be a pirate, acknowledged to be stronger than all the Pirate Admirals, second only to the six Pirate Kings."

Quite impressive… Lumian couldn't determine the exact Sequences of the Pirate Admirals and Pirate Kings, but their survival despite constant pursuit by the authorities showed they weren't weak.

Blazing Danitz ranked seventh among the pirates, almost reaching the level of a quasi-Pirate King. He was undeniably formidable!

A Saint? If he's one, the same can be said for the Pirate Kings… The strongest among Sequence 5s? Lumian quickly grasped the bartender's words.

"Used to be?"

"Yes, used to be. He's no longer a pirate or a Treasure Hunter. Look, there's no wanted poster of him on the wall." The bartender gestured around.

But there's my wanted poster… Thankfully, the bounty is low. It's tucked away in a corner where no one pays attention… Lumian asked curiously, "He can just stop being a pirate because he wants to? Did the authorities cooperate and revoke his wanted poster?"

Which country or orthodox Church did he surrender to?

The bartender lowered his voice even further.

"He's now a member of the Church of The Fool, the envoy of that deity."

Mr. Fool's Oracle? Perhaps that one and only Oracle? Lumian was taken aback.

The bartender assumed Lumian wasn't familiar with the Church of The Fool, so he explained, "That's a deity recognized by all orthodox Churches. Heh heh, why would a deity choose such a name?

"The Fool's faith is very popular at sea. Many sea merchants and sailors believe in Him. They even pooled money to build The Fool cathedral in Lavigny."

"The cathedral's bishop is that Oracle?" Lumian deliberately lowered his voice.

"No." The bartender shook his head. "But Blazing Danitz often comes to Trier. He likes it here. Yes, he's from Intis. There isn't an Intisian who doesn't long for Trier."

Just as Lumian was about to say something, the important figure at sea, the Oracle of The Fool's Church, Blazing Danitz, finished his remaining wheat beer and stood up, heading towards Sea Breeze's entrance.

Almost simultaneously, the sailors—playing cards, drinking, boasting, and making out with street girls—stood up in an unusually orderly fashion.

They didn't cause any commotion as they silently and orderly followed Blazing Danitz out of the bar.

If he hadn't witnessed this scene, Lumian wouldn't have realized that all the sailors in the bar were subordinates of The Fool's Oracle.

Blazing Danitz… From his nickname, he deals with fire… Could he also be from the Hunter pathway? Lumian sipped his Lanti Proof and chatted with the bartender about the Church of The Fool.

"What kind of deity is The Fool?"

The bartender gestured a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest and shook his head.

"I'm not a follower, so how would I know?"

"By steam!" Lumian drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest as

well.

The bartender glanced at the empty area and said, “But the Church of The Fool isn’t bad. Even if you’re just a tramp, even if you don’t believe in The Fool, you can still receive communion after entering their cathedral.

“If you ask them for help, you might even get a meal with meat and bread and a room to sleep in.”

“Should I join the queue now?” Lumian asked with a smile.

The bartender shook his head again.

“No need. They can’t leave the cathedral to preach or proselytize. Only the local tramps know they can seek help there, but they only go once in a while because the Church of The Fool is more willing to offer job opportunities to them.”

After a pleasant chat and having figured out the schedule of The Fool’s cathedral’s bishop sermons, Lumian finished his Lanti Proof and decided to make the most of the spare time by exploring the nearby streets in detail.

He soon noticed that several strategic points were guarded by the military, armed with cannons and massive firearms that required water-cooling.

The government’s distrust of these sailors and merchants, who occasionally indulge in piracy around the docks, is evident… Lumian turned away and hurried towards The Fool’s cathedral before darkness fell.

The cathedral had a simple layout, devoid of gold embellishments or intricate machinery. The most remarkable aspect was its numerous windows, allowing natural light to illuminate the interior without the need for candles and gas lamps even before nightfall.

Like many religious spaces, the walls were adorned with giant murals, although the colors were muted and somber.

Using the fading light of dusk, Lumian examined the mural’s contents

and discovered that it depicted a wilderness where humans struggled to navigate.

These humans were unusually tall, almost resembling legendary giants. Some had three eyes, while others lacked noses, leaving only two dark holes. They looked more like monsters than ordinary people.

Despite the pain and despair evident on their faces, their eyes shimmered with hope.

Leading these peculiar humans were several distinct and detailed guides. Some had gray hair and carried two swords on their backs. Others wielded dark-blue sledgehammers emitting a sun-like glow. There were also figures clad in dark black armor with silver-gray curly hair…

At the forefront of these guides stood a figure.

Dressed in a black trench coat and a half top hat, the figure walked with a straight back, holding a lantern.

Just ahead of the figure was a ball of light—the altar of The Fool's cathedral—a silver-white Sacred Emblem emitting a radiant glow under the sunlight.

Lumian's attention was drawn to a few stained glass panes. Sculpted in an exaggerated style, angels and saints adorned them. Some were also featured in the murals, while others were not. There were angels with wings and halos, and saints with only halos.

Lumian carefully circled the area, observing for over half an hour. Eventually, he found a seat and settled in to wait for the 6 p.m. sermon.

As time passed, many people entered the cathedral. Some were dressed as merchants, others as typical sailors. There were also dockworkers, visibly exhausted after a long day's work, and a few street girls as well.

Amidst the tolling of the bell, the bishop arrived at the altar.

His hair and eyes shone with a golden hue. Towering at 2.56 meters tall, he donned a finely tailored black trench coat and a half top hat, hardly resembling a typical clergyman.

With a hearty gesture, the boorish bishop pressed his hand to his chest and called out in a booming voice, “Praise The Fool!”

“Praise The Fool!” echoed the gathered believers, and Lumian enthusiastically joined in.

Flipping through the black-and-silver-patterned bible in his hand, the bishop spoke with a voice that reverberated through the cathedral,

“Our lord is known as The Fool. Across past, present, and future, he reigns supreme over the spirit world. He is also the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck. A beacon for all in the pursuit of eternity…

“He is compassionate, benevolent, and the savior of this world. He allows us to address him as him instead of Him…

“Our lord resides above both reality and the spirit world. His benevolence extends to Heaven and the land. Beside him stand eight angels…

“The Angel of Mercury is the embodiment of fate, our Lord’s most cherished angel. The Angel of Death has followed our Lord for the longest period of time and is the consul of the Underworld. The Angel of Redemption is our Lord’s bugle, once taking on the form of Gehrman Sparrow to deliver his revelations. The Angel of Life is the crystallization of wisdom itself, the indestructible spirituality that resides in everyone’s body.”

Gehrman Sparrow? That adventurer is an angel of Mr. Fool? Lumian was astonished by the revelation.

The giant bishop continued, “There’s also the Angel of Retribution beside the Lord’s throne. He is the Lord’s lightning, the Lord’s rage, and the Lord’s palm, the judge of all the fallen and the ones who aren’t chaste.

“Next to the Angel of Retribution is the Angel of the Holy Spirit,

reigning over all spirits and representing our lord in controlling the spirit world.

“In contrast to Them, there are the Angel of Time and the Angel of Stars.

“The Angel of Time was an angel of ancient times. He eventually submitted to our Lord and now strikes the bell of Heaven.

“The Angel of Stars is a witness, a recorder, the eyes and ears of our lord…”

Lumian listened attentively, finding it hard to believe that there were eight angels by The Fool’s divine throne.

Wasn’t this strength too terrifying?

It seemed no different from an orthodox Church!

Suddenly, Termiboros’s magnificent voice resounded, “Do you believe it?”

“Why not?” Lumian replied in a hushed tone, as if reciting passages from the bible.

After all, whose bible, even among the orthodox Churches, didn’t have a touch of exaggeration?

Even without embellishments, it was still impressive!

Chapter 292 - 292 Communion

292 Communion

Termiboros fell silent.

Lumian continued to listen intently to the bishop's sermon as he recounted the general situation of the Church of The Fool. He discovered that there existed another continent in this world called the Forsaken Land of the Gods—a place cursed and abandoned by the gods Themselves.

Despite the gods turning their backs on the continent, Mr. Fool refused to forsake it. He dispatched the Angel of Redemption—Gehrman Sparrow—to lead the surviving humans from the lost city-states out of the Forsaken Land of the Gods and guide them in rebuilding their homes on the maritime islands.

Consequently, the Church of The Fool's headquarters were established in the New City of Silver in the Sonia Sea.

The other two Holy Lands, New Moon City and Bayam, the capital of the Rorsted Archipelago, were also located in the same area.

Lumian listened with fascination, gaining a fundamental understanding of the Church of The Fool.

Following the sermon, the bishop and a few priests distributed communion.

It consisted of a glass of transparent, colorless liquid and a large fruit shell with charred marks covering it.

Lumian picked up the glass and took a sip. The liquid had a slight sweetness, reminiscent of dairy products but with a more fragrant essence.

Next, he used a wooden spoon to scoop out the food from the huge fruit shell.

As soon as he tasted the food, Lumian's expression turned surprised.

It's meat!

Isn't this a bit extravagant?

Even the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Communion couldn't compare to this. They only had red wine and unfermented flatbread.

Lumian perked up and chewed the food with interest. It was delicious, with a meaty texture and a mix of sweetness and slight sourness, like that of a fruit. Its aroma was entirely different from the usual dishes found in Trier.

While he ate, he listened to the bishop explain the origins of Communion.

It turned out that this was Angel of Redemption Gehrman Sparrow's favorite food during his travels across the land. As the bugle of the Lord, he preached the revelations of the Lord.

The liquid was called Teana, derived from a giant fruit unique to the Rorsted Archipelago, and it was extracted from the pulp.

Having lost most of its pulp, the Teana rind was stuffed with mashed mutton and fish, culminating in the communion, Teativa.

However, transporting such massive fruits from the Rorsted Archipelago to Trier for Communion was impractical. It required crossing three seas, and no matter how unripened the fruit was, it would inevitably rot, wasting valuable resources.

With the help of a particular botanist, the Church of The Fool had cultivated a modified Teana tree that could grow in southern Intis, producing a stronger milky scent.

A delicacy with a maritime charm… If it weren't for the Church of The Fool's inability to preach and proselytize, who knows how many people would convert solely due to the Communion… But that could

lead to financial issues as well. Too many believers in The Fool would cause the expenses of Communion to skyrocket… After pondering the Church of The Fool's finances for a moment, Lumian, who hadn't eaten dinner yet, finished the Teativa clean and gulped down the Teana juice.

"Praise The Fool!" Lumian stood up sincerely and bowed. He slowly left the candlelit cathedral and stepped into the night.

Under the warm glow of gas street lamps, Lumian strolled along the port area, dressed in a linen shirt, black vest, and rolled-up sleeves. His destination was the other side of the docks, where he intended to catch a public carriage to Avenue du Boulevard.

Lavigny had grown quiet, with only occasional groups of sailors passing by, singing or shouting.

All of a sudden, a commotion erupted nearby, followed by a piercing scream.

As the sound echoed through the night, Lumian noticed a figure hurtling towards him at an incredible speed.

Casually, he sidestepped, acting like an innocent bystander.

Yet, if the approaching person happened to be vile or had indeed committed some wrongdoing and was now being chased, Lumian wouldn't mind sticking out his right foot and tripping them, just for the spectacle.

Within seconds, the figure reached the edge of the street lamp's glow, making Lumian's eyebrows twitch in surprise.

So fast!

Clearly not an ordinary human!

With the help of the gas lamps, Lumian got a good look at the figure's appearance.

It wasn't human—it was a monster!

Though its wrinkled head resembled a human's, its dark-green scales covered its body. Wearing a torn linen shirt and brown pants, its feet lacked shoes, and thin, tough skin membrane grew between its fingers. Slippery dark green mucus oozed over its form, and its palms and mouth were stained with blood.

Having encountered numerous monsters in Cordu's ruins, Lumian remained unperturbed. He only frowned slightly.

It reminds me of those murlocs mentioned in mysticism magazines. Those dark-green scales must provide formidable defense…

As Lumian pondered, the monster noticed him sidestepping and grew more violent and crazed in its expression.

Without warning, it lunged at Lumian.

Reacting swiftly, Lumian arched his body, not backing away, but stepping forward to face the suspected murloc.

Bang!

His right hand, emitting sparks, struck the creature's abdomen.

Then, he swiftly lowered his body, slipping under the armpit of the dark-green-scaled monster, avoiding its counterattack and effectively positioning himself behind the assailant.

Lumian spun around, his arms swinging. His fists, with flickering flames, delivered powerful blows to the back of the suspected murloc, knocking it to the ground. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Blows resounded until Lumian withdrew his hands, ceasing his assault. He observed silently as the struggling body left corrosive marks on the ground.

With a muffled explosion, crimson sparks erupted from the monster's eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. Its body swelled before collapsing, shedding several dark-green scales.

After a few convulsions, it lay still.

Lumian averted his gaze and looked towards the figures chasing after him. He nonchalantly flicked his hands, alleviating the corrosive pain caused by the dark-green liquid.

His injuries were minor. After all, he had delivered a barrage of powerful punches, and his contact with the dark-green scales and viscous liquid had been brief.

Soon, the figures reached the lamp pole.

They were sailors, led by a mixed-blood man from the Southern Continent, sporting braided hair and brownish-red skin.

He appeared to be in his thirties, with thick lips. His eyes first scanned the murloc-like monster lying motionless on the ground, then he looked at Lumian with surprise, suspicion, and fear.

After a few seconds of silence, the sailor with the braided hair spoke with a solemn voice, “This is the murloc we captured at sea. It injured one of our crewmates and managed to escape.”

It is indeed a murloc… Did they truly capture it? Why didn’t they turn it into various materials and transport it to Trier? Why risk keeping it alive? Lumian silently mused as he asked with a smile, “Are you planning to apologize on its behalf and compensate me for my mental distress to soothe my terrified mind?”

The sailor and his companions exchanged glances, unable to decipher the lad’s true intentions.

In the distance, the sound of regimental-like running resonated, accompanied by gunfire.

Patrol soldiers had rushed over upon hearing the scream.

The sailor’s heart tightened as he unconsciously grabbed the monster’s corpse, closely observing Lumian’s reaction. He intended to stop once the other party showed any dissatisfaction.

Simultaneously, he continued, “No problem. We have no problem.”

What he meant was that they would provide compensation for

Lumian's mental distress.

Lumian sensed that they mainly wanted the Beyonder characteristic produced by the murloc, but the monster was too weak. He wasn't in the mood to discuss how the prize would be divided with them.

It was not worthy of the Shadow Branch at all!

If these individuals, who acted recklessly without concern for covering their tracks, managed to evade pursuit and crossed paths with him again, he could simply demand compensation from them for his mental distress.

As Lumian watched the sailors carry the murloc away, he continued on his way as if nothing had happened.

Before long, several patrolling soldiers caught up with him, examining his condition and inquiring if he had witnessed anything unusual.

Lumian candidly pointed in the direction the sailors had fled.

"I heard a scream and saw a group of people running that way. They were dressed like sailors."

The officer leading the patrol nodded approvingly.

"Thank you for your cooperation."

"No need to thank me. It's what any responsible citizen should do," Lumian replied with a smile.

Soon, the other soldiers discovered traces of corrosion and scales on the ground, along with sticky liquid that hadn't entirely evaporated. They followed the trail towards the docks.

Lumian clicked his tongue and continued on his way towards the public carriage stop.

Clap! Clap! Clap! He heard a soft applause.

Feeling uneasy, Lumian turned his head and saw someone sitting on a

nearby cargo box, seemingly having appeared out of nowhere.

The man's eyebrows were charred yellow, and his hair shared the same color. His eyes were dark blue yet radiant. He wore a linen shirt, a brown vest, and a pair of black leather boots hung from his dark brown pants.

Lumian recognized the man and felt alarmed.

Blazing Danitz, a great pirate second only to a few Pirate Kings!

But Lumian calmed down when he recalled the man's other identity: He was no longer a pirate; he was now Mr. Fool's Oracle!

As the holder of a Minor Arcana card, Lumian believed that as long as he revealed his identity, Blazing Danitz wouldn't give him trouble.

Blazing Danitz gazed at Lumian for a few seconds before effortlessly leaping down from the top of the wooden crates.

He chuckled and spoke leisurely, "To be able to swiftly choose the most effective, targeted, and efficient attack method against your prey, perfectly evading the enemy's enhanced scale defense—your combat intelligence is quite impressive. I admire it.

"So, how about it? Are you interested in joining my team and becoming my subordinate?"

Chapter 293 - 293 “Pious”

293 “Pious”

Inviting me to join your team without even checking my background or confirming my strength? Are you that confident, Mr. Fool’s Oracle? Lumian couldn’t help but criticize, feeling unsure about the whole situation.

He looked at Blazing Danitz and responded with a smile, “No.”

Blazing Danitz acknowledged tersely, his voice gaining intensity as if confirming it for the last time.

Lumian slipped his right hand into his pocket, maintaining his smile.

“Not interested.”

What a joke. How can I complete the Tarot Club’s mission if I join your team?

This requires your consultation with Madam Magician!

Danitz’s dark-blue yet bright eyes narrowed slightly, his aura instantly becoming more intense.

Lumian felt as if he were facing a spear or a loaded gun pressed to his forehead. Fear and danger washed over him.

However, he didn’t look away and met Blazing Danitz’s gaze with a calm determination, as if facing an apex predator.

After a brief silence that filled the air with tension, Blazing Danitz broke into a smile.

“Not bad. You’re quite resolute and bold. I admire you even more.”

With those words, the former great pirate, now The Fool's Oracle, turned around and strolled towards the well-lit street in the distance.

Confidence naturally breeds resoluteness… Lumian thought silently as he withdrew his right hand from his pocket, revealing a tarot card held between his thumb and index finger.

The tarot card—Seven of Wands!

Though he couldn't fathom Blazing Danitz's impromptu recruitment, he felt somewhat glad to have encountered Mr. Fool's Oracle.

This meant that The Fool Church held substantial strength in Trier.

…

After leaving Lavigny Docks, Lumian hopped onto a public carriage and soon arrived at Avenue du Boulevard. He walked to 19 Rue Scheer and met Mr. K beneath the headquarters of the Psychic organization.

The Aurora Order Oracle remained seated in the red armchair, his face concealed in the deep shadows of his black hood.

His voice rasped as he inquired, "How's your progress in gaining Gardner Martin's trust?"

Lumian replied calmly, "I've already joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order."

Mr. K fell silent for a moment before asking, "How did you gain Gardner Martin's trust? How did he test you? And how did you pass the test?"

The Aurora Order Oracle altered his usual demeanor, posing three questions at once.

Lumian chuckled.

"Well, there was no need to gain Gardner Martin's trust. Simply joining the Iron and Blood Cross Order earned loyalty."

Upon hearing this, Mr. K, who had been reclining in his chair, sat up straight. The shadows in the basement seemed to stir, almost alive.

With his expertise and knowledge, discerning the hidden meaning behind Lumian's words wasn't difficult for him.

And it undoubtedly spelled danger: Lumian had indeed become a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, pledging his allegiance to them. He was here to report while bringing the powerful figures of the Iron and Blood Cross Order!

Lumian smiled, unfazed by the immense pressure radiating from Mr. K. He proceeded to recount how he informed Gardner Martin that he had become a Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, leading up to the vigil at 13 Avenue du Marché and the formal initiation ceremony.

He didn't hold back the fact that he had engaged in an underground transaction and fled in terror after encountering Supervisor Olson's monstrous creation.

As Lumian finished, Mr. K stood up, excitement in his tone as he verified Lumian's various details at 13 Avenue du Marché repeatedly.

Upon realizing that Lumian had used the honorific name at a crucial moment and received a divine revelation of "don't respond," Mr. K burst into a fit of maniacal laughter.

"Hahaha, hahaha, just as I thought, piousness is the only way out!"

The hooded Oracle's laughter grew wilder, echoing through the basement, making Lumian's eardrums tremble and a faint scent of salt and blood fill the air.

"Hahaha! Hahaha!"

Mr. K laughed so hard he nearly doubled over.

He no longer concealed his condition. The whole basement seemed enveloped in darkness, and he stood as the source of danger behind it all.

After a while, Mr. K paid no mind to Lumian's presence, instead

kneeling down, lowering his body to pray almost silently, as if thanking the Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God.

Lumian managed to keep his lips from twitching. Before leaving for Lavigny Docks, he had performed a ritual, praying to The Fool for the angel's protection. He praised the True Creator of the Aurora Order and drew a cross on his chest, following an up-to-down, left-to-right order.

With a sudden display of piousness, Mr. K stood up and said with fervor, "This was all arranged by the Lord. He brought you here to join us."

It depends on which lord you're talking about… Lumian muttered, finding amusement in the situation, and replied humbly, "What He says will come true."

This was one of the religious texts of the Aurora Order taught by Mr. K. Lumian had always regarded it as a sermon praising the deity's strength. He found it quite useful in the present conversation.

The hooded Mr. K nodded, thoroughly satisfied.

"I had arranged for others to approach the exposed members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order before, but they lost contact with me and stopped reporting. They even put me in considerable danger.

"Now I understand why they failed. Their lack of piousness! In the face of danger and corruption, they didn't even think to recite our Lord's honorific name and seek His protection!

"But you, at the critical moment, had only my Lord in your mind. That's the kind of piousness I admire the most.

"That's why you successfully joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order without being corrupted!"

With only faith in a deity left in your mind… Will this affect your intelligence? Lumian observed Mr. K, gaining a deeper understanding of his state of mind and way of thinking.

Mr. K paced back and forth in front of Lumian, his excitement palpable in his voice.

“Based on the information you brought back, I now have a better understanding of the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s problems. I have a new insight into their current situation and their intentions.

“I can say you’ve completed half of the mission I assigned you. Next, you need to investigate the source of the abnormality, the exact timeline, and their roadmap for inciting the riot.

“If they find a way to enter Fourth Epoch Trier or a passageway, you must inform me immediately. Don’t let them succeed.”

Mr. K pondered for a few seconds and said, “The first option is to take out my finger and ignite it. As long as the environment isn’t special, I can sense it and roughly understand the cause.

“If that doesn’t work, pray to my Lord immediately, just like this time.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed.

When the time came, he might have to try contacting Madam Magician. It seemed like he would be very busy.

After assigning the subsequent mission, Mr. K looked at Lumian in a friendly tone and asked,

“Since you’ve completed half of the mission and brought back crucial information, I can’t be stingy with the rewards. Tell me, what do you want?”

“I want a mystical item of bizarre nature. If you don’t have it, a corresponding Beyonder characteristic will do. I’ll find an Artisan to craft it myself,” Lumian answered without hesitation.

Mr. K let out a chuckle.

“You deserve that. Come back in three days. I’ll give you a few choices, or I’ll offer what I think suits you best.”

“Thank you, Mr. K,” Lumian expressed his sincere gratitude.

This was much more generous than what the Iron and Blood Cross Order offered!

“It’s not me you should be thanking, but the Lord,” Mr. K replied with a smile.

Helpless, Lumian drew the cross again. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Praise be to you, the creator of all things. Praise be to you, who carries the burdens of the world’s sins.”

Mr. K chimed in, praising the True Creator.

“Unfortunately, our Aurora Order doesn’t have things like godfathers or godchildren. Otherwise, I’d be more than willing to baptize you again.”

Why do so many people express their admiration by wanting to be someone else’s father? Lumian found it amusing.

…

In high spirits after Mr. K’s assurance, Lumian made his way back to Auberge du Coq Doré. He headed straight to the basement bar and ordered a glass of the unique textured distilled lemon liquor. As he chatted with the others, he found amusement in Charlie’s return, spreading all sorts of rumors.

Meanwhile, intermittent singing and clapping rhythms filled the air, creating a lively atmosphere that lasted until the early hours of the morning. When the customers, who had to work at dawn, finally departed to their residences, the bar quieted down.

Lumian realized he had been spending too many nights at Auberge du Coq Doré lately, neglecting his sleep at Salle de Bal Brise. He decided it was time to balance things out and head there next.

As he left Auberge du Coq Doré and walked along Rue Anarchie, where there were no gas street lamps, he noticed a figure emerging

from the dark shadows ahead.

The person was almost as tall as Lumian, with broad shoulders and a muscular build, dressed in a linen shirt, a brown jacket, and a brownish-yellow wide-brimmed hat.

Gray hair adorned their head, and dark eyes stared intently. The man's hairy skin added to his rugged appearance, giving off a wild sense of beauty.

Having halted Lumian, the man, whose age was difficult to gauge from his appearance, lifted his chin slightly and inquired, "Are you Ciel Dubois?"

Do you truly think yourself worthy of addressing me by my name? Lumian contemplated responding in a similar manner, uncertain of the man's intentions, and sensing a hint of arrogance. Thus, he chose to pretend.

He asked cautiously, "And who might you be?"

The man remained composed, showing no signs of being affected. With a cold expression, he pressed on, "Tell me who the boss of your Savoie Mob is."

Chapter 294 - 294 Beyonder

294 Beyonder

You don't even know who's running the show for our Savoie Mob? And you're coming to me with this question? You must be clueless about the real deal. Our Boss is the Commanding Officer of the secret organization called the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and we're just a small part of the whole setup, Lumian thought, sliding his right hand into his pocket.

He quickly considered three possibilities.

First, Gardner Martin used the Savoie Mob for his secret missions, like smuggling some bizarre stuff through "Rat" Christo. Having been detected by someone or some faction, they now wanted to dig into the mob and expose the mastermind behind it.

Second, some members of the Savoie Mob must have offended the wrong people, and now the consequences were knocking at their door.

Third, after the Poison Spur Mob got wiped out, the Savoie Mob expanded rapidly, attracting attention from certain factions.

Lumian quickly dismissed the first two options. Whether it was some secret getting leaked or someone causing offense, he wasn't going to be the one facing questions about the identity of the Savoie Mob's Boss!

Usually, whoever did something secretive would get a visit from the investigators. Similarly, if someone offended another, they'd be targeted, or the leader shielding them. Lumian had never truly been involved in the Savoie Mob's clandestine affairs, nor had he recently defended any subordinates.

The person standing across from him was directly probing about the identity of the Savoie Mob's Boss. It wasn't about which individual belonged to the mob or some specific incident in the past. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Based on this, Lumian strongly suspected that some faction or individual had taken an interest in the Savoie Mob and planned to incorporate them.

Of course, he couldn't dismiss the possibility that a rival mob had teamed up with a powerful being to seek help in taking down the Savoie Mob's Boss.

Yet, in either case, they seemed to have a shallow understanding of the Savoie Mob. They didn't even know the superficial identity of Gardner Martin. All they knew was the most famous member of the mob in recent times. They had just asked about him and paid him a "visit."

In other words, they are treating the Savoie Mob as a regional mob with only a few Beyonders. Sending real powerhouses to deal with such a mob is clearly impractical, and they probably can't afford to hire them either. Even a Mid-Sequence Beyonder is highly esteemed; it doesn't go beyond Sequence 6. Lumian made this rough judgment in just a couple of seconds.

Seeing Lumian remaining silent and not reaching for his weapon, the tall man with bushy hair, dark eyes, and a brownish-yellow wide-brimmed hat let out a cold snort. His expression and eyes revealed a clear sense of danger.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt the darkness around him grow heavier, swallowing up the faint glow of distant street lamps and the crimson moonlight from the sky.

The darkness condensed like frost, slowly but firmly seeping into Lumian's skin, flesh, and bones, causing an uncontrollable fear to well up within him.

Is that all? Lumian, who had been through major situations before, scoffed inwardly.

Gazing at the muscular man with gray hair, donning a linen shirt and a brown jacket, Lumian feigned a twinge of fear and blurted out, “It’s Gardner Martin! Gardner Martin, a member of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce!”

The man nodded, pleased, and pressed on, “Where does he usually reside?”

“Lion” Ciel, the ruthless, crazed, and powerful mob leader, is no different from other mobsters!

They only know how to bully the weak and rely on their mob’s backing to take on rival mobs. When facing genuinely formidable foes and simple dark-type spells, their timidity and cowardice become evident!

Lumian swallowed hard and managed to say, “He lives at 11 Rue des Fontaines.”

At that moment, Lumian shook himself out of his daze.

“Let me tell you, our boss is a member of a secret organization. His strength is even more terrifying than you can imagine!”

A member of a secret organization? The broad-shouldered man was momentarily taken aback before breaking into a smile.

This was truly an unexpected windfall!

“Lion” Ciel is even more timid than I thought. He even spilled such vital information!

The man lifted his chin and sneered with a deep voice, “Well, did I mention that I, too, am part of a secret organization? A very ancient one.”

With those words, the surrounding darkness seemed to tighten its grip.

Really? I can’t quite tell… Lumian pondered the idea of luring this man and the faction behind him to confront the Boss. He wanted to see what would happen when the two secret organizations clashed,

hoping to expose more of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's secrets.

After a brief silence, Lumian couldn't bear the weight of the darkness any longer. His right hand and arm, tucked into his pocket, trembled slightly.

"I don't know, I don't know. The Boss didn't tell us the exact name!"

The man scrutinized Lumian for a few seconds and concluded that he shouldn't know the details of the secret organization.

For a regional mob like theirs, the Boss is at most a member of some secret society.

The man couldn't help but smirk sinisterly.

"Then take me to 11 Rue des Fontaines."

As soon as he spoke, he lunged at Lumian, moving with such speed that he left afterimages.

Almost simultaneously, his nails shot out, long and sharp, flickering with a metallic light that exuded a dark sheen.

Yet, Lumian showed no fear, offered no resistance, and didn't panic. He also moved to evade the attack, all while extending his right hand from the depths of his pocket.

In his hand, he held a blazing white fireball the size of a fist, sending it hurtling toward his assailant like a gift.

Fireball… Blazing white… The man with short gray hair on his face and the back of his hands found himself too close to turn around due to his speed. As these thoughts raced through his mind, he collided with the condensed, blazing-white fireball.

Boom!

Amidst the muffled explosion, the man's abdomen burst into a bloody mess, emitting a distinct charred smell.

After the other party inquired about the Savoie Mob's boss, Lumian

discreetly tucked his right hand into his pocket. However, it wasn't to draw a weapon or guard against attacks. Instead, he used his clothes as cover to steadily conjure crimson flames in his palm. Layer by layer, he compressed them to their utmost, turning the flames into a blazing white. The explosive power was on par with a Giant Fireball, but even more concentrated, capable of burning through skin.

If the enemy's speed hadn't exceeded Lumian's expectations, he would have had a high chance of witnessing the enemy's neck exploding upon impact.

Amidst the rumbling, the man was sent flying, and Lumian was affected by the aftershocks, stumbling backward and tumbling a few times.

Both of them got up simultaneously. Lumian's shirt and vest bore burn marks, and many parts of his skin were damaged.

He saw an irregular, gaping wound on the man's abdomen, with blood-stained intestines flowing out and being stuffed back into place. The surface was marked with fractures and charred spots.

Despite the severe injury, the man didn't lose mobility. As he pressed his abdomen to prevent his intestines and other internal organs from spilling out, he let out a low growl of pain, anger, and violence.

Accompanied by the growl, short gray fur sprouted from his body, transforming him into a towering wolf.

His severed intestines began to writhe, attempting to reconnect. His charred skin slowly healed, and he forcefully closed the huge crack in his abdomen with his palm. Flesh and blood intertwined, bit by bit.

What potent vitality… Lumian sighed from the bottom of his heart at the sight.

He realized that given enough time, the other party would likely recover!

The other party's behavior and state reminded Lumian of a few passages recorded in Aurore's grimoires:

“Werewolf, a Sequence 7 of the Prisoner pathway, a category under Mutants. During the full moon or when they nearly lose control of their emotions, they will be controlled by their bloodthirsty and murderous desires, involuntarily transforming into a true werewolf.

“They possess terrifying strength, agility, and speed, and their self-recovery abilities are outstanding. Their claws and teeth are sturdy and sharp, and they are venomous. They are equivalent to Beyonder weapons of the same Sequence, capable of destroying thinner steel plates.

“They also know a few dark-type spells, capable of turning ordinary humans into puppet monsters with short lives.

“Werewolves often appear in the Southern Continent. They are often associated with various terrorist activities in the Northern Continent…”

I actually encountered a Werewolf Beyonder… Lumian didn’t give the other party time to recover from his injuries. Crimson Fire Ravens materialized behind him, spiraling towards their target.

The Werewolf didn’t sit idle either. Clutching his stomach to suppress the wound, he approached Lumian with extraordinary speed.

Most of the Fire Ravens’ initial lock-on missed, but a few made minor changes in direction and landed on the target one after another, causing continuous rumbling.

The Werewolf suffered several more wounds, leaving him charred and blood-red.

Relying on his potent recovery abilities, he swiftly closed the distance between him and Lumian, disregarding his injuries. He intended to engage in close combat with the Pyromaniac, who excelled in spells, and tear him to pieces with his sharp and venomous claws.

At some point, the darkness around Lumian further encroached on him, causing him to feel an eerie chill on this summer night and slightly affecting him.

In an instant, crimson flames erupted from his body, enveloping him

in scorching warmth.

The very next second, Lumian turned around and fled, dodging the Werewolf's claws.

This made the Werewolf, whose mind was filled with bloodthirsty and murderous desires, feel his adversary's fear. He believed that his target had already gone all out and lacked experience in such battles.

He chased after him and caught up to Lumian in a few swift strides.

Chapter 295 - 295 Brains Are Important

295 Brains Are Important

Sensing the swipe that carried the scent of blood and char behind him, Lumian swiftly pivoted and darted into the alley leading to Rue du Rossignol.

The Werewolf's pitch-black eyes were bloodshot, and his severe injuries fueled his anger and desire to kill, overpowering most of his thoughts. He forcefully turned around and sprinted into the alley after Lumian.

Seeing Lumian vault over a barricade up ahead, he followed suit and leaped up as well.

In the next instant, he caught sight of an uncovered entrance to the sewers. Iron-black stairs led straight into the depths.

Lumian deftly stepped on the edge of the sewer entrance and jumped over the "natural" trap.

Bam! The Werewolf crashed into the sewers, finding himself halfway in. His wounds worsened, and his head spun.

Lumian seized the moment to turn around and conjure crimson Fire Ravens, sending them spiraling towards the Werewolf, who was stuck at the sewers entrance.

Amidst a muffled rumble, the crimson flaming ravens engulfed the area, setting the Werewolf's gray fur on fire, scorching patches of his skin, and tearing more flesh.

The Werewolf exerted strength with both hands and finally managed

to leap out of the sewers. Lumian took the opportunity to flee, having successfully dealt a blow.

The Werewolf grew even angrier. All he wanted was to tear Lumian apart and spill his innards to the street dogs.

With a swoosh, Lumian, who had rushed to the alley exit, turned at high speed and sprinted to the left.

The Werewolf caught up in a few strides and followed the target's escape route.

However, a nearly one-meter tall barricade emerged in the darkness ahead of him. Lumian, already prepared, reached out and pressed down, using the situation to somersault and jump over.

The Werewolf realized it too late and didn't have time for other strategies. He could only choose between hastily jumping up or crashing straight into the barricade.

Exerting strength in his legs, he attempted to leap to the top of the barricade, but his forward momentum couldn't be stopped. Before he could fully ascend, his feet caught onto the obstacle.

Thud!

The Werewolf tumbled off the barricade; his fall made him see stars.

Lumian halted once more. With one hand in his pocket, he gazed at the enemy.

Around him, a new wave of Fire Ravens condensed and flew towards the base of the barricade. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

The Werewolf tried his best to roll, but he was still struck by at least ten flaming ravens. The wound on his abdomen, which no longer had pressure on it, reopened, and blood-colored intestines flowed out.

Only then did the Werewolf realize that he had fallen into the other party's trap. He regained some of his rationality and assessed his weak body and unstable condition.

He extinguished the flames over his body and struggled to his feet, attempting to escape.

At that moment, Lumian's mocking voice echoed in his ears.

"Didn't your mommy tell you not to fight in an environment familiar to Hunters? You actually dared to pursue me on Rue Anarchie and the surrounding areas. I can only say that brains are important, but you don't have any."

The Werewolf's mind buzzed, and he became abnormally infuriated.

He willingly sacrificed his rationality and erupted with desire, bolstering his body in all aspects.

He had become a Lunatic!

He pursued Lumian once more.

Occasionally, Lumian would abruptly halt and counterattack. Other times, he would sneak under a stone statue's arm from a corner. When the Werewolf slammed into an obstacle, Lumian would turn around and unleash a volley of crimson Fire Ravens. Sometimes, he would feign entering Underground Trier but lie in ambush, waiting for the incoming attack.

As the pursuit continued, the Werewolf finally reached his limit, his body teetering on the brink of collapse.

Regaining his senses from his frenzied state, he felt a strong premonition of danger. All he wanted was to leave this area and escape Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

At that moment, Lumian halted, as if he had sensed something. He turned around and smiled.

He watched as the Werewolf fled much slower than before while condensing a blazing white spear in his hand.

Lumian swung his body and hurled the flaming spear.

A blazing white stream of light streaked through the air, piercing the

Werewolf's ravaged body, pinning him to the ground, and setting him ablaze.

Amidst the sudden blaze, Lumian walked toward the enemy with one hand in his pocket.

Crimson Fire Ravens materialized behind him, whistling and spiraling as they approached the Werewolf. They burrowed into his wounds, destroying his heart, lungs, and other organs.

By the time Lumian reached his target, the Mutant was no longer breathing—he was dead.

His eyes were wide open, filled with regret and fear.

Why'd you have to attack me? If you needed something, you could've just gone to the Boss of our Savoie Mob, couldn't you? Lumian shook his head while looking down at the Werewolf. Did you plan on turning me into a puppet for the assassination of Gardner Martin? Did you really think so low of mobsters? Your confidence made you arrogant.

Earlier, Lumian prepared for a tough battle. He had even prepared for a Sequence 6. His escape route was always near Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Once there, he could get Franca's attention and have her secretly use the enemy's blood to cast a fatal curse.

Lumian considered using the explosion caused by a fireball on Avenue du Marché to create a commotion and scare the enemy away if capturing the target proved difficult even with teamwork.

But the enemy's madness and desire to kill made Lumian doubt if he could think rationally and end the battle quickly to escape the pursuit of official Beyonders. He himself had to hold on until dawn arrived.

Squatting down, Lumian searched the Werewolf's clothes, finding only 3 verl d'or coins, burnt banknotes, and a wallet without anything useful.

Have you never considered bribing me? Do you only want to rely on

your strength to intimidate me? Lumian cursed, his heart aching.

He wasn't too disappointed as he knew the chances of this Werewolf being a bestowed were slim. Soon, it could secrete a Sequence 7 Beyonder characteristic that included Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 Beyonder characteristics, worth 30,000 to 40,000 verl d'or, or even more. He could use it to complement the Shadow Branch, create mystical items, or exchange it for more suitable Beyonder characteristics.

Considering the relatively weak explosions he caused, Lumian didn't linger on the street. After briefly dealing with the Werewolf's corpse, he picked him up and brought him to the back door of Salle de Bal Brise.

Sarkota and the other members of the Savoie Mob were no strangers to destroying corpses, quickly placing the body inside a bag and sending people to clean up the blood along the way.

Lumian tossed the body bag into the carriage belonging to Salle de Bal Brise, fully intending to find Gardner Martin that very night.

During the journey, he opened the body bag several times and finally noticed a blackish-green light secreting from the corpse, which merged with a sharp canine fang.

After a few seconds, Lumian had obtained this strange black-green fang.

After a moment's consideration, he decided to keep the fang in the body bag and see what Gardner Martin would do.

Based on the Commanding Officer's behavior, Lumian knew he would undoubtedly reward him when the time came. He might hand over the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic, switch it to another one, or purchase it at market value.

In any case, Lumian was ready to be honest about it.

Around 1 a.m., Salle de Bal Brise's carriage stopped at 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. Lumian unceremoniously pulled the rope beside the iron fence door, causing

the chimes to reverberate through the grayish-white three-story villa.

Before long, a valet of Southern Continent descent arrived and opened the door, though he looked displeased at being woken up. When he saw Lumian's charred and tattered clothes and the body bag he dragged behind him, his attitude changed to that of a courteous servant.

Lumian brought the body bag into the villa and saw Faustino, the butler, who was also a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

After tying his bow tie, Faustino stared at Lumian and the body bag for a few seconds before asking in surprise, "What's this?"

"A strange fellow," Lumian replied with a smile.

Faustino didn't inquire further and led Lumian into the activity room on the first floor.

There, Gardner Martin, donning a dark-blue silk robe, sat in a recliner and asked with a smile, "Who's in the body bag? For you to rush here overnight, it doesn't seem simple."

Lumian untied the body bag and dumped the Werewolf's corpse and the strange black-green fang onto the carpet in the activity room.

Gardner Martin's expression turned serious at a single glance.

"A Werewolf…"

Lumian chuckled. "He came to me to inquire about the identity of the Boss of our Savoie Mob. He even wanted to control me and turn me into a puppet."

Gardner Martin nodded slowly and said, "And?"

"And then?" Lumian raised his eyebrows and replied with a smile, "Then I killed him."

Upon hearing this, Faustino, the butler standing beside the Commanding Officer, glanced at the Werewolf's corpse on the ground and then at Lumian, whose clothes were clearly charred and torn. His

expression was no longer calm and composed.

Gardner Martin's eyes narrowed. After a few seconds of silence, he sighed and said, "Unfortunately, you don't know how to channel spirits; we missed out on a lot of information."

Lumian wanted to say, "Perhaps I need a mystical item that can channel spirits," but he was worried that it would take up a portion of the reward and cause the Shadow Branch to lose its match.

Gardner Martin continued, "I'll arrange for follow-up investigations and responses. Don't worry about this for the time being. I'll inform you when you need to carry out your mission."

"What's he up to? He doesn't seem simple." Lumian glanced at the Werewolf's corpse and deliberately expressed his confusion.

Gardner Martin shook his head.

"I can't be sure yet." He then looked at Lumian and asked with a smile, "Do you want this Werewolf fang or something else?"

"What are the choices?" Lumian didn't hold back.

Chapter 296 - 296 Request

296 Request

Gardner Martin was well accustomed to Lumian's straightforwardness. He gave a slight nod and said, "If you want a quick trade, I have three items of equal value to the Werewolf fang."

"The first is the Shadow Bracelet, a mystical item that lets you conceal yourself within larger shadows. It can summon a Shadow Servant with a few special abilities and can bring shadows to life to restrain targets to some extent.

"It's a foreboding item. More than a third of those who've used it have gone mad, while another third mysteriously disappeared without it, never to be seen again. Many of those who remain seem fine, but they often complain of tinnitus and hallucinate sounds. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"In recent years, unless there are special circumstances, no one has dared to use this mystical item."

Lumian expressed his confusion through his gaze: Then why are you offering it to me? Do I look like a lunatic or an idiot to you?

Gardner Martin smiled and explained, "I'm one of the few people who hasn't encountered problems with the Shadow Bracelet. I know a way to weaken its negative effects, but I can only tell you if you choose it."

When did you start hallucinating that there's nothing wrong with you? Lumian suppressed his concerns and held his tongue.

He thought that Gardner Martin, who had been corrupted by the abnormality at 13 Avenue du Marché, might not be any better than those who had gone mad or disappeared mysteriously.

According to Madam Magician's description of corruption, the person standing before him might not be the same Gardner Martin as before.

Gardner Martin glanced at Lumian and smiled. "Actually, there's no need to be so reserved in front of me. That won't make you seem like a Hunter who hasn't advanced to Sequence 6. If you say something that might 'provoke' me, I'll probably just respond with sarcasm. Look, isn't Albus still alive and well?"

"Yes, CO Sir," Lumian replied, not revealing the secrets that couldn't be disclosed to the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Gardner Martin got up from his recliner and continued, "The second item is a Beyonder characteristic left behind by a Spirit Medium. Do you know what Beyonder characteristics are?"

Lumian answered calmly, "Killing a Beyonder creature will yield one of the main ingredients for concocting a potion. Killing a Beyonder will definitely yield the corresponding items, just like the transparent golden-red ball from 'Hammer' Ait and this Werewolf fang."

"I believe these are Beyonder characteristics. They all correspond to a potion. There's no need to gather additional main ingredients, right?"

Gardner Martin nodded approvingly. "That's right. Your judgment is accurate."

Gardner Martin didn't go into detail about the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, as if he believed it involved many secrets Lumian couldn't grasp at the moment.

With his hands clasped behind his back, Gardner Martin paced in front of the unlit fireplace.

"Spirit Medium. From its name, you can roughly guess the abilities of the mystical item created from it. Of course, what you obtain depends on an Artisan's ability.

"If I'm not mistaken, it should be an Eye of Death, allowing one to disguise as a zombie and endure the effects of decay, cold, death, and other auras. It can also identify the weaknesses of undead creatures and directly communicate with natural spirits and various undead

creatures in the real world, using them for various magical effects. If you're lucky enough, you might even have all of those abilities.

"Try not to carry this Beyonder characteristic with you. Otherwise, you'll become the target of surrounding natural spirits and undead creatures. You'll never know when you might suffer a bizarre attack."

Impressive as it sounds, it's somewhat similar to a Contractee—relying on other creatures to gain strength… Lumian pondered for a few seconds and asked, "And the third?"

Gardner Martin settled back into his recliner.

"It's also a Beyonder characteristic. If you carry it, you'll find yourself rather lucky. This will be reflected in the details of various matters.

"The corresponding Sequence name is Lucky One, but you have to remember that reveling in luck is often a precursor to disaster. Also, it might allow you to see things you shouldn't see."

Sequence 7 of the Monster pathway? Lumian recalled the contents of Aurore's grimoires.

The Monster pathway, also known as the Fate pathway, was a pathway known for its high spiritual perception and close connection to fate.

Lumian chuckled and said, "The Lucky One ultimately transformed into a Beyonder characteristic in an unlucky manner? What an ironic joke."

Gardner Martin agreed. "Don't underestimate bad luck, and don't rely on luck. Otherwise, you may also become a Beyonder characteristic."

"Very philosophical." Lumian took note of the words filled with experience and lessons learned.

He carefully recalled Gardner Martin's introduction and realized that he wasn't stingy with information about the corresponding Sequences.

Merely the descriptions of the abilities of a Spirit Medium and Lucky

One could fetch a good price at many mystical gatherings.

Gardner Martin pointed at the blackish-green fang on the ground.

“It’s a Werewolf Beyonder characteristic. Once transformed into a mystical item, it should provide powerful self-healing abilities, allow transformation into a werewolf, and grant a short burst of power at the expense of rationality.

“But, as you saw, Werewolves are always affected by killing and bloodlust. During the full moon or Blood Moon, there’s the latent danger of losing your mind and control.

“Have you decided which item to choose? If you choose the Beyonder characteristics, I can help you contact an Artisan and assist with the production fee. It’s the reward you deserve for your contribution tonight.”

Is the Artisan you’re hiring a Saint? How will you react if you discover that I’m hiding a Shadow Branch? Lumian wondered, seriously considering his options.

First, he eliminated the Shadow Bracelet, suspected to be a mystical item of Mr. K’s pathway. Mr. K might offer similar but better options in his rewards soon. Besides, the negative effects of the Shadow Bracelet were too perilous. Even if Gardner Martin claimed he could weaken them, Lumian didn’t dare take the risk.

Most importantly, such a risk was pointless.

A Spirit Medium can compensate for my shortcomings, but it doesn’t complement the Shadow Branch. I can’t create a mystical item with the effect of lingering human-ghost emotions. Yes, some characteristics overlap with a Contractee…

Lucky One can make the Shadow Branch always trigger suitable desires? The Werewolf’s rationality sacrifice and the influence of being murderous and bloodthirsty are quite compatible with the Shadow Branch. I wonder what kind of mystical item it would produce…

After careful consideration that spanned a few minutes, Lumian made

his decision.

“I want Lucky One.”

The main reason he gave up the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic was its potential negative effect of losing rationality.

Others might find ways to reduce the impact, using it only when facing enemies or avoiding certain lunar phases. But Lumian couldn’t take that risk. Losing his mind even once could lead to Termiboros exploiting him and causing the seal to lose its balance.

Furthermore, he belonged to the Inevitability domain as a Beyonder in some way. In the future, when he reached a higher Sequence, he might be able to enhance the mystical item’s effects through the Lucky One trait.

As for seeing things he shouldn’t, Lumian already had the Mystery Prying Glasses, so having something similar didn’t bother him.

Gardner Martin seemed surprised. He had expected Lumian to choose between the Spirit Medium Beyonder characteristic and Shadow Bracelet.

However, he quickly composed himself and didn’t inquire further. With a smile, he said, “Humans are obsessed with good luck.”

The Boss of the Savoie Mob, Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, briefly left the activity room and went upstairs.

A few minutes later, he returned with a transparent glass jar, once used to hold sweets.

Inside the jar lay a mercury-colored eyeball, swiveling left and right as if it were alive.

“To carry and store it, place it in a narrow dark space,” Gardner Martin instructed as he wrapped the jar in black cloth.

Handing the item to Lumian, he added, “Change the jar every seven days.”

“Thank you, CO Sir.” Lumian put the glass jar containing the Lucky One Beyonder characteristic into his pocket.

Gardner Martin didn’t wonder why Lumian didn’t ask him to contact an Artisan. The true effects of a mystical item were something the wielder wanted to keep as secret as possible. Seeking an unknown Artisan was more conducive to secrecy.

Just as these thoughts crossed his mind, Lumian brought up the matter himself.

“CO Sir, I’d like to exchange the free Artisan service for other rewards.”

Curious, Gardner Martin asked, “What reward do you desire?”

A grin crept across Lumian’s face. “Help me find someone.”

“Who?” Gardner Martin had a hunch.

Lumian’s expression turned serious.

“Guillaume Bénet.

“Since you know I’m from Cordu, you must have seen the padre’s wanted poster.

“I’ve been tracking him, hoping to apprehend the heretic who caused disaster for me. I just received information that he might appear in Quartier de la Princesse Rouge next week. I’d like to request your assistance in locating him, CO Sir.”

Gardner Martin burst into laughter.

“I thought you wanted to handle it yourself, enduring pain, tracking alone, and seeking revenge in secret.

“Nicely done. You’ve learned to leverage an organization’s strength sooner than I expected. That’s something a Hunter must understand.

“I agree to your request.”

Chapter 297 - 297 Informant Contract

297 Informant Contract

On his way back to the market district, Lumian leaned against the carriage wall, pondering the whole situation once more. He realized he had overlooked a problem.

A Sequence 7 mysteriously vanishes during a relatively simple mission, and it is now suspected to be dead. Would the secret organization behind him just pretend that nothing had happened?

Would they realize the truth tonight and launch an investigation?

As a Conspirer, there's no way the Boss wouldn't have thought of this. Yet, he didn't warn me and allowed me to go home alone… Is he using me as bait?

Yes, the secret organization behind the Werewolf might not take action tonight. As long as they keep their wits about them, they should realize that their missing subordinate is a huge problem. It seems the Savoie Mob is not as simple as it appears. If I were in their shoes, I'd hold back for a while until further events unfold. Then, I'd use the chaos to figure out the true situation of the Savoie Mob.

Of course, if they have an angel's protection and can get Him to temporarily descend upon Salle de Bal Brise, they can do whatever they want…

Now that I think about it, although that Werewolf was arrogant, he wasn't that stupid or reckless. He's just average. He must have captured some ordinary members of the Savoie Mob beforehand and roughly figured out the situation of the few leaders before targeting the leader who recently joined the Savoie Mob—me. Logically

speaking, I wouldn't have been involved in the Savoie Mob's core matters. I wouldn't know many secrets, and I won't cause too many implications…

Furthermore, ordinary members of the Savoie Mob don't know that I've advanced to Pyromaniac. Judging from my recent combat records, that fellow believes he can easily handle me. In close combat, a Werewolf with stronger self-healing abilities, faster speed, greater strength, and nimble reactions, possessing claws equivalent to Beyonder weapons, is far superior to a Provoker…

By the time Lumian returned to Salle de Bal Brise, he had already sorted out the situation. He touched Mr. K's finger in his pocket and entered the room on the second floor, seemingly oblivious. He washed up and went to bed.

…

As the sun began to rise, Jenna hurriedly left 17 Rue Pasteur in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, a piece of toast in her mouth.

Last night, she had returned to visit her brother. She tossed and turned in the bed that she had shared with her mother until midnight before finally falling asleep. She woke up early in the morning, not wanting to run into her neighbors who might inquire about the wanted criminal named "Celia Bello."

It was still dark, and the streets were mostly empty. Jenna passed by the few vendors and passersby and turned into an alley near Rue Saint-Hilaire, which was even more desolate.

And then, she saw a familiar figure approaching.

He was a man with brown skin, thick lips, and light-yellow hair neatly combed. He had native blood from the Southern Continent and an inconspicuous piece of tape on the bridge of his nose. Wearing a light-colored shirt and a yellow vest, a golden Sun Sacred Emblem was pinned to his chest.

Sun Sacred Emblem… Jenna's heart skipped a beat as she remembered who he was.

He was a Beyonder from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, once responsible for protecting Hugues Artois!

Jenna instinctively wanted to turn and leave the alley, but she noticed another Beyonder from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church standing guard at the alley's exit! He too was an Eternal Blazing Sun Church Beyonder who had protected Hugues Artois!

Valentine's eyes were bluer than lake water, and his expression was cold.

Jenna stopped turning and held her breath. Her right hand rested on her waist, ready to draw her hidden revolver and dagger in an instant.

Seeing her cautious stance, Imre quickly called out, "Relax! We're not here to arrest you."

Recalling Franca's analysis about the possibility of the official Beyonders making her an informant, Jenna calmed down a bit, but still eyed Imre and Valentine warily.

Imre flashed a friendly smile and said, "We do eliminate wild Beyonders, but that doesn't mean we don't have options."

"Don't be intimidated by the rumors about the stake. This is Trier. Wild Beyonders who aren't truly sinful won't face such a fate. Of course, similar cases happen in other provinces, villages, small cities, and towns."

Jenna grew more certain of the official Beyonders' intentions. She feigned inexperience and asked, "What do you want from me?"

Imre smiled.

"We hope you can cooperate with us.

"In fact, if we hadn't deliberately let you go, you would have been arrested long ago."

Jenna pondered for a moment, thinking about how she managed to lead a peaceful life after assassinating Hugues Artois.

After a while, she asked hesitantly, “Cooperate?”

Imre smiled and nodded.

“Let me introduce myself. I’m Imre, a Purifier of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Inquisition. This is my colleague, Valentine.

“Not every wild Beyonder earns our goodwill and the chance to cooperate. We’ve looked into your situation and confirmed that you’re also a believer of God and haven’t committed any serious offenses. Moreover, after gaining superpowers, you restrained yourself and didn’t misuse your abilities, except for assassinating Hugues Artois.

“We understand your hatred and your choice. After all, he’s a heretic who deserves death. Anyone has the right to purify him on behalf of God. You must know that if we hadn’t arranged it and deliberately turned a blind eye to your actions, you wouldn’t have escaped from the member of parliament’s office.”

Jenna nodded slowly, showing that she had realized it later.

Imre continued, “Because you’re a believer who inherently stays true to yourself and doesn’t abuse your abilities, we want to invite you to be our informant and provide us with corresponding intel.

“Don’t worry, we won’t force you to betray your friends. We just want you to keep an eye out for anything that might bring disaster to the market district and Trier.”

Stay true to myself and refrain from abusing my abilities… I used to be like that in the past, barely so in the present, but will I be in the future? Jenna thought, mocking herself. She wanted to tell them that they had arrived too late, and she was no longer the same person.

After a moment’s hesitation, she said, “I also live in the market district. I’d be glad to help resolve any issues that might harm this place through you.”

She tactfully expressed her willingness to cooperate.

At that moment, Jenna felt inspired and blurted out, “I discovered

something two days ago!”

“What?” Imre glanced at his teammate Valentine in surprise.

They hadn’t expected their newly-hired informant to provide intel right away.

Jenna recounted how she’d attended a mysterious gathering where she heard about the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister’s gatekeeper. Upon accepting the corresponding commission, she described how she and her companion accidentally stumbled upon a cybernetic-eyed monk entering a nearby quarry and opening a secret cave filled with numerous human arms and legs.

Throughout the process, she kept her companion’s identity and name, as well as the time and location of the mysticism gathering, hidden.

Imre and Valentine were a mix of joy and solemnity.

They were delighted by the unexpected gain, but the peculiarity of the situation also troubled them.

“Very good. That’s the kind of cooperation we need,” Imre praised Jenna after she finished speaking.

Valentine nodded reluctantly.

It wasn’t that he didn’t see the need for such an informant; the incident with Hugues Artois had changed his perception of wild Beyonders significantly. However, he was a bit emotional as Imre could have convinced Celia Bello alone, yet he insisted on involving Valentine.

After praising the morning sun, he could have gone home to rest and enjoy breakfast with his family.

Nevertheless, Imre’s reasoning was sound.

According to the rules, it was best to have two Purifiers present when developing informants, especially Beyonders who belonged to a few pathways like Demoness.

Imre explained that over the years, many Purifiers had fallen into the trap of being seduced while developing Demonesses as informants or pursuing them. This led them to fall in love, betray the Church, and lose control amid the torment of faith.

Hence, having two Purifiers to supervise each other in such cases was essential.

Though Jenna was still an Assassin and had plenty to go before qualifying as a true Demoness of Pleasure, one couldn't be careless about such matters, especially with a rare female Assassin.

After the praise, Imre added, "Cooperation means both sides can benefit from this matter. We'll reward you accordingly based on the intel you provide. You can choose from money, materials, knowledge, weapons, and more."

Jenna hesitated for a moment before asking, "Will there be a reward for what I just said?"

"What do you want?" Imre inquired.

"The main ingredient of the Instigator potion," Jenna replied without hesitation,

having already received the potion formula from Franca.

Imre wasn't surprised. He nodded and said, "We'll discuss it after we verify the authenticity and importance of this intel."

"Alright," Jenna replied, not too disappointed as she didn't hold out much hope.

Imre produced an ordinary-looking piece of white paper with a few simple clauses written on it, outlining what he had just said.

The terms didn't demand Jenna's faith to be constantly with the Eternal Blazing Sun, but they required her not to believe in an evil god.

Being experienced, Jenna read the terms over and over again until she confirmed that there were no issues, and then she readily signed

her real name.

She watched Imre take out a fountain pen made of pure gold and sign his name. He then quickly wrote a few bright red words in the Notary position.

A sun-like glow briefly enveloped the contract before vanishing.

After bidding farewell to Imre and Valentine, Jenna headed towards Rue des Blouses Blanches.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian roused Franca from her sleep at the crack of dawn and faced her wrathful expression as he recounted the Werewolf incident.

Franca swiftly focused her mind and mumbled contemplatively, “If there’s a follow-up investigation, the one you’ll face will either be Zombie or Wraith. I’m more inclined to believe the latter.”

“Huh?” Lumian was bewildered.

Franca explained matter-of-factly, “They are Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 of the Prisoner pathway.”

Lumian sighed, still puzzled, and commented, “You seem to know this pathway quite well.”

“Of course.” Franca chuckled. “In the whole world, besides a few Prisoner pathway Beyonders, the rest belong to two factions. One is the Southern Continent’s terrorist organization, the Rose School of Thought, that I mentioned earlier, and the other is…” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

At this point, she paused, teasing Lumian deliberately. After a few seconds, she revealed, “Mr. Fool’s Church.”

Chapter 298 - 298 Rose School of Thought

298 Rose School of Thought

Mr. Fool's Church? Lumian was both surprised and unsurprised by the answer.

He hadn't expected the Church of The Fool to have a large number of Beyonders from the Prisoner pathway, but he figured that, according to the Bible's description, it wasn't too surprising for anyone from any pathway to appear.

Franca smiled and began to explain in detail, "Actually, the Prisoner pathway Beyonders of the Rose School of Thought and the Prisoner pathway Beyonders of the Church of The Fool were originally one."

"They later fractured?" Lumian hazarded a guess.

Franca confirmed tersely. "The Rose School of Thought is an incredibly ancient organization, boasting a history stretching back over two millennia, even predating the Fourth Epoch—prior to the Cataclysm."

Over 2,000 years old… Lumian was astonished.

When he learned that the Iron and Blood Cross Order had been established only 200 to 300 years ago, he had considered it ancient. But compared to the Rose School of Thought, the Iron and Blood Cross Order seemed like a child who hadn't even attended compulsory education.

Franca continued, "The Rose School of Thought was originally an orthodox organization in the Southern Continent. It ruled the Paz Valley and Star Highlands, where the government and the church

were one, until the invasion of the Northern Continent's countries."

"When the invasion occurred, they lost their country and went underground, becoming clandestine. On the one hand, they resisted the colonists and attempted to expel them from the Southern Continent. On the other hand, they frequently caused terrorist acts in the Northern Continent. Heh heh, this actually had no effect on their resistance to colonization. Instead, it incurred the hatred of the people of various countries. Of course, their primary goal might not be this. Perhaps it's purely for blood sacrifice and certain rituals."

"How did they fracture?" Lumian was more concerned about this question.

Franca leisurely paced two steps in the living room.

"The Rose School of Thought has held different beliefs for ages. Their core principle revolves around the notion that willpower is born from diverse desires, capable of reshaping reality and achieving incredible feats. Yet, there's a divide in how they approach these desires.

"Some adhere to indulgence, embracing passionate cravings at all times, even resorting to bloody or primitive sacrificial rituals to bolster their willpower. On the other hand, the temperance faction, working from the potions' names, advocates for suppressing desires, keeping them pent up within their hearts, only unleashing them during critical moments to unleash formidable forces.

"Hence, one faction is known for indulgence, while the other is the temperance faction."

Prisoner… Lumian silently echoed the name of Sequence 9 potion and pondered. "I reckon the temperance faction has got it right."

"Any sensible person would think the same. After all, the body is like a cage for the heart, and the world is a cage for the body. Madness must be curbed, and desires must be reined in," Franca sneered. "But there'll always be a few with a few screws loose. After indulgence, all that's left is madness. They'll barely be able to retain their basic faculties."

No wonder the Werewolf reacted that way… It seems he truly belongs to the Rose School of Thought… If the others in their ranks share his mindset, it only confirms their strength. Surviving to this day without wit would demand remarkable strength… Lumian's thoughts carried both mockery and vigilance.

Franca gazed out the window, watching the daylight grow brighter, and spoke, "In the beginning, the indulgence faction and the temperance faction barely tolerated each other. If you ignore me, I won't meddle with you or the people you protect. But later, the indulgence faction started claiming that the Chained God, whom both factions believe in, is actually the embodiment of some evil god."

Some evil god… Giving in to desires… Lumian's brow furrowed as he sought confirmation.

"Mother Tree of Desire?"

"Yes," Franca smiled. "Someone you know, or rather, a deity you know."

No, I don't want to know Her at all… The Rose School of Thought actually believes in the Mother Tree of Desire. The Werewolf's investigation of the Savoie Mob's information seems more complicated than I suspected… Does the Bliss Society have any connection to the Rose School of Thought? Or do they withhold such information? Lumian fell deep into thought.

Franca sighed sincerely and said, "Powers related to desire can be quite useful, but why can't they be used for the right purpose?"

"Blame it on the evil god?" Lumian cautioned his companion. "It's best if you don't try."

Franca smiled sheepishly and said, "I still know what I can try and what I shouldn't. I understand the dangers posed by evil gods better than you."

"Yes, later on, the indulgence faction launched a surprise attack on the temperance faction and inflicted severe injuries. The remaining members of the temperance faction fled in a sorry state and were

hunted down for a long time until they found protection under Mr. Fool."

"I've heard that Saint Sharron from Mr. Fool's Church was once a member of the temperance faction. Likewise for the Angel of the Holy Spirit beside Mr. Fool's throne…"

The indulgence faction is terrifyingly powerful to be able to hunt down the angel-led temperance faction and send them scurrying. There's no doubt they have angels, and not just one… And Mr. Fool's Church can protect the temperance faction… After hearing this, Lumian gained a rough understanding of the Rose School of Thought's history. He grew more confident in the Church of The Fool's strength and associated some of the names from the Bible with significant figures in reality.

Simultaneously, he understood why the Knight of Swords, the other holder of a Minor Arcana card, intended to blow up the Rose School of Thought's weapons warehouse.

"Heh heh, should we stop calling it the Rose School of Thought? Can't we just call it the School of Indulgence?" Lumian taunted.

Franca replied in amusement, "What a lame name! Do you think every secret organization is as uncreative as the Iron and Blood Cross Order?"

As they chatted, they heard Jenna's familiar gait approaching.

Jenna opened the door and was taken aback to find Lumian standing there.

"Something happened to him last night," Franca explained.

"What happened?" Jenna scrutinized Lumian but found no signs of injury.

Franca briefly recounted the Werewolf and Rose School of Thought, leaving out the deep connection that tied her, Lumian, and the Church of The Fool.

The more Jenna listened, the more alarmed she became. She felt that

a Sequence 9 was nothing in the world of mysticism.

Her determination to become an Instigator as soon as possible grew stronger.

After the discussion, Franca added, “I’ll briefly explain the situation of Zombie and the Wraith so you don’t rush forward without knowing anything or sense the abnormality without realizing it. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Compared to Werewolf, a Zombie’s greatest transformation is their steel-like sturdiness. They’re unafraid of fire, bullets, or cannonballs. You need to hit the same spot more than five times in a row to break through their defenses. As Zombies, as long as their heads remain intact, they are not in danger.

“They have also mastered decomposition, frost, and death-type spells that can awaken and control ghosts and corpses.

“A Wraith can freely transform into a specter. They no longer have a physical body and are unafraid of physical damage. Their spellcasting abilities are significantly improved. They can even forcefully possess you, taking control of your body and making you kill yourself.

“After entering the Wraith state, they can traverse different mirrors and use them to conceal themselves. Even if you activate your Spirit Vision, it’s almost impossible to see them directly.

“If you encounter something similar to a poltergeist, you mustn’t be careless. You have to consider the possibility of dealing with a true Wraith.”

Lumian listened attentively and pondered before saying, “Are attacks targeting the spirit more effective against Zombies and Wraiths?”

“Yes, I recommend the abilities of the Sun domain,” Franca said with a chuckle. “However, I suggest that you run if you can when facing such an enemy. If you can’t, seek help quickly.”

Lumian never found it embarrassing to ask for help. As he expressed his agreement, he proposed a new idea.

“They’re all members of the indulgence faction. Wouldn’t it be better to deal with them using an ability to influence desires?”

If that was the case, the mystical item made from Shadow Branch would come in handy.

Lumian had yet to contact Madam Magician. He planned to wait for Mr. K to reward him before deciding which domain’s Beyonder characteristic to match the Shadow Branch.

“In theory, yes, but it might have the opposite effect,” Franca warned him.

After discussing the Rose School of Thought, Jenna recounted how she had been recruited as an informant and provided information about the Deep Valley Cloister.

Franca genuinely felt happy for her.

“That’s right. This way, you’ll have a fixed source for resources, but the officials are very strict about key items. You can’t rely on them completely.”

Lumian hadn’t expected Valentine to be in the market district as well. He was concerned about his lack of necessary disguises. The Mystery Prying Glasses could only be used at critical moments.

After some thought, he said to Jenna, “Showing your devotion to the Eternal Blazing Sun in front of a Purifier will yield unexpected gains.”

“You seem very experienced.” Jenna’s eyes darted around, sensing that Ciel held many secrets.

…

Leaving 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Lumian strolled back to Salle de Bal Brise.

The more he delved into secret organizations, the more he sensed his lack of knowledge about mysticism.

Lumian sipped a glass of absinthe and settled into his office.

Just as he was about to find a more comfortable position, starlight oozed forth, forming a dazzling and dreamy door.

The door swung open, and Madam Magician emerged. Today, she sported a beige shirt, a brownish-yellow dress, and dark brown leather boots.

What's the matter? Lumian rose to his feet.

Madam Magician grinned and replied, "The friend I mentioned earlier, the one who can help you decipher the symbolic elements, has finished his recent work and is on a short vacation. I'll take you to him now."

Lumian responded with unusual excitement, "Alright!"

Chapter 299 - 299 Interpretation

299 Interpretation

Lumian had been eagerly waiting for the dream symbols to be interpreted so that he could get enough clues before meeting with Padre Guillaume Bénet.

Only then could he effectively interrogate his target.

This time, when Madam Magician placed her hand on his shoulder, the usual layers of saturated colors and strange creatures were absent.

Instead, he felt a surge of starlight before finding himself in a distorted and concealed dark tunnel. His spirit and body seemed in chaos, unsure if he was moving forward, retreating, or simultaneously ascending and descending.

The state lasted briefly, but Lumian couldn't grasp the duration accurately, as if time had slipped from his grasp temporarily.

When he returned to his senses, he almost suspected that he was at Salle de Bal Brise just a moment ago, and in the next instant, he had arrived at his destination.

Before him lay a primitive forest, its dense canopy almost blotting out the sky. In an open space surrounded by towering trees stood a brownish-yellow hunter's hut.

"Go in," Madam Magician's voice echoed, though he couldn't see the demigod.

Following her instructions, Lumian stepped forward, treading on tumbling leeches and navigating through the dancing poisonous insects in the air and vegetation. He reached the hunter's hut and

pushed open the unlatched wooden door.

Inside, rows of bookshelves lined the walls, and a wooden table stood in the center, seemingly existing in a different world compared to the primitive forest outside.

A figure sat behind the table, dressed in a white shirt and an open black coat, appearing somewhat obscured by a thick fog. Lumian could barely make out the clothes, facial features, and gender of the person, but not his face clearly.

“Have a seat,” the figure spoke with a slightly magnetic and ethereal voice.

“Hello,” Lumian greeted with a polite bow before taking a seat. “May I know how I should address you?”

The figure pondered for a moment and replied, “Think of me as a poet.”

Poet? Lumian didn’t fully grasp the significance of the code name, but he still chose to show respect. “Hello, Mr. Poet.”

The poet gave a small nod and said, “Magician has already shared the entire dream and related information with me, but I’d still like to hear you recount it in detail.”

Addressing her directly as Magician… Is he also a member of the Tarot Club? A holder of a Major Arcana card? Lumian sized up the poet opposite him with a guess. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

In the dense fog’s outline, he got a clearer impression.

His black hair was longer than usual, giving him an artistic appearance. His eyes were emerald green, not sharp but captivating. He had a slim face and a relaxed posture…

The combination of these elements and the thick fog made the poet seem like he emerged from a dream.

“Alright,” Lumian replied.

He recounted Cordu's nightmare, supplemented by the various traces found in the ruins and the vast amount of information he gathered over the past month.

Compared to before, his emotions were still stirred by recalling these matters, but not as intensely. Throughout the entire process, he only took a single deep breath.

As he spoke, Lumian noticed the poet, leaning back in his chair, clasping his hands between his chest and abdomen. The poet's green eyes were much clearer than before.

In the next second, Lumian noticed strange insects crawling in and out of the other party's eye sockets.

The insects switched between translucency and opaqueness, as if carrying rings on their backs.

Such a scene nearly made Lumian forget to continue his recount. It was like facing the headless monster created by Supervisor Olson. He couldn't help but feel shocked.

He composed himself and forced himself to ignore the strange insects wriggling into his eyes, expressing everything he wanted to say.

After his words trailed off, the poet fell silent for a moment before continuing, "It's truly a dream filled with symbolic meaning.

"Let's start with the simplest part—the deceased Warlock in the tomb."

Doesn't it symbolize Aurore becoming Inevitability's Blessed and ultimately dying? Lumian was about to ask this question, but before he could, the poet seemed to sense his thoughts and took the initiative to explain.

"This is a typical dual-structure symbol. In other words, it contains two layers of meaning.

"The first layer is about the Warlock representing the power of Inevitability, or rather, corruption. And it also stands for Termiboros. The coffin is like the concept of 'death.' Both symbolize the sealing of

Inevitability's power and its loss of vitality. The tomb itself represents the seal.

"In the dream, we can see that the Warlock is truly dead and has never left the tomb. This aligns with the sealed state on your body.

"Your sister Aurore got some boon from Inevitability in this incident as well. She's suspected to be one of the leaders, embodying the power of Inevitability to a certain extent. Plus, she's already dead, so the Warlock matter takes on a second symbolic meaning.

"These two layers of symbolism are superimposed through Inevitability's core power, which can easily make interpreters overlook one of them."

So that's how it is… Lumian's heart sank as he gradually became convinced by the poet. From another perspective, he now understood the essence of the Warlock legend.

The poet kept his seated posture, and there were no longer any strange insects crawling in and out of his eye sockets.

"Now that we've unraveled the full symbolism of the deceased Warlock, there's a preliminary answer for the owl and the other you.

"The other you symbolizes both your mutated personality due to corruption and Termiboros's attempt to achieve His goal by influencing your thoughts. If we only had the first symbol, the other you probably wouldn't be able to leave the tomb.

"The fact that the owl can freely enter and exit the deceased Warlock's tomb means that it can bypass the seal to some extent. It also displayed a few characteristics: monitoring your changes, not showing up at critical moments, and guarding the deceased Warlock.

"Based on our interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the deceased Warlock, the owl represents another Blessed of Inevitability, assigned to monitor your condition. Its attitude towards the deceased Warlock is quite ambiguous. It didn't exhibit the protective behavior it should have, nor did it assist during the final ritual with the angel's descent.

"Bypassing the seal suggests it's in the outside world and might be

communicating with Termiboros in some way. I'm not entirely sure about that yet. You shouldn't ignore other possibilities."

So, the symbol of the Sufferer turns out to be the owl. I thought it was the other me or Aurore… Lumian heaved a sigh of relief but also felt a sense of disappointment.

During the momentary pause in the poet's speech, he seized the opportunity to pose a question. "The underground altar exists, but what does the Sufferer aura in the dream symbolize?"

"The first layer symbolizes the previous appearance of the power of Inevitability there, but only on this layer. It's unlikely that the symbolic elements will take the form of the Sufferer aura." The poet took a moment to interpret. "As for the second layer, if the owl—the Blessed of Inevitability—who watches over you is already a Sufferer, it means it doesn't want others to come into contact with the altar of Inevitability. It also symbolizes the power of Inevitability.

"Furthermore, we observed that you suffered the least damage back then. This suggests that the Sufferer isn't willing to kill you. It might even protect you to some extent. This is quite similar to the psychiatric treatment you experienced in Trier's market district."

So, from the beginning, that person was already eying Termiboros? Of course, before his intentions are fully revealed, he will cooperate with Termiboros to do something… Termiboros attempted to influence me several times, but without success. Could this be the reason? Lumian couldn't help but sympathize with the Inevitability angel sealed in his chest.

The poet continued, "I suspect there's a third symbolic layer. It represents a true Sufferer in Cordu, a Sufferer who's not at the Beyonder level."

A true Sufferer… Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

He made numerous connections but couldn't find the correct answer.

The poet wasn't entirely certain about this, so he didn't elaborate further. Instead, he focused on interpreting the symbol that Lumian

was most concerned about.

“Whether or not the lizard-like elf actually exists, its symbolic importance in the dream is quite evident.

“Firstly, it represents a yearning for the cemetery and a fascination with entering and exiting tombs, but it never truly enters the tomb of the deceased Warlock. This signifies its affiliation with another faction, linked to the power of Inevitability, yet not exactly the same. It appears to be using this connection to seek and attain something related to Inevitability.

Another faction… Lumian recalled the diaphanous “lizard” present during the Tree of Shadow incident.

The poet sat up straighter.

“Secondly, it symbolizes concealed corruption and unconscious alterations.

“In the entire dream, only two individuals had a lizard-like elf crawl out of their mouths. One was your sister Aurore, and the other was the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue. What do you recall about him in reality?”

Lumian pondered for a moment and responded, “He’s somewhat similar to the dream, but not as exaggerated.

“He’s a devoted follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun. When he was shunned by Guillaume Bénet, he became fixated on giving sermons and hearing confessions. Later, his behavior became more and more apparent, neglecting all other matters…”

Suddenly, Lumian was startled.

He thought of Aurore, the other person from the dream who had a lizard-like elf emerge from their mouth.

Hadn’t she also neglected to ask Hela for help?

Mr. Poet nodded.

“Your sister Aurore should have exhibited similar behavior.

“Thirdly, the faction or deity represented by the lizard-like elf does not want to witness an angel of Inevitability descending. It symbolizes the role of a saboteur.”

Seeing Lumian’s confusion, the poet continued, “If it hadn’t been the person with the lizard-like elf crawling out of their mouth who knocked you out, brought you to the final sacrificial site, and turned you into a vessel, the descent ritual might have succeeded.

“Consider this: during the ritual, if someone else had stood in front of Aurore instead of you, would she have gained a moment of clarity and pushed him off the altar?”

Chapter 300 - 300 Another Symbol

300 Another Symbol

Upon hearing Mr. Poet's question, Lumian was caught off guard. A shiver ran up his spine and pierced his brain like an icy dagger.

Whether it was Aurore, who had knocked him out in the dream and led him to the sacrificial grounds, or the deputy padre, Michel Garrigue, who had done it in reality, they all had been secretly corrupted by the lizard-like elves—evident from them crawling out of their mouths!

If Lumian hadn't become the vessel, forced onto the altar and stood before Aurore, Termiboros's descent ritual might have succeeded. Aurore wouldn't have pushed the vessel out the altar, ruining the rite, and Lumian's Mr. Fool mark wouldn't have been activated!

This realization left Lumian's mind in chaos.

He never imagined that the lizard-like elf was behind the sabotage of the ritual. They had insidiously corrupted Aurore and the deputy padre, making them blind to important matters and missing their last chance to save themselves!

"W-what does it want? What's its true motive?" Lumian asked, feeling a pang of pain.

The poet's voice, veiled in mist, replied calmly, "I'm just interpreting the symbolic meaning of your dream's elements. I can't fully reconstruct the truth.

"But I can offer some speculation.

“The faction represented by the lizard-like elves aims to use the large-scale sacrifice of the Inevitability believers to summon an angel for some hidden purpose. However, they don’t want Termiboros to descend upon this land for real.

“There must be a conflict between them and the entity known as Inevitability.”

Lumian nodded, finding it the most logical explanation.

He couldn’t help but furrow his brow.

“What hidden motives do they have?”

“That’s one of the paths for your subsequent investigation,” the poet said with a smile. “Decryption isn’t divination or prophecy. You need enough information for deduction. You can’t make wild guesses.”

Lumian nodded slightly, eager to catch the padre, Guillaume Bénet.

The poet leaned forward, placing his elbows on the wooden table, hands still clasped together.

“I’ve already deciphered the more crucial symbolic elements. There’s only one left.

“Your dream itself holds a strong symbolic meaning.”

“The dream itself?” Lumian pondered for a few seconds but couldn’t grasp the specific symbolism.

The poet’s voice deepened, no longer abnormally ethereal but more magnetic.

“It symbolizes protection.

“Back then, due to intense emotional upheavals, your mind was on the verge of collapse, and you fell into a deep slumber. If not for the comfort and hope brought about by the dream of reality, perhaps you would have collapsed completely. Driven by your self-destructive tendencies, you would have acted irrationally until your death.

“Moreover, we can confirm that you don’t have the ability to produce a dream of reality, nor can you draw investigators into that dream. The sealed Termiboros can’t do it either. In other words, the dream of reality is a result of external interference.

“We haven’t grasped the specific abilities of the High-Sequence Beyonder of the Inevitability pathway. We can’t determine if it was done by the Inevitability Blessed symbolized by the owl or if it was influenced by other factions. Given the previous interpretation and the situation in reality, all of them have sufficient motives.

“In short, besides the entity known as Inevitability, no one else wants to see Termiboros truly descend upon the land.”

Lumian instantly recalled the area around the blood-colored mountain peak in Cordu’s ruins that induced slumber.

Before he could bring up the subject, the poet added, “Considering that the area that forces others into sleep is around the sacrificial ground and not the house where you sleep, I’m inclined to believe that it’s influenced by other factions. Their main purpose is to disrupt the ritual, and pacifying you just comes with it.

“If it was done by the Inevitability Blessed symbolized by the owl, the location of the abnormal area would be completely opposite.”

The faction represented by the lizard-like elf did it, or someone else did. Is there another faction? The more Lumian understood the situation, the more he realized that the truth of the Cordu disaster was far more complicated than he had expected.

He fell silent, taking a moment to gather his thoughts before speaking.

“What’s the significance of the empty baby cradle in the administrator’s castle?”

The poet took a few seconds to contemplate and then replied, “It’s a rather minor symbol. It represents the child of the Great Mother. Based on the information you provided, it seems that the child might have entered our world secretly during the final sacrificial ritual,

aided by another blood-related son hidden by Madame Pualis. It then left Cordu unnoticed, leaving behind the empty cradle."

The spawn of the Great Mother… Lumian hissed to himself, realizing the seriousness of the situation was on par with Termiboros's descent.

Inevitability's faction had taken a significant risk and worked tirelessly for nearly a year, all for the sake of obtaining a sealed angel. Ultimately, it served the Great Mother's purpose.

With those thoughts, Lumian let go of his worries.

The saints and angels of the Tarot Club and the Church of The Fool would undoubtedly handle this matter. It was beyond the concerns of someone like him, a mere Sequence 7.

Besides, this issue primarily revolved around the sacrificial ritual and had little to do with the truth behind the Cordu disaster. Lumian's main focus was tracking down and capturing the padre, Guillaume Bénet.

He then inquired, "Why was the entire Cordu village destroyed, while only my home remained intact?"

The poet pondered for a moment and answered, "I believe it symbolizes Aurore's nostalgia, reluctance, and regret.

"After the ritual, she should have regained some clarity. In the midst of the fusion of the villagers' flesh and blood, she instinctively protected the building that represented her beautiful past life.

"Of course, it's possible she also leveraged other forces interfering with the ritual."

Nostalgia… Reluctance… The beautiful life of the past… Lumian fell silent, lost in thought.

Observing this, the poet unclasped his hands and said, "I've deciphered all the symbolic elements of your dream."

"Thank you, Mr. Poet." Lumian stood up and, following the Church of The Fool's customs, pressed his hand to his chest and bowed slightly.

For a moment, his mind turned adrift, seeing the poet, the wooden table, the surrounding bookshelves, walls, the primitive forest outside, and all kinds of insects fade away like a dream, returning to deep darkness.

In an instant, the darkness vanished, and Lumian found himself standing at the edge of a marketplace.

In the distance, there were white buildings with dark black or earthy yellow bell towers and spires. Nearby, cloud-like tents and herds of cows, sheep, and horses were scattered around.

Most of the people passing through the market had dark skin, as if they were exposed to the sun every day. Among them, men wore felt hats and dark-red or sky-blue robes, while women wore colorful multi-layered gowns.

A chilling wind howled as Lumian gazed at the snow-covered mountain peak in the distance, momentarily lost in his thoughts.

His conversation with the poet and what he had just experienced felt like a vivid dream.

No, it was a dream!

That's why he couldn't see Mr. Poet clearly.

I didn't realize I was dreaming at all. When did the dream start? It felt eerily similar to the dream I had in the ruins of Cordu. Could it be that Mr. Poet's divine path has the power to make others have vivid dreams? And could the abnormal area around the blood-colored mountain be related to similar abilities? Lumian was shocked at first, but then numerous thoughts rushed through his mind.

Just then, Madam Magician appeared before him, wearing a beige shirt, a brownish-yellow dress, and dark brown leather boots.

"Do you want to go back to Salle de Bal Brise now?" the Major Arcana card holder asked.

Lumian casually asked, "Where are we?"

Madam Magician gazed at the azure sky and pure white clouds and replied, “We’re in Star Highlands’ Rapus, once a significant city in the Highlands Kingdom, also known as the City of White.”

Star Highlands… Lumian recalled the Rose School of Thought and recounted the Werewolf attack and Gardner Martin’s arrangements to Madam Magician. Finally, he asked, “Did the Rose School of Thought enter the market district because of the Tree of Shadow? And didn’t they gather detailed information about me from the Bliss Society?”

Madam Magician chuckled.

“You should have asked these questions earlier. The gentleman who helped you decipher the dream symbols is an expert at dealing with the Rose School of Thought. Alright, I’ll ask him for you now.”

With that, she vanished in front of Lumian. A few minutes later, she reappeared in the same position, unnoticed by the people passing through the market.

Madam Magician smiled at Lumian and said, “Based on that gentleman’s experience, although the Mother Tree of Desire and its worshiping organizations show clear purpose, sufficient decisiveness, accurate foresight of the future, and excellent planning on a higher level and at the macro scale, when it comes to specific events, they often appear chaotic, disorderly, and even mad. It reflects the nature of the evil god itself.

“In simpler terms, the organizations worshiping the Mother Tree of Desire don’t cooperate or communicate well. They sometimes act erratically and unpredictably. It’s a common situation. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“However, in the past year or two, that gentleman noticed some rudimentary cooperation among these organizations. Some members of the Devil families are even involved.”

“Devil families?” Lumian had never heard of such a term.

Madam Magician casually explained, “The families that control the Devil pathway—the Criminal pathway. Some of them show signs of

worshiping the Mother Tree of Desire.”

Chapter 301 - 301 Devil

301 Devil

Criminal pathway… Lumian began to recall the contents of Aurore's grimoires.

Sequence 9 Criminal possessed a formidable physique, sharp senses, and a range of criminal skills. They were adept at wielding various weapons and could even kill their targets using something as mundane as a spoon.

Sequence 8 Coldblooded were heartless and inhuman. Their bodies were further strengthened, and they gained mastery over spell-like abilities with a leaning towards the eviler domains. Different Coldblooded excelled in different aspects, making them challenging opponents to deal with with no one-size-fits-all solution.

Sequence 7 Serial Killer was well-versed in devilish knowledge and rituals. They could summon projections of devils from the Abyss and had a sick fascination with creating serial murders.

Turning to Madam Magician with a thoughtful expression, Lumian inquired, "What are the names of Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 on the Criminal pathway?"

"Sequence 6 is called Devil, and Sequence 5 is Desire Apostle," Madam Magician readily shared her knowledge.

From worshiping the devil to becoming one—a fitting name for the Devil pathway. And Desire Apostle sounds like a Beyonder who would follow the Mother Tree of Desire. It's a compatible match. They might as well rename it to Mother Tree of Desire Apostle… Lumian couldn't help but criticize as he analyzed the information.

Madam Magician continued, "The first major qualitative

transformation of the Criminal pathway is at Sequence 6 Devil. After the corresponding Beyonder temporarily transforms into a devil, not only will their strength, speed, and defense improve, but they become immune to most poisons and acquire a certain resistance to curses and flames.

“More importantly, they possess Malicious Perception. If someone can cause fatal damage to them in a short period of time and begin to take steps to make it a reality, and both parties are within the range of their abilities, the Devil Beyonder can sense the source of danger and the perpetrator. This allows them to take targeted revenge in a counterstrike.”

So powerful… Lumian couldn’t help but frown.

If the Rose School of Thought’s subsequent operations had members of the Devil families involved, the situation would become exponentially more dangerous.

Of course, the Prisoner pathway’s Zombie and Wraiths were also terrifying.

Most importantly, at a certain Sequence, Beyonders of these two pathways boasted formidable defenses against flames.

Dammit, Pyromaniacs would be in for a rough time! Lumian made a self-deprecating comment, infected by Franca’s and Jenna’s vulgarities.

After pondering for a moment, Lumian inquired, “How short can the period of time be for the Malicious Perception to be effective?”

Madam Magician smiled and replied, “The Devil pathway is highly individualistic. Devils from various races each possess their distinct abilities. Even among devils originating from the same race, differences arise due to their individual nature. The reason behind this lies in the requirement of ostentatious malice, which varies from person to creature.

“Unique wills, distinct hearts, and a penchant for desires all amalgamate to form the diverse nature of devils.

“Now, to your query. Some Devils can sense malice merely minutes before its occurrence, whereas others can foretell it hours or even more in advance. As they progress in Sequence, this ability only grows stronger.

“The range of this ability’s influence can span a few kilometers, an entire market district, or perhaps even encompass the whole of Trier.

“Furthermore, Devils wield an array of spells involving flames, poison, and filth.”

The more Lumian listened, the more serious he grew. Devils were truly powerful—just like Zombies countering Pyromaniacs, who were experts in fire spells and close combat. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

After briefly explaining the Desire Apostle’s abilities, Madam Magician comforted him with a smile,

“Don’t worry too much. Even if the Rose School of Thought takes action in the future, their target will most likely be Gardner Martin. You’ll just be along for the ride. The Iron and Blood Cross Order, being a secret organization, has enough strength to resist the Rose School of Thought even if the Devil families send someone to participate.

“If the Bliss Society and the Rose School of Thought share intelligence, you may become their primary target, but they won’t launch a fatal attack on you paradoxically. They fear releasing an Inevitability angel like Termiboros. As long as you pay more attention to abnormalities and suspected conspiracies around you, you’ll have enough time and opportunity to seek help.”

Upon hearing this, Lumian retorted, “If the Rose School of Thought sends an angel to capture me, how will I have time to seek help?”

Madam Magician chuckled.

“Do you think Trier is a public washroom where an angel can descend and snatch someone away easily?

“If it weren’t for the alternate space of the Tree of Shadow with the

Paramita World enveloping it, that brainless Abomination wouldn't have been able to descend its power.

"So, remember to avoid such places and live under the sun in Trier."

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief and asked in confusion, "Abomination?"

Could it be the power summoned by Susanna Mattise?

Madam Magician's expression turned odd.

"Yes, Abomination—the child of the Chained God whom the Mother Tree of Desire worshipers and the Rose School of Thought originally worshiped. He's a Sequence 1 angel and the current leader of the Rose School of Thought.

"I won't tell you His real name. This guy is covered in curses. If you say His real name often, you might become a frog that needs a prince's kiss to recover. Or worse."

"Why a prince?" Lumian had read the Intis Fairy Tales Collection published two years ago and remembered that the protagonist of the story was a princess.

"Why else would it be called a curse?" Madam Magician wore a matter-of-fact expression.

Lumian was speechless. He asked, "The spawn of the Mother Tree of Desire are angels, already roaming our world. And to descend, the child of the Great Mother requires a ritual. Is one more special than the other?"

"They're equally special," said Madam Magician, her expression taking an odd turn once more. "The crux of the matter is that it wasn't the Mother Tree of Desire who gave birth to the Abomination, but a high-ranking existence in our world known as the Chained God."

Lumian's heart filled with trauma as he immediately thought of Louis Lund, Administrator Béost, and his valets.

“Can the Mother Tree of Desire impregnate creatures of all races and genders through the barrier?” Lumian asked with a hint of fear in his voice.

Madam Magician shook her head.

“She doesn’t have authority in that regard. That belongs to the Great Mother.

“However, if you’re enticed by Her and end up interacting with the power She has descended or the aura that seeped into our world, She has plenty of ways to impregnate you. Furthermore, the Chained God pathway—the Prisoner pathway—is rather special and has a close connection to the Mother Tree of Desire.

“If it weren’t for Mr. Fool’s protection, the temperance faction members would have more or less been influenced by Her in the past year or two.”

Lumian nodded, then brought up the issue of the indulgence faction and the temperance faction.

“I believe the temperance faction’s philosophy is correct, but why can the indulgence faction still grow and possess such strength? Is it because there’s no fear of losing control when they are already crazy?”

Madam Magician chuckled and responded, “The temperance faction’s philosophy is correct, but it doesn’t mean that the indulgence faction’s viewpoint is necessarily erroneous.

“You have to remember that acting based on the potion’s name is like tarot cards. There’s a difference between the upright and reversed position. And even if we act in the upright manner, the acting principles summarized by different people will vary according to their unique minds and experiences. After all, we’re just acting. Our goal is to deceive the mental imprint left behind by that entity and digest the potion bit by bit. It would be troublesome if we were to completely align with Him.”

Lumian nodded in understanding.

“So, the phrase ‘remember that you’re only acting’ not only prevents us from losing ourselves to avoid mental problems but also helps avoid such problems altogether?”

“That’s right,” Madam Magician affirmed.

Lumian then steered the conversation back to matters pertaining to the Mother Tree of Desire.

“Mr. Poet mentioned that there are multiple organizations that worship the Mother Tree of Desire?”

“Poet…” Madam Magician’s lips curled up slightly. “They’re all relatively small organizations that haven’t formed a large cult. They’re far inferior to the Rose School of Thought and the few Devil families, but they’re relatively hidden. Currently, we are aware of three. One is the Bliss Society, the other is the Naturism Sect, and the third is the Tree Worship Sect.”

After pondering the matter for a while, Lumian finally brought up the idea of crafting a mystical item using the Shadow Branch.

“Madam, once I receive the reward from Mr. K, I’d like your help in finding a saint-level Artisan to craft the item. Do you happen to know the price?” Lumian inquired.

Madam Magician grinned and replied, “I haven’t rewarded you yet for successfully joining the Iron and Blood Cross Order. How about using that reward to cover the cost?”

“That sounds perfect,” Lumian happily agreed.

Receiving three rewards for a mission was truly a remarkable thing.

Madam Magician nodded thoughtfully and said, “A friend’s relative knows a demigod-level Artisan. I’ll check with them first. If it doesn’t work out, I’ll find another option.”

She then smiled and asked, “With the gap between the Lucky One and the potential reward from Mr. K, are you sure you want to use one of them to create a mystical item?”

Lumian responded with certainty, “I won’t have any regrets.”

His approach had always been to utilize available resources as swiftly as possible.

It had to be known that the padre was already a Sequence 5 bestowed when he left Cordu. He might have even taken a potion to boost his abilities. Dealing with him on one’s own was akin to embracing death for Lumian.

He needed to make use of every available resource to enhance his skills quickly and gather more allies to increase his chances of success!

During his early days as a wanderer, Lumian once stumbled upon a wild apple tree laden with fruit. He intended to wait for the apples to grow larger and less sour before figuring out how to pluck them. However, to his surprise a few days layer, someone else had managed to harvest all the small and sour apples.

This incident left a profound mark on Lumian, significantly influencing his approach to handling things.

Chapter 302 - 302 Mummy Ashes

302 Mummy Ashes

Madam Magician didn't say more and asked again, "Do you want to return to Salle de Bal Brise now, or stay here until noon?"

Lumian had never left Intis, let alone come to the Southern Continent. Since he had nothing planned, he nodded and replied, "I'd like to explore around a bit." Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Madam Magician gave a slight nod and vanished before him.

Almost instantly, a bone-chilling wind swept through the crowd and struck Lumian.

Having come from Trier in the summer, he couldn't help but shiver in the harsh highlander winter.

Accompanied by the cold breeze, the distant clamor of the market, a few hundred meters away, filled Lumian's ears, making him feel truly immersed in this world.

Recalling how Madam Magician's arrival and disappearance had gone unnoticed by the surrounding people, Lumian quickly made a guess.

Did she create a wall of spirituality or pull me into a separate alternate space?

As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, he noticed that the passersby looked at him with wariness and puzzlement. He was only wearing a thin shirt, a black vest, and thin pants, which were hardly suitable for the harsh winter.

“What are you staring at? Haven’t you seen someone acting cool?” Lumian muttered. Relying on Alms Monk’s endurance, he nonchalantly ventured into the market.

The smell of fresh livestock dung, the sweet aroma of corn, and the tantalizing scent of roasted meat with spices filled his nostrils.

Lumian surveyed the area and spotted numerous stalls selling various food items made primarily from corn. There were boiled whole corn, roasted corn with red sauce, corn chunks served in thick soup, roasted corn wrapped in beef and mutton, onions, and potatoes, corn ground into a gooey paste and stuffed into various meat chunks, and corn spread into rough flatbread sprinkled with ingredients…

After a moment of consideration, Lumian made his way through the “cleared” path among the marketers and arrived at a stall.

The stall owner was a man in his thirties with dark and flushed skin, gaunt face, high cheekbones, and dark brown eyes. He had long greasy black hair and wore a black felt hat along with a dark red robe made of wool and other materials.

Lumian pointed at the bubbling yellow corn paste in the iron-colored pot and asked in Intisian, “How much?”

He had noticed that some folks here understood Intisian. The transactions were done using various metal currencies, including verl d’or.

The stall owner seemed scared, and he replied in non-fluent Intisian with a hint of flattery, “5 coppet for 1 cup.”

A lick, pretty cheap… Lumian glanced at the corn paste with mutton chunks and pulled out a brass coin with a Hornacis mountain range pattern on the front.

The vendor breathed with relief and quickly produced a paper cup that didn’t quite match the market’s style and technology. He filled it up generously, even adding a few extra meat chunks.

As Lumian received the cup, warmth spread through his body.

It was a wonderful experience to have something warm while enduring the biting wind.

The even better experience was the warm corn paste flowing from his mouth into his esophagus and into his stomach, spreading warmth to every nook and cranny of his body.

The corn paste, with its light sweetness and a hint of spiciness and pungency, perfectly complemented the beef and mutton cubes, neutralizing their gamey smell. It was peculiar and appetizing, a treat for his taste buds.

Ignoring the cautious glances from the women and the fear and loathing from the man driving the cows and sheep, Lumian sipped his corn paste and made his way to the end of the market.

Soon, he entered the City of White, Rapus. He spotted the golden Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral and the God of Steam and Machinery cathedral adorned with various industrial components. The white buildings, shops selling leather and fabrics, the Highland Import and Export Corporation, and the Rapus Mining Federation signs were all visible. Carriages pulled by long-haired cows and medium-sized horses filled the streets, accompanied by locals in robes and a few foreigners in formal attire.

Lumian picked a shop called Highland Mystic Potion and entered like a tourist.

The owner, an Intisian in his forties, with typical black hair and blue eyes, wore a white shirt with floral patterns, thick cashmere clothes, and a dark blue coat with golden trim.

Upon seeing Lumian, he greeted him warmly, “Good morning, dear compatriot.”

The man checked out Lumian’s attire and asked with concern, “Did you encounter a bandit?”

“I just arrived in Rapus. There was an accident on the way,” Lumian replied, smiling with a Trier accent.

The proprietor of the mystic potion nodded in understanding.

“The Southern Continent isn’t all it’s cracked up to be, but it’s a paradise for adventurers. I arrived in West Balam fifteen years ago in search of opportunities. Life only turned for the better when I found true opportunities in the City of White. By steam!”

With a sigh, he drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

“By steam!” Lumian responded with the same etiquette.

The owner’s smile grew warmer.

“Brother, would you like some mummy powder? Real mummy powder!”

Lumian looked around the small shop and smiled.

“Why don’t you display the mummy in the window to prove its authenticity?”

The boss smiled sheepishly and said, “That would upset the barbarians.

“Some buy mummy powder, but most can’t accept mummies as commodities.”

Lumian deliberately said, “When I left Trier, there was a shortage of mummy powder. The price skyrocketed. Ever thought of transporting mummies back to Trier for sale?”

“Maritime trade is too risky, and the import-export companies give terrible prices, not to mention the taxes they charge. Those damned hyenas!” The owner glanced at Lumian, testing the waters, “If you’re willing to take the risks, we can cooperate.”

“How many mummies can you provide?” Lumian feigned skepticism.

The boss smiled.

“That depends on how many you want. I have the right connections.”

I can have as many as I want? Have you unearthed the grave of a nobleman from the Highlands Kingdom? Or will you find a corpse or

even a living person to make one on the spot? Lumian engaged in a conversation with the owner of the Highland Mystic Potion and left the shop, pretending he needed time to consider the offer.

After wandering for some time, Lumian came across a magnificent three-story white building by the roadside, bustling with locals swarming in.

Curiosity got the better of him, and he followed the crowd inside, only to find Intis soldiers, clad in their distinctive black triangular hats and blue coats with gold threads, guarding the entrance in their white pants and black leather boots.

Rapus, Lumian thought to himself, is truly an Intis colonial city. His gaze settled on the golden words above the main entrance, which read: “Rapus Specialized Court.”

Taking a seat in an empty corner of the courtroom, Lumian tuned in to the trial that was underway.

Two Intis soldiers stood accused of a heinous crime—intercepting a newlywed couple in the suburbs, murdering the husband, and subjecting the wife to unspeakable horrors.

The latter was fortunate enough to survive. With numerous witnesses and ample evidence, the entire case appeared quite clear-cut.

After much deliberation, the judge, who was now holding the third hearing, finally pronounced them guilty, decreeing their immediate expulsion from the highlands. Upon their return to Intis, they would face further punishment in a military court.

The verdict didn’t sit well with the local crowd, and they expressed their dissatisfaction loudly. However, the judge remained resolute, ordering bailiffs and soldiers to remove the dissenters from the court.

Lumian observed the faces of the agitated and angered locals as they were forced to leave, and only when they had gone did he decide to leave the courtroom as well.

As he strolled past the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral’s square, he noticed a group of clergymen in white robes adorned with golden

threads.

They were walking towards the cathedral, keeping a safe distance from the crowd, and speaking in hushed tones.

Lumian, relying on his Hunter's ears, strained to catch their words from afar.

Though the distance made it difficult, he managed to make out two phrases: "Evernight's power… has invaded this place…"

What could that mean? Is the Evernight Goddess Church of the Loen Kingdom extending its reach into the Star Highlands? Lumian pondered for a moment before continuing on his way.

…

At 12:30 p.m. Trier time, Madam Magician escorted Lumian back to Salle de Bal Brise, and he reappeared in his bedroom.

He sat down at his wooden table and began organizing Mr. Poet's interpretation of the dream's symbolic elements.

In the midst of his work, Lumian heard familiar footsteps approaching and an impolite knock on the door.

Putting down the fountain pen, Lumian stood up and glanced at the entrance.

"Come in."

It was Franca, dressed in her usual attire of blouse, beige breeches, and red boots. However, she now wore a light-colored pleated dress around her waist.

"Very strange," Lumian remarked honestly.

Franca sighed, a mix of joy and melancholy on her face.

"I'm not used to wearing dresses yet. This will have to do for now.

"This is to welcome Pleasure."

“Pleasure?” Lumian was puzzled by the term she mentioned.

Franca closed the door behind her and explained with a complex expression,

“Since you’ve joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order, my initial mission is considered accomplished. Now, I’ll see if I can join and assist with your operation.

“And since the mission is complete, there should be a reward. The next Sequence for a Witch is Demoness of Pleasure.

“Yes, I already have all the main ingredients and most of the supplementary ones, except for real mummy ashes. I came to ask if you could keep an eye out during your mysticism gatherings. Damn it, those mummy ashes sold in shops are all fake!”

Chapter 303 - 303 Sparks of “Fire”

303 Sparks of “Fire”

Mummy ashes… Lumian’s mind immediately went to the Highland Mystic Potion shop in Rapus.

The mummies had their origins in the old Highlands Kingdom, and they had a special ancient Highlander term for it. Emperor Roselle translated it into “mummy.”

In simpler terms, the most genuine and ancient mummies could be found in Star Highlands, the largest source of mummy ashes.

Franca grew more and more agitated as she spoke.

“Why do you think men in Trier are so keen on things that enhance their abilities in that area? They even dare to consume mummy ashes! This means that those who genuinely need them can’t afford the real deal!”

“Many women in Trier are interested as well, hoping their husbands and lovers can perform better in bed.” Lumian had read about it and asked Franca curiously, “Does it really work?”

Franca scoffed.

“I can’t see any other effects besides getting sick from using powder made from a specially prepared corpse. Well, its use in mysticism is a different matter.

“Think about it. Trier is now flooded with fake mummy ashes. People are gobbling them up without knowing if they’re authentic!

“There are many herbs with similar effects, but once they are labeled as mummy ashes, the price skyrockets. Who wouldn’t take advantage of that? This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“Don’t overestimate the merchants’ conscience. I’ve heard complaints at many mysticism gatherings about people finding dead rats, grinding them into powder, mixing it with herbs, and selling it as mummy ashes.

“When I, um, before I had superpowers and was still struggling, I saw the café owner making fake coffee from chicory. Later, he couldn’t even afford that. He gathered coffee dregs, animal bile, and even brick dust and soot as a substitute. Believe me, if you visit the kitchens of certain restaurants and cafés, you’d want to hang the boss from the gallows. Those escargot shells are reused, picked up from the trash, filled with ingredients, and served to new customers”

Franca continued her rant, expressing her frustration with counterfeit and inferior products hindering her Beyonder career.

After she finished speaking, Lumian asked with certainty, “Have you finished digesting your Witch potion?”

Franca’s emotions returned to normal as she replied smugly, “That was a long time ago. Have you seen me act as a Witch during this period of time?”

Lumian changed the subject thoughtfully.

“You seem to despise the Rose School of Thought for their acts of terror in the Northern Continent. You even mock them for hindering the colonization resistance by the Southern Continent natives. I don’t quite understand your logic. Shouldn’t they resist and take revenge when bullied?”

Franca walked to the window of Lumian’s bedroom and gazed at the dock and depot concealed by buildings. Her gaze was unfocused as she said, “They should—if they wish to seek the adrenaline from exacting vengeance, for a moment of exhilaration. But if you want to lead the Southern Continent to expel the colonists, such actions will only have the opposite effect. A philosopher back home once said

that no king should send troops out in anger. Resisting colonization is a serious and challenging matter; it's something that shouldn't become a wastebasket for venting one's emotions."

Seeing Lumian's confusion, Franca pointed out the window.

"There are many workers and laborers there. They work hard every day and sleep in bedbug-infested rooms. Are they colonists? Did they benefit from the colonies? True, their jobs may be a result of colonial trade, but will they lose their jobs without the colonies and normal trade? I don't think so. The most likely possibility is that they will still have a job that barely provides sustenance; it's the bosses who lose excessive profits.

"They have their own demands and a desire to change the current society. They often join Trier's citizens in various marches and protests, expressing deep dissatisfaction with the government.

"There are many similar people in Trier. Some of them have various reasons and even sympathize with the Southern Continent colonies.

"A philosopher king back home once said that we must distinguish between our friends and foes when carrying out deeds. The Rose School of Thought's various terrorist acts will only pit those who sympathize with the colonists and those who are also resisting the government against them. It makes them the object of hatred that will be exploited by the rulers to bridge any internal conflicts. It will harm the people of the Southern Continent's resistance against colonization.

"The philosopher king even prohibited his intelligence officers from carrying out assassinations or seeking revenge, let alone causing terrorist incidents."

Franca snapped out of her daze and spoke with enthusiasm, her eyes sparkling, "As long as we can gather more allies, isolate our enemies, and ignite that tiny spark, it can set a whole wilderness ablaze!"

Who is friend and foe… Finding allies and isolating the enemy… Even a tiny spark can set a whole wilderness ablaze… The words left a profound impact on Lumian. He pondered Franca's words

repeatedly, especially her last sentence. It unveiled a new understanding of Pyromaniac, bringing him closer to unveiling his first acting principle.

After a few moments, Lumian nodded solemnly.

“I agree with you now. The Rose School of Thought’s acts of terror are extremely foolish, mere decisions made after their minds are filled with desire. Uh, as believers of the Mother Tree of Desire, it’s quite expected.”

Franca pursed her lips.

“If the Rose School of Thought focused on assassinating colonial generals, members of parliament, and high-ranking government officials, as well as destroying battleships and arsenals, I wouldn’t mock them. But their blood sacrifices, indiscriminately killing people, are the actions of lunatics. I don’t want to become a sacrifice to these madmen one day.”

Lumian remarked, “It’s a classic case of turning sympathizers against each other.”

Franca disdainfully added, “Not only do these lunatics carry out blood sacrifices in the Northern Continent, but they also do it in the Southern Continent, turning villages into uninhabited lands. The Southern Continent has the Rose School of Thought as another insurmountable obstacle besides the colonists.”

Lumian nodded gently and said, “That lady took me to the Star Highlands and during my tour of Star Highlands, I encountered a mummy merchant. Should I request permission to visit again and obtain some real mummy ashes for you?”

That lady… Franca realized something and decided not to press further. After some thought, she said, “No need for that now. Just because Trier has plenty of counterfeit goods doesn’t mean there’s nothing authentic. Let’s try to find the authentic ones first. If not, we’ll go to the Southern Continent.”

Lumian honestly shared his intentions, “I hope you can advance to

Sequence 6 within a week and become a Demoness of Pleasure."

"Huh?" Franca was confused.

Who's the one making the advancement?

Lumian didn't hide anything, responding directly, "It has been prophesied that Guillaume Bénet will appear in Quartier de la Princesse Rouge next week. I want to find him and capture him, and I need the help of more friends. The Boss has already agreed to help me find him. The stronger you are, the higher our chances of capturing Guillaume Bénet."

Amused, Franca teased, "You're learning on the spot, kid. You really aren't holding back anymore. You made a request without getting my agreement to help."

Lumian smiled, replying, "Isn't that what I'm doing now?"

Franca pondered for a moment before saying, "Wait a few more days. If we still can't find real mummy's ashes, we'll go to the Southern Continent to search for them. Remember, try not to trouble the Major Arcana card holder if possible."

"Right then," Lumian said, sharing a similar view, but he never missed a chance to fleece. Otherwise, it would be best to seek Madam Magician's help in dealing with Guillaume Bénet.

A subordinate who couldn't handle problems on their own, bothering their superior all the time, would eventually be left behind!

Furthermore, the Tarot Club followed a rule of equivalent exchange. What price would one have to pay to enlist the help of a demigod-level Major Arcana card holder?

After chatting for a while, Franca, who was about to leave, glanced at the window and suddenly said, "Although Gardner Martin already knows the situation and has made preparations, you can't be careless. You can't place all your hopes on him. The Rose School of Thought is an ancient secret organization. It must possess various abilities."

Why are you bringing this up all of a sudden? Lumian was taken

aback for a moment before responding with tacit understanding, “The Boss is at least a Conspirer. He has probably set countless traps in secret, awaiting the arrival of the Rose School of Thought.”

On this topic, the two of them continued their conversation as they left the bedroom and entered the corridor.

Franca lowered her voice and said, “I sensed something amiss with the glass in your window. I suspect a Wraith.”

The Rose School of Thought’s Wraith? Franca discovered something wrong with her Witch’s grasp of mirrors? Lumian’s nerves tensed as he nodded slightly, acting as though they were discussing an ordinary topic.

He saw Franca stroll into the café and depart Salle de Bal Brise before stepping out of the corridor. Like always, he settled into his regular seat and savored his aromatic coffee.

An hour went by, and Lumian started to feel a bit more at ease. He thought the Wraith had probably left, so he shifted his focus to Gardner Martin and the potential traps.

The following days were filled with paranoia for Lumian. He sensed eyes on him from the glass window in his room and the bathroom mirror, but nothing alarming occurred.

Finally, the day of the reward promised by Mr. K arrived.

As Lumian descended the stairs of Auberge du Coq Doré, he encountered an unfamiliar woman.

Dressed in a lake-blue dress, her brown hair flowed naturally, and her brown eyes had a uniquely ethereal quality. Her looks were above average, her cheeks plump, and her demeanor stood out from the ordinary.

As Lumian passed by the front desk, he casually asked Madame Fels, “Is that young lady a new tenant?”

The plump Madame Fels smiled ingratiatingly. “No, she’s Miss Safari, staying in Room 309. She went to a small seaside town to be a

human model for a painter. She only returned today.

“How enviable. Her job lets her take a vacation by the sea.”

That human model? Lumian nodded and left Auberge du Coq Doré, catching a public carriage to Avenue du Boulevard.

Chapter 304 - 304 Decency

304 Decency

Avenue du Boulevard, 19 Rue Scheer, basement.

Mr. K's face remained hidden under the massive hood, but Lumian could feel the admiration and recognition in his gaze.

Standing behind a red armchair, Mr. K pointed to a narrow wooden table by the wall. nove(l)bi(n.)com

"Make a choice. These are Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts, as per the standards of various Churches. They have distinct characteristics but come with dangerous negative effects. Nonetheless, there are ways to resolve those issues and utilize them to some extent."

Following the gesture of Mr. K's raised right hand, Lumian spotted three containers on the narrow wooden table.

One was an exquisite wooden box adorned with rubies, emeralds, agates, and other precious items. Another was a rubber injector, and the last one was a wide-mouthed bottle filled with a dreamy green liquid with a golden object at the bottom.

Mr. K approached the table, picked up the wooden box with gems, and opened it.

Inside, there lay a thin and soft leather mask. As Mr. K lifted it to display, an exaggerated face outlined in red, yellow, and white oil paint emerged.

For some reason, Lumian's mood took a plunge at the sight of the face, and his heart filled with sorrow.

"It's called the Clown Mask," Mr. K introduced in a low, raspy voice.

“Wearing it enables you to create Paper Figurine Substitutes. You can ignite combustible objects within a 50-meter radius and leap between flames, allowing you to transfer wounds across your body and turn a fatal injury into a minor one. However, each wound can only be transferred once.

“It will also meld with your face, altering your appearance. This aspect is beyond your control, but it grants you strong expression control and sharp premonition for a short duration.

“To store it safely, you’ll need a high-value container. Otherwise, it will continuously bring frustration, pain, and sorrow to those around it, gradually driving them insane until they break down. For Beyonders, this often means losing control.

“That’s why you can’t wear it for more than ten minutes at a time. Additionally, you have to ‘watch’ a comedic performance once a week; otherwise, it will attempt to replace you when you wear it, truly becoming your ‘face.’”

Wound transference… This Sealed Artifact belongs to the Seer pathway. It corresponds to the Sequence of Bureau 8’s Miss Leah or higher, Lumian quickly deduced based on his experience.

He felt that the Clown Mask suited him well. With Pyromaniac and Flaming Jump, he could significantly increase his strength.

He was in need of changing his appearance, but the limitation of wearing it for only ten minutes made it similar to the Mystery Prying Glasses, albeit more convenient.

Moreover, Paper Figurine Substitutes and wound transference could effectively boost his survivability, but when it came to dealing with Zombies, Wraiths, Devils, or Desire Apostles, these abilities lacked specificity.

Emotional influences were currently a taboo for Lumian. While his psychological issues had been somewhat healed, the flames of pain couldn’t be fully extinguished. They still smoldered deep in his heart. If this emotional breakdown erupted, Termiboros would undoubtedly be grinning from end to end.

As Lumian pondered, Mr. K put the Clown Mask back into its exquisite wooden box and picked up an injector made of rubber hoses, a glass syringe, and a thin needle.

At that moment, a tube of bright red liquid quietly filled the syringe, as if it had just been extracted from a person's body.

Mr. K gently shook the injector and said, "It's called Lifeblood. Once injected into your body, it allows you to control your flesh and blood completely for a short period. You won't need to maintain your human form deliberately, and your vital points will be safe. Moreover, you can envelop a target, corrode their body, and kill them from the inside.

"Simultaneously, you can transform into your own shadow and merge with the surrounding shadows. That way, you can secretly trail the enemy and avoid detection.

"With each injection, you'll become closer to our Lord, closer to the most ancient appearance of humanity's original form. Others and creatures won't endure it well. Their bodies will collapse gradually with each injection, and they won't be able to return to their original state. Their minds will be cloaked by shadows, making them crave flesh and blood, turning them into irrational monsters. However, we need not worry. As long as we devoutly believe in our Lord and remember to pray to Him always, there won't be many issues with our bodies and minds.

"I've injected myself several times before. Am I not normal now?"

Lumian didn't fully buy into it. I don't think you're normal… The flesh corrosion ability seems useful against Zombies…

Furthermore, he wasn't devout when it came to the True Creator. He usually used psychological cues to seal the memories of His honorific name and didn't pray at all.

"If you carry Lifeblood without injecting yourself, it won't affect you other than making you crave flesh and blood," Mr. K explained. He then picked up a wide-mouthed bottle filled with green liquid

filled with an alcoholic fragrance and retrieved a golden brooch carved into a Scotch Broom from it with his white palm that appeared sickly.

“This one’s called Decency.

“Once you wear it, you can acutely detect a target’s weaknesses. By symbolically giving them items, you can complete a Bribe, significantly weakening their attack, defense, or control over you for a certain period.

“In addition, you can Distort the target’s words, actions, and intentions. You can also Distort certain actions of yourself or others to create an environment that’s beneficial to you.”

Using Bribe to weaken the target’s attack, defense, or control… This ability is very versatile. It can be used against Zombies, Devils, or other Beyonders… If I use Distortion well, I can come up with all kinds of tricks… Lumian’s spirits lifted, believing this was what he wanted.

The next step was to see if the negative effects could be endured.

Mr. K continued, “It must be kept in liquor that exceeds 45 proof. Otherwise, it might result in arrest from official Beyonders or other factions at irregular intervals.

“You can’t wear it for more than fifteen minutes. In the following hour, you’ll become repulsive and disdainful. It’s best not to go out. Wait patiently until the negative effects fade.”

As a Hunter, how can I not be repulsed and despised? And it’s normal for regulars at Ol’ Tavern to carry two or three flasks of liquor with them… Sometimes, I can even use it to attract nearby factions to capture this characteristic for “fishing.” It’s a perfect part of certain traps… Lumian quickly made up his mind and said firmly, “I want Decency.”

Now, the question was whether this Sealed Artifact could be matched with the Shadow Branch to create a mystical item with both characteristics.

Mr. K respected Lumian's decision and didn't offer any persuasion.

He tossed the Decency brooch back into the wide-mouthed bottle of liquor, capped it, and handed it to Lumian.

Lumian swiftly caught it and mumbled, What if I'm not skilled enough to catch it and shatter the bottle? We'll exchange looks and then flee before the official Beyonders come after us?

Lumian gripped the bottle of liquor suspected to be absinthe and deliberately said, "I have something to report."

He briefly recounted the Werewolf incident and concluded, "The Rose School of Thought suffered repeated setbacks, yet they remain arrogant. I heard they also believe in the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire."

Mr. K's gaze turned cold, and his voice carried an oppressive metallic quality.

"The evil god's believers are indeed becoming more impudent.

"Since some deities can't shoulder such a heavy responsibility, let us share Their burden."

Lumian could sense Mr. K's anger igniting as his Pyromaniac potion was showing signs of digestion.

After bidding farewell to Mr. K, he left the basement and closed his eyes in the corridor.

Through this experiment, combined with the fire in his heart when he advanced to Pyromaniac, Franca's words, the various situations in the market district, and the actions of the people of Rapus and the Southern Continent, he concluded his first Pyromaniac acting principle: "Pyromaniacs not only ignite matter but also the mind and society."

…

In the market district, Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian gazed at the enticing green liquor bottle, contemplating the need for sturdy military flasks to prevent it from breaking during a potential fight. Simultaneously, he made the final decision—to utilize the Lucky One Beyonder characteristic and the Shadow Branch to create a mystical item.

He felt that Decency's powers didn't mesh well with the Shadow Branch, and its drawbacks were manageable. On the other hand, Sealed Artifacts offered decent effects and could be used independently.

Without any hesitation, Lumian penned a letter, seeking Madam Magician's aid in locating a demigod-level Artisan.

Afterward, he made his way to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches, summoned the messenger, and dispatched the Shadow Branch and Lucky One Beyonder characteristic, along with the letter, to the holder of the Major Arcana card.

In no time, Lumian spotted the puppet messenger materializing above the desk, dropping a thick stack of papers with a loud thud.

Bang!

The table groaned under the weight of the hefty object.

Lumian rose to his feet and noticed a response placed on top of the stack.

"No problem. I'll assist you in making contact. The process will take some time, as will the crafting of the item. If you don't mind, I'll add a condition that the final product should be portable."

"Additionally, while observing celestial phenomena, I sensed that you are on the verge of assimilating the Pyromaniac potion and can endure a new Inevitability boon. Here's information about some creatures from the spirit world. You can study it beforehand and explore which contracts you might form to borrow their abilities."

Madam Magician possesses knowledge of astromancy? Her predictions are remarkably accurate… Lumian felt a bit lightheaded as he glanced at the substantial stack of papers.

Having summarized the core principle of his initial Pyromaniac acting, he knew he wasn't far from fully digesting it.

Chapter 305 - 305 Test

305 Test

Lumian took his time with the thick stack of information on spirit world creatures. He stowed them and Aurore's grimoires in an iron cabinet he had acquired earlier.

But now, there were other pressing matters at hand.

Unscrewing the lid of a wide-mouthed bottle, he reached into the green liquor to retrieve the Scotch Broom brooch known as Decency.

His plan was to test the Sealed Artifact's abilities and its negative effects.

Waiting for a real battle wouldn't do; he needed to familiarize himself with it now. Figuring it out on the fly during a fight would be disastrous, leaving him unable to coordinate his Beyonder powers and attacks effectively. nove(l)bi(n.)com

He also wanted to test the extent of the brooch's adverse effects while he was still in good shape. After a battle that had taken a toll on his body and mind, it would be too risky to face those effects hastily.

Understanding the brooch's negative effects in advance would allow Lumian to make better choices when forced to use Decency, minimizing its influence on him.

A Hunter who wasn't familiar with their weapon was bound to fail!

Lumian placed the Scotch Broom brooch on the table before him, focusing his mind to sense its power.

As he did so, a gust of wind blew in from the open window, making his heart race. He quickly stood up, extended his right hand, and shut

the window tight.

The moment the window closed, the room fell eerily silent, as if it had been sealed off from the outside world.

Lumian then walked over to the door, gently opening and closing it.

It seemed like the safe house had turned into a secluded sanctuary.

Seating himself again, Lumian exuded an aura that could provoke disgust and hatred in small animals—this was an application of Provocation.

Almost instantly, a rat appeared from nowhere, snarling and attacking him with its claws.

Without much effort, Lumian flicked his index finger and thumb, and a crimson spark shot out, incinerating the rat as it squealed in pain.

The rat desperately tried to escape while suffering the scorching pain, but the invisible force sealed all exits, leaving it trapped.

It lacked the ability to open a door.

Lumian nodded with satisfaction, using the rat to test the other abilities of the Decency brooch.

The test lasted for about 12 to 13 minutes, but Lumian couldn't be sure without a pocket watch. He decided to proceed with caution and removed the Decency brooch, throwing it into a container of green liquor.

Then, with another small crimson fireball, he ended the rat's life, filling the room with the smell of roasted fat.

After stowing away the container, Lumian left the safe house, ready to test the brooch's repellent effect on others.

The gas street lamps were already lit as he stepped out, and he immediately noticed the glares of pedestrians and vendors around him.

It felt as if they despised him deeply, wanting to attack him with knives, bottles of alcohol, or even an iron pot filled with food.

However, “Lion” Ciel’s trademark golden-and-black hair seemed to deter them from acting on their impulses.

Th-this effect is equivalent to a large-scale Provocation… However, it’s not within my control… Lumian assessed roughly, realizing that he couldn’t fully control it. Under the unfriendly gazes, he walked along the roadside and made his way towards Avenue du Marché.

At that moment, two police officers dressed in black uniforms, their shoulders adorned with silver epaulets, and armed with revolvers strolled by the area.

Catching sight of Lumian, they immediately pointed at him and bellowed, “Halt right there! Routine inspection!”

The effects are truly potent… Lumian didn’t waste a breath and swiftly turned on his heels, dashing away.

“Stop!”

The two officers shouted, drawing their revolvers and taking aim at Lumian.

He skillfully evaded a pedestrian’s sneaky attempt to trip him, making a sharp turn into an alleyway blocked by a barricade. Without glancing back, he hurried into Underground Trier.

He hadn’t brought his carbide lamp, nor did he possess night vision. However, as a Pyromaniac, he could conjure light in any environment.

Crimson fireballs materialized above Lumian’s head and on his shoulders, illuminating his path. Easily outpacing the police officers, he made his way toward another Underground Trier entrance near Rue des Blouses Blanches.

As he walked, Lumian abruptly twisted his body, narrowly avoiding a black shadow that lunged from a corner.

It was a snake-like creature with bluish-black scales.

The creature reared up, flicking its bright-red forked tongue in an aggressive stance, challenging Lumian.

It doesn't only arouse disgust and disdain from humans… They need to see or make contact with me to be influenced… Lumian sighed and shook his head, allowing one of the fireballs to shoot out and reduce the venomous snake into three charred pieces, emitting a burnt fragrance.

Having already gauged the strength and reach of the negative effects, he decided not to take any more risks. He found a nearby empty cave, extinguished the fireballs, and sat in the darkness, quietly waiting for the effects to wear off.

After what seemed like an hour, he stood up and conjured three crimson fireballs above his head, left shoulder, and right shoulder to illuminate the tunnel ahead.

In no time, Lumian found himself at an exit near Rue des Blouses Blanches. There, he spotted a figure with a carbide lamp emerging from a nearby tunnel.

With a grin, Lumian raised his right hand in a wave.

"Well, well, look who's wandering in Underground Trier like a rat."

It was Jenna.

As she caught sight of Lumian, her brow furrowed.

"Did you use Provocation on me? Why are you so irritating?"

Lumian replied vaguely, "Something like that."

Jenna couldn't hide her annoyance and blurted, "Dammit! Why did you use Provocation on me?"

Not bad. You didn't come over to beat me up. That means you still treat me as a friend… That's probably how strong the negative effects are when they're about to disappear… He smiled and explained,

“I encountered something that left me tainted with a dreadful aura, but it will soon fade away.”

Shifting gears, Lumian examined Jenna, who wore a light-white shirt and a faded yellow dress. Her hair cascaded down her back, and she wore a small Sun Sacred Emblem around her neck.

“What brings you to Underground Trier?”

Jenna, now looking more like a college student in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, pursed her lips and replied, “Meeting the two Purifiers. I wanted to show my devotion to god as you suggested. So I dressed in a way that the Church advocates, even wearing a Sun Talisman. But they guided me to Underground Trier, claiming it was to avoid crowds. Dammit, it’s just absurd to go around here dressed like this!”

As the negative effects of Decency waned, Jenna understood why she reacted strongly and calmly shared her experiences with Lumian.

“Did it work?” Lumian glanced at the brown wooden box in Jenna’s right hand but didn’t rush to ask what it contained.

Puzzled, Jenna inquired, “Yes, it did. Valentine, the Purifier, became much more receptive to me. Imre also changed, but they seem to be cautious and suspicious of me for some reason.”

“Maybe they think you’re trying to ingratiate yourself and have ulterior motives,” Lumian speculated, attempting to analyze the Purifiers’ mindset. He pointed at the wooden box Jenna was carrying with his chin. “Is that their reward for you?”

Jenna couldn’t help but smile.

“Exactly. They verified the information about Deep Valley Quarry and acknowledged its importance. As compensation, they gave me two main ingredients and one supplementary ingredient for the Instigator potion. I’ll collect the rest myself.”

“Franca probably has the rest of the supplementary ingredients.” Lumian mused. “The main ingredient for a Sequence 8 potion isn’t cheap, it’s precious, you know. Is the information about Deep Valley

Quarry really that important?”

What did this entail?

Jenna tersely acknowledged his words.

“They didn’t elaborate much. The only thing they said was that the Purifiers can’t directly enter the quarry due to issues between the Churches. But they’ll keep an eye on it to prevent things from escalating.”

“They also want me to keep contacting the client to get more information from him. Apparently, part of the main ingredients for the potion is an advance payment,” Jenna explained.

Lumian nodded approvingly. “Makes sense.”

Jenna sighed. “I’m such a degenerate.”

“Why do you say that?” Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Jenna grabbed her hair. “I should have asked for enough money to pay off my debts before even thinking about the ingredients for the Instigator potion.”

“When you become an Instigator, that money won’t be a problem,” Lumian scoffed. “You’re not planning to stick around as a local singer forever to repay your debts, are you?”

Jenna fell silent for a moment before admitting, “But I don’t want to harm anyone.”

“Why not just target villains?” Lumian tried to ignite Jenna’s determination.

“Damn it, you’re the Instigator, not me, right?” Jenna muttered, adding, “How much should I pay Franca? We got the information together; it’s not fair if she doesn’t get anything.”

Lumian chuckled. “Considering the potion formula she gave you, even with a friend’s discount, you should pay her a minimum of 20,000 verl d’or.”

“20,000 verl d’or minimum…” Jenna’s face showed a hint of pain. “For now, I can only owe her. Do you think I’ll accumulate more debt the higher my Sequence? The potion formula and ingredients are so expensive…”

“But your earning potential will increase,” Lumian half-instigated, half-comforted.

He extinguished the three fireballs on his body and headed toward the exit of Underground Trier, Jenna’s carbide lamp lighting their way.

After a few steps, Jenna asked with curiosity, “Why did you create fireballs above your head and both shoulders? What’s the point?”

“Haven’t you heard of people carrying three lamps—one above their head, one on their left shoulder, and one on their right shoulder?” Lumian asked.

“No,” Jenna shook her head, intrigued, “Is it some mystical knowledge?”

“Nah, just folklore,” Lumian smiled. “I thought it looked cool, so I went with it.”

Jenna couldn’t help but curse, “Dammit! You’re so childish!”

As they chatted, they left Underground Trier and entered Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, where Franca gave them a suspicious look.

Chapter 306 - 306 Ambivalence

306 Ambivalence

Lumian calmly recounted his encounter with Jenna in the depths of Underground Trier while he was enduring the air of repulsion and disdain.

Franca gave a slightly awkward smile and deftly changed the topic.

“How can you be repulsive and detestable? You didn’t lose control.”

Franca had encountered Beyonders on the Hunter pathway succumbing to a loss of control numerous times, most of them exuding traits that attracted hostility from those around them. This was the principal reason they were swiftly dealt with.

Lumian briefly explained, “I obtained a Sealed Artifact. Its negative effects manifest an hour after I remove it, causing me to exude repulsion and disdain.”

Jenna, curious, interjected, “What happens if you don’t take it off?”

Lumian’s lips curled as he replied, “Then it turns into an alarm, drawing the attention of nearby official Beyonders who’d like to apprehend me.”

“It’s quite the attention-seeker,” Franca remarked with a playful grin.

“It does have a fondness for ‘decency,’” Lumian said, his tone meaningful. Then, he added nonchalantly, “Its abilities lean heavily towards Bribe, with a touch of Distortion.”

Given the likelihood of needing to collaborate with Franca in the future to deal with Padre Guillaume Bénet, Lumian took the initiative to divulge the situation regarding the Decency brooch. However, he

refrained from delving into intricate details, especially regarding the strength and range of its powers. After all, mystical items were a Beyonder's ace in the hole. Exposing them risked a sense of vulnerability. Just as Franca had shared information about the Ring of Punishment while omitting the brass revolver and other items during their earlier operation.

It was a delicate balance—sharing yet withholding the full truth; building trust while maintaining essential precautions.

Franca didn't press further. She pondered for a moment before saying, "It corresponds to a Sequence 7 Briber and a Sequence 6 Baron of Corruption from the Black Emperor pathway. It seems a Baron of Corruption met his end, melding his Beyonder traits with the objects on him to create the Sealed Artifact. Its abilities aren't fully revealed."

"Black Emperor?" Lumian had never heard of this Sequence, nor had Jenna.

"The deity appellation for the Lawyer pathway," Franca whispered, excitement in her voice. "Rumor has it that Emperor Roselle achieved Black Emperor status before his demise—a true deity!"

For a brief moment, Lumian and Jenna were rendered speechless. Their expressions mirrored their astonishment.

Franca couldn't accurately fathom Emperor Roselle's standing in their eyes as genuine Intisians.

Had he—no, had He truly ascended to godhood?

"Rumors, mere rumors," Franca hastened to add, lest her dependable image be tarnished in Jenna's eyes.

After a few more exchanges, Jenna opened the wooden box in her right hand, revealing the smaller boxes within.

They contained a small, dark, hive-like heart, a sac exuding dark green liquid, and a slender, smoked tube-like substance.

Franca scrutinized them briefly before giving a nod of approval.

“The heart of the Demon Throat Honeyguide and the poison sac of the Dark Prowler—these are the main ingredients. Yes, the Dark Prowler is a peculiar two-headed snake.

“You’ve also acquired the Demon Throat Honeyguide’s syrinx. You only need blue Jimsonweed juice, fern powder, walnuts, and pure water… I have the blue Jimsonweed juice. The other three supplementary ingredients are easy to come by.”

Fern powder… Lumian recalled the supplemental ingredient for the Provoker potion shared a similarity. It implied being “susceptible to others’ words.”

In that light, Instigator and Provoker bore resemblance. Hunter and Demoness truly were neighboring, interchangeable pathways.

Noticing Jenna’s keenness to buy ferns and walnuts from the right shops and prepare pure water overnight, Franca cautioned, “Hold on a moment. Set yourself straight first. You’ve digested the Assassin potion, and chances of losing control with the Instigator potion are slim these days, but why not aim for the best? Wouldn’t it be wiser to minimize the chance of losing control entirely?”

Lumian scratched his chin and added, “I’m curious what kind of monster an Instigator would end up as after losing control.”

Jenna shot him a glare and settled onto the sofa, shutting her eyes and focusing on her breath.

Lumian sprawled in the armchair next to him, his arms draped over the armrests. He turned to Franca and inquired, “Have you gotten your hands on genuine mummy ashes?”

“Nope,” Franca shook her head, a touch of helplessness in her expression. “I even offered 500 verl d’or for 10 grams, but those guys keep pushing fakes. Worthless bunch. They can’t even tell the real from the fake!”

“Only 500 verl d’or?” Lumian teased. “Aren’t you rolling in it?”

“Normally, 10 grams go for just over 100 verl d’or. 500 is already a small fortune, alright?” Franca snapped back, her frustration evident.

“And I’m not exactly swimming in money at the moment.”

Lumian nodded, getting why Franca’s funds were running dry.

Her infiltration of the Iron and Blood Cross Order wasn’t a true success. It could only be considered as aiding Lumian in reaching the goal. So, the reward she received wasn’t the main ingredients for the Demoness of Pleasure, but rather the privilege to buy them at a discount.

“How much more do you need?” Jenna’s eyes popped open, a willingness to help evident in her gaze.

Franca shook her head and replied, “If 500 verl d’or can’t get me the real stuff, neither will a grand. They’ll just think I’m a fool, waiting for me to bid higher.”

She then turned her gaze to Lumian.

“What’s your plan for now?”

Given time, she could likely snag actual mummy ashes in a fortnight or a month. However, Lumian needed her assistance within the next week, pushing her to consider searching for true mummies in the Star Highlands of the Southern Continent.

Lumian caught onto Franca’s unspoken message and mused, “Maybe consider a little arson and digesting the potion to some extent.”

This way, he could unlock the Contractee boon, garnering diverse abilities from different creatures through contracts.

As far as he knew, a freshly minted Contractee could only forge three contracts. Lumian intended to cherry-pick three from the four possible abilities: ones that impacted the Spirit Body or psyche, basic teleportation skills, a moderate level of disguise, and an ability akin to invisibility or shadow blending.

The final choice hinged on the information on creatures from the spirit realm. Maybe the willing creatures suitable for a contract with Lumian didn’t wield matching skills.

Lumian was sure of one thing—all spirit world creatures could traverse the spirit realm—a basic form of teleportation. The variance lay in swiftness. If he struck a pact with White Paper, perhaps he'd manage only ten to twenty meters per jump. Not the optimal choice for traversing to the Southern Continent—exhaustion would likely make him lose control long before he arrived there.

"Arson… What's your thinking?" Franca sat cross-legged in the recliner.

Lumian recounted the acting principle he had deduced about the Pyromaniac.

Franca shared her insight based on her own experiences. "Upright acting is incitement, and inverted acting is instigation. They can all help you digest the potion. Wouldn't that be easy? Go down to the docks tomorrow and incite the dockworkers into a strike. The rallying cry will be for better pay."

Lumian shook his head slowly.

"If I can rally them into a strike and there's a good chance it'll get them some benefits or help them achieve their goals, I'll give it a shot. But if it's only going to bring disaster upon them, I'm not so keen on it.

"I can't stand exploiting others without benefiting them and causing harm instead—unless there's no other way. Then anyone can be sacrificed.

"Once there was this guy who always said that we could only grab more and have enough food if we united. But when we did unite to fight others for food, he took advantage of the chaos and made off with the food."

"You've got quite a bit of experience." Franca studied Lumian anew, feeling that he wasn't just as simple as Muggle's brother.

Jenna had been through similar situations.

Franca sighed and said,"As expected, you're quite the instigator in the upright sense. I'd be the same if I were you. Though I can put up

a tough front, truth be told… haha, I can't bring myself to do it."

Lumian regarded her thoughtfully and spoke,

"I find you a bit paradoxical. Sometimes you're seasoned, well-informed, and have a knack for analyzing things. Other times, you're foolish, innocent, and naive." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in). (com)

Lumian had only encountered such a contradictory disposition in one other person—his sister Aurore.

Stirred by Lumian's string of words, Franca blurted out, "Are you trying to provoke me? How am I foolish or naive?"

At this, she caught Jenna's disapproving glance.

"Ahem." Franca cleared her throat and went on, "It's because I have this core kindness and certain expectations for the world. Even after seeing how harsh life can be, I still cherish life. Sigh, most in my group are like that. Only a few are resilient, brilliant, and agile. They seem to never be daunted by hardships or moral dilemmas."

The Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society? Why do they have such similarities? Lumian nodded, choosing not to probe further.

With Jenna's plan to gather the remaining supplemental ingredients the following day to advance as an Instigator, Lumian swiftly departed from Rue des Blouses Blanches and returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As he made his way up the stairs, Lumian caught sight of Anthony Reid, the information broker, coming down with a suitcase.

"Moving out?" Lumian inquired.

"That's right." Anthony Reid, still donning his military-green camouflage, gave a slight nod.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Didn't you mention some unfinished business in the market district?"

“The lead’s gone cold.” Anthony Reid let out a soft sigh.

Gone cold? Suddenly, Lumian recalled having seen a parliamentary election poster in the other man’s room. He prodded, “Because Hugues Artois is dead?”

Chapter 307 - 307 Instigation

307 Instigation

Upon hearing Lumian's question, Anthony Reid, his round face slightly pudgy and his skin with a slight sheen, fixed his dark brown eyes on him for a moment before responding, "I'm not sure what you're getting at."

The information broker's emotions appeared steady, and his expression seemed unaffected. It was almost as if Hugues Artois's demise hadn't affected him in the least.

Lumian's grin widened, and he didn't press further. Pointing toward the lower level, he suggested, "Let me buy you a drink. You've aided me in the past, and we've fought side by side. Consider it a parting gesture."

Anthony Reid scratched his retreating, light-yellow hairline with his free hand, his other holding a suitcase, pondering briefly before conceding, "Okay."

Descending the narrow, gas-lit staircase, the duo entered the basement bar and settled at the counter.

"What's your poison?" Lumian inquired in a casual tone, as if he'd just stepped into his own abode.

"Fennel absinthe," Anthony Reid replied succinctly.

"Absinthe, eh?" Lumian chuckled, producing a verl d'or silver coin and four coppet copper coins. He tossed them to the barkeep, Pavard Neeson, who sported a ponytail. "Two glasses of Somersault."

Somersault was bar parlance, signifying a double serving of fennel absinthe and a measure of "little mummy."

The latter took seven licks, while the former required twelve.

Pavard Neeson deftly flipped over standard cups and filled them with a dreamy green liquid for Lumian and Anthony Reid.

As Lumian took a sip, he savored the familiar bitterness and revitalization. He observed Pavard Neeson, whose dark brown beard framed his lips, muttering in a low, ingratiating tone,

“Ciel, got any of them peculiar drugs?”

The bar owner and amateur painter believed that Ciel, a notorious mob leader, surely possessed a couple of routes for obtaining proscribed substances.

Lumian caressed the glass with his thumb and smiled, inquiring, “What kind of drug are you after?”

Recognizing that Anthony Reid was an information broker often entangled in illicit affairs, Pavard Neeson did not hold back, explaining in hushed tones,

“Banned psychotropic drugs. Sigh, when that odd tree affected me, I created the draft I was most proud of. Actually, it wasn’t just my most satisfying piece; it embodied the aesthetics I’d always strived for but never reached. It perfectly channeled my thoughts and convictions. Since then, that sensation’s eluded me completely. Every stroke of mine has turned into dogsh*t! I’m considering experimenting with psychotropic drugs, hoping to recapture that sensation.”

Lumian took another sip of the misty absinthe, his lips curling in a derisive smile,

“If I were you, I’d steer clear of painting altogether. You lack the innate aptitude.”

Without waiting for Pavard Neeson’s retort, he chuckled and stated, “Relying on drugs for passable creations signifies your dearth of talent!” nove(l)bi(n.)com

“But many famous painters have resorted to it…” Pavard Neeson

began, only to be cut off by Lumian. He clicked his tongue and interjected, “That’s an indication their creative faculties are waning, their fountain of inspiration drying up.

“Isn’t that cheating? Pitting drug-fueled works against those of other artists, barely eking out a victory. Earning a spot in an exhibition and proudly proclaiming to every visitor: ‘Behold, I’m despicable. I possess an inferiority complex. Drugs are my prowess, and demons are my parents.’”

Seeing Pavard Neeson’s visage turn ashen, Lumian spread his arms slightly, probing, “Does that fill you with pride?

“Should you possess talent, you’d no longer be an amateur painter. Even if critical acclaim eluded you, and the World’s Artists Exhibition snubbed you, private galleries would come seeking. You understand the harsh reality better than I do.”

At this juncture, Lumian’s smile broadened.

“Drugs won’t save you. It’s available to all, like a common commodity. When everyone resorts to it, won’t they be pitted against their innate skill and standards?”

Pavard Neeson’s lips quivered, yet he remained speechless.

With a somber expression, he took a couple of steps back, slumping into his seat, as if his spirit had vacated his body.

Anthony Reid, who had been quietly sipping fennel absinthe, turned his gaze to Lumian. “You’re not a fan of those forbidden psychiatric drugs?”

“Otherwise?” Lumian scoffed.

Anthony Reid shifted his attention to Pavard Neeson, visibly grappling with his inner turmoil, and spoke contemplatively. “You seem to have swayed him.”

“I merely stoked the embers of his guilt,” Lumian replied with calm composure.

Anthony Reid nodded gently. “But what if your persuasion falls short?”

Lumian laughed. “I’m not his godfather.”

If he couldn’t sway him, so be it.

A brief pause fell upon Anthony Reid before he turned his gaze back to Lumian.

“Your method of dissuasion deviates from your usual approach. Is this acting?”

Impressively observant and astute, as expected from a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Spectator pathway… If I can kindle the inner fervor within a Spectator’s heart, it should greatly aid my digestion… Lumian mused inwardly. Holding his glass of verdant liquid, he looked ahead and replied, “I stumbled upon some fliers earlier. They made mention of Hugues Artois deserting his troops during the war against the Loen Kingdom a few years back, leading to countless casualties.”

Anthony Reid remained silent, savoring his fennel absinthe in quietude.

Lumian’s gaze flickered toward the vacant bar counter as he continued, “I recall you wrestled with the lingering effects of PTSD from that war a few years ago.”

With a gulp, Anthony Reid took a swig of the green liquor.

Lumian opted to not bring up the parliamentary election poster found in the information broker’s room. He glanced at the vacant shell that was Pavard Neeson and mumbled to himself, “If the sole motivation is animosity towards Hugues Artois, then news of his assassination would be met with jubilation and him drinking until he dropped at the bar.

“But if one wishes to unravel the reason behind Hugues Artois’s actions, understand how he wormed his way into politics and a parliamentary bid despite his past, and uncover the strings being pulled in his favor, one must seek out other breadcrumbs to grant the

departed some semblance of peace.

“The official Beyonders should be on this case, but they labor under too many constraints. They lack the untamed boldness of wild Beyonders.”

Seated still, Anthony Reid took another swig of fennel absinthe.

Lumian chuckled.

“It’s indeed a vexing conundrum. The hurdles are countless, and the perils are real. Surrender becomes a tempting option for everyone. In the end, though, Hugues Artois lies deceased. The instigator of that tragedy rests in the grave. The departed souls should find some solace.”

Anthony Reid ceased his imbibing, his middle-aged visage betraying no emotion.

Lumian glanced his way, lowered his tone, and smiled knowingly.

“Folks plagued by severe mental ills can’t ascend far in the Spectator path. And even if they do plateau, external stimuli can trigger catastrophic lapses, transforming them into monstrosities. In this ever-more perilous world, stability is but a distant wish for flawed Beyonders.”

At this juncture, Lumian reined in his expression and fixed his gaze upon Anthony Reid’s profile. He inquired, his voice resonating with gravitas, “Do you fancy departing laden with remorse and reluctance, languishing in the throes of becoming a monster, shying away from your former comrades, or do you dare venture forth in pursuit of the truth, courting danger, and crafting your own heroic saga?”

Without acknowledging Anthony Reid’s response, Lumian gracefully alighted from the barstool, lifted his fennel absinthe, and downed the remainder in a single gulp.

With that, he whispered into Anthony Reid’s ear, “I contributed to Hugues Artois’s demise. We’re still untangling his problem.”

Observing Anthony Reid’s slight tremor, Lumian straightened up and

exited the subterranean bar without casting a backward glance.

He strolled back into Room 207, not bothering to shut the door behind him, and lit the carbide lamp.

With a casual swivel, he spun the chair around and settled into it, his posture easy as he fixated on the dim corridor outside.

Lumian waited in abnormal silence, as he held a certainty that the figure he awaited would materialize.

As moments ticked away, the couple's voices escalated into a quarrel anew, and the rowdy drunkards began to trickle onto the street.

The soft patter of hesitant steps drew near Room 207, each sound echoing the uncertainty.

A sly grin played upon Lumian's lips, and he reclined in the chair, his gaze steady on the door.

Before too long, Anthony Reid stepped into view, garbed in a military-green shirt and matching pants, capped off by tall leather boots. His hair lay cropped and thin.

Standing within the circle of light cast by the carbide lamp, he regarded Lumian seated at the wooden table, a smirk adorning his lips. His features danced in a contorted display.

In a rich timbre, he intoned, "I know you're trying to provoke me. I know you're acting, but… you're correct…"

Anthony Reid, middle-aged and weathered, raised his right hand and pressed it to his chest, his expression one of fierce resolve.

"Over these past few years, my heart has been seared by anguish and righteous anger."

A knowing smile graced Lumian's face as he shut his eyes momentarily, sensing the Pyromaniac potion digesting a little.

He rose from his seat and addressed Anthony Reid, saying, "Truth wields the mightiest power of persuasion."

Anthony Reid felt a weight lift after speaking, the inner conflict and confusion subsiding.

He ventured into Room 207, the door clicking shut behind him. His eyes swept over the surroundings in a swift assessment.

“Did you truly eliminate Hugues Artois? How deep did your investigation penetrate?”

“Celia Bello, the one who assassinated Hugues Artois, is a friend of mine. It was I who first unearthed the heretic cults supporting Hugues Artois,” Lumian responded in a matter-of-fact tone before extending a sincere apology. “My earlier words held a deceit, and for that, I’m sorry.”

Anthony Reid was taken aback.

“Which statement?”

A mischievous grin curved Lumian’s lips.

“Actually, we haven’t even embarked on the trail to uncover the people and forces behind Hugues Artois.”

Chapter 308 - 308 Incomprehensible Choice

308 Incomprehensible Choice

The plump, middle-aged Anthony Reid found himself taken aback. But after a brief moment, he grinned in a self-deprecating way and uttered, “I was so rattled that I couldn’t even judge the authenticity of that sentence. As anticipated, a Spectator must take a seat in the audience.”

Lumian remained calmly seated, his smile unwavering.

“No, it’s not that simple. Why did I leap off the barstool? Why did I murmur into your ear from behind? My aim was to shield you from my subtle expressions and involuntary body language. In those moments, your emotions were already stirred, blurring your ability to decipher my true intent.”

A short pause followed Anthony Reid’s contemplative silence, then he spoke,

“That’s one reason. Another lies in your characteristic demeanor. I don’t know if you’ve caught on, but you tend to put on a bit of a show, appear nonchalant, or in modern terms, act cool.

“Just then, I believed those actions, given the circumstances, were in line with your usual behavior, aimed at lending weight to your words. So, suspicion didn’t even cross my mind.”

A chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips.

“It’s only natural for a lad like me to yearn for a touch of coolness, a bit of swagger. It also conveniently masks my true motives. Actually, both are genuine. That’s why they remain impervious to scrutiny.”

It was akin to him having Fire Ravens circling him with one hand in his pocket, unleashing them on his adversaries as he advanced. First, it was undeniably cool, and second, he seized the chance to grasp Mr. K's finger to avert any potential mishaps.

Anthony Reid pondered momentarily before nodding.

"Only a superficial motive, steeped in authenticity, can truly deceive a Spectator."

Raising his right foot over his left knee, Lumian steered the conversation back on track.

"Our journey to unveil the people and forces behind Hugues Artois hasn't yet commenced, as we are engaged in more pressing matters. But fear not, we shall delve into this matter next week. We possess the relevant sources of information as well."

Lumian's strategy involved Jenna delving deeper into Hugues Artois's background through the Purifiers, exploring ways she could "assist."

As the one responsible for Hugues Artois's demise, it was logical for Jenna to keep tabs on the investigation's progress, hoping to unearth all details without arousing the official Beyonders' suspicion. These thoughts and tendencies were inherent in Jenna, so Lumian didn't need to fuel them further. Just a reminder would suffice.

In due course, the Purifiers could subtly guide Jenna and her companions toward actions they might find inconvenient. This would undeniably supply Anthony Reid's investigation with invaluable leads.

Anthony Reid's deep brown eyes mirrored Lumian's figure as he absorbed the discourse in silence.

The information broker offered an almost imperceptible nod.

"I'll stay a while longer."

Engaging with Spectators of the Beyonder path is straightforward. There's no need to concoct another tale or search for an excuse to sway him. He can ascertain the truth for himself… Lumian flashed a

grin and gestured toward the bed. “Take a seat.”

This way, he needn’t expose Jenna’s true identity or her role as a Purifier informant.

Anthony Reid stood near the door, rooted in place, and spoke, “You’ve more or less sussed out what’s happened to me. Is there something else you want me to add?”

“I’d prefer a more detailed account,” Lumian responded without much ceremony.

Having been through the Poison Spur Mob, the Bliss Society, the Cordu catastrophe, Ruhr and Michel’s deaths, and the explosion at the Goodville Chemical Factory, Lumian found the evil gods and their minions abnormally repulsive. His casual demeanor had been replaced by a newfound seriousness.

Once, he’d believed that people could fancy whatever beliefs they pleased—that it didn’t concern him. Now, his perspective had entirely changed. He held that only heretics who’d gone to their grave were the good ones. The living ones were ticking time bombs of doom, liable to unleash havoc on him and his companions sooner or later.

So, he wasn’t just spinning tales for Anthony Reid. He truly planned on delving into Hugues Artois’ affairs and uncovering more of those heretics when he could spare a moment.

Moreover, this could endear him to Mr. K and the Aurora Order.

Of course, it did seem quite odd for a wanted mob leader to be lending a hand to the authorities in taking down cultists.

Anthony Reid’s expression darkened as he said, “Towards the end of the war with the Loen Kingdom, my comrades and I were stationed at a vital route in the northern foothills of the Hornacis mountain range. Our commanding officer was Major Hugues Artois.

“We were split into three companies, each at different positions. We were to prevent small Loen Kingdom Beyonder teams from crossing the treacherous path and attacking us from the rear, as well as defend

against direct assaults.

“That night, gunshots and cannon fire suddenly shattered my sleep. I watched as my comrades were torn apart, one by one, from behind. Their heads exploding, bodies rent asunder. The earth became a sea of blood…”

At this point, Anthony Reid’s breath quickened, as if he was reliving the trauma.

He paused for a moment before continuing, “In the midst of that war, I had a fortuitous encounter that pushed my Sequence upward. I never reported it to Hugues Artois. Using my newfound abilities, I managed to break through the encirclement with four wounded comrades and retreated.

“Two of them were gravely hurt and were left behind on the mountain path for—forever. I can still see their pained and angry gazes.

“At first, I thought maybe one of the other positions had been compromised, or that Loen’s airships had dropped troops behind us under cover of darkness. But later, I realized that the reason was that Hugues Artois’s company had chosen to retreat without informing us, after encountering only a probing attack!”

Lumian pondered for a moment before replying, “When Hugues Artois ordered the retreat, didn’t those soldiers question it? Didn’t they try to get word to the other two positions?”

“Hugues Artois was our commanding officer, and he knew how to give rousing speeches. Plus, he had a warrant supposedly signed by General Philip,” Anthony Reid said, his expression grim. “The soldiers back then assumed he had already passed on orders to the other positions. I still can’t wrap my head around why he’d sacrifice us. It wouldn’t have taken much time or caused him any harm.”

“Maybe he was overwhelmed and forgot,” Lumian suggested, not out to defend the late Hugues Artois, merely offering a possible explanation.

Anthony Reid shook his head.

“He wasn’t a green recruit on his first battlefield. He had proven his mettle in prior fights, showed his leadership under duress.”

Lumian didn’t delve further, allowing Anthony Reid to continue.

“Once we found out the truth, the three of us fought to bring Hugues Artois to military court, but it was futile. They’d simply tell us that imagination wasn’t evidence.

“Helpless, we watched Hugues Artois shift into politics after the war and rise through the ranks.

“My other two comrades were frail to start with. They passed away burdened by fury and pain. When Hugues Artois threw his hat in the ring for the Enlightenment Party in the market district’s parliamentary election, I ended up here.”

Lumian nodded slightly and inquired, “Being an information broker, that’s to hide your true identity?”

“No, I’ve been scraping by as an information broker for a few years now,” Anthony Reid replied with a wry smile. “Plus, this cover helps me dig deeper into Hugues Artois’ dealings.”

“Any breakthroughs?” Lumian asked naturally.

Anthony Reid’s expression darkened as he answered, “Hugues Artois’ foray into politics seems unremarkable. He rode General Philip’s coattails and climbed the ladder. His eloquence caught the eye of several senior Enlightenment Party MPs. And he forged ties with a handful of ex-noble families.” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Is General Philip a concern?” Lumian queried, straightforward as ever.

Anthony Reid sighed slowly, his voice heavy, “The general met his end before I could investigate him. Official word is—illness took him.”

Lumian posed a few more questions before saying, “I’ll catch up with you when I’ve got more to share.”

“Sure.” Anthony Reid understood Lumian’s sincerity.

…

After departing Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian made his way back to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches. He swung open the iron cabinet, retrieving a hefty stack of information concerning the denizens of the spirit world.

Within the assortment, he discovered a notebook labeled ‘Sights in the Spirit World.’ Flipping through a couple of pages, he could feel a surge of frustration and anxiety creeping into his mind.

His immediate aim wasn’t to grasp the intricacies of the spirit world, but rather to pinpoint suitable creatures from that realm. Thus, he closed the notebook and delved into the introductions of the various spirit world entities.

Somewhat inexplicably, after poring over the pages for over half an hour, Lumian sensed his mental energy draining away. His thoughts seemed to evaporate, forcing him to bring his study session to an abrupt close. He sprawled out on the bed, drifting into slumber.

Early the next morning, Lumian arrived at Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, and rang the doorbell.

Franca had already risen from her sleep, attired in her customary shirt and breeches. She directed her gaze towards Lumian and inquired, “What brings you here so early?”

Lumian’s eyes flicked towards Jenna, who occupied the living room, a smile tugging at his lips.

“Isn’t today the day Jenna advances to being an Instigator? I’m here to witness the moment.”

A frown played across Franca’s features as she muttered, “You seem quite concerned about her.”

“Absolutely,” Lumian affirmed, his grin widening. “Once she’s an Instigator, she can aid me in dealing with Guillaume Bénet. While I can’t exactly count on her for a direct confrontation, she’ll excel at launching sneak attacks and surveying the surroundings to forestall any potential mishaps.”

Jenna emitted a derisive snort, while Franca offered a mix of exasperation and amusement through a tongue click. “Your words are like honey.”

“The kind that’s already been digested?” Lumian chuckled, his self-awareness evident.

Chapter 309 - 309 Restoring Confidence

309 Restoring Confidence

Naturally, Franca caught onto Lumian's true intentions; otherwise, her Instigator potion would've been a wasted effort. She felt satisfied that Lumian was one who wouldn't falter in a battle of sophistry, and she hoped he could maintain that.

"Come on in." Franca gestured for Lumian to step into the living room.

Right then, boxes already occupied the coffee table, containing Demon Throat Honeyguide and other ingredients.

Simply glancing at these items stirred something in Lumian, an urge to devour them.

Thankfully, it wasn't overwhelming. It was more like hungry folks eying a chef grilling lamb.

Jenna's focus had returned to the ingredients. Gazing at the white porcelain broth bowl with its dual handles and cover, she found it absurd that she was going to consume it the same way she had consumed the Assassin potion.

How was this potion concoction? It seemed more like cocktail mixing or broth preparation!

Mysticism was nowhere to be found!

Jenna inhaled deeply, then poured 100 milliliters of pure water into the broth bowl using a measuring cylinder. She added the Demon Throat Honeyguide and the Dark Prowler poison sac.

Amidst the bubbling sounds, the two main ingredients fused in the pure water.

A manifestation of the law of Beyonder characteristics convergence… Lumian observed closely, holding his words.

Franca carefully unsheathed a ritual dagger and conjured a wall of spirituality around the living room.

The hive-like heart and the dark-green poison sac began to dissolve simultaneously, coloring the pure water in the white porcelain bowl with a gleaming black hue.

Jenna then added the syrinx of the Demon Throat Honeyguide, five drops of blue Jimsonweed juice, and 10 grams of fern powder. Finally, she tossed in an unpeeled walnut.

Watching the walnut disappear as if swallowed by crimson molten steel, Jenna couldn't help but feel a shiver of fear.

Can this thing really be drunk?

"Not bad. It's exactly like the Instigator potion I brewed before," Franca commended with an easy smile.

Of course it's the same. Concocting a potion is that simple… Lumian thought to himself.

Franca waved her hand, her confidence unwavering, and continued, "No need to fret. Downing a Sequence 8 potion directly won't trouble you. Plus, you've already digested the Assassin potion."

Infected by her confidence, Jenna's expression gradually turned resolute.

Oh, you're employing Instigation, are you? Is this an upright approach for an Instigator? Lumian grasped Franca's intentions, yet he didn't call her out.

Jenna steeled herself and composed her mind. She picked up the double-handled broth bowl and lifted it to her lips.

Gazing at the obsidian potion fizzing with tiny bubbles, as though harboring hidden desires and ill intent, she tilted her head back and poured the contents from the porcelain bowl into her mouth.

An acute pain coursed from her mouth down to her esophagus, radiating to her brain and other parts of her body.

The pain jolted her awake, memories of the explosion at Goodville Chemical Factory flashing through her mind. She gained fresh insights, a better understanding of the true intentions and thoughts of those involved. She sensed malevolent thoughts that had either come to fruition or were waiting to be acted upon.

Soon, Jenna's heart was filled with rage, loathing, and a desire to obliterate those individuals and matters. She felt an urge to cease holding back and unleash her emotions.

Recalling Franca's repeated warnings, she resisted letting her hatred, anger, and desires take the reins. She clenched her fists, standing still.

Her shadow seemed to deepen, and her brownish-yellow hair appeared to lengthen.

In a little over ten seconds, the pain gradually receded, and Jenna reconnected with her body.

It's indeed quite easy… Most of the reason why I'm feeling half-dead after gulping down potions at a low Sequence is due to Inevitability's corruption… Lumian sighed.

Jenna swiftly gathered her thoughts and stretched her limbs, examining the changes in her body.

"Oh, my body's definitely gotten stronger. And I've got this new ability, Instigation…"

"It's actually pretty great. Instigation is more than just an ability. It lets me feel what others are feeling—emotions, desires, even malice. It sharpens my thinking and analytical skills. Ha, I'll have to use this to my advantage. Can't have Ciel always making fun of my smarts and performance…

“Even if I don’t speak, using Instigation actively will make me seem more reliable and approachable. It’ll help folks around me think better of me.”

“With the Instigation ability and some clever talk, I can plant certain thoughts or desires in someone’s mind, making them choose to act the way I want…”

After a quick adjustment, Jenna confirmed that her combat skills hadn’t improved significantly, but she could be much more valuable in other situations.

“How’d it go? Told you there wouldn’t be any trouble,” Franca said with a grin, her satisfaction not hidden at all.

Jenna’s blue eyes still had traces of black threads in them. She let out a relieved breath and replied, “I was a bit worried earlier.”

“That’s just the way it is at low Sequences. You’ll need to be careful when you move up to Sequence 7,” Franca reminded Jenna, ensuring she didn’t underestimate the risks of a potion.

Jenna nodded and said to Franca, “I owe you 30,000 verl d’or, including this time. I’ll pay you back in installments.”

She included the Assassin potion from earlier.

Franca had discussed this with Jenna the night before. She had intended to treat it as a gift. After all, she could continue selling the potion formula and information about the Deep Valley Quarry. However, seeing Jenna’s determination, she decided to accept it after some thought.

With a smile, she replied at that moment, “No need to rush. Take your time repaying. You could even stretch it into a 20 or 30-year loan.”

Lumian couldn’t help but click his tongue and turned to Jenna. “Has the compensation from the Goodville Chemical Factory come through?”

“Imre and Valentine told me the legal process is done. Once the

auction wraps up, the assets will be distributed—perhaps in two weeks." Jenna didn't quite grasp why Lumian was suddenly bringing this up. "Julien and I should get around 6,000 verl d'or. We'll split it evenly after settling our debts. Honestly, I don't really want it, but he won't agree for sure."

Lumian nodded and inquired further, "And what about your father's compensation?"

"Because of the Goodville Chemical Factory explosion, the court's given its final say, but the factory owner's dragging his feet. Ugh, is he trying to move his assets out before he pays up?" Jenna's tone carried a hint of anger as she spoke about it.

A chuckle escaped Lumian's lips.

"How about this? We pay a visit to the families waiting for compensation soon. You 'instigate' them, and I'll 'incite' them. We alternate, gather them at the factory owner's place, and demand what's owed to them. It helps them and gives us a chance to digest the potion."

"The factory owner's got a bunch of armed guards, and he's got ties to the police. What if they hurt the people just asking for their dues? They're already going through so much," Jenna expressed her concern.

Lumian arched an eyebrow and replied, "The court has made its decision. They've got every right to seek their compensation. If anyone dares to fire shots, I promise they won't shoot again. Don't worry, with us around, they'll be safe. Besides, you can give the heads-up to the Purifiers. They'll understand."

Jenna was convinced, her thoughts racing.

"Dammit, you're inciting me!"

While she grumbled, she accepted Lumian's idea and decided to gather information as soon as possible to figure out where the factory owner was now residing.

Simultaneously, another thought crossed her mind. "Now that I'm an

Instigator, I need to interact with the entrustee. It's a task from the Purifiers. Franca, when's the next meetup?"

Franca said indignantly, "Next weekend. Reaching out to the entrustee is risky business. The Purifiers are kind of taking advantage of your lack of knowledge by only advancing you one ingredient for the Instigator potion. If it were me, I'd demand a better deal!"

Habitual instigation… Lumian chuckled inwardly.

As Franca and Jenna tidied up the coffee table, Lumian remained seated in an armchair, looking all repulsive.

After a while, Jenna approached him, her body lowering.

Lumian turned his head in surprise.

With a confident smirk, Jenna adjusted her hair. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

"I can safely say that you didn't just show up to watch me drink that potion for dealing with Guillaume Bénet."

Her grin was playful and teasing. Though she wasn't wearing makeup, it brought Lumian back to their first meeting when she was an underground singer at Salle de Bal Brise.

Before Lumian could respond, Jenna straightened up and strolled toward the bathroom, leaving behind a casual question.

"Is it really so hard to admit that we're friends and you care about your friends?"

…

On his way back to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian mulled over his role as Pyromaniac.

He was teetering on the edge of taking the first step towards digesting the potion; his hunger for more acting chances was insatiable.

Though I must set aflame minds and society, I cannot overlook the elemental act of kindling substances and fulfilling fire's symbolic essence.

Who would be a suitable candidate for burning…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian's gaze spotted Baron Brignais.

The mob leader, who usually emulated Gehrman Sparrow, had discarded his customary poise and genteel demeanor. Instead, he marched restlessly and agitatedly along Avenue du Marché, his eyes darting around incessantly.

Lumian fixated on him briefly, though Baron Brignais remained oblivious.

Baffled, he retraced his steps to Salle de Bal Brise and inquired of Sarkota, who had once served under Baron Brignais, "Do you have any knowledge of what happened to Brignais? I observed him in a state of great unease just now."

The reticent Sarkota glanced towards the café's glass window and replied, "Baron Brignais's illegitimate son has gone missing."

Illegitimate son? Gone missing? Lumian's thoughts immediately turned to the young lad Baron Brignais had picked up from the Suhit steam locomotive station.

Chapter 310 - 310 Encounter

310 Encounter

“How did he go missing?” Lumian asked, puzzled.

Baron Brignais wasn’t just a mob leader; he was a Beyonder, too. As long as he was attentive, how could he allow his child to disappear?

Moreover, who in the market district would dare to snatch his child?

Sarkota shook his head. “He didn’t provide details.”

Could it be the machinations of the Rose School of Thought, striving to expose the truth about the Savoie Mob from Baron Brignais? With recent events woven into the mix, Lumian had some unconfirmed theories.

After a brief pause of thought, he inquired, “Do you know what Brignais’s illegitimate son looks like?”

Sarkota nodded. “The baron’s underlings came by with a portrait that resembles a photograph.”

A portrait that resembles a photograph… Had he invoked ritualistic magic? Lumian’s memory recalled the contents of Aurore’s grimoires.

Gazing at the brilliant sunlight streaming through the window, he turned to Sarkota.

“Gather some men and aid Brignais.”

Regardless of whether the child was ensnared by the Rose School of Thought or had truly gone missing, if they couldn’t locate him soon, the outcome would be grim.

At his age, even without additional complications, his fate as a street

urchin wouldn't be kind.

"Understood." Sarkota refrained from inquiring why his boss had decided to lend a hand to Baron Brignais.

After all, it wasn't yet noon, and Salle de Bal Brise had just commenced operations. The real hustle and bustle didn't kick in until three or four in the afternoon. Apart from the janitors and kitchen staff, most folks had time aplenty.

Lumian ordered a glass of ice water topped with sugar-infused alcohol and stood on the café's balcony, observing the mobsters interrogating vagrants along Avenue du Marché.

After a while, "Rat" Christo appeared. The diminutive smuggling chief emerged from an alley, trailed by seven or eight dogs of varying hues and breeds, and entered the diagonally opposite alley.

Before long, he drew nearer to Salle de Bal Brise.

At this sight, Lumian finished the remaining alcohol, placed the glass on the railing, and leaped from the second floor to the street.

Christo, his two rat-like whiskers wiggling, approached with a sycophantic grin.

"Good morning, Ciel."

"Are you aiding Brignais in locating his illegitimate son?" Lumian inquired directly.

Christo nodded gently. "Indeed. He personally reached out to me for assistance. Coincidentally, these kids excel at tracking down people."

As the "Rat" spoke, he affectionately patted the dogs' heads.

They alternated between gathering and dispersing, following a distinct scent.

Baron Brignais truly cares for that illegitimate son… Lumian advised "Rat" Christo with a pensive air, "There might be something peculiar about this situation. Stay vigilant. I don't want you to go missing

before finding the boy."

The Rose School of Thought being responsible for abducting the boy was always one of the possibilities.

Christo was taken aback, pondered for a moment, and remarked, "There's indeed something amiss. In recent years, we've never heard of Brignais having such a son. Moreover, he holds him in high regard. Why would the boy vanish?"

A sudden appearance of an illegitimate child? Lumian's intuition suggested this might be more intricate than he presumed.

After contemplating briefly, Christo gratefully said, "Ciel, your intellect surpasses mine."

"Don't you possess medicine to enhance your mind?" Lumian inquired, half jesting and half curious.

As Christo allowed the dogs to nuzzle his trousers, he sheepishly smiled and replied, "Indeed, but they're short-term solutions. Their effects are middling, nowhere near the potency of a potion. Damn it, excessive consumption can lead to complications."

Lumian shifted the conversation, asking, "Do you possess authentic mummy ashes?"

Christo assumed an enigmatic expression.

"How much do you require? I can provide you with the best version. That 'Little Minx' Jenna often frequents Franca. She's a tricky one. Just days ago, Franca inquired if I had genuine mummy ashes. Tsk, even the Boss is having trouble." This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Ciel also had numerous dancers and actresses as mistresses. Despite his youth, he still relied on medicine.

"I mean true mummy ashes." Lumian stroked his chin.

"I don't." Christo shook his head. "That stuff is ineffective, and I don't know who propagated the falsehood, but I do have a concoction that

can satisfy all your paramours. It's composed of various herbs; I merely claim mummy ashes as the primary ingredient."

"Did Franca buy it?" Lumian inquired with a grin.

"She did." Christo cooperatively chuckled. "Probably because the Boss is too embarrassed to approach me."

Her facade was impeccable. She concealed her true desires from the "Rat," seeking the so-called "ineffective" mummy ashes… Lumian sighed and confessed openly, "I need genuine mummy ashes. They possess mystical uses. Keep an eye out since you often engage with merchants trading in alchemical materials."

"No problem." Christo suspected that Ciel aimed to preserve his dignity and wouldn't acknowledge his quest for such a remedy. He insisted on mysticism as a pretext for seeking mummy ashes but didn't expose him. After all, it was a minor matter.

Observing Christo's persistent search for Baron Brignais's missing illegitimate son with his dogs, Lumian turned on his heel and made his way back to the dance hall.

As he was about to approach the bar counter, Termiboros's commanding voice reverberated in his ears: "To the cellar."

To the cellar… Lumian's initial thought was that the Inevitability angel had something planned.

"Which cellar?" he inquired.

"The one used to store ingredients," replied Termiboros.

So proactive, so eager… What's He plotting? Lumian began to wonder if there was an underlying scheme at play.

Termiboros continued, "It's a stroke of fate for you. Even if you don't go, it will find its way to you. It's destined."

You're giving me chills… Termiboros won't likely put me in immediate danger right now… What could be in that cellar… Lumian contemplated briefly and reckoned that the ingredient storage cellar

was usually bustling around noon. In theory, there shouldn't be anything unusual or perilous.

After careful consideration, he decided to head to the cellar, listen at the door, and take a look. If he sensed anything awry, he would write to Madam Magician and inquire if he should heed Termiboros's advice and enter.

Amidst the greetings of the chefs, kitchen helpers, handymen, and dishwashing maids, Lumian crossed through the kitchen and descended the stairs to the ingredient storage cellar.

The cellar's dark-brown wooden door was securely shut, as usual.

Lumian strained his ears, intently listening for any signs of activity.

A faint chewing sound reached his ears.

It wasn't a dramatic sound, devoid of the horrifying notion of a creature devouring flesh. Rather, it resembled a tramp gnawing on food after a long bout of hunger.

Something's definitely amiss… Lumian cautiously pushed open the cellar door.

The light from the stairs seeped in, revealing a figure.

It was a boy of seven or eight, his back to Lumian. He had short yellow hair, a caramel coat, white stockings, and black strapless leather shoes. Behind him lay a dark red school bag that seemed somewhat weighty and sturdy.

Lumian found the attire oddly familiar.

Suddenly, he recalled where he'd seen it before.

Baron Brignais's illegitimate son!

So, his disappearance led him to hiding in the ingredient cellar of Salle de Bal Brise? Lumian had intended to take a quick glance before shutting the door and leaving to pen a letter to Madam Magician at Auberge du Coq Doré. Yet, upon realizing that the person in the

cellar was likely Baron Brignais's illegitimate son, he furrowed his brow slightly and swung open the dark brown wooden door a bit more.

Additional light streamed in, causing the boy to instinctively turn and face the door.

Lumian caught sight of the brass buttons on his clothes, a black-and-white checkered shirt, and a linen coat. He saw a face with evident baby fat, unperturbed but vacant brown eyes, and a mouth smeared with blood.

The boy clutched a few raw steaks tinged with a dark red hue in his hand. His mouth kept opening and closing as he chewed on a vague mass of flesh resembling a rat. Its thin black tail gently swayed near his lips.

Lumian narrowed his eyes and slipped his left hand into his pocket.

The boy remained unperturbed, his gaze vacant as he continued staring at Lumian. He chewed a few more times before swallowing the bloody rat, tail and all.

Lumian arched an eyebrow and asked, "Are you Brignais's illegitimate son?"

"No," the boy mumbled, nibbling at a piece of raw steak.

"Then what's your connection?" Lumian queried in a "peaceful" manner.

After a while of eating raw steak, the boy answered, "He's my godfather and guardian in Trier."

Remarkably precise Intisian, hardly any accent… Lumian regarded the peculiar boy with puzzlement and probed, "Are you running away from home?"

"Yes," the boy replied, blood staining his mouth as he continued nibbling on the raw steak.

Behind him stretched a thick darkness, enveloped by the dim light

from the corridor.

“Why did you flee from your godfather? Do you need me to help you return?” Lumian asked, offering a friendly smile, noticing that the other party was more amicable in conversation.

The boy shook his head vigorously.

“No! I don’t want to go back to attending classes, studying, doing homework, taking practice tests, and sitting for exams!”

Wh— The boy’s reasoning left Lumian oddly bewildered, as if he had glimpsed his own past.

He was intelligent and had no trouble attending classes, reading, or taking exams. He absorbed knowledge swiftly, but he disliked homework or practice tests. He relied on Aurore’s “heartfelt education” to barely persevere. He often wished he could rope in Reimund, Ava, and his friends to do those tasks for him.

Is this rat-chewing enigma the fateful encounter Termiboros alluded to? Lumian pondered and inquired, “You don’t seem to be from Intis?”

With an honest demeanor and a bloodied mouth, the boy responded, “I’m from Lenburg.”

Chapter 311 - 311 Strange Boy

311 Strange Boy

Lenburg? Baron Brignais's illegitimate son or godchild resides in Lenburg? Lumian was puzzled, his mind racing with playful guesses.

Lumian studied the young lad before him and asked in a laid-back tone, "Aren't you supposed to be hitting the books in Lenburg at your age? The education there is leagues ahead of what Trier offers."

The boy's face lit up with an oddly animated expression. "Nah, I'm not up for the daily grind of school, burning the midnight oil over homework, and tackling exams every month!"

Sounds a little terrifying… A shiver trickled down Lumian's spine at the thought of such a life.

At the very least, it didn't sit right with him.

Agreeing with a nod, Lumian casually asked, "Are live rats tasty?"

The boy regained his composure. "It's not exactly gourmet, but I can't be choosy when hunger gnaws. Waiting till midday to raid the kitchen doesn't cut it. True bliss is savoring a meal whipped up by a maestro chef. And some mild hunger pangs do add a certain… flair."

After explaining, he must have felt he came across too mature and quickly recalibrated.

"Can't blame me if your kitchen's dragging its feet until noon!"

Well, that's hardly the point, now, is it? When I was wandering about without a proper place to stay, I sure as heck didn't have any notions of munching on live rats. The big issue, of course, was that I couldn't even catch the pesky things. And if by some miracle I did, then I had

to somehow figure out how to set up a fire, skin them, and roast them. But this kid right here? He's out here grabbing rats, using nothing but his own bare hands. His strength or maybe just his good luck isn't half bad, I'll give him that. It's not even an hour away from noon, and he's acting like he's got an insatiable hunger? The more Lumian looked at him, the more he was convinced there was something peculiar about this little lad.

Amused, he inquired, "Brignais didn't bother to feed you, then? Need me to escort you to the police headquarters so you can lodge a complaint about his child abuse?"

"Well, aside from pestering me about my studies, he's alright. He makes sure I have a proper meal every two hours. On top of that, he whips up cakes, biscuits, roasted meat, and pies for those midnight hunger pangs." A subtle lick of the lips revealed the boy's longing.

Are you a pig? Lumian had never eaten so much while undergoing puberty.

And yet, the lad didn't appear overweight, only solidly built.

In the blink of an eye, the boy's gaze shifted as he spoke in rapid succession, "Perhaps studying demands a lot of energy. I need all this sustenance to keep my brain firing on all cylinders."

Is there no saying about how "trying to explain is just a cover-up" in Lenburg's education? Your elaborate justification makes me wonder if your appetite is problematic… All this eating hasn't exactly made you a genius, has it? Lumian grinned and quipped, "If Brignais wasn't intentionally starving you, why resort to raw rats and steak?"

In a frustrated tone, the boy retorted, "I managed to slip away without breakfast or morning tea today!"

And yet, you're so famished that you're downing raw rats? If you go hungry for another half day or so, will you start eying pedestrians on the street? With a fluid motion, Lumian produced an iron-gray military flask from his shirt pocket.

His left hand slid into his trouser pocket, deftly unscrewing the cap of

the flask before tucking it away.

Lumian raised the iron-gray metal flask, breathing in the fragrance with a satisfied grin. He inquired, his voice light, “Fancy a sip?”

Gulp! The boy’s Adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed his saliva.

He’s tasted it before, and he’s taken a liking to it… Lumian passed his judgment and swallowed a mouthful of the spirit.

“Why’re you asking?” the boy inquired cautiously.

Seeing the lack of alarm, Lumian breathed a sigh of relief. He tipped the flask again, the liquid gurgling.

He lowered the military flask, his expression bright as he spoke with clarity, “As a devout follower of the God of Steam and Machinery, I’ve got to verify the faith of those with uncertain origins.”

“By steam!”

This time, Lumian spoke without the veil of alcohol.

Subconsciously, the boy shook his head.

“Words don’t mean much. Just saying I believe in whichever deity doesn’t make it true.”

Lumian studied the boy’s reaction. “It’s true that folks from the orthodox Churches can sometimes claim belief in any deity without much sincerity, but they’re harmless. I’m more concerned about worshipers of evil gods. They’re fervent and unpredictable. They won’t fake it to deceive others, believing that to be against their faith and blasphemous.”

Instinctively, the boy retorted, “Not always. Some followers of evil gods will pose as adherents of the orthodox gods to further their holy missions. They can pray, attend rituals, join Mass, and chant the names of other gods without a second thought—as long as they repent to their own deity afterward, they reckon there’s no issue…”
This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

At that moment, the young lad abruptly halted. He exchanged gazes with Lumian and lapsed into a prolonged silence.

After a spell, he took a bite out of his uncooked steak and introduced himself, “I’m a believer of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom. The devoted faithful in our Church have this peculiar knack for pointing out slip-ups in the other party’s speech, just like before. Yep, just like before!”

Lumian fixed a piercing gaze on the lad for a few beats before inquiring, “What might be the usual prayers at the God of Knowledge and Wisdom Church?”

Quick as a flash, the boy responded, “Like I was saying earlier, folks who believe in those evil gods can mutter the honorific name of an orthodox god with a heavy heart and toss out those prayers. You can’t rightly figure out what’s in others’ minds unless you’re a card-carrying member of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and you’ve got it notarized that you won’t lie…”

With that, the lad clammed up once more, his gaze fixed vacantly on Lumian.

After a brief pause, he stretched out his empty right hand, and pressed it to his forehead. “May wisdom be with you!”

Such a foolish fellow shouldn’t be a spy sent by an evil god… From his intelligence, he’s really a child… Lumian struggled to maintain his composure, requiring a concealed deep breath to regain control over his facial muscles.

“Indeed,” he concurred, his lips curving into a smile. Mirroring the boy’s action, he brushed his head with the base of the iron-gray military flask and uttered with significance, “May wisdom be with you!”

Without affording the boy a chance to reply, Lumian adopted an alluring tone. “Would you care to join me at the café on the second floor? I’ll treat you to a proper meal. The chefs here are quite remarkable.”

The boy swallowed visibly. “You won’t turn against me, will you?”

“You can tail me the entire time. That way, I won’t ever get a shot at double-crossing you.” Lumian initiated a little trial, testing if the other guy’s brains matched his looks and age, or maybe they lagged behind. “And mind you, we only prohibit the God of Knowledge and Wisdom Church from preaching in Intis or setting up a cathedral. We do let their believers cross the border. Trier’s got the Lenburg Chamber of Commerce, you see.”

The boy pondered for a moment and said, “Okay.”

Lumian sized him up, withdrew his left hand, sealed the liquor flask, and tucked the iron-gray flask back in his brown coat.

With that, Lumian pivoted and ascended the stairs.

The kid stuck to him, politely shutting the cellar’s deep-brown door behind him.

Seeing Lumian whirl around, the kid explained earnestly, “If it’s left open, the food inside will spoil.”

“True enough.” Lumian pulled his gaze and climbed up the stairs.

The kid trailed him close, eyes peeled for any odd moves, any signs of betrayal.

Lumian steered him into the kitchen, then upstairs to the café on the second floor and ordered a set meal.

In no time, the spread hit the table: fried veal steak, grilled eel, roasted leg of lamb, chicken pie, red wine, and cream.

Lumian settled in, watching the kid wolfing down like he was bottomless.

Every now and then, he tossed a comment,

“Veal is crisped good, but the meat is nothing special…

“Sweet sauce masks the eel’s fishiness, but it makes it greasy…

“Leg of lamb is roasted just right, crispy outside, tender inside. Spices are off a touch, though. Too much fennel…

“…”

Just eat. Why are you so talkative… Lumian silently watched the boy eat the table full of food with a satisfied expression.

Fifteen minutes later, Baron Brignais walked in from the second-floor entrance, donning a half top hat with a diamond ring shining.

The boy turned in surprise and glanced back at Lumian.

Lumian smiled and said, “Did you think I’m the only one here who knows you?”

The boy was startled as he fell silent.

Baron Brignais walked up to Lumian and said with unconcealed relaxation, “Appreciate it, Ciel.”

“Just so happened to catch him skulking around in the cellar, munching on something,” Lumian responded, his voice warm and friendly.

Baron Brignais gave him a sidelong glance before shifting his attention to the boy. “Time to head back, Ludwig.”

Ludwig, the young boy, remained silent. Swiftly, he polished off the last remnants of his meal and rose from his seat.

“Ciel, we’ll catch up,” Baron Brignais directed a nod at Lumian.

Seated opposite, Lumian observed as Baron Brignais clasped Ludwig’s hand, their departure imminent. Lumian’s lips curved again before saying, “Don’t forget to settle the tab.”

Baron Brignais displayed a hint of surprise. His eyes flickered, suggesting a momentary uncertainty in his initial assessment.

Yet without uttering a word, he withdrew a wallet brimming with banknotes and promptly covered the cost of Ludwig’s meal.

Lumian maintained a contemplative silence, watching the duo disappear down the stairwell. Leaning back in his chair, he murmured softly, his voice a mere whisper, “Temiboros, where exactly is the stroke of fate you mentioned?”

Chapter 312 - 312 Hint

312 Hint

Though Lumian maintained a cautious skepticism toward Termiboros, his curiosity about the enigmatic “stroke of fate” continued to gnaw at him.

The way Termiboros had alluded to the Earth Blood ore as an “encounter” had caught his attention. Could this time involve Ludwig, the young boy?

There was something off about this fellow, something amiss. Yet, as their conversation unfolded, Lumian came to acknowledge Ludwig’s intelligence, origins, and apparent devotion to the God of Knowledge and Wisdom. Despite this interaction, Lumian found himself gaining no true insights or foresight. It was unlike his understanding of the Earth Blood ore’s potential, which hinged on specific conditions of going underground, finding the right area to encounter something.

Once again, Termiboros’s powerful voice reverberated through Lumian.

“The moment will reveal itself.”

“Can’t you people make yourself clear?” Lumian’s frustration surged, his blood boiling in his veins..

“I’m unlike what you consider people,” Termiboros responded, straightforwardly. “I’m a Mythical Creature.”

“…” Lumian was left speechless, taken aback. He forced a scoff and retorted, “I doubt even your sealed form can truly grasp fate’s threads. Each time, your answers are mired in vagueness. What sets you apart from amateurs in the Divination Club? If you possess the power, reveal clearly where my next opportunity lies!”

Termiboros responded with a deep tone, “Tonight, at 11 p.m., Rist Docks, Warehouse 3.”

Huh? Surprise coursed through Lumian; Termiboros’s hint was unexpected.

Yet, within his astonishment, puzzlement persisted.

Inevitability’s angel is that kind?

As a high-ranking Alms Monk, He shouldn’t have been provoked so easily to interpret my fate…

Could there be an ulterior motive?

Regardless, I’ll consult Madam Magician’s insight first.

Lumian decided swiftly. He rose, departed Salle de Bal Brise, and embarked on a journey to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Executing a simple act of arson, he could initiate the initial potion digestion step and contemplate gaining a Contractee boon. Despite his anxiety, Lumian refused to lower his guard against Termiboros.

Within Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the safe house.

Lumian meticulously documented the particulars regarding Ludwig and Termiboros’s clue. Subsequently, he conducted a ritual, summoning the doll-like messenger.

As Lumian awaited Madam Magician’s response, he delved into a trove of information concerning spirit world creatures. Reading the descriptions of certain knowledge consumed a substantial amount of his spirituality. Some even induced dizziness, nausea, frustration, headache, a burning sensation, and illusions.

Similar to Aurore’s grimoires’ portrayal of profound knowledge about deities and high-level creatures, this information is fraught with intense corruption and perilous ramifications. If all the knowledge that pursues humans bear such attributes, it’s genuinely chilling. The prospect of losing oneself upon hearing it or succumbing to immediate demise is unsettling… Thus, Lumian punctuated his

reading to safeguard his mental well-being from plummeting to precarious thresholds.

After poring through descriptions of approximately 30 to 40 spirit world creatures, Lumian stumbled upon a figure he recognized.

“Rabbit of Knowledge:

“Weak spirit world creature, friendly to humans and possesses an innate thirst for knowledge. Their summons are rarely declined.

“Diverse experiences yield distinct Rabbits of Knowledge. Shared traits include mastery of various languages, spoken and written communication skills, and adept reading capabilities. Extracting salient information from extensive knowledge is their forte, and their transcription speed outpaces even mechanical typewriters.

“Drawback: Limited communication finesse and inflexible thinking. Some Rabbits of Knowledge have been tainted by anomalous knowledge, evolving into significant hazards. To summon, restrict choices to the friendly and weak.”

So, it goes by the name “Rabbit of Knowledge.” Summoning this entity in the future should be more targeted… Yet, its abilities and attributes are of limited value. If I had gone as per Aurore’s vision of university enrollment, I would benefit from its multilingual proficiency and strong reading skills… Noteworthy, the text omits mention of its speed within the spirit realm, implying its negligible worth in that aspect. It moves sluggishly, drains spirituality… Lumian lowered the document, massaged his temples, and embarked on his third respite.

During this juncture, the messenger bore Madam Magician’s response:

“I share curiosity regarding what encounter the lad named Ludwig would bring. His appearance in Trier intrigues me; motivations remain nebulous.

“Vigilance is prudent. His existence carries intrigue.

“Proceed. The window of acting presents itself to me as well.”

Can't you people make things clear… Lumian's lips twitched, absorbing the succinct message.

However, a nuanced sense emerged that Madam Magician's opening sentence wasn't an immediate response. It resonated more as a condensed echo of her contemplations.

In essence, Madam Magician, imbued with her astromancy prowess, struggled to glean Ludwig's fate. Her perceptions seemed clouded, suggesting she only harbored conjectures.

The obscurity surrounding Ludwig's destiny, evident in her inability to perceive it, spoke volumes.

…

At 10:50 p.m., at Rist Docks, outside Warehouse 3.

Lumian took cover in the shadows, poised to seize the much-anticipated opening for action.

Soon enough, two silhouettes approached Warehouse 3, drawing within a mere five to six meters of Lumian.

One of them spoke hushedly, riddled with concern, "Héctor, the accountants arrive tomorrow for an audit. How do we address this? Shall I hire a thief to pilfer the account records?"

"What purpose would that serve? The moment they inspect the warehouse, suspicion will arise. Our remaining stock barely equals a tenth of the required amount." Héctor's tone escalated, simmering with intensity. "If we're to proceed, we ought to do so comprehensively by reducing the warehouse to ashes. This way, any discrepancies would remain concealed."

I see… Listening closely, Lumian deduced his cue to act.

As his companion wavered, Héctor interjected, "Fires are commonplace in Trier, normalized in everyone's mind. Moreover, igniting them ourselves isn't necessary. The market district swarms with miscreants and rogues. Once the time is ripe, we can entice them to vacate Trier with a handsome fee.

“Honoré, we can’t wait any longer. You must decide now.”

Honoré paused, then spoke resolutely, “Agreed! We’ll locate Guy and recruit him into our plan!”

The duo conducted a swift survey of the warehouse’s surroundings before departing for the docks, en route to rendezvous with their comrade, Guy.

After a brief trek, the sky abruptly reddened, casting an incandescent hue across the scene. Simultaneously, the crackle of flames resounded.

Honoré and Héctor instinctively spun around, bearing witness to an inferno emerging. Vermilion flames surged, fierce and ravenous, soaring to engulf the structure.

“Fire, fire…” Héctor mumbled, a glint of realization dawning. “Indeed, fire! Praise the Sun, it’s a fire!”

Honoré exhibited a similar reaction, his right hand tracing a triangular Sacred Emblem over his chest, lips moving in muted invocation.

Yet, within the momentary elation, disquiet brewed within Honoré’s senses.

Trepidation tinted his voice as he discerned, “The warehouse isn’t aflame. It’s our office!”

Positioned meters away from the warehouse was their office—a modest gray two-story edifice.

The expanse separating it from the warehouse remained empty, devoid of combustible material.

“…” Héctor’s visage contorted in terror. Clenching his jaw, he spoke with grim resolve, “We must set fire to the warehouse now!”

Even as the words left his lips, an explosion erupted from the locus of crimson flames.

Though not seismic, the detonation garnered the attention of dock workers and firefighters.

“Fire! Fire!” The clamor resounded as responders converged. In Trier, a city renowned for frequent conflagrations, firefighters were seasoned in addressing such crises.

Observing the scene, Héctor and Honoré, who hadn’t reached Warehouse 3, slumped onto the roadside, their vigor sapped.

At the entrance of the dock.

Albus, his hair now a fiery hue, averted his gaze from the raging blaze to the middle-aged man at his side.

“Monsieur Guy, your colleague seems even more agitated than you.”

Guy’s complexion paled as he shook his head in bewilderment.

“The warehouse wasn’t the target of the fire…”

A pause lingered before Albus sneered.

“I warned you already. Hesitation begets mishaps. Now, ponder your escape. May you be more decisive this time.”

Beside the unassuming two-story structure, Lumian gazed upon the soaring flames. The timber and flammable materials metamorphosed into an ephemeral dragon, casting his countenance in fiery red, eyes alight with fervor.

With a grin, he advanced toward the blaze.

The duo’s intent to commit arson entailed erasing incriminating evidence by reducing the warehouse to ashes. However, Lumian’s purpose was to generate turmoil, inviting scrutiny that would unearth the discrepancies within the warehouse!

Such was the duty of a responsible citizen.

A mantle of flames enveloped Lumian, adhering to his attire obediently—merely a hair’s breadth from ignition. This chapter is

updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Donning the flaming cloak, Lumian marched into the roaring blaze.

Fire coalesced with fire, repelling smoke. Effortlessly traversing the structure, Lumian exited on the opposite end of the dock.

Following the arson, Lumian acquired a rudimentary mastery over the potion's powers. He tamed it, dispelling the burning sensation on his skin and the trepidation in his heart.

While his potion digestion remained incomplete, Lumian had already adapted to his present state, giving him the capacity to receive an additional Inevitability boon.

…

After carrying out a few rounds of anti-tracking, Lumian returned to the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Initiating the initial step of digesting the Pyromaniac potion prior to tracking down the padre filled him with satisfaction. He maintained a smile, yet his demeanor faltered upon glimpsing the towering pile of dense information within the iron cabinet.

It would take at least a month or two to finish reading them!

How could he identify an apt contracted creature in so brief a span?

Chapter 313 - 313 Plans with Different Styles

313 Plans with Different Styles

Lumian stood before the iron cabinet, his mind immersed in contemplation.

With just a handful of days remaining until the date designated by the Prophecy Spell, Lumian earnestly aspired to secure Contractee status, thereby attaining three distinctive abilities. This enhancement was imperative prior to pursuing Guillaume Bénet. The augmentation would tip the odds in his favor.

Relying solely on Pyromaniac, even in collaboration with Franca, now a Demoness of Pleasure, and the support of Anthony Reid and Jenna, prevailing against the padre's uncanny abilities remained tenuous. Victory might be attainable, but apprehending the adversary without incurring losses was a near-impossible endeavor—except if he enlisted the assistance of the Aurora Order Oracle via Mr. K's finger.

This assessment solely considered Guillaume Bénet as Lumian's adversary. If the padre had other confederates, alongside a cohort of bestowers or Beyonders, and if he had grown mightier than his state upon departing Cordu, Lumian's undertaking wouldn't assure triumph—even with Mr. K.

Lumian's aspiration was to pinpoint the padre's whereabouts and engineer a snare, drawing him out. Such an approach would markedly simplify the process. Nevertheless, Lumian needed to bolster his strength substantially. Otherwise, the "fishing" operation would entail dire jeopardy.

As Lumian perused the stack of dense information concerning spirit

world entities, his mind whirled, seeking avenues to locate a suitable contract partner within a constrained timeframe.

Should I designate a time frame for reading and strive to cover as much ground as feasible? Then, my selection must derive from my existing familiarity?

This proposition falls short of my expectations. It risks bypassing the most fitting opportunity…

Although the circumstances aren't optimal, I must reconcile with reality. Perfection remains elusive; I must confront my own limitations head-on.

Son of a sow, it hasn't reached a juncture necessitating blind acceptance!

For now, I'll withhold any definitive moves until I ascertain the padre's whereabouts next week. I'll bide my time. Following the completion of this information assimilation, a comprehensive strategy will crystallize, right?

It will take approximately a month. The potential for accidents looms large…

Uh, the Rabbit of Knowledge appears to have the ability to read and extract key points. Can I summon one to help me read the information and extract the keywords of every spirit world creature, like when I whistleblowed? Then, I'll carefully study the corresponding spirit world creatures based on the keywords…

It's a creature of the spirit world to begin with. Having come into contact with such knowledge, it will definitely be less affected than me and can last longer…

Lumian gradually grew excited. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that it was feasible to ask the Rabbit of Knowledge to help him do the reading and write a brief summary.

He swiftly perfected the corresponding plan.

That rabbit is quite stupid and silly. I have to design a table in

advance and list the ‘page number’, ‘strength’, ‘whether it’s friendly’, ‘brief description of abilities’, and ‘points of characteristics’. I’ll let it fill in the columns in step and order. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Unfortunately, a person can only summon one Rabbit of Knowledge at a time. Otherwise, if I had ten or twenty, I will be able to complete the summary on spirit world creatures before dawn…

If one person can only summon one, what about having more than one person?

I can have Franca, Jenna, and Anthony Reid summon one each for me!

Uh… Rabbits can read quickly, extract essential points, and fill out summaries. Humans can do the same. Franca, Jenna, and Anthony can help browse through the information and quickly extract keywords from the columns.

I’ll contribute knowledge, and they contribute labor, spirituality, and time!

Lumian’s eyes grew brighter and brighter. He felt that if he pushed this plan forward, even with frequent breaks to mentally recover and the time to summon a Rabbit of Knowledge again, he should be able to produce a summary on the spirit world creatures in twelve hours.

When the time came, he would browse through the summaries that wouldn’t affect his mind and select 20 to 30 suitable ones. He would read the raw information in a targeted fashion and make a final decision.

The only problem now was that the information on these spirit world creatures had been provided by Madam Magician; Lumian hadn’t exchanged it using contributions or money. He believed that before “sharing” with others, he had to obtain the approval of the Major Arcana card holder.

This was basic respect.

Lumian sprang into action without hesitation. Swiftly, he composed a

letter outlining his inquiry and the comprehensive plan he had crafted.

Soon, Madam Magician responded: “For a moment, I don’t know what to say about your idea. It appears you possess an aptitude for such considerations.

“Sharing your knowledge with your friends is permissible, but remember to advise them against engaging with powerful or perilous spirit world creatures. These entities hold no sway over you, thanks to Mr. Fool’s seal. It serves as a deterrent in the spirit world, offering you a measure of protection that others lack.”

“Actually, there are simpler and easier ways:

“Take the information to Two of Cups and spread it in every corner of the room. Then, get Two of Cups to recite the divination statement repeatedly and throw out three tarot cards or three coins.

“Choose whichever spirit world creature they land on. Even if it’s not the most suitable for you, it’s relatively suitable. It might be useful in a future occasion.”

Hiss, what a brilliant charlatan! Madam Magician is indeed skilled in divination. Her style is completely different from mine… Lumian hadn’t considered divination.

After careful consideration, he decided to follow his plan. The answer chosen through divination always felt unreliable and unreal. He subconsciously didn’t want to rely on it.

By relying on his own intelligence and abilities to filter them out, he would feel more confident and convinced.

Unless there was no other way, Lumian hoped to finish “reading” the information before making a choice.

He burned Madam Magician’s reply and carefully wrote up the form. For the time being, he only made five copies.

Immediately after, he set up the altar to see if he could accurately summon the Rabbit of Knowledge.

To this end, the summoning incantation he had devised was: “Rabbit-shaped spirit wandering in the void, a friendly creature that can be communicated with, a weakling who pursues knowledge.”

The choice to avoid using the human-coined “Rabbit of Knowledge” as its name spoke of Lumian’s respect for the enigmatic nature of these creatures.

Having carefully considered his approach, Lumian ignited a solitary candle and made a summoning in his own name.

His incantation concluded, and the candle’s flame transformed into a deep shade of green, expanding to resemble a human head in size.

From within the luminous green flame, a translucent creature emerged, its appearance reminiscent of an amusingly awkward rabbit.

Relief washed over Lumian as the ritual proved successful. The creature’s presence signaled a triumph, and Lumian’s experienced voice addressed it, “I wish to share knowledge with you, seeking your assistance in distilling key points and completing a form.”

The rabbit’s eyes brightened, and in a tone that mimicked Lumian’s voice and Trier’s Intisian accent, it inquired, “Where is the knowledge?”

This was the first time Lumian had heard such a creature speak. He didn’t expect it to imitate his tone and pronunciation.

With purpose, Lumian retrieved a stack of information about spirit world creatures he had yet to delve into. He gestured towards the form on the table, articulating the task’s parameters in a manner befitting a creature of limited intellect.

The rabbit absorbed Lumian’s guidance, its long ears drooping as it committed the instructions to memory. Eventually, it nodded in comprehension.

Seated at Lumian’s desk, the rabbit’s eyes sparkled as it engaged with the information.

Lumian noted with satisfaction that, despite its unwilling nature, the rabbit demonstrated proficiency in its repetitive task. It diligently extracted pertinent details and methodically filled out the form with words like “powerful” and “dangerous.”

Although it’s not very smart, doing such repetitive work isn’t a problem for it… It’s at least twice as fast as my reading… Lumian nodded in satisfaction and lay on the bed, preparing to close his eyes and rest while the Rabbit of Knowledge was busy working to alleviate his fatigue.

After an unknown period of time, he suddenly sensed danger and hurriedly sat up.

He saw that the transparent rabbit had grown to two meters tall, constantly flipping through the information and extracting.

“Stop!” Lumian didn’t understand what was happening and instinctively stopped the other party from coming into contact with the knowledge.

The rabbit turned its head, its eyes bloodshot.

After staring at Lumian for a few seconds, it reluctantly halted its work.

Lumian’s introspection led him to deduce the cause behind this transformation.

As a creature of the spirit world, the Rabbit of Knowledge was similarly affected by that knowledge, albeit to a relatively mild extent. However, it wasn’t like ordinary humans due to its lacking intelligence. It didn’t know to stop and rest after an abnormality unless it directly endangered its life.

As it accumulated, it inevitably underwent a certain mutation.

Phew, it’s useful—that’s true, but not having much intelligence is a huge problem… Lumian ended the summoning and allowed the Rabbit of Knowledge to return to the spirit world and slowly recover.

He washed up briefly, lay on the bed, and prepared to rest.

An idea surfaced just before sleep claimed him. Lumian summoned the rabbit once more and directed it to replicate a hundred copies of the form he had devised.

Only then did he truly relax and fall asleep.

…

The following morning, Lumian was brimming with vigor as he set off for Rue Anarchie. His first stop was to locate Anthony Reid, the information broker, and discuss the potential of his assistance.

As he approached Auberge du Coq Doré, a figure emerged from a nearby side alley.

It was Baron Brignais, adorned in a half top hat and a formal black suit, mahogany-colored pipe in hand.

“I promised to catch up with you and express my gratitude for aiding me in finding Ludwig,” Baron Brignais began with a smile. “It’s quite surprising to find you neither at Salle de Bal Brise nor Auberge du Coq Doré.”

Gratitude? Then help me read and write a summary! Lumian muttered subconsciously before swiftly dismissing the notion.

Compared to Anthony Reid, an information broker with a mental illness, Baron Brignais was not only a member of the Savoie Mob, but his background also seemed problematic. It was best not to let him discover that his relationship with Franca didn’t rely solely on Jenna.

A smile tugged at Lumian’s lips.

“The night offers its own beauty. It’s pointless to remain confined within one’s room. How do you intend to express your gratitude?”

Rather than providing a direct answer, Baron Brignais diverted the conversation. “I may not have mentioned this earlier, but I converted to the worship of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom a few years back.”

Chapter 314 - 314 Crowd-Sourcing

314 Crowd-Sourcing

Did you communicate with your godson and come to me to confirm the situation? Lumian maintained his smile.

“What you believe has no bearing on me, as long as you don’t subscribe to an evil god. Furthermore, devotees of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom are not wanted criminals in Trier.”

His implication was clear: “I’m still a wanted criminal. Believe what you will.”

Baron Brignais had always been astute. He changed the subject and continued, “Thank you for aiding me in locating Ludwig. I’m unsure how to adequately express my gratitude.”

He refrained from specifying a thank-you gift, hoping to gauge Lumian’s stance and thoughts.

Lumian pondered briefly before recalling the idea he had set aside.

Getting Baron Brignais to assist with reading and summarizing didn’t necessitate his presence alongside Franca, Jenna, and Anthony Reid. He could impart some information, clarify what he needed to focus on, and allow him to return home to peruse and transcribe.

Likewise, before Anthony Reid committed to joining the pursuit of Padre Guillaume Bénet, direct contact with Jenna and Franca couldn’t be allowed. An isolated “office” could be arranged for him at a later time.

Lumian glanced at Baron Brignais and inquired deliberately, “Are you

proficient in reading and drafting notes?”

Aurore’s grimoires had denoted that the pathway under the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom was labeled Reader. This was also the title of Sequence 9 potion. Sequence 8 was Student of Ratiocination, and Sequence 7 was Detective.

Given Baron Brignais rarely exhibited special abilities and mostly leveraged his exceptional intellect, above-average combat skills, and sharp marksmanship to lead the Savoie Mob, coupled with his present faith, Lumian speculated he was a Beyonder of the Reader path.

From the potion’s nomenclature alone, one could infer such an individual excelled in reading.

Baron Brignais drew from his pipe and responded, “In contrast to the illiterate, my reading and learning aptitude is rather commendable.” Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

He couldn’t entirely fathom Ciel’s intentions, yet he suspected Ciel was prying into his Beyonder pathway.

And it wasn’t confidential. Gardner Martin had long been privy to this.

Lumian unveiled a genuine smile.

“Of late, I’ve acquired a trove of information concerning creatures from the spirit world. However, as you’re aware—you should be aware, correct? Delving into such knowledge extensively exerts a significant toll on the mind. As a Beyonder of the Hunter path, I shan’t require this information for an extended period. Nevertheless, I wish to have access to the pertinent knowledge when necessity arises, without squandering precious time. Therefore, I intend to furnish you with a portion of the data. Kindly assist me in reading and extracting the key terms.”

“Much akin to constructing an index for a library.” Baron Brignais promptly grasped.

He grinned and remarked, “Truthfully, this would prove

advantageous to me. That knowledge holds considerable value."

Library index… As anticipated of an adherent of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom. How professional… Lumian rejoiced, sensing Baron Brignais was roughly on par with Anthony Reid combined with a Rabbit of Knowledge.

Simultaneously, he harbored a cautious sentiment toward Baron Brignais. For instance, he would furnish this God of Knowledge and Wisdom follower with ten pages of information. He would peruse them in advance and jot down notes. Subsequently, he would cross-reference them with the index submitted by Baron Brignais to discern any deliberate omissions or alterations.

Of course, this was Lumian's unrefined approach. He could alternatively beseech Franca to verify via divination, but the potential for interference still existed.

Lumian slid his hands into his pockets and surveyed Baron Brignais, akin to an artisan observing a laborer. He beamed and uttered, "I'm indifferent to who benefits, as long as I accomplish my objective."

Baron Brignais nodded faintly, refraining from further commentary. He solely apprised Lumian of his whereabouts the following morning and requested the information to be conveyed there.

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 305.

Facing Anthony Reid, Lumian eased back and reiterated his words to Baron Brignais. Concluding, he voiced, "This knowledge serves as your compensation. Furthermore, I shall impart to you the knowledge of ritualistic magic. You'll be able to summon a unique spirit world creature to peruse the information alongside you and distill the essential points. How does that proposition strike you? Are you inclined to accept this assignment?"

Anthony Reid's deep brown eyes mirrored Lumian's form as he contemplated and responded, "You're pressed for time. This matter bears added weight for you. It carries great significance."

Lumian had no intention of concealing this. He seized the

opportunity and conveyed, “I’m confronted with the need to face a formidable adversary soon, and I seek to secure a fitting contracted creature. When the moment arrives, I might extend you an invitation, primarily in a supportive role. You can consider whether to agree and what form of compensation you desire. Heh heh, there’s no rush for an answer. Think over it for the next two days.”

“You’re paving the way for me to be mentally prepared and foster appropriate expectations.” Anthony Reid deciphered Lumian’s thoughts.

Instantly, Lumian felt a twinge of embarrassment, but he was never one to blush easily. He maintained a composed smile and articulated, “Can you not tell that being honest will put your life in danger?”

Anthony Reid offered a slight nod, affirming certain aspects prior to committing to aid in perusing the information and crafting the “summary.”

…

On the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise, in the room adjacent to Lumian’s quarters.

Lumian surveyed Anthony Reid and the Rabbit of Knowledge, seated in tandem, diligently sifting through the information and completing forms. He subtly nodded in relief.

Once more, he reiterated the caution not to delve deeply into the spirit world creature knowledge marked as “powerful” and “dangerous.” Exiting the room, he entered the office at the corridor’s end.

Franca cozied up in Lumian’s armchair, her red-booted feet propped on the desk’s edge.

Baffled and intrigued, she inquired, “What exactly do you need our help with? Why are you being so mysterious?”

Jenna settled into the chair across from her, turning her body as her gaze drifted to the door.

Lumian nonchalantly shut the door and recounted the scenario, elucidating his need to secure a contracted creature prior to confronting the padre.

“Wouldn’t a simple divination suffice?” Franca pondered as she acquiesced to Lumian’s entreaty, while Jenna simmered with curiosity about the spirit world creatures.

Before long, Franca gazed up at the trio of Rabbits of Knowledge and Jenna, as well as Lumian, each absorbed in their respective tasks of poring over documents. Amusement laced her voice as she quipped, “Why does this feel like a miniature workshop, and we’re the toiling transcribers?”

Congratulations, your instincts are on point… Lumian retorted in jest, “Am I not also perusing the information and completing forms?”

Franca mulled it over and conceded. She resumed her “labors.”

And so, they persisted until well past 10 p.m., punctuating their efforts with numerous breaks—meals, siestas, catnaps—to mitigate the strain. Brief reprieves preceded the summoning of the Rabbits of Knowledge once more.

Intermittently, during his short intervals, Lumian observed Franca, Jenna, Anthony Reid, and the quartet of Rabbits of Knowledge. He remained vigilant to prevent them from becoming too engrossed and to detect any anomalies they might experience.

Jenna reached her threshold first. Having newly ascended to Instigator, she hadn’t fully acclimated to the potion’s effects and was grappling with containing the surge of power. Her state was less than optimal.

Anthony Reid followed suit. His psychological scars ran deep, rendering him susceptible to certain deviations.

Lumian, Franca, and the seventh set of Rabbits of Knowledge soldiered on till the end.

Baron Brignais concluded his task around 6 p.m. and delivered the documents and forms to the café.

After dismissing the summons and seeing off the fatigued “assistants,” Lumian returned to the safehouse on Rue des Blouses Blanches, arranging the forms in a neat stack.

Perusing the papers briefly, he confirmed the general state of affairs. A sense of accomplishment swelled within him as he casually tossed the forms onto the table.

The immediate selection wasn’t on his agenda. His plan was to first establish a Contractee status and sort out the specifics of the contract. Only afterward would he consult the index, thereby preventing the likelihood of stumbling upon a spirit world creature that matched his criteria in all respects but failed to meet the contract stipulations.

Lumian rested for a spell before summoning a Rabbit of Knowledge and tasking it with duplicating two more forms.

Storing the three indices separately, Lumian’s weariness was palpable. The prospect of cleansing himself seemed distant as he tumbled onto the bed and surrendered to sleep.

…

At 6 a.m., Lumian brimmed with vigor, showing no haste to descend underground, arrange an altar, and beseech for a boon. Instead, he engaged in his usual regimen: jogging, practicing boxing, and cultivating his mental equilibrium.

By nearly 8 a.m., he stood before the doorway to Room 207 at Auberge du Coq Doré, ingredients at the ready.

After a brief internal debate, Lumian ultimately seized the carbide lamp—although he no longer required specialized illumination equipment; he was, in essence, a paragon of such abilities.

His aspiration rested on his foes’ initial assumption that he lacked night vision and was inept at generating light.

In Underground Trier, within the quarry cavern that had once borne witness to Inevitability-linked rituals on several occasions.

Lumian briefly tidied the dank, lightless setting, positioning a blood-

infused candle upon the altar stone.

Just as he concluded the sanctification of the ritual silver dagger and readied to cast a spiritual barrier, faint footfalls reached his ears.

The sounds reverberated within the subterranean passage, seemingly not distant from the present mine.

Someone is passing by? Lumian's pulse quickened, his intent fixated on swiftly restoring the area to order and concealing himself.

Yet, as he neared the altar before him and before he could extinguish the carbide lamp, soft footsteps drew close, manifesting at the cave entrance.

Aware that concealment was futile, Lumian promptly swiveled around, one hand nestled in his pocket, his gaze converging on the source of the sound.

A slender man of brownish-black complexion stood there, clutching a carbide lamp. His black hair bore a slight curl, and his eyes held a profound allure. He sported a black seer's cloak reminiscent of those seen in a circus.

Monette… Lumian recognized the figure.

He was an Islander swindler who had duped Charlie and been hoodwinked by the con artists in Salle de Bal Unique.

Monette, too, saw Lumian.

A smirk tugged at the corners of his lips as he greeted with palpable cheer, "What a coincidence."

In tandem with his words, the swindler produced a crystalline monocle, inserting it into his right eye socket.

Chapter 315 - 315 Anxious Termiboros

315 Anxious Termiboros

What a coincidence? Lumian knew better than to consider it mere coincidence.

This wasn't like the time he had rescued Jenna—Lumian had doggedly followed the trail.

Monette's presence, monocle affixed, roused Lumian's caution. He mustered a semblance of a smile and replied, "Indeed. What a coincidence."

With one hand casually slipped into his pocket, Lumian played his role, pretending to secure the candles and materials on the stone surface. The intention was to convey that the ritual was complete and he could depart whenever he pleased. There was nothing of value to plunder or destroy.

Monette adjusted his monocle and with a wave of his hand, offered a departing smile.

"See you aboveground."

And just like that, he withdrew, his footsteps fading into the depths.

Lumian was caught off guard.

He's leaving just like that?

Could it really have been a coincidence?

Judging from Monette's familiarity with Underground Trier, it is evident he has traversed these passages countless times. Yet, that

level of familiarity should have taught him that barging into a well-lit spot amidst the darkness could easily trigger conflict…

Common sense dictates that a stranger's presence in the quarry cave warrants cautious observation for any approach. The abrupt, nonchalant "appearance" seemed off…

Does he truly possess that much confidence in his prowess?

It can't be just to scare me!

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he shifted his gaze from the cave entrance to the candles and materials neatly arranged on the rocks.

The question arose whether to persist with the boon ritual.

In that instant, the voice of Termiboros reverberated within him: "You'd best relocate."

Uh… Lumian's senses tingled, catching a note of unease in Termiboros's tone.

It was subtle, almost elusive, making Lumian doubt his judgment.

This was the first time Lumian had perceived emotional fluctuations in this Inevitability angel.

In previous interactions, no matter how much Lumian goaded and prodded, Termiboros merely maintained silence.

As his heart quickened, Lumian blurted out, "Is this person truly dangerous?"

This confirmed Lumian's guess.

The angel had sensed a looming problem through the strings of fate, a predicament that could jeopardize His very essence.

"Why does a seemingly less formidable individual trigger such unease? What's his motive?" Lumian pressed on.

Termiboros reverted to His usual depth as He intoned, "I'm sealed. I

can only perceive the outside world through you, so I lack ample information. To uncover the answers to these queries, the seal must first be weakened."

Do I look like an idiot to you? I even suspect that your anxiety and worry might be fabricated to exert pressure and intimidate… But given Termiboros's previous conduct, even if progress hadn't been made, such overt intentions should not have been revealed so swiftly… Monette's appearance was indeed oddly coincidental, his actions shrouded in inexplicable bizarreness. If possible, I must evade him. It's safer to assume he poses considerable danger rather than underestimate and expose myself… With a brisk pace, Lumian gathered his belongings, clutched the carbide lamp, and exited the quarry cave.

Drawing upon the subterranean map meticulously memorized from Gardner Martin's records, Lumian navigated closer to Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, discreetly delving a few meters below ground level to stumble upon another somber, soundless quarry cave. He incorporated no fewer than three evasive maneuvers along the way to evade potential trackers.

Phew… Exhaling a breath of relief, Lumian surveyed his surroundings and rested his carbide lamp upon the ground. On a moderately level rock, he arranged the candles and ritual components, ensuring their proper alignment.

Abruptly, a flicker of motion in the shadows at the quarry's edge pricked his senses.

Hiss… Lumian's heart skipped a beat. Clasping the carbide lamp cautiously, he directed its beam toward the source.

A bluish-yellow radiance pierced the obscurity, unveiling a black rat partially concealed by gravel.

The rat made no effort to evade the light; it stood still. After a few heartbeats, it pivoted languidly and vanished into a minuscule crevice at the rock wall's base.

For some reason, Lumian sensed a disproportion between the rat's

right and left eyes.

Gripping the carbide lamp, tension once again coursed through Lumian. He hushed, “Temiboros, is there a problem here too?”

Termiboros’s voice resonated within Lumian’s being, emanating a regal aura.

“It’s best if you pray to The Fool immediately for angelic protection before moving elsewhere.”

Could the situation be that grave? Lumian’s pupils dilated. Swiftly producing an additional candle, he hastily constructed the altar.

Not a shred of concern lingered regarding Termiboros potentially manipulating him into a detrimental choice. After all, supplicating The Fool was Lumian’s last resort, and it undeniably served his interests.

From a different vantage, the very fact that circumstances compelled an Inevitability angel to indirectly beseech The Fool’s protection implied that something far amiss was afoot. Unleashed, the peril would prove unfathomable!

Being both mentally and physically optimal, Lumian’s adept hands fashioned the candles, a process lasting just over ten seconds. He sanctified the dagger and forged a wall of spirituality that enshrouded solely him and the altar.

Methodically, he ignited the three candles sequentially, from deity to humanity, from left to right, punctuating with drops of essential oil and extract.

Amidst the haze and wisps of fog, Lumian exhaled, reciting gravely, “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

“I implore you,

As the ritual unfolded, Lumian surrendered to the mist’s embrace, the prickle of his skin, the lassitude of his mind. Once more, he glimpsed the twelve-winged seraph, pure luminescence descending from

infinite heights to envelop him.

As the radiant wings receded and dissolved, Lumian's senses jolted back to him. Gauging his state, he hastened to pack up the altar items and hastily exited the mine's confines.

Descending beneath the bustling market district, Lumian maintained his vigilant, practiced evasiveness, pushing forward with meticulous attention.

Almost twenty minutes elapsed before Lumian stumbled upon another concealed quarry cave, secured by its discreet location, courtesy of his map.

Stepping inside, he assessed the surroundings. His voice hushed, he inquired, "Temiboros, is there any issue here?"

"Presently, none," Termiboros responded.

Lumian shut his eyes, a newfound calm settling over him.

He mulled over his options.

Should I surface and await the anomaly's dissipation before seeking out a secluded haven for the boon-praying ritual? Or should I seize the moment, briefly escape the abnormality, and hasten my progression to Contractee, capitalizing on The Fool's angelic protection?

In keeping with Lumian's disposition, he leaned towards the risk. The scenario wouldn't change later. He couldn't ascertain if the anomaly had genuinely dissipated. He needed the counsel of someone higher in rank.

In that case, he might as well seek that counsel now!

The altar was reinstated. Yet, this time, he bypassed protection or boons, summoning instead Madam Magician's messenger.

The "doll" messenger, clad in a gown of light gold, coalesced above the flickering candle flame.

Observing Lumian, it grumbled, “This isn’t a good place.”

With that, it retrieved the hastily inscribed letter from Lumian’s hand.

The letter briefly recounted Monette’s behavior and Termiboros’s response, querying the possibility of initiating the boon prayer ritual at present.

Lumian exercised some cunning here. He didn’t outright solicit Madam Magician’s protection, merely inquired about feasibility.

Hiring a demigod came at a steep price. Lumian deemed it currently unaffordable. Instead, he aimed to draw her attention by inquiring.

Of course, if push came to shove, he’d consider it. Debts could be repaid. Or if the person was deceased, repayment became moot.

This isn’t a good place… Does this pertain to the current quarry cave or the entirety of Underground Trier? Lumian contemplated the messenger’s words.

Swiftly, the messenger returned, bearing Madam Magician’s response: “That’s a big problem.”

Madam Magician’s opening remark twitched Lumian’s eyelids. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

“Of course, the situation isn’t dire—at least, I haven’t discovered the gravest entity’s return to this world yet.

“What we must ascertain is His true intent. Termiboros’s reaction implies He’s the target, but this individual excels at concealing motives. This may well be a calculated illusion meant to deceive us or another party.

“For the time being and the foreseeable future, anomalies should be absent. Stabilize yourself and proceed with the boon prayer.

His? That’s an angel? The entity whose hostility Monette exhibited is an angel? Lumian hissed involuntarily, engulfed by a renewed surge of trepidation.

This brought to mind the uniqueness of Salle de Bal Unique. He suspected that confronting them to reclaim a debt might entangle him with a host of angelic Blessed!

Seeing Madam Magician's assessment align with Termiboros's, Lumian composed himself and reconfigured the altar.

Before long, he focused on the pair of gray-white candles symbolizing Inevitability's power and himself. Amidst the intricate fragrance of gray amber perfume, he retreated slightly and intoned deeply, "Power of Inevitability!

"You are the past, the present, and the future;

"You are the cause, the effect, and the process."

Chapter 316 - 316 “Invitation Letter”

316 “Invitation Letter”

In a repetition of events, the silver-black candle flame once again solidified into a beam of light, striking Lumian’s left chest, already wracked with agony and turmoil.

Amidst the pervading gray fog and the unsettling black wind, a silvery-black illusionary liquid began to trickle out.

At some elusive point in time, Lumian’s pain and vertigo faded into insignificance. He felt as though he had transformed into an entirely different entity.

Standing in the wilderness, he gripped a wooden bow in his hand and released an arrow that gleamed with a blue radiance toward his aerial target.

Lumian vaguely remembered who he was, but he felt that everything was extremely real and he was experiencing it.

The keen, spectral-blue arrow cut through the sky, finding its mark in the belly of a dusky vulture.

An acute agony surged into Lumian’s consciousness. He observed himself beating his wings, descending with an arrow lodged perilously close to his abdomen.

No, why have I become a vulture… Amidst the present experience, Lumian maintained a fragment of awareness about his own state and condition.

Bang!

He collided brutally with the ground, each bone fracturing with excruciating force. Agony pierced his core.

Lumian teetered on the brink of unconsciousness as a hyena lunged, its sights set on him.

Warm, repulsively scented flesh filled his mouth. He found himself ravaging the lifeless form of the grayish-black vulture. The bluish-tinged arrowhead had snapped within the avian creature.

This taste is nauseating… I'm no Ludwig, the monstrous child… Lumian's internal complaint resounded.

He didn't completely mistake himself for a hyena, but he continued to bite and devour his prey uncontrollably, not letting go of the poisoned parts.

Abruptly, a searing pain stabbed into his back, and he was thrust onto the ground by razor-sharp claws.

His attacker: an uncanny lion marred by decay, oozing blood-yellow pus from its wounds.

Lumian tore the hyena's throat apart and retreated with it into the nearby underbrush.

As he witnessed the scene through an observer's lens, he systematically dismantled the hyena.

Amidst a mix of satisfaction and revulsion, Lumian's abdomen seethed. His Beyonder powers, teetering on the edge of control, were fully ignited by the venom, resulting in a chaotic anomaly.

His sanity waned, spiraling into insanity. All that remained was an insatiable urge to obliterate the beings before him, to unleash chaos.

No, I mustn't succumb… The paramount objective remains incomplete… Lumian drew in the faint, sweet aroma of gray amber, resisting complete surrender to madness.

In the midst of his cathartic sprint, his attention fixed on a hunter, and he lunged at the figure.

With a wooden bow in his grasp, Lumian caught a whiff of a repugnant odor and sighted a decaying lion, two wart-like growths on its shoulders.

Its mouth, adorned with remnants of vibrant red flesh and blood, stretched to its limit.

A jolt of alarm coursed through Lumian as his full self-awareness returned. He discerned that the hunter's "form" had turned ethereal, akin to the vulture, hyena, and lion, morphing into intricate silver-black words and bizarre symbols.

The words linked with the symbol, weaving a ring that abruptly contracted into his body.

Lumian's eyes opened, and he confronted the flickering silver-black candle flame. A half-meter-tall stone, functioning as an altar, met his gaze.

The encounter felt tangibly authentic… As if I had been the vulture, the hyena, the lion, and another human… Lumian massaged his throbbing head and gradually rose to his feet. Reflecting on his prior experiences, he assimilated the newfound knowledge within his mind.

He couldn't remember when he rolled on the ground in pain.

Phew… Exhaling deeply, Lumian affirmed that he had acquired a fresh boon and transformed into a Contractee.

He swiftly tidied up the altar, dismantled the wall of spirituality, and grabbed the carbide lamp, ready to leave the quarry cave at any moment.

Simultaneously, Lumian assessed his transformation and the Contractee's abilities.

His spirituality had seen a marked increase.

His Dancer flexibility and the Alms Monk's endurance in harsh environments had shown modest improvement, though not substantial.

His intuitive sense for luck had also seen a slight upgrade. However, upon recognizing that Termiboros could sway his fate and judgment, he refrained from frequently relying on this ability for protection.

Summoning Dance now exerted a broader sphere of influence, and his ability to forcefully possess the bizarre creatures had extended further.

The Contractee status bestowed upon him just a single fresh ability—the power to enter into a contract with a summoned creature, directly borrowing a distinctive characteristic skill.

Contrary to Lumian's anticipations, this unique contract had merged with his body and soul during his advancement. Its transfer to others was impossible.

In essence, he had become an indivisible part of the contract, the most pivotal aspect. In time, he would need to rely on this element to compose the remaining sections of the contract and offer them to the target creature for "signing."

After musing for a time, Lumian had a rudimentary understanding of the specifics of the Contract ability.

The agreement could solely be formed with the consent of the target creature.

Once the contract was sealed, he could handpick the traits he desired, guided by his volition.

With each ratified contract, not only would he acquire a skill, but he'd also assimilate a measure of influence from the contracted being. The higher its rank, the greater the adverse impact.

The count of contracts inked depended on his resilience. Perhaps he could endure just one high-level or exceedingly potent attribute. Several ordinary traits might be borne, keeping pace with his standing. Particularly feeble ones could be pursued more liberally. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Upon signing a contract, a cost was entailed. Part was a tribute to the contracted entity, and the remainder was a tribute to the witness. The

cost could encompass life, limbs, kin, loved ones, offerings, one's spirituality maximum, a fraction of reason, and so on. The precise demand hinged on the desires of the contracted creature.

Hence, much of the intelligence Lumian gleaned from this boon concerned the corresponding creature. This encompassed specific abilities and the "compensation" the counterpart sought.

Nevertheless, most of these odd creatures were sinister and uncanny, and the price he'd need to pay was consistent. Lumian didn't wish to select from their ranks.

Of course, this wasn't the prime rationale. Conceivably, these creatures harboring the mystical knowledge interwoven with the power of Inevitability had ties to the entity known as Inevitability. Lumian dreaded that forging a contract with them might covertly manipulate him, propelling his destiny into the abyss.

Consequently, Lumian had no intention of designating the entity as the object of prayer and witness while entering into a pact.

A superior choice was at hand: Mr. Fool!

According to the sermons in The Fool's cathedral that Lumian had heard, this great entity reigned over the spirit world. The Angel of the Holy Spirit by His throne presided over the spirit world on His behalf.

Even if embellished, this testified to Mr. Fool's considerable sway in the spirit world.

In such a situation, Lumian—marked by The Fool's seal and enlisting The Fool as an intermediary and pact witness—could potentially yield substantial advantages and concealed benefits when attempting to forge a pact with a spirit world creature. It was just like other Contractees signing contracts with strange creatures that came with knowledge.

Lumian promptly sorted through the recently acquired knowledge and discerned that certain aspects remained quite ambiguous, as if they encompassed myriad possibilities.

For instance, the stipulation of obtaining the target creature's consent before signing a contract did not specify the methodology of obtaining consent. Securing agreement through offerings as a bribe constituted consent, but so did beating them into unreserved submission. Similarly, the "compensation" demanded by the latter should be negotiable.

Additionally, the deleterious impacts that the acquired knowledge from contracted creatures brought along, along with the limits of one's endurance, precluded the prospect of Lumian circumventing the system to forge a pact with a high-ranking creature and attaining godlike power at a reasonable price via Mr. Fool's seal, the sovereign of the spirit world.

Nonetheless, the liberty to cherry-pick any amalgamation of skills within a defined spectrum imposed a considerable upper boundary on the potential of a Contractee. Naturally, the floor was equally low. Opting for an ill-suited skill and exacting an erroneous price could render one subpar even in comparison to an elite non-Beyonder individual's aptitudes.

Lumian steadied himself and murmured with a sense of contentment, "Temiboros, do you have anything to add?"

To be candid, Lumian's foremost apprehension upon descending into the underground was whether Termiboros would exploit the boon-seeking ritual to instigate harm. After all, the potency of the boon he was acquiring was escalating, posing a genuine threat to the angel of Inevitability. Even if securely sealed, He would unearth a method to stir up discord. It was improbable for Him to remain inert, permitting His strength to wane.

Furthermore, during the boon ritual, the seal would inevitably crack slightly, permitting the essence of Inevitability to trickle out. This would afford Termiboros a distinct opportunity.

Initially, Lumian had intended to solicit safeguards before officially beseeching a boon. Unexpectedly, Monette's bizarre appearance and the angel backing him had expedited the need for a blessing. Termiboros had turned more tractable, abstaining from conspicuous interference.

Termiboros's voice resounded with His response, "The mine entrance."

The mine entrance… What does that imply? Lumian clutched the carbide lamp and advanced toward the entrance of the quarry cave, mired in bewilderment.

A bluish-yellow luminescence cast light over the debris-strewn expanse, revealing a meticulously trimmed piece of stiff paper.

It wasn't present when I entered… Lumian tensed and cautiously drew closer. On the ebony paper, a monocle had been meticulously drawn, almost replicating reality. Four lines of bold, vibrant red Intisian words graced the page:

"Salle de Bal Unique

"Night of Lovers

"7 p.m. on the last night of every month

"You're invited."

Salle de Bal Unique… Monocle… Night of Lovers… Lumian's thoughts instantly summoned an image of Monette donning a monocle in his right eye socket.

He had earnestly invoked The Fool's angelic safeguard and expended considerable effort to elude detection, yet he had failed to shake off the enigmatic trickster?

No, Mr. Fool's angelic blessing exudes a high-tier anti-divination and anti-prophecy influence. Unless Monette has been lurking in my vicinity without being thrown off, it's implausible for him to regain proximity! Lumian's heart skipped a beat as he instinctively surveyed the surroundings.

Silence reigned within the obscurity bordering the quarry cave. Yet, Lumian's skin prickled, as though an abundance of eyes remained concealed within the air.

Chapter 317 - 317 Summoning Target

317 Summoning Target

In the Cordu days, Lumian might have snatched up that invitation and made his way to the Salle de Bal Unique by month's end, all to unleash a prank to return the shock.

However, this time around, Lumian's grip on the mystical world was firmer, a result of his brush with countless otherworldly aberrations. He conjured a flicker with the snap of his fingers, sending forth a crimson spark that alighted on the ebony paper before him.

Amidst the swiftly burgeoning flames, Lumian departed the quarry cavern, his carbide lamp casting its light, guiding him towards the nearest exit of the Underground Trier.

Yet, on this journey, an unshakable paranoia seized him. The moss on the rocky walls, the unseen insects within the shadows, even the intangible entities that traversed the air—it was as if Monette's eyes bore into him from all angles.

It wasn't mere illusion but rather a reality that wound Lumian's mind taut, each heartbeat a gallop of unease. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Termiboros's unwavering quiet provided the lone solace, a lack of agitation hinting that the quandary hadn't escalated—yet.

A quarter-hour's passage led Lumian to ascend the steel stairs, emerging onto solid ground once more.

As sunbeams pierced the sky, penetrating a sea of white clouds and bathing his visage in their glow, he felt as though he'd been reborn.

Phew, no wonder Madam Magician said to live under the sun in Trier as much as possible… Exhaling a sigh, Lumian snuffed the carbide lamp, locked in his bearings, and charted his course back to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Upon reentering the safe house, he immediately summoned Madam Magician's messenger, apprising the holder of the Major Arcana card of the developments that unfolded.

Madam Magician's reply was simple:

"Exemplary work. Steer clear of Salle de Bal Unique.

"The Lord's Angel of Time shall keep vigilant watch over this affair."

Why would Mr. Fool's Angel of Time direct His attention toward Salle de Bal Unique? Is there indeed an Angel of Time? The angelic entity whom the charlatans of Salle de Bal Unique revere bears a link to Mr. Fool's Angel of Time. Or perhaps, an animosity? Lumian ruminated, momentarily adrift in the murk of comprehension.

With a measure of relief prevailing, he reclined upon the bed, surrendering himself to sleep's embrace—an interlude wherein his mental fortitude and vitality underwent reinvigoration.

At noon, Lumian ate two savory meat pies and drank a glass of Apple Whiskey Sour. Seated at the table, he engaged in earnest perusal of the bestiary chronicling the spirit world creatures.

As he raced through the pages, a sleek black fountain pen danced in his hand, crafting purposeful circles on the paper to accentuate potential candidates.

After over an hour of intense scrutiny, Lumian distilled a preliminary list of 50 to 60 spirit world entities boasting suitable attributes and modest threat levels. Following the breadcrumbs of indicated page numbers, he retrieved the source manuscripts and embarked on meticulous research.

Intermittent breaks punctuated his reading. As evening painted the sky in hues of twilight, Lumian at last concluded his meticulous perusal of the source materials, now in possession of their profound

knowledge. A final selection had been forged.

First in line was the Abscessed Hand. This enigmatic spirit, once shrouded in legend across the southern and central parts of the world, had been conjured by aficionados of mysticism, leaving a trail of lifeless bodies in its wake.

From crime scene accounts, the fallen were strewn across the forest expanse. With the exception of those initially claimed within a hunter's lodge, the remaining deaths occurred nearly simultaneously. This revelation hinted at the Abscessed Hand's swift transitions between victims, throttling one soul and in a heartbeat, lunging towards its next quarry.

Dream divinations unveiled a bluish-black, gangrenous hand, swollen and oozing with putrescence. Its appearance was always abrupt, snapping a victim's neck within two to three seconds before vanishing to assail another, irrespective of the distance.

Based on the hand's traits, Lumian inferred its considerable aptitude for traversing the spirit world.

As for its danger level, Madam Magician's accounts deemed it commonplace, bound by the constraints of the summoning ritual.

Nevertheless, a significant detail stood out from the Major Arcana card holder: "It's suspected to be a fragment of something greater."

Severed hand? Could its kindred comprise severed legs, heads, torsos, and innards? What would happen when these fragments converge? If reassembled, what would manifest? Lumian scoured the index in vain, failing to unearth analogous entities. His focus rested on abilities, traits, and threat levels, with little heed to nomenclature.

An alternative theory remained afoot. The remaining Abscessed Hand counterparts might reside within the powerful and dangerous categories, evading the scrutiny of Franca, Jenna, and the Rabbits of Knowledge.

Should the anticipated spirit world traversal prowess prove elusive, or if the cost demanded an untenable toll, Lumian had an arsenal of

alternatives at his disposal.

With regards to disguising abilities, he found a peculiar fondness for a spirit world creature known as the Headless Bride.

This mythical tale was woven within the heart of the Haagenti Kingdom in the Southern Continent. It began with the story of a young girl who dared to elope with her beloved.

In the shadowed chambers of their hidden nuptials, her kin unveiled the shrouded ceremony. Amidst the assembly of family and kin, her own brother exacted a swift, brutal end, severing her head in the name of matrimonial transgression and ancestral decree.

Perhaps this girl was special to begin with, or perhaps she had come into contact with something related to the spirit world during her elopement. Thus, ignited by the agony, fury, and rancor that gripped her before her demise, she imbibed the essence of the spirit world, transmuting into a creature akin to an evil spirit.

Dressed in scarlet bridal raiment adorned with gilded motifs, she hunted and hexed her lineage, subjecting them to an unending torrent of catastrophes spanning three decades, until the tapestry of their lineage was all but erased.

In the present, the Headless Bride prowled the spirit world, shape-shifting with calculated artistry. Its transformations beguiled unwary beings and unsuspecting travelers, drawing them closer to their doom in its relentless embrace.

For a Pyromaniac, this was an easy target with the protection of a ritual.

Headless Bride's alternative was Human-Faced Mantis:

"This is a unique creature from the spirit world. When he was alive, he was a playboy with elegance and good looks.

"As an educator in Sion within the Intis Republic's Hornacis Province, he was embraced by admiration and ardor from both distinguished dames and youthful maidens.

“He was gifted in literature, skilled in poetry, and had numerous lovers.

“This idyllic existence found an abrupt termination when a spurned spouse denounced him to the Church as a Warlock, accusing him of employing sorcery to control his wife.

“Agents dispatched by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church probed into the matter, gathering accounts from a multitude of local men. Astonishingly, their testimonies echoed the allegations in the complaint letter. Strangers to one another, these men’s narratives converged in unsettling symmetry.

“In contrast, the dames and young maidens adamantly attested to their willing involvement, fervently defending the playboy’s actions.

“Amid simmering resentment from the local men, the trial raced to a conclusion. The playboy met his end at the stake.

“Upon later investigation, officials confirmed his innocence, unveiling the accusations as a construct of collective envy and enmity.

“It’s suggested that an Instigator was behind the scenes.

“In the spirit world, the playboy’s essence metamorphosed into a mantis bearing a human visage. Festering within him was an all-consuming loathing, mingling with a mastery over metamorphosis and relentless predation…”

Lumian turned emotional as he read the two pieces of information.

Six years in the countryside had acquainted him with the ignorance that shadowed village life.

From this, he deduced that not all spirit world denizens sprang from nature’s womb. Rather, under exceptional circumstances, the souls of departed humans could transmute into enduring spirit creatures. A plausible explanation for hauntings.

Pondering meticulously, Lumian relinquished his aspiration for invisibility and concealment. Instead, he earmarked his final contract slot for traits with direct influence over his Spirit Body.

His choices boiled down to the Thousand-Eyed Evil and the Shadow of Shriek.

These two entities were quintessential ‘natives’ of the spirit world, venturing forth only in the realms of nightmares and tomes of authentic Warlock craft.

The Thousand-Eyed Evil comprised fleshy forms, exuding a pink ichor, each adorned with an eye bereft of lashes.

Gazing into the ebony pupils of these multitudes, whether human, beast, or mere Spirit Bodies, led to swift slumber.

Their connection to dreams was palpable; they occasionally manifested in the darkest recesses of the most harrowing nightmares.

The Shadow of Shriek, on the other hand, manifested as a confluence of translucent shadows. With frequent outbursts of shrieks, they induced unconsciousness in those who dared to draw near.

Beyond their shrieks, they bore the attributes of ordinary shadows.

Lumian meticulously transcribed all the details concerning the alternative contenders onto fresh paper, folding it as he slipped the paper into his pocket.

He lingered within the precincts of Salle de Bal Brise for a period, eventually departing from Avenue du Marché around 10 p.m. Navigating the pathways along Rist docks, he ultimately gained entry into the two-story edifice he had once reduced to smoldering ruins.

Though the inferno that had previously ravaged the building had long since been quelled, the structure now stood cloaked in inky darkness and utter desolation.

Recognizing that his intended audience was none other than Mr. Fool, rather than the entity called Inevitability, Lumian had no intentions of executing the summoning ritual underground. This strategic choice was to avoid any potential encounters with the odd and dangerous swindlers of Salle de Bal Unique.

His primary objective was to locate a secluded enclave, far removed

from prying eyes. This calculated approach would ensure that even in the event of an unforeseen mishap during the conjuration, should the summoned entity lose control, the collateral damage would be contained, thereby facilitating a swift resolution.

Having meticulously arranged a relatively unscathed chamber ensconced within the obsidian heart of the decrepit building, Lumian proceeded to meticulously arrange the altar.

Relying on the insights gleaned from his role as a Contractee, Lumian diverged from the norm by invoking two additional candles, each symbolizing a deity.

In this ritual, Mr. Fool was both the focal point of supplication and the solemn observer.

With a wall of spirituality set in place and candles aglow, Lumian didn't rush to commence the incantation. Instead, he extracted an iron-gray flask from the inner pocket of his worn brown jacket.

Within this flask, Lumian had ingeniously affixed a slender thread, its counterpart connected to the Decency brooch that lay submerged within a pool of absinthe.

This ingenious design facilitated Lumian's swift and precise retrieval of the Sealed Artifact. No clumsy maneuvering was required; a simple hook of his index finger and the Scotch Broom brooch was within his grasp.

As he tugged at the brooch, a burst of crimson sparks erupted, severing the knot binding the Sealed Artifact.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian adorned the resplendent Decency brooch upon his chest.

He harbored the belief that brokering a contract with a denizen of the spirit world carried an inherent cost, akin to a form of bribery. In this context, Lumian hoped the Decency brooch would assume a role of significance.

Securely fastening the brooch, Lumian's gaze shifted to the trio of candles, silently ablaze before him. Drawing a deep breath, he steeled

himself for the upcoming ritual.

Chapter 318 - 318 Price

318 Price

Lumian recited in ancient Hermes, following the precise summoning ritual as described in Aurore's grimoire and the mystical knowledge of Contractees.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"I beseech your shelter.

"I pray for your attention.

"I!

"In the name of The Fool, I summon:

"A peculiar creature that roams the upper realm, the enigmatic severed hand, the bluish-black throat crusher."

Lumian crafted this summoning incantation based on insights from the Abscessed Hand's data. As the ritual afforded some degree of protection to the subject of the invocation, and since the Abscessed Hand was not deemed perilous, he omitted the terms "weak" and "friendly," infusing it instead with other phrases that would effectively pinpoint the target creature.

The bluish-black candle flames surged, intertwining to shape an ethereal doorway adorned with cryptic symbols. A faint gray mist filled the surroundings, instilling an eerie atmosphere.

Gradually, the door creaked open, and a decaying bluish-black

severed hand emerged. It loomed twice the size of Lumian's palm, with the potential to crush a human skull.

The afflicted severed hand hovered before the enigmatic illusory entrance. Its fingers extended toward Lumian's throat, yet it abstained from aggression.

Lumian retrieved a flask of military-grade alcohol, differing in hue, unscrewed the cap, and drizzled a few drops towards the altar where the Abscessed Hand stood.

The liquid struck the ground midway, but with a glint from the Scotch Broom-shaped brooch, the Bribe was discreetly consummated.

Only then did Lumian speak. His voice resonated within his throat and chest as he enunciated alien syllables.

These were words he had never encountered, sourced from the mystical knowledge of Contractees, empowering him to master their pronunciation and essence.

They fell under the Mystical Language of Fate, an integral part of this arcane tongue.

Lumian's vocal resonance coalesced into silvery-black glyphs, akin to symbols, materializing from thin air.

They descended upon the faux goatskin resting on the altar, melding into a brief yet uncanny covenant.

As the pact solidified, Lumian established an intricate connection with the Abscessed Hand, akin to utilizing the Summoning Dance to anchor it to his very being.

Through this conduit, Lumian gleaned the rudimentary abilities and traits of the Abscessed Hand, sensing its yearnings in the process.

These yearnings were the price Lumian had to pay.

"Locate my body, or godhood shall elude you forever!"

An advance payment and a debt to be settled later… Could this be

the unfolding of the Bribe? No, that's not it. Upon sealing a contract, the price is promptly remitted—manifesting as my inexorable fate of ascending to demigodhood. Once I uncover the remaining segments of the Abscessed Hand, the reward shall naturally replace the price… Presently, it's akin to providing ample collateral… Lumian's musings raced as he gleaned the crux of the pact.

Concurrently, he found the coveted spirit world traversal ability from the Abscessed Hand's attributes and qualities, inclusive of its anti-divination, quasi-invincibility, and the skill to snap the necks of those without godhood.

A trait intrinsic to the Abscessed Hand, not a mere ability. Its effects marginally deviated from Lumian's expectations, yet remained within tolerable thresholds.

With Decency's utilization window limited to fifteen minutes, the cost was bearable, and its attributes neared sufficiency. Lumian squandered no time, summoning the other candidates and vowing in ancient Hermes. nove(l)bi(n.)com

"I shall aid you in finding your body. Until then, godhood shall elude me."

These words fused with the surroundings, morphing into wisps of bluish-black mist that seeped into the faux goatskin parchment.

The Abscessed Hand descended, leaving a tincture of yellow-tinged, sanguineous pus within the contract's vacant space.

Spontaneously, the covenant ignited, yielding myriad silvery-black symbols and words.

They interlinked, configuring an intricate and enigmatic pattern, abruptly condensing onto Lumian's shoulder.

Though concealed beneath his attire, Lumian's psyche conjured an image of his right shoulder.

A curious black seal-like emblem materialized there.

Instinctively, Lumian apprehended that upon activating the contract

sigil, he could harness the Abscessed Hand's attributes to traverse the spirit world. Dissolution of the contract was only conceivable upon the demise of either party—a destiny preordained.

Without bothering to experiment with spirit world traversal, Lumian terminated the summoning and embarked on a fresh ritual.

…

"In the name of The Fool, I summon:

"The vengeful spirit that wanders the void, the headless bride in her eternal plight, and the wellspring of a bloodline's malevolence."

Once again, the enigmatic illusory portal manifested, enshrouded in bluish-black flames interweaving. A frigid wind swept forth, transforming the summer night into a wintry chill.

Lumian observed a form materialize from within the illusory entrance. Adorned in a vibrant red festive gown, meticulously threaded with gold, the figure stood before him.

Without question, the figure lacked a head, exuding an aura of deep-seated malice and resentment.

Lumian meticulously followed the prescribed procedure—utilizing the liquor as a "bribe," reciting the contractual pledge. He discerned the price demanded by the Headless Bride.

"Sacrifice a kin or friend."

"Thank you for your presence," Lumian murmured with a sardonic smile, concluding the summoning.

From this seemingly fruitless summoning, he gleaned valuable insights. He confirmed that Bribe wielded a degree of influence.

The original demand from the Headless Bride entailed a kin's sacrifice; however, Bribe had managed to expand the scope to encompass friends.

Lumian's sights next shifted to the Human-Faced Mantis. He had

formulated a summoning phrase: “The vindictive spirit that wanders the void, a hunter adopting mantis guise, a shapeshifter adept at donning human semblance.”

Amidst a peculiar swooshing sound, an immense, translucent cyan mantis emerged from beyond the illusory door.

Its head bore the visage of youth, handsome and radiant, inadvertently lowering one’s guard.

Sensing the summoner’s presence and gender, the mantis swiftly transformed into a resplendent woman attired in a black evening gown.

Internally scoffing, Lumian meticulously fulfilled the entire sequence: Bribe, recitation, and perception.

The Human-Faced Mantis delineated three categories of offerings, requiring solely one to be met: “Contractor’s reproductive organs; Contractor’s capacity for lying; Contractor’s immolation at the stake.”

Post-Bribe, the stipulations underwent some relaxation, affording an additional choice or two. This entity seeks but a single thing—human anguish… The first aligns with his malevolence towards men. If I were of the female gender, this option likely wouldn’t surface… The second corresponds to slanderers and false accusers, while the third aligns with the stake he himself endured… Lumian swiftly concluded.

As a Pyromaniac, the third demand posed no grave challenge. On one hand, he exhibited formidable resistance to flames, and on the other, enduring agony was his forte.

Were this choice absent, Lumian intended to forfeit and subsequently summon several comparable spirit world beings later. Depriving him of the power to lie would markedly undermine his capabilities, rendering survival in a place like Trier implausible. He also wasn’t certain if his reproductive organs would return at 6 a.m. after sacrificing them; he didn’t want to take the risk.

Without delay, he found the Niese Face he sought from the arsenal of the Human-Faced Mantis’s abilities.

“Niese” had been the name of the Human-Faced Mantis during its living days. The essence of this ability leaned more toward illusion than corporeal transformation. Nevertheless, absent the means to nullify it or godhood, piercing through the illusion remained beyond reach.

This occasion saw the black insignia affix to Lumian’s left shoulder, accompanied by surges of crimson flames welling from his feet.

Unperturbed by Lumian’s actions, they ignited his attire and charred his flesh.

Sensations reminiscent yet distinct from his encounter with Susanna Mattise enveloped him. An amalgamation of familiar and unfamiliar torment coursed through his consciousness, assailing his senses.

Swiftly forsaking his cherished belongings, Lumian clutched the Decency brooch in his palm.

The conflagration endured for a full three minutes. Lumian’s skin charred, his clothes imprinting scorched marks onto his body.

For a Pyromaniac, such wounds posed no mortal peril—they scarcely even qualified as severe. He maintained the vitality to prepare for the ensuing summoning.

“The enigmatic entity that roams the upper realm, a mass of flesh bedecked with myriad eyes, a participant in the abyssal realms of nightmares.”

As the chant resonated, a creature of flesh and sinew rolled forth through the illusory door. Each flesh fragment sported a white eye, its pupil veiled in obsidian.

Clasping the aluminum-white military flask, Lumian’s grip faltered, and he abruptly descended into a profound slumber, ensnared by the myriad gazes.

After an indeterminate stretch, he snapped back to consciousness, realization dawning that the ritual had concluded on its own accord. The Thousand-Eyed Evil had retreated to the spirit world, forgoing a genuine assault.

I was lulled to sleep by mere sight. Communication is impossible… Also, this level of influence lies beyond the ritual's inherent protection… Lumian exhaled, seizing the Salle de Bal Brise pocket watch to ascertain the time.

Thankfully, I only slept for a few minutes. There's still about three minutes left… Lumian focused, initiating afresh, summoning forth the Shadow of Shriek.

…

"The spirit that wanders in the void, a confluence of myriad silhouettes, the progenitor of incapacitating shrieks."

Once more, the mysterious illusory entrance swung ajar. Yet, what met Lumian's gaze wasn't an anomalous shadow coiled into a blob, but a nebulous silhouette draped in a pitch-black armor resembling fish scales.

Distinct from all armors documented in newspapers and magazines, this suit bore scales each akin to miniature, writhing shadows.

Hmmm… Could the summoning incantation have been imprecise, yielding a kindred spirit world creature? It seemingly boasts an incapacitating shriek. Let's first gauge the prospects of cementing a pact… Lumian fathomed the situation and embarked upon another cycle of Bribe, utterance, and apprehension.

The armored shadow stipulated an offering: "A blood tribute of ten or more lives or gold amounting to 100,000 verl d'or."

Courtesy of Bribe, the prerequisites exhibited leniency, demanding the sacrifices be rendered within three months. Failing to comply would precipitate contract retribution, a potentiality encompassing control loss or, worse yet, fatality.

A sum of 100,000 verl d'or… Lumian discerned this to be modestly manageable, thereby delving into the ability roster and traits of the armored shadow to locate the coveted incapacitating shriek.

While scouring, he happened upon an ability bearing an intriguing nomenclature: "Spell of Harrumph."

Chapter 319 - 319 “Travel”

319 “Travel”

The Spell of Harrumph derived its name from a combination of a snort from the nose and a harrumph from the mouth, giving it a distinct quality that Lumian found intriguing.

Moreover, the enigmatic armored shadow, while alive, was believed to be either human or a humanoid intelligent creature. Many of its distinct attributes and abilities had been given their own names. These attributes weren’t like the dense individuals who relied on Lumian to simplify and assign labels for their ease of remembrance.

Information channeled through the unique connection revealed to Lumian that the Spell of Harrumph was a spell-like ability capable of affecting a Spirit Body.

Through the dual sounds, it stirred one’s consciousness to induce a mystical transformation, generating a unique fluctuation that surged towards its designated target.

Any creature touched by such a fluctuation would experience severe dizziness at a minimum or even a Psychic Piercing assault at its worst, potentially rendering the target unconscious.

This ability would grow in potency as the user advanced in levels. In essence, it possessed the potential to influence divine entities, provided Lumian also ascended to Sequence 4 or temporarily elevated his level in some fashion.

Impressive. It’s on par with the incapacitating shriek. Moreover, harrumphing seems more dignified than indiscriminate shouting… Realizing time was of the essence, Lumian made a commitment and formalized the agreement.

He harbored a genuine curiosity about the additional attributes and capabilities of the armored shadow. Their names held a certain uncanny quality, such as the Night Parade of Ten Thousand Demons and the Soul Devouring Scream.

This instance, the seal-like object descended onto Lumian's right chest, marking the conclusion of the ritual.

Swiftly, he secured a thread around the Decency brooch and returned it to the iron-gray military flask. Dismissing the spiritual barrier, he cleared the altar and retrieved the objects he had laid out.

Subsequently, a ghostly light emanated from Lumian's right shoulder, and he abruptly vanished, traversing into a mystical realm drenched in layers of hues and peculiar creatures.

In the subsequent moment, he exited the spirit world, dazed, reappearing in his bedroom on the second story of Salle de Bal Brise.

As Lumian massaged his throbbing head, he surveyed his surroundings and nodded approvingly.

It's indeed true spirit world traversal. This ability is very useful…

The only problem rested in its exorbitant spirituality cost. With Lumian's Contractee and Pyromaniac enhancements, he could only execute it three to four times. Considering the consumption of flames and the contingency allocation for safety measures, he could employ it once or twice in a relatively intense confrontation.

For a pure Contractee, they could merely "teleport" twice as standard procedure, excluding any other expenditure.

Furthermore, this was contingent on selecting a proximate coordinate. Of course, proximity didn't exclusively signify the immediate vicinity.

The spirit world encompassed a realm of mystique and peculiarity. Up, down, left, right, front, back—even time—intermingled there. It intersected with the real world, governed by its distinct chaos. Beyond concepts linked in nature, everything else seemed scattered without deliberate arrangement.

In essence, Trier as a holistic notion held sway. It boasted a corresponding domain in the spirit world, unsullied by fragmentation or dispersal. Nonetheless, its surroundings extended beyond neighboring towns and villages. It might correlate to a river's conceptual presence in the Southern Continent, or manifest as a settlement projection for undersea beings.

Minus precise coordinates, Lumian could solely "teleport" within Trier's immediate ambit. Otherwise, he risked straying into the spirit world's treacherous realm, a hazardous endeavor indeed.

When he had endeavored to traverse the spirit world previously, all of Trier's locations had materialized within his consciousness as unfamiliar coordinates. This granted him the capacity to "teleport" back to Salle de Bal Brise instead of venturing to remote corners of the metropolis.

Concurrently, Lumian faintly perceived the Highlands Kingdom's City of White, Rapus—his former destination. It wasn't overtly distant in the spirit world from Trier, but neither was it nearby. Directly "teleporting" there remained infeasible for Lumian. He needed to ascertain one or two intermediate coordinates between the two locations.

Remarkable. Lumian acknowledged with satisfaction.

Inclusive of limited uses and range, his spirit world traversal from Abscessed Hand perfectly met his expectations.

Lumian proceeded to the full-length mirror. Activating the black mark on his left shoulder, he observed his charred form transition into that of a middle-aged man, featuring a few strands of silver at his temples. His cheeks were rounded, eyes amber-red, and facial contours dignified. The features were sharp, radiating an approachable aura.

Gardner Martin!

It can replicate one's appearance, physique, and demeanor. Yet actions and mannerisms must stem solely from myself… Lumian evaluated Niese Face's potential.

The transformation had expended a notable degree of spirituality, but its maintenance necessitated but a fraction. He could adopt Gardner Martin's likeness for more than ten hours.

Dispelling Niese Face, Lumian retreated a few paces. Gazing upon the mirror, he opened his mouth.

"Ha!"

In response, his spirit surged into the black mark on his right chest. His Spirit Body quivered, releasing an almost imperceptible yellow light from his mouth.

The radiance penetrated the mirror, traversing the wall, vanishing after a span of nearly ten meters.

Effective solely at close quarters… Consuming less spirituality than spirit world traversal yet surpassing Niese Face in expenditure. Applicable four or five times within combat… Lumian, his body marred by burns, exhaled leisurely. He donned his attire, settled onto the bed, and surrendered to sleep.

Temporarily shelving thoughts of the gold he owed the armored shadow and the commitment to locate Abscessed Hand's body, Lumian had ample time for these matters. Current requisites centered on recuperation and rest, alongside allowing the repugnant aura accompanying the Decency brooch to dissipate.

The next morning.

Lumian, clad in a black felt hat, shirt, sweater, and sturdy jacket, pressed the doorbell of Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca greeted him with a downcast countenance, seemingly taken aback by Lumian's outfit.

"Is your sense of temperature playing tricks on you?"

Lumian inquired, "Have you gotten your hands on genuine mummy ashes?" Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Didn't you ask that very question just yesterday?" Franca snapped.

The answer was no.

A smile tugged at Lumian's lips.

"I'll take you to find a real mummy."

"Where?" Franca was puzzled and curious.

Lumian stepped into the room and replied nonchalantly, "The Southern Continent's Star Highlands."

"How will we get there?" Franca glanced toward the washroom before lowering her voice. "Are you suggesting we bother your Major Arcana card holder?"

"I've merely penned a letter to inquire about a transit junction," Lumian responded with a smile.

"Transit junction…" Franca combined her understanding of the mystical arts and swiftly formulated a hypothesis. "Have you obtained a mystical artifact capable of teleportation?"

Lumian shook his head and elaborated succinctly,"Through my contracted creature."

"What sort of contract yields such extraordinary results?" Franca exclaimed, genuine surprise tinging her words.

She had been wondering over Lumian's haste in filtering contracted creatures. Typically, those amenable to a Sequence 7 contract were fairly commonplace. Moreover, their summoning typically necessitated a ritual, rendering them rather impractical for most confrontations.

Lumian let out a chuckle.

"A unique kind of contract."

"Uh…" Franca studied Lumian carefully, circling around him.

The pants-wearing, shirt-clad Witch cleared her throat and remarked, "Are we considered brothers?"

“Not quite,” Lumian answered promptly. “We hold different beliefs!”

Franca lowered her voice again. “Isn’t it just superficially Steamed, but actually, it’s Mr. Fool?”

Lumian replied piously, “I still maintain some faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun.”

After all, he had upheld this faith for nearly six years.

Franca found herself momentarily speechless. After a few seconds, she inquired, “Could we be considered friends?”

“Yes.” Lumian now spoke in accordance with his true feelings.

Franca’s brows eased.

“Could you teach me that unique contract? Name the price.”

She made her request straightforwardly.

Lumian shook his head again.

“I can only employ that contract due to unique circumstances.”

“Alright.” Franca refrained from pressing further, though a tinge of disappointment lingered.

At that moment, Jenna emerged from the washroom. Lumian asked half-teasingly, “Are you interested in journeying to the Southern Continent?”

“Travel? Why would I want to travel?” Jenna appeared perplexed.

Franca swiftly recounted her need for genuine mummy ashes and Lumian’s method of “teleporting” to the Star Highlands. Ultimately, she queried, “Do you wish to come along and observe?”

Jenna deliberated briefly and responded, “Okay.”

She recognized her need for greater experience in the realm of Beyonder powers, a necessity for observation, learning, and training.

Furthermore, her maximum geographical range had been confined to Trier's Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra. For a while, she had been captivated by tales of the Southern Continent circulating in the taverns and dance halls.

Lumian assessed his two companions and offered a gentle reminder with a smile, "I'd advise you to don thicker garments. The altitude is considerable, and it's currently winter there."

"Oh…" Franca looked at Lumian and understood why he had bundled up for winter.

Before long, Franca changed into a black coat resembling leather armor and donned dark knee-length pants with plush interiors, adopting the guise of a female mercenary or bounty hunter. Jenna hadn't yet transported her thick clothes, thus she borrowed Franca's clothing. Though their appearances matched, Jenna was shorter, necessitating a tightened belt, secured sleeves, and rolled-up pant legs to prevent impeded mobility.

Lumian reached out and grabbed their shoulders, activating the contract mark on his right shoulder.

A spectral light danced along the seams of his clothing, enveloping Jenna and Franca in a surreal realm, awash with vibrant overlapping hues and enigmatic creatures retreating in every direction.

In an instant, they departed the spirit world, materializing on a desolate island.

Before Jenna and Franca could fully adjust, Lumian initiated spirit world traversal once more.

Upon their return to reality, the Assassins found themselves facing a distant snow-clad mountain peak and an adjacent foreign city dominated by a white edifice.

Jenna soon regained her composure and involuntarily exclaimed, "How magical…"

If she were compelled to encapsulate the magic and articulate her sentiments, a choice of expletives might have been used.

Although not certain if this location was indeed the Southern Continent's Star Highlands, the fact that she could translocate swiftly from Rue des Blouses Blanches to this wilderness underscored the mystical potential of teleportation!

Lumian endured the pulsing headache and the substantial drain on his spiritual energy as he pointed toward the City of White, seemingly unperturbed.

"Proceed inside."

Chapter 320 - 320 Mummy

320 Mummy

Franca and Jenna couldn't tear their eyes away from the grazing herd of cows, sheep, and horses. The swarthy men donned felt hats and thick blue or red robes, while the local women flaunted their colorful, multi-layered gowns. Numerous white buildings and shops peddling leather products dotted the scene. It was a captivating and unfamiliar sight.

Franca stepped aside as a wooden carriage, drawn by a long-haired bull, trundled by in the biting wind. She glanced at Lumian and Jenna before speaking up.

"Why the silence? Let's engage with the locals."

After all, what was the point of wandering without interacting?

Lumian fell momentarily quiet before responding, "I lack sufficient information."

Jenna felt a pang of embarrassment. "I don't know enough either."

All she was acquainted with were tales of romantic exploits featuring Pharaoh queens and adventurers unearthing treasures within rainforests.

"Uh…" Franca gestured dismissively with her right hand. "I'm not much better."

How much is not much? Lumian didn't pry further. He ushered his companions into a shop named Highland Mystic Potion.

The proprietor, Sallent Empaya, an Intisian dressed in a blue coat adorned with gold accents, recognized Lumian right away. After all,

his distinctive hair color and appearance set him apart. Moreover, only a few days had passed since their last encounter.

Sallent assessed Franca and Jenna, extending a warm smile to Lumian. “What brings you here this time?”

Lumian, struggling with a headache from expending too much spirituality, got straight to the point. “Real mummy’s ashes. I want to see the mummy!”

Sallent’s eyes flickered briefly, but he refrained from probing. “Very well, I’ll show you.”

Being a seasoned purveyor of mummy ashes, he knew these products didn’t bestow virility; they were combined with genuinely efficacious medicine before hitting the shelves. However, since the clients didn’t inquire about the practicality of real mummy ashes, he saw no need to divulge that information.

Furthermore, he suspected Lumian and the two women intended to purchase a mummy for resale and profit. This was a substantial transaction.

Sallent temporarily closed his shop and guided Lumian, Franca, and Jenna to the rear warehouse, where ordinary herbs were stored. They descended a narrow staircase, reaching the basement door.

Turning to face Lumian and the others, he sought confirmation. “Do you really want to see it?”

It wasn’t so much a guilty conscience as a cautionary note.

“Absolutely,” Lumian responded without a moment’s hesitation.

In the midst of his words, his gaze fixated on the basement’s pitch-black wooden door.

It bore a mystical symbol, its form a distortion of dark-green and pale-white hues.

Within, a mix of rudimentary skulls, intertwined arms and vines, and inverted triangles melded to create an enigmatic pattern.

Threads of the same hues radiated outward from these symbols, infiltrating walls, floor, and ceiling alike.

Sallent brought forth a golden key, advancing toward the door. Franca's voice dipped to a hush as she addressed Lumian and Jenna. "Those arcane symbols appear rooted in the domain of Death."

Jenna furrowed her brow. "What significance do they hold?"

Franca's head shook gently as she replied, "I'm uncertain. Generally, these would play a pivotal role in ritualistic magic. Yet, without a wellspring of power, such magic can falter.

"As I understand, the cathedrals of orthodox Churches feature akin arrangements. The devout believers who pray daily lend their spirits and spirituality to sustain the ritualistic magic. While individual contributions may seem modest, their accumulation wields ample strength."

"Perhaps this location holds the power necessary for sustaining ritualistic magic." Lumian grinned at Franca. "You might have a reason to rejoice. This perspective heightens the likelihood of finding a genuine mummy."

A relieved sigh escaped Franca's lips. "Hopefully, counterfeits aren't as rampant here as in Trier."

Perplexed, she inquired, "But why the need to bring us here to see a real mummy? My divination could discern the authenticity of the ashes."

"To broaden your horizons," Lumian replied confidently.

Before Franca could curse, he added, "Directly requesting mummy's ashes might tempt him to provide counterfeits. When your divination results manifest on the spot, should I then smash his cabinet or engage in a scuffle? Such violence is hardly ideal."

Lumian drew on an adage often uttered by Aurore.

Of course, he left out the adverse effects of the three contracts. The Abscessed Hand stoked a yearning to snap a target's neck. The

Human-Faced Mantis fueled a heightened disdain for those who unjustly maligned the innocent. The armored shadow goaded him to break free from the shackles of life's confines.

Perhaps Mr. Fool's witness or the boon of Bribe rendered these effects relatively manageable. They were detriments he could subdue with focus, yet their collective might occasionally sparked such impulses.

Simultaneously, Franca and Jenna scoffed, unified in their disdain.

Only Hunters harbored an affection for violence!

At that juncture, after a brief struggle with the lock, Sallent triumphantly swung open the pitch-black wooden door, its surface adorned with a cryptic symbol.

Within the basement passageway, Lumian's eyes landed on wall-embedded oil lamps, forever alight.

Drenched in the dancing hues of dark-green firelight, Franca and her companions trailed behind Sallent, the shopkeeper of concealed curatives, as they ventured into the corridor that lay beyond the portal.

Light permeated the space, yet an illusion of advancing into darkness seized them step by step.

The already cold atmosphere seemed to plummet several degrees Celsius lower.

Sallent proceeded seven to eight meters ahead, navigating past firmly shut grayish-white stone doors. He halted before a chamber positioned at the corridor's midpoint.

These stone doors and the encompassing walls bore symbols akin to those at the basement entrance.

Sallent nudged open the stone door confronting him, unveiling a diminutive sepulcher to Lumian and his comrades.

In the chamber's heart rested an exotic humanoid sarcophagus adorned with a golden base and a kaleidoscope of colors.

“This mummy hails from five centuries ago,” Sallent introduced, drawing near the stone casket and pressing down its lid.

“He seems rather unconcerned about us making off with the mummy…” Lumian mused under his breath.

Franca emitted a soft chuckle, her voice hushed. “Perhaps he simply thinks nothing of us.”

Jenna remained silent during their exchange, her curiosity and trepidation fixated on the innards of the golden sarcophagus.

Within, a corpse swathed in yellowish-brown fabric lay. Its lips were slightly parted, while faint voids marked the spots where eyes once resided. Hints of seeped oil stained its form.

Unrestrained by the foreign surroundings, Franca extracted a mirror and initiated a divination before Sallent’s presence.

His eyes flickered momentarily, swiftly reverting to their prior state, as if he’d encountered such phenomena too frequently.

Before long, an aged voice resonated from Franca’s mirror, its cadence accompanied by the gentle rush of water.

“A bona fide mummy, albeit not ancient in origin.”

Franca’s gaze snapped up at Sallent, the proprietor of the mystic potion store.

Sallent offered an awkward smile in return.

“I fibbed earlier. This mummy isn’t a relic from five centuries past. Truth be told, it was crafted just a fortnight ago and dispatched here. However, regardless of origin, it underwent a comprehensive and protracted mummification process. The sole disparity from ancient mummies is the brevity of its interment.”

An “ancient” mummy born a mere fortnight prior? Lumian quirked an eyebrow at Sallent, his tone casual. “Do you hunt down the living to fashion mummies?”

Sallent gently shook his head.

“No need for such methods. The Southern Continent witnesses countless daily deaths. Procuring fresh cadavers requires only a nominal fee. Hiring hunters to track and capture would entail far greater expenses. Undertaking the task personally would exact an exorbitant temporal toll.”

He involuntarily assessed the advantages and drawbacks of multiple strategies.

Post this explanation, Jenna regarded the mummy with a newfound perspective.

It was the body of someone who hadn’t long been dead.

His motionless form stood exhibited as a tradable commodity.

Though the two-week-old mummy served its purpose and met the requisites, Franca yearned for superior specimens.

With a sigh, she averted her gaze from the recently minted mummy, prompting Sallent with a question. “Are there older mummies available?”

Sallent hesitated momentarily before treading cautiously. “How about those from last year?”

This constituted the most “ancient” mummy within the basement.

Franca emitted a rueful sigh. “That works too.”

Less enthused, Sallent led the trio to another sepulcher. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Initially presuming Lumian and his companions intended to purchase an entire mummy, Sallent had showcased the most well-preserved specimen. Now, it seemed Lumian merely sought a segment.

The yellowish-brown mummy dating back to the prior year already displayed signs of fragmentation. Not only were lower extremities absent, but its chest and abdomen also sported gaping voids.

With Franca's divination validating its authenticity, Sallent posed his inquiry with diminished enthusiasm. "How much do you require?"

"50 grams," Franca responded, intending to amass a larger reserve.

Sallent mulled over the request before pronouncing, "500 verl d'or."

Promptly, Franca remitted the payment, her eyes fixed as Sallent procured a hammer and dirk, employing them to sever a portion of the mummy's arm, akin to extracting ore.

Jenna stood dumbfounded. To her, it seemed somewhat gruesome and brutal.

Though she'd witnessed mob fights and personally taken a life, she'd never encountered someone treating human remains as inexpensive commodities.

Internally, Franca sighed and suppressed her emotions.

This was the stark reality of the Beyonder world and its potion system, yet compared to the boons, it was strangely appealing.

With the fraction of a mummy's arm now in her possession, Franca wordlessly led Jenna out of the tomb, trailed by Lumian and Sallent.

They had traversed scarcely three meters when the kerosene lamps lining the corridor receded, casting an eerie dimness.

Sallent swiveled his head, his demeanor a mix of surprise and uncertainty.

Chapter 321 - 321 Compensation

321 Compensation

In the dim corridor, despite the unchanging temperature, an icy gust swept through, sending shivers down the spine.

His initial urge was to reach into his pocket and grasp Mr. K's finger. Yet, he held back, mindful of the unfamiliar territory that was the Southern Continent. Mr. K might not sense the use of his finger, so Lumian suppressed his instinct.

Franca reacted swiftly too. A small mirror materialized in her palm. Jenna, less experienced, didn't grasp the scene's significance, but her instincts told her it wasn't a positive development.

It was akin to the spooky tales told in bar dance halls to frighten young girls!

Sallent, avoiding the dim oil lamp's gaze, briskly moved past Jenna and Franca, making a beeline for the pitch-black wooden door to the basement. He paid Lumian no attention.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Sounds of impact echoed from the tombs on either side. It wasn't clear if sarcophagus lids had been struck or heavy stone doors pounded.

Sallent's expression shifted, and he bolted out.

In the silent basement, the echoes of the pounding lingered. Lumian and the others hurried after the mystic potion store owner, easily overtaking him.

At that very moment, the pitch-black wooden door creaked shut abruptly.

Seeing this, Franca sprinted forward and flung the mirror out the door.

A resonant crack marked the mirror's collision with the wooden door, fragments scattering across the floor.

Lumian and Franca came to a halt simultaneously, their attention on Sallent. Jenna, still in motion, comprehended and made the same choice.

In the eerily dim corridor, Sallent, decked in a blue coat with gold accents, stood frozen, his pale face tinged with a sickly green hue.

The pounding from the tombs persisted, its reverberations shaking everyone present to the core.

Sallent trembled visibly, muttering to himself, "We're done for. We're all finished…"

Franca inquired swiftly yet composedly, "What's going on?"

Only by grasping the core issue could she devise a swift and effective strategy!

Seemingly detached from his own senses, Sallent didn't answer. He half-mumbled, "We're done for. We're all finished…"

Before he could complete his thought, the entire basement quivered.

The dark-green flames that had shrunk to the size of rice grains flickered noticeably in the same direction.

"It's awake! It's awake!"

Sallent remained unresponsive, repeating his panicked cry, "It's awake! It's awake!"

Seeing that the mystic potion store owner was clearly in a state of extreme horror and not in his right mind, Franca decisively

abandoned her attempts to ask him for information and took out a mirror.

Her plan was to use Magic Mirror Divination to swiftly assess the current situation.

Even if the divination's response wasn't crystal clear and required interpretation, it was still better than being completely clueless!

In a matter of moments, Franca completed the incantation and witnessed an aqueous light emanating from the mirror.

Just as she was preparing to gather her thoughts and formulate appropriate questions to obtain corresponding answers, Lumian, who had been standing silently beside her, suddenly spoke up. "Did it work?"

"It did. I can perform the divination," Franca cooperatively responded, although she was puzzled by Lumian's actions.

Lumian immediately broke into a grin.

"No need for questions."

Uh… Franca was caught off guard before she grasped Lumian's intention.

Just then, the basement shook once more. Sallent, the mystic potion store owner, was so overcome with fear that his voice turned high-pitched.

"It's here! It's here!

"We're going to die!"

In the next heartbeat, Lumian seized his shoulder.

Simultaneously, Lumian firmly held Jenna's arm with his other hand, while Franca hooked her arm around his shoulder like a bro.

An eerie light shimmered through the crevices of their clothing, and the four of them materialized outside the basement, standing before

the pitch-black wooden door adorned with intricate and enigmatic symbols.

“It’s here! It’s here!

“We’re going to die!”

Sallent’s cries of despair still echoed in the air.

Lumian cast an appraising glance at the mystic potion store owner, pondering whether to utilize the Niese Face to transform into a mummy and give him a scare.

Therapeutic provocation had its merits too!

However, considering his waning spirituality and the prudence of revealing too many abilities to a stranger, Lumian ultimately shelved the prank idea.

Jenna swung her right palm, delivering a resounding slap to Sallent’s face, leaving him bewildered. He gazed at the woman before him, utterly perplexed.

Franca and Lumian exchanged speechless glances, unsure how to react to this unexpected turn of events.

As the pitch-black door and the basement walls swayed gently, the cacophony outside abruptly subsided.

Jenna felt the weight of their gazes and mumbled, “Isn’t this how they wake them up? That’s how they would bring back my neighbor when she lost control of her emotions.”

It wasn’t madness. In the factory district, people had their own practical remedies. More often than not, they did the trick, though occasionally they proved ineffective.

Of course, if he were part of her family, she wouldn’t dare try it. She’d seek professional assistance instead.

Franca snapped out of her reverie and commended sincerely, “Well done.”

Several moments elapsed, and Sallent's gaze cleared.

Instinctively, he scanned their surroundings and exclaimed in surprise, "We're outside? When did we get out?"

"When you were screaming 'we're going to die,' 'we're going to die,'" Lumian retorted with an annoying tone.

He then raised an eyebrow and inquired with a deep intonation, "Who were you saying was about to wake up?"

Sallent's expression shifted multiple times before he stammered, "A genuine ancient mummy. It slumbers deep within the tomb and occasionally stirs. It only woke up a few days ago. Why did it wake up so quickly…"

Normally, there was a rough timeframe for how long the mummy remained "awake." According to Sallent's experience, it would be at least another month before it awoke again. That was why he dared to bring Lumian and the others into the basement.

Unexpectedly, an accident occurred!

What caused the ancient mummy to awaken prematurely? Lumian directed a thoughtful gaze at Franca, as if silently asking her if she wished to consider obtaining the genuine ancient mummy.

Franca comprehended his inquiry and shook her head, indicating that it wasn't necessary.

The mummy's ashes were merely supplementary ingredients. The ones formed the year before were still usable. There was no need to risk dealing with what seemed to be a perilous entity.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and pushed through the headache gnawing at his temples. He turned to Sallent and grinned.

"I don't care if it's last year's mummy or an ancient one awakening. There are two things I know for sure.

"First, I saved your life. Second, we were scared out of our wits and nearly met our end down there.

“So, you owe me a thank-you present and compensation for the mental strain. How much do you think is fair? Keep in mind, I only want gold.”

With the memory of owing the Armored Shadow and Mr. Fool a total of 100,000 verl d’or in gold, Lumian was keen on seizing every opportunity to amass funds.

As the tumult behind the pitch-black wooden door gradually settled, Sallent heaved a sigh of relief and responded, “How about 1,000 verl d’or? That’s all the gold I have on hand.”

His heart ached at the thought of parting with the money, but he acknowledged Lumian’s point. Without their intervention, he’d have met his end in that basement, becoming fodder for the mummy.

Moreover, the group had demonstrated significant prowess. Rejecting their request outright seemed like a risky proposition.

“Agreed.” Lumian didn’t push for more or attempt to haggle.

As the quartet made their way toward the stairs leading to the warehouse, Franca lowered her left hand and surreptitiously let something slip into the shadowy corner.

After obtaining 1,000 verl d’or in gold coins, gold nuggets, and jewelry, Lumian, Franca, and Jenna exited the Highland Mystic Potion Shop.

Franca glanced back at the shop and let out a wry chuckle. “Tsk, all this trouble, and we ended up with a mummy’s hand and an additional 500 verl d’or.”

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, she queried with a grin, “Are you running short on funds again? You used to save people without expecting payment. They could give it or not.”

“Have you switched to the Spectator’s Pathway?” Lumian teased, nodding in agreement. “The special contract I mentioned involves sacrificing 100,000 verl d’or worth of gold within a set timeframe after the pact is made.”

100,000 verl d'or? Jenna's understanding of monetary matters had undergone quite a transformation since entering the world of mysticism.

Based on what she knew, even someone like Ciel didn't possess as much liquid wealth as her. Yet, he dared to accumulate a debt of 100,000 verl d'or just for a contract granting access to those special abilities.

Franca clicked her tongue and inquired, "Why didn't you 'teleport' us right to the door from the start? The basement door wasn't closed then, so no mishaps would have occurred."

"Don't you think it's more dramatic to do it at the last moment?" Lumian retorted with a question. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Naturally, the actual reason was that he had recently gained the ability to traverse the spirit world and hadn't ingrained a reflex to use it. When the pitch-black wooden door in the basement shut, he had been hesitant to attempt teleporting for fear of it failing.

Later, Franca successfully completed her Magic Mirror Divination. Through it, Lumian confirmed his ability to remain connected to the outside world within the seal, which allowed him to make the definitive teleportation.

Amid Franca and Jenna's baffled expressions, Lumian massaged his aching head and announced, "Let's find an inn. I need to rest and restore my spirituality."

"Okay." Franca wasn't in a hurry to secure an inn. Instead, she turned into an empty alley and produced an ornate makeup mirror.

"Why are you using divination?" Jenna queried inquisitively.

Franca's lips curled into a smile.

"I'm using it to divine the reflection in my other mirror."

Seeing Jenna's perplexity, she elucidated, "I left a small mirror that looks like a shard outside that basement."

With that, Franca caressed the mirror and chanted an incantation.

Before long, the mirror projected an image: Sallent, the mystic potion store proprietor, stood before the pitch-black wooden door, his posture hunched as he cried out, “Only death endures forever!”

Chapter 322 - 322 Pleasure

322 Pleasure

“Only death endures forever?”

Lumian and Jenna struggled to grasp the gravity of the situation unfolding before them. Their attention turned towards Franca.

Franca observed as Sallent bowed and offered his prayers before departing from the dimly lit basement. The mirror’s enigmatic display dissolved into darkness, marking the end of the divination. She spoke contemplatively, “He seems to be from the Numinous Episcopate.”

Numinous Episcopate? Lumian, who had encountered references to this secret organization within Aurore’s grimoires, knew that it originated from the royal lineage of the Balam Empire on the Southern Continent and ancient Death believers. The organization’s mission seemed to involve awakening or reviving Death while expelling colonists to restore the Balam Empire to its former glory.

Aurore’s knowledge of the Numinous Episcopate was somewhat superficial, lacking details about prominent figures, rituals, or specific practices.

“The Numinous Episcopate?” Jenna’s lack of familiarity was apparent in her voice.

Franca proceeded to provide a succinct overview of the Numinous Episcopate’s background, aligning with Lumian’s understanding.

She concluded, “In the Southern Continent, the Numinous Episcopate holds a comparable status to the Rose School of Thought. Although they don’t resort to blood sacrifices or terrorism like some secret faith-based organizations, rituals are inherent to their nature. The Numinous Episcopate’s pursuit of death’s revival necessitates

sacrificial rites."

"Right, the Numinous Episcopate's leader is a demigod nicknamed Pale Empress."

Pale Empress? Given the Numinous Episcopate's similarity in strength to the Rose School of Thought, it's plausible that Pale Empress is an angel… Lumian rubbed his head, lacking the energy to analyze further.

Jenna's gaze shifted toward the Highland Mystic Potion shop, her confusion evident.

"Why would the shop owner, an Intisian, join the Numinous Episcopate?"

The Numinous Episcopate's goal was to eradicate colonists and rebuild the Balam Empire. Intis was one of the colonial powers established in West Balam.

Sallent, though having lived in the Southern Continent for over a decade and reaping the rewards of being an Intisian, found himself in a puzzling predicament. His allegiance to the Numinous Episcopate, despite these benefits, raised questions. Sallent wasn't one of the lowest-class denizens of Trier like Jenna who didn't have a clear concept of colonial interests.

Franca muttered, "Who knows? Numerous possibilities exist. Enforced conversion after being captured, manipulation by mysterious forces, gradual enticement with escalating benefits leading to devout belief, or a transformative experience thanks to being rescued by a kind Death believer.

"In any case, the Numinous Episcopate displays cunning by employing a genuine Northern Continent native to operate a mystical potion shop, peddle mummies, and act as an inconspicuous spy. Their strategy appears well-orchestrated, defying easy suspicion."

Observing Lumian's weariness, Franca decided to not delve further. She located a nearby inn and secured lodgings for them.

Upon Lumian's awakening, sunlight streamed through the glass

window, casting a warm glow on Franca and Jenna, who were seated at the table. The sky was serene, adorned with fluffy clouds resembling wisps of cotton.

Franca and Jenna savored a burrito seasoned with spices, enveloping succulent beef and mutton, while Lumian indulged in a plate of roasted onions, potatoes, corn, and assorted meats. A sweet corn-based beverage graced their table, emanating a delightful aroma.

As Lumian sat up, a chuckle escaped his lips. “Looks like you two had quite the time.”

Munching on her food, Franca mumbled, “I don’t often venture to the Star Highlands, and I accomplished what I set out to do. Naturally, it’s time to unwind.

“What’s this called? It’s called… Dammit, forget it. You get the idea!”

Despite a prolonged attempt, Franca struggled to articulate her thoughts in the appropriate language. Eventually, she abandoned the effort, prioritizing her meal.

Jenna gestured to her right. “We brought you some lunch.”

A strip of fried beef, coated with a crimson sauce exuding a subtle alcoholic aroma, lay before Lumian.

“I figured you might be hesitant to venture out due to the language barrier,” Lumian admitted, promptly satisfying his hunger.

He had previously realized that only a minority of the locals understood Intisian, and even then, only on a basic level for rudimentary communication.

Franca, swallowing a bite of burrito, sipped on a cup of steaming corn juice.

“Body language is universal.”

Jenna added with a grin, “Franca’s gestures are truly something to behold. She even mimics pig squeals, cow moos, and sheep bleats to communicate her meat preferences to vendors unfamiliar with

Intisian. Yet, the nobles here are a departure from my expectations. They appear more akin to Northern Continent counterparts than their Southern Continent peers."

In this relaxed ambiance, the trio enjoyed a leisurely lunch, recounting their escapades as if they were on an authentic holiday.

…

Under the cover of night, within the Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman district, nestled at Rist docks, an abandoned building stood—a site Lumian had previously set ablaze.

Cognizant of the potential disturbances that advancements within an apartment might trigger among nearby residents, Franca heeded Lumian's advice and selected this vacant location.

Promptly erecting a wall of spirituality, Franca collected the ashes of the incinerated mummy—thanks to Lumian—along with the other requisite ingredients.

Meanwhile, Lumian and Jenna maintained a careful distance, intently observing as Franca adroitly mixed the ingredients and consumed the potion.

A brief hush enveloped the scene, then Franca's visage twisted in anguish.

Almost instantly, her flaxen hair, formerly bound in a ponytail, broke free of its constraints. Propelled by an invisible force, the hair drifted and extended, resembling a radiant web expanding in all directions.

More ethereal strands emerged, dense and elongated. Swiftly, they populated the space embraced by the wall of spirituality, fashioning a spectral woodland of filaments.

Once again, Jenna bore witness to the mystifying and surreal attributes of the potion,

while obscured by the burgeoning hair. Alongside Lumian, she patiently awaited the anomaly to subside.

Whether this passage of time spanned dozens of seconds or stretched beyond two minutes, the ethereal flaxen hair finally withdrew, returning to Franca's form.

With a jubilant countenance, Franca pivoted to face her companions, her limpid eyes radiating contentment.

"Everything went quite seamlessly. I'm anticipating future advancements to be quite cumbersome and challenging."

Curiously, Jenna found Franca's flowery blouse and off-white breeches harmonizing impeccably with her demeanor for the first time. The attire seemed to accentuate an ineffable allure, evoking a blush and a warmth in Jenna's ears, despite her own femininity. On the other hand, Lumian experienced an unfamiliar and unwanted warmth and reaction.

As Franca acclimated to the powers of the Demoness of Pleasure, Lumian and Jenna's racing hearts eventually steadied, restoring a semblance of normality.

Concluding their task and dismantling the spiritual barrier, Franca rejoined them, sporting a radiant smile. Her eyes shimmered akin to a lake glinting with reflected light.

"How much of an improvement are we talking about?" Lumian posed a direct question.

A rough comprehension of the situation would facilitate better teamwork!

Franca's eyes danced playfully as she responded, a grin adorning her face. "Take a guess."

"I'm not a Demoness. How can I guess?" Lumian's retort barely left his lips before he frowned.

An intangible force had coiled around his legs and body!

Then, with a sudden rush, Lumian's form was engulfed in crimson flames that erupted from within him, engulfing the enigmatic threads.

Only now did Lumian and Jenna perceive the intangible tendrils, tinted in fiery hues resembling translucent spider silk.

Amidst her amusement, Franca inquired of Lumian and Jenna with a mischievous glint, “Do you understand now? Perhaps you’d like to explore another?”

“No!”

“No need.”

In unison, Jenna and Lumian retorted, their voices echoing their apprehension.

Franca maintained her smile, suggesting, “Are you truly certain you don’t wish to give it a try? I assure you, a mere touch can envelop you in true pleasure.”

“Dammit!” Jenna instinctively retreated a step, her expletive punctuating her reaction.

Lumian regarded Franca, grappling with whether she was indeed teasing him or harboring some genuine intent.

Yes, the target should be Jenna… I can’t rule out the possibility of using simple contact to embarrass me… As Lumian’s thoughts raced, Franca suddenly composed herself and said seriously, “In addition to the two I mentioned earlier, my proficiency in Black Fire, Frost, Curse, and Mirror magic has all been elevated. Their integration has expanded as well. For instance, I can utilize a mirror to focus on a target and employ Black Fire to enact a curse. Another scenario involves my utilization of Mirror Substitution and Staff Substitution to counteract fatal harm while gaining some measure of recuperation.

“My capabilities as an Assassin and Instigator have also been enhanced.”

She succinctly summarized her advancements without delving into particulars.

Lumian nodded, mulling over Franca’s capabilities. He inquired thoughtfully, “Do you possess a charm-like ability too?”

Franca's smile hinted at an answer, but she chose to remain silent.

Jenna observed Franca for a moment and then noted something else, pointing at her and remarking, "You've become even more beautiful!"

Franca's individual features and overall appearance had transcended any imperfections. Her demeanor radiated an undeniable brilliance—a striking, flamboyant beauty that demanded no disguise.

"Is that so?" Franca responded, her surprise evident.

Lumian couldn't resist stroking his chin, pondering whether Madame Hidden Blade would genuinely switch to Iron-blooded Knight when going from Sequence 5 to Sequence 4.

As Lumian bade Franca and Jenna farewell and embarked on his return to Auberge du Coq Doré, a sudden realization swept over him. He lowered his voice and inquired, "Temiboros, what's the next boon after Contractee?"

Yet, Termiboros remained silent, offering no reply.

Lumian let out a scoff.

"It's fine. Once I locate the padre, he'll divulge the information."

Although his confidence might waver internally, maintaining an outward appearance of assurance was essential in times like these.

… nove(l)bi(n.)com

The day of the prophesied event arrived swiftly.

In Quartier de la Princesse Rouge, at the crossroads of Rue de la Muraille and Rue du Cheval Blanc, Lumian disembarked from a public carriage with a casual grace. Clad in a white shirt, a black vest, brown trousers, and sleek leather shoes, he cast his gaze upon the slumbering neighborhood that lay ahead.

Chapter 323 - 323 Psychological Profile

323 Psychological Profile

Lumian stood at an intersection, his hands casually tucked into his pockets as he strolled leisurely toward Rue de la Muraille.

This street held more significance to the people of Trier than even the renowned Avenue du Boulevard. It was their aspiration.

In the days before Emperor Roselle ignited the Industrial Revolution, Trier's cityscape hadn't sprawled to the extent it had now. It nestled in the easternmost corner, fortified by stout city walls and vigilantly guarded by soldiers. Their military encampment wasn't distant, which prompted the emergence of numerous brothels and prostitutes nearby.

As the sands of time sifted through, Rue de la Muraille garnered its reputation, and Trier's population burgeoned. A modest market burgeoned into a realm of prestige and extravagance that stretched across the Northern and Southern Continents.

Lumian passed beneath the sheltering canopy of Intis parasol trees, his gaze taking in opulent palace-like structures alongside unassuming apartments. They all shared a common trait—windows adorned with frosted glass and the occasional green shutter.

Rue de la Muraille appeared to be rousing from its midday slumber. The road hosted few pedestrians, but each one bore a distinct air. Some dashed by in somber gray-blue work attire, driven by haste, while others donned antiquated finery. They glanced around before slipping into apartment complexes. Cameras slung around necks captured candid moments before these wanderers vanished into ornate edifices. Attempts at projecting an Intisian facade couldn't

mask true identities, betrayed by hairlines and exaggerated heights.

Moreover, Lumian's keen eye caught sight of an iron-gray robot, towering at two meters. A steam-spewing outlet adorned its back, accompanied by gears, torsion springs, screws, and bent pipes—a symphony of decorative mechanics.

Perched on the robot's left shoulder, a lavishly dressed man flaunted intricate makeup. His leisurely observation spanned pedestrians, dignitaries shrouded in gold or silver masks, and groggy men stumbling into wakefulness.

Here, the ordinary and elite intertwined in a peculiar harmony.

As Lumian advanced, he methodically surveyed his surroundings, his gaze unrelenting in its pursuit of his target.

In a flash, he spotted Albus approaching from a side alley.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order member, sporting dark-red locks, acknowledged Lumian with a sly grin. He lifted his right hand, pointed at his own head—provocation in motion.

Under Gardner Martin's directive, Albus was tasked with tracking down Padre Guillaume Bénet. It seemed Albus was insinuating a competition of sorts, pitting Lumian against himself to see who'd uncover the "prey" first.

Beyond Albus, the Iron and Blood Cross Order likely deployed several official or peripheral affiliates. In this, Gardner Martin had kept his promises.

Undeterred by Albus's gesture, Lumian pressed on, deeper into Rue de la Muraille.

Guided by the revelations of Demoness of Pleasure Franca's Magic Mirror Divination, the prophecy's domain narrowed:

Guillaume Bénet's presence was expected on five streets, including Rue de la Muraille and Rue du Cheval Blanc, within the week.

However, Rue de la Muraille's length, its expanse, and the thronging

populace created a nebulous landscape for Lumian's quest. Carpet searches and widespread net-casting was virtually impossible. Success hinged on the possibility of enlisting aid from the authorities and mustering an army to seal off this domain, vigilantly guarding every entrance to Underground Trier.

Previously, Lumian could only hope that the Iron and Blood Cross Order, a secret organization teeming with formidable Hunters, boasted superior tracking and manhunt techniques. Or perhaps, Termiboros—an Inevitability angel—might drive them to converge. As long as the distance between Lumian and Guillaume Bénet was moderate, they would "reunite" as though preordained.

However, a new trail had emerged.

This advancement was predominantly the fruit of the mystical knowledge he had acquired as a Contractee!

Within this trove of knowledge lay a menagerie of uncanny creatures, summonable or recruitable, complete with the requisite costs for forging contracts. The compendium detailed the abilities obtainable and the subsequent penalties incurred post-contract.

Merging the exhibition of Guillaume Bénet's contractual capabilities from his memory and dream, Lumian pieced together a fragment of insight:

Summoning Abyss Demon Flowers necessitates a sacrifice of fresh human blood. The downside—an increased desire for coitus.

Invisibility mandates thirteen portions of prepared meat. The downside—an intensified susceptibility to hunger.

Slow Flight sacrifices one's romantic infatuation perpetually. The downside—an urge to show off.

Bone Curse predicates the sacrifice of a living person. The downside—drowsiness.

The Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell exacts no fewer than three human souls. The downside—random bouts of dizziness, numbering four to five daily.

Internal Explosion demands the sacrifice of any Beyonder characteristic. The downside—unrelenting spirituality drain, tantamount to permanent reduction of spirituality capacity.

From the detailed description of the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, Lumian conjectured that the padre had inadvertently met an additional, covert cost.

That was his name!

The Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell affected the target's Spirit Body by invocating their true name, causing them to experience dizziness and other reactions, amplified by deeper comprehension of the target and employment of verbiage echoing the spirit world.

In contracting with a spirit world entity armed with the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, Guillaume Bénet inadvertently disclosed his true name. Entities endowed with such powers could wield a person's true name for manifold feats—a potentially profound latent hazard.

This clandestine peril was merely one amid numerous akin enigmas housed within a Contractee's mystic wisdom. Therefore, Lumian opted for an extensive screen of spirit world creatures, personal interaction followed by experimental engagement.

Based upon the known downsides accompanying the contracted abilities, Lumian hatched an educated hypothesis.

After Guillaume Bénet, a man driven by insatiable desires, found his appetite for sex surging, he had definitely sought out women. The prophecy's alignment with Quartier de la Princesse Rouge harmonized with the results unearthed from the Magic Mirror Divination about the five nearby streets.

Furthermore, he found his hunger more voracious than ever, and the act of intimacy left him drained of vigor. Thus, the likelihood was high that he would gravitate towards a brothel that catered to both carnal and culinary needs or invite a woman back home.

Guillaume Bénet was not only a man of fervent desires but also an

ambitious soul, thirsting for power. Being confined in the village and before the contractual abilities imbued his life with adverse effects, his lust mirrored an expression of power. Otherwise, it was impossible to explain how his desires sprawled across every woman, an inclination spanning the spectrum between esteemed paramours and those of lesser stature.

To him, appropriating the companions of other men became a testament to his standing, might, and allure.

Stepping onto Trier's soil, a place where his provincial accent drew disdain from the citizens, he undoubtedly sought vindication, manifesting his claims in his own unique manner.

Fused with his relentless pursuit of strength and his past style, Guillaume Bénet very likely went after sought-after courtesans, stoking the fires of envy amongst the local denizens. He might even spirit one or two of these coveted women away to grace his home. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

This comprehensive analysis of the padre's character and psyche wasn't Lumian's solitary undertaking. Rather, it emerged from the expertise of Anthony Reid, a Psychiatrist. Armed with Lumian's intricate portrayal of Guillaume Bénet, Reid painted a psychological canvas, a vivid portrait of this heretic's inner workings.

Thus, two distinct paths unfurled to ensnare his prey. The first entailed staking out upscale brothels, where both meals and famous courtesans awaited. The other trail veered towards investigations surrounding courtesans who had entered matrimony, taken on mistress roles, or even vanished within the past two months.

For the former pursuit, the mantle rested upon the shoulders of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Lumian's current task revolved around unearthing a conduit to intelligence about Rue de la Muraille's clandestine tales.

Anthony Reid, an adept intelligence broker, held a key. He was well-acquainted with Bühler, a Ghost Face columnist renowned for exposing scandals and whispers that wove through the fabric of Rue de la Muraille.

Bühler, a connoisseur of drinking and writing, would frequent a corner of Hope Café where he could survey the entrance before venturing into the brothels.

With his objective clear, Lumian embarked on a steady stride toward the café nestled amidst Rue de la Muraille.

En route, he revisited the entirety of the task at hand, stirred by an indescribable emotion.

His divination capabilities paled in comparison to Franca's. A lone Prophecy Spell rested in his arsenal, a tool he dared not wield recklessly. The finesse of Anthony Reid's psychological profiling and information-gathering expertise dwarfed Lumian's own. However, mobilizing these allies allowed him to harness these strengths, akin to gaining possession of these abilities.

Lumian couldn't foretell the ramifications of ascending to godhood. Yet, one thing was certain: beneath Sequence 4, one's prowess met constraints. Cooperative squads harnessed the potential for synergy, enabling them to confront even higher Sequences sans those with godhood.

Soon, Lumian caught sight of Hope Café, its entrance adorned in a milky-white veneer.

After pushing open the heavy door, he cast his gaze upon the corner granting anyone a vantage point.

A slender-faced man in his thirties, his ebony hair framing azure eyes, his beard trimmed meticulously and waxed to precision, met Lumian's gaze—his attention fixated on the entrance.

Sensing Lumian's scrutiny, the man's visage transformed. He reached for the soft-covered notebook and crimson fountain pen upon the table, on the verge of vanishing through the back door.

In response, Lumian drew his revolver and dispatched a shot toward the café's rear exit.

With a resounding bang, the bullet embedded itself into the wood.

The café's patrons were jolted into alarm, their reactions oscillating between concealment and inquiry, engendering chaos.

The bearded man stood immobilized, neither sure if he should run or stay.

Under the collective gaze of bartender, patrons, and staff, Lumian advanced toward his target, revolver in hand, amusement playing across his features.

"Are you Monsieur Bühler?"

"Yes, that's me." Bühler forced a smile.

Lumian gestured toward Bühler's original seat and spoke nonchalantly,

"Take a seat. I've come to purchase information."

A sigh of relief escaped Bühler as he hunched, retracing his steps to settle into the chair.

Lumian occupied the opposite seat, putting down his revolver. With a trace of playfulness, he queried, "Why the preference for such a dim corner?"

Bühler sighed and said, "In my line of work, reprisals are a constant concern. You're well aware that some individuals detest seeing their names or likenesses entangled in the web of scandals across newspapers and periodicals.

"This corner grants me an unobstructed view of the entrance, affording early detection of any potential troublemakers. And, should the need arise, I can effect a swift escape through the back."

Chapter 324 - 324 Which Is True and Which Is False

324 Which Is True and Which Is False

After a brief mention of the reason for selecting his seat, Bühler glanced up at Lumian, a self-deprecating smile on his lips.

“I didn’t expect you to open fire so quickly.”

Lumian’s hand rested casually on the revolver by his side as he offered a faint smile in return.

“It seems the folks you’ve encountered before are law-abiding citizens.”

Bühler’s instincts, honed from past experiences of being beaten, urged him to retort. But as he compared Lumian’s demeanor with those of his previous encounters, he found a strange logic in the man’s words.

Thanks to the shelter of the law, he, a columnist for Ghost Face, had managed to survive up to this point!

“Are you not afraid of attracting the police?” Bühler turned to look at the waiter, who dared not approach with the menu and drink list. “Firing a gun in a place like this isn’t a minor incident. Someone should have already alerted the authorities.”

Lumian chuckled.

“That’s why we have to hurry.”

His words punctuated by deliberate actions, Lumian picked up his revolver, rotated the cylinder, and slotted a yellow cartridge into the empty chamber, right before Bühler’s eyes.

“I want to know which courtesans have left Rue de la Muraille, this haven of extravagance, in the last two months,” Lumian inquired with a calm resolve.

Instinctively, Bühler shook his head. “They aren’t true courtesans. Those women possess their lavish residences and permanent paramours. They frequent high society, wielding influence over industries and policies with their words alone. This place merely acts as a reserve for courtesans.”

“I’m only interested in those who fit my description.” Lumian dismissed the specifics of courtesanship.

Bühler’s gaze flickered between the revolver in Lumian’s grip and said, recollecting,

“Four of them. Lil’ Jort wed a Loen merchant and relocated to Backlund. ‘White Vase’ Sophie became the lover of Member of Parliament Batis, attending high society banquets and salons. She had a chance of becoming a true courtesan. ‘Dew Rose’ Mary fell victim to mental illness and mutilated her face with scissors one morning. She’s confined to an asylum. ‘Condiment Beauty’ Paulina vanished from Rue de la Muraille without a trace, as though whisked away by someone of status.” Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

As Bühler recounted, he noticed the dashing figure before him, ready to fire at the slightest provocation, producing a post-it note and a fountain pen, meticulously jotting down notes.

Swallowing unease, he continued, “I encountered Paulina on Rue Vincent not long ago. She seemed well off, with a four-wheeled carriage, a maid, a valet, and even a butler.

“Sadly, I had pressing matters then and failed to determine her place of residence.”

Rue Vincent… Lumian’s memory jogged. It was one of the five streets Franca had divined. Farthest from Rue de la Muraille, it exuded a quieter, upscale aura.

Based on Bühler's account, he suspected Paulina had become Guillaume Bénet's paramour.

For a fugitive, a prospective courtesan proved a safer choice than frequenting Rue de la Muraille. Guillaume Bénet was intelligent and capable. His present yearnings for intimacy and his voracious hunger hadn't rendered him a mindless imbecile. He would surely opt for a less risky strategy.

Just then, hurried footsteps resonated outside the café as three police officers neared the entrance.

Coolly, Lumian donned his dark-blue cap, stashed his note and pen, and slid 50 verl d'or notes onto the table before Bühler.

With these tasks accomplished, he reclaimed his revolver, stood up, and proceeded to the café's rear door. Swiftly, he opened it and departed.

Bang!

The police officers burst into Hope Café through its main entrance.

…

On the elegant street of Rue Vincent, stately villa-like houses adorned both sides of the road. The road was wide and well-kept, with only occasional pedestrians and carriages passing through.

After Lumian turned into the street, he found himself at a loss.

He couldn't infiltrate every house and search every room, could he?

Besides, he wasn't the most suitable candidate for this kind of investigation. Franca would be better suited for it, but involving her was risky.

After a brief contemplation, Lumian allowed a smile to grace his features. He strolled toward one of the houses and pressed the doorbell.

A young valet opened the dark-brown door. His appearance

suggested no trace of Southern Continent lineage, and he gazed at Lumian in bewilderment. In a clear Trierien accent, he inquired,

“Sir, how may I assist you?”

With an amiable grin, Lumian replied, “I’m here to inquire about the most splendid madam residing on this street.”

“…” The valet was momentarily speechless. This was the first instance he’d encountered someone seeking such peculiar information.

Or perhaps not. While such matters were whispered about behind closed doors and boasted about in taverns, there were occasionally individuals who exhibited curiosity about such affairs. However, who would approach a stranger’s door in the sweltering sun to inquire?

What was this person up to?

Before the valet could react, Lumian produced a 10 verl d’or note and offered it with a genial demeanor.

The valet’s eyelids twitched. He hesitated for a moment before accepting the payment.

He suspected this young man to be a counterfeit Dandyist, specialized in duping affluent ladies of their bodies and riches. The appearance and conduct matched the descriptions found in newspapers.

However, if the lady wasn’t the valet’s mistress or lady, why refuse the reward?

When the stranger acquired what he sought, a certain madam would also receive some gratification!

The valet cast a furtive glance around before lowering his voice.

“The lady in Unit 50 is exquisitely beautiful. A genuine Trierien, she married a foreigner from the southern lands. That accent…”

As the valet spoke, he shook his head with a mixture of indignation and scorn, as if he had harbored this sentiment for some time.

Lumian's smile broadened.

Indeed, under the sway of his burgeoning impulses, the padre couldn't resist sharing his prize with the neighbors—a stunning Trierien courtesan.

He might not host grand banquets or waltz to proclaim his conquest, nor would he escort his lover for a public appearance. Nonetheless, he would inevitably find subtle ways to make his neighbors aware that even foreigners could possess resplendent courtesans as mistresses.

At times like this, Guillaume Bénet had to exercise prudence in disguising himself. However, his mistress's beauty wasn't something easily concealed. She might even meticulously dress herself to exhibit her remarkable presence.

Of course, Lumian couldn't be certain if the lady was Paulina, the presumed mistress. Yet, the gradual collection of anticipated information through bold assumptions and careful confirmation made him feel he was steadily closing in on Guillaume Bénet.

Beyond the gates of 50 Rue Vincent, Lumian glanced at the facade as an ordinary passerby might.

The three-story beige structure stood before him, surrounded by a lush green lawn and a garden vibrant with colors. A gardener tended to the greenery, offering a partial view.

Lumian promptly averted his gaze from the building's pillar, wary that prolonged observation could arouse suspicion.

As for any possibility of being recognized by the padre, Lumian held no concern. Prior to setting out, he had employed Niese Face to alter his appearance and communicated to his companions that it was due to cosmetics.

Lumian's striking appearance—a fusion of golden and black hair—could be anyone's. As long as Guillaume Bénet lacked the ability to penetrate the illusion or actively employ it, it was unlikely he'd realize his pursuer had infiltrated the vicinity.

Lumian's current plan was to leave Rue Vincent and switch places with Jenna or Franca. He would then ensconce himself in the shadows across from Unit 50, patiently observing until all suspicion around the target was dissipated.

He refrained from adopting the guise of a tramp this time, given the scarcity of such individuals on this refined street. While a rare appearance might occur, these transients were promptly shooed away by the household staff.

Just as he prepared to depart from the beige edifice, Lumian turned his head in a casual manner. His gaze alighted on a figure visible through the living room window.

The figure stood at a modest height, barely reaching 1.7 meters. Clad in a dark shirt and black trousers, the person possessed a slightly stocky build. Their nose bore a gentle curve, and their black hair fell in a mid-length cascade.

Lumian's pupils dilated for a fleeting moment before swiftly returning to their normal state.

A wisp of a smile tugged at the corners of his lips, and an invisible fire seemed to ignite in his eyes.

Despite the adept disguise, Lumian would recognize him even if he were reduced to ashes!

It was Guillaume Bénet, the padre of Cordu!

Lumian wrestled to contain his surprise, his gaze steering onward.

Simultaneously, his mind raced as he evaluated the next course of action to undertake.

Before long, he reached the end of Rue Vincent.

At that very juncture, a parrot adorned with green and white feathers took flight from Rue de la Muraille and perched itself on Lumian's shoulder. It chirped excitedly, "We've located the target!"

Located the target? Then who did I just see? Another padre? Lumian

was momentarily flabbergasted and perplexed.

Which one was the genuine Guillaume Bénet? Had he erred in judgment, or had the Iron and Blood Cross Order and “Rat” Christo been deceived?

…

Fifteen minutes earlier, at the Dill Brothel on Rue de la Muraille.

Within the annex bar on the first floor, Albus savored his Lanti Proof while discreetly observing the attendants, laborers, and the overseer who managed the establishment.

His assessment encompassed the clientele as well, but it yielded nothing of note. Many concealed their identities by donning assorted masks, making it nearly impossible to unveil their true selves.

Having gained a preliminary insight into the inner workings of the Dill Brothel, Albus seized the chance to make his way toward the washroom. He veered onto the path leading to the kitchen when an attendant approached, carrying a collection of post-it notes.

This attendant’s responsibility encompassed recording the requirements of each room and relaying orders to the kitchen.

Albus, marked by his dark-red hair, advanced and retrieved a handful of glistening coins along with a substantial bundle of banknotes from his pocket.

The attendant’s features twisted into a blend of perplexity and intrigue.

Albus smiled and said, “I’m on the hunt for a scoundrel. Uncertain about his guise, I’m merely aware he shares your build and possesses a penchant for consorting with the most celebrated ladies. Post-exertion, he seeks sustenance to satiate his hunger immediately.

“If you’re able to furnish me with the relevant particulars, all this is yours.”

Chapter 325 - 325 Visit

325 Visit

The attendant's gaze locked onto the handful of gold coins and the banknotes, their unique ink fragrance captivating his senses. He couldn't help but hold his breath, caught in the allure of the treasure before him.

"A-all of it?" The attendant's voice quivered as he swallowed with difficulty.

With a precise flick of his wrist, Albus tossed a gold coin worth 5 verl d'or into the attendant's waiting palm. A confident smile tugged at his lips as he spoke, "That depends on the value of the information you provide. Rest assured, you'll receive another 20 verl d'or, no matter what."

The attendant gingerly bit the gold coin, stealing a glance back at the path they had traversed. His voice dropped to a hushed tone as he shared, "Just as you surmised, the man from the south, in Room 2 on the sixth floor, frequents the company of the most renowned courtesans. He possesses a penchant for pre-ordering his meals, which we dutifully deliver to his quarters every half hour."

A southerner with a penchant for famous courtesans and a habit of pre-ordered meals. Room 602… Albus wasn't one to skimp on appreciation. He tossed two 10 verl d'or coins, etched with the likeness of a warship, to the attendant.

Seizing the calmness on Rue de la Muraille, Albus covertly ascended to the sixth floor, concealing himself on the balcony at the corridor's far end.

Within mere minutes, the attendant tasked with meal deliveries arrived at Room 602, carried by a steam-powered mechanical

elevator. A silver-white metal serving cart accompanied him. Carefully, he pressed the doorbell.

Albus straightened up, aligning his view with Room 602's entrance. His gaze intensified.

The door swung open, revealing a man of slight stature, not exceeding 1.7 meters. His attire comprised a pitch-black half-mask, a crisp white shirt, and pale-hued boxer shorts.

Removing his trousers but leaving his upper attire on… Concealing tattoos, perhaps? The more Albus observed, the stronger his conviction that the occupant of Room 602 matched the likeness of Guillaume Bénet from the wanted posters.

Abstaining from "disturbing" his quarry, Albus settled back into a white-paneled armchair on the balcony. From his pocket emerged a gray-furred rat—one of Beast Tamer Christo's pets.

Lumian had engaged the services of the "Rat," his abilities allowing easy communication and efficient coordination among team members.

Naturally, Christo served as the intermediary and the "translator."

Albus tenderly patted the rat's head, signaling it with a gesture—a thumb and index finger forming a ring, with the remaining fingers raised.

This signified the discovery of the prime suspect.

With a high-pitched squeak, the rat darted from Albus's grasp, off to find its owner at a nearby tavern.

…

Upon learning from Christo's pet parrot that members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order had located the padre, Lumian found himself plunged into a momentary maelstrom of shock and confusion.

Had they truly found Guillaume Bénet? Then, who did I see?

If the occupant of 50 Rue Vincent is Guillaume Bénet, where did the counterfeit they see come from?

Substitution Spell!

It was one of the five specialized ritualistic magics Lumian had acquired as an Alms Monk. The padre, now a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator, was evidently familiar with it.

This ritual enabled the user to choose another person to inhabit their identity for a period upon sensing impending danger. By gaining the genuine or fake approval of those around them and establishing a strong mystical connection, a ritual could then finalize the switch.

If the Substitution Spell succeeded, the stand-in would be indistinguishable from the original in the eyes of others, although their self-awareness and performance might be compromised to a degree. Nevertheless, their core identity would remain.

When the substitute faced imminent disaster, the one who cast the Substitution Spell could alter their own fate, thus avoiding the impending calamity.

Of course, this hinged on the substitute being kept unaware of the impending danger.

While this ruse could prove effective on other Beyonders, Lumian was well-acquainted with the circumstances surrounding the Substitution Spell. Thus, he couldn't be easily deceived.

For Lumian, the paramount issue at hand was this: Which individual was the true Guillaume Bénet, and which was the substitute?

To deal a decisive blow to the padre and apprehend him with minimal casualties, Lumian needed to consolidate his forces and make a choice. He couldn't attack both entities simultaneously.

Gardner Martin had merely agreed to assist in locating the "prey," without extending further support. Consequently, the majority of individuals dispatched by the Iron and Blood Cross Order were Low-Sequence Beyonders or even regular people.

If Lumian opted to solicit Gardner Martin's aid, it might take hours for the Iron and Blood Cross Order to assemble sufficient reinforcements. Guillaume Bénet didn't possess limitless endurance, and the courtesan wasn't a Demoness of Pleasure who could allow an extended encounter. He would definitely be gone by then.

The question remains: What decision would Guillaume Bénet make? Would he have the substitute remain at the residence to divert danger while he ventured out for personal pursuits? Alternatively, would he dispatch the substitute to showcase his characteristic behavior, drawing danger away from himself? Lumian found both scenarios challenging to dismiss.

After deliberation, his gaze shifted to the green and white parrot. He addressed it, "Locate 'Red Boots' Franca and ask her to divine the authenticity of the Guillaume Bénet at 50 Rue Vincent and the one present here."

The parrot stared at Lumian as if questioning his sanity. "I'm just a parrot."

What I said is too complicated. It can't understand or memorize everything? Lumian swiftly arrived at a decision.

"Guide me to 'Red Boots' Franca. Actually, first lead me to Christo."

Time remained on their side. The individual at 50 Rue Vincent couldn't elude them. The team responsible for the mission could convene briefly, exchanging essential information.

In the shadows they lingered, while their foes roamed in plain sight. As long as they didn't startle the targets, they could afford to wait. Of course, they had to conclude before Guillaume Bénet's deed with the courtesan reached its conclusion. After all, tailing an individual posed inherent risks, especially when dealing with the padre and his array of bizarre and unfamiliar abilities.

…

In a narrow alley near Rue de la Muraille.

The afternoon sun cast its radiant touch upon the mostly dismantled

barricade, while even the breeze seemed to take a momentary pause.

Franca, now garbed in an Assassin's attire, and Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, rendezvoused with Anthony Reid, still clad in his military green attire, and Lumian, sporting a cap, a black vest, and a white shirt.

Lumian delivered a succinct briefing, omitting details about the Substitution Spell due to time constraints, referring to it merely as a form of witchcraft capable of generating lifelike substitutes.

Soon, an aqueous luminescence radiated from the mirror, accompanied by an aged voice.

"They are both real."

Both real… Franca turned to Lumian in surprise.

The witchcraft responsible for creating the substitute proves potent—resembling the original down to appearance and fate. Conventional divination methods stand powerless against such deception!

Both real… Lumian had anticipated this response and had already devised an alternative course of action.

Sensing his silence, Franca drew a deep breath, hesitatingly suggesting, "D-Do you need me to consult another source?"

She aimed to seek confirmation from the entity renowned for unerring divination.

Yet, this approach risked unveiling a question that could render her socially deceased before Jenna, Lumian, and Anthony Reid.

She envisioned the other party asking, "Do you often entertain the idea of doing the deed with Jenna?"

How would she navigate her future interactions with Jenna?

Lumian shook his head, asserting, "No need. I have a plan."

Turning his attention to Jenna, he directed, "Conceal yourself in the

shadows diagonally across from Room 602 in Dill. Keep a vigilant watch on that Guillaume Bénet's activities.

"If he concludes his affairs and prepares to depart, but we haven't arrived yet, refrain from impulsive pursuit. Instead, discreetly monitor his movements from a distance and deduce his chosen path."

"Understood." Jenna nodded, mentally rehearsing her upcoming task.

Lumian shifted his focus to Franca and Anthony Reid.

"Let's proceed to 50 Rue Vincent together. I'll directly confront Guillaume Bénet. Franca, maintain invisibility and follow me closely. We mustn't launch an attack until we're certain of his authenticity.

"Anthony, secure the perimeter outside. If the Guillaume Bénet on Rue Vincent proves to be counterfeit and we hasten to Dill, covertly monitor the madame there, tracking her movements. In case Guillaume Bénet manages an escape, she could serve as a pivotal lead for subsequent pursuit.

"If the 50 Rue Vincent counterpart is genuine and a skirmish erupts, approach discreetly and provide reinforcement."

Franca harbored no objections to this arrangement. Aware of Lumian's teleportation abilities, she grasped that once he confirmed the Rue Vincent Guillaume as fake, he could facilitate swift transition for the primary combatants to the opposite location, preventing the two Guillaumes from "exchanging information."

Assessing the calculated risks, Anthony endorsed the plan, confirming his willingness to execute his designated role.

… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

50 Rue Vincent, near the beige three-story building.

Observing Franca's seamless invisibility, Lumian raised his right hand and swept it across his face.

In an instant, he transformed into a man in his thirties, attired in a black uniform with an inspector's epaulet.

Niese Face!

Satisfied with his condition, Lumian proceeded to the designated building and pressed the doorbell.

The door swung open, revealing a man garbed as a butler. His gaze landed on Lumian as he inquired with a touch of confusion, “Officer, how may I assist you?”

“I’m here regarding a missing vagrant case linked to this street. I’d appreciate a conversation with your master,” Lumian nonchalantly fabricated.

A subtle shift occurred in the butler’s expression.

“Please wait a moment, Officer. I shall inquire with our master.”

After a brief pause, the butler returned to the doorway, addressing Lumian, “Officer, our master invites you to the small parlor on the ground floor.”

Lumian offered a slight nod and trailed the butler into the abode at 50 Rue Vincent.

The living area exuded spaciousness, hosting a bluish-gray cat huddled in one corner, its presence accompanied by the ceaseless chirping of caged birds. Positioned in the aisle, a black dog, reminiscent of a hound, remained seated, its gaze unwaveringly fixated on the unfamiliar entrant.

Circumventing an elegant sofa, the butler led Lumian into a parlor towards the rear. There, a man with midnight hair, azure eyes, and a slightly hooked nose reclined in an armchair. He sported a dark-hued shirt and black trousers, his demeanor one of relaxed arrogance as he gently caressed the head of a sizable brown-furred dog.

“Officer, in what way may I be of assistance?” The man inquired, rising with deliberate languor.

It’s him—Guillaume Bénet! Padre Guillaume Bénet! Lumian’s pupils contracted, closing the distance to a mere five meters.

Then, he parted his lips and voiced, “Ha!”

Action was the sole path to distinguishing the genuine from the imposter!

Chapter 326 - 326 Substitute

326 Substitute

“Ha!”

It instantly struck Guillaume Bénet, dressed in a dark shirt and black pants, causing him to collapse in confusion and shock.

Spell of Harrumph!

He’s fake! Lumian’s eyes narrowed as he assessed the situation. He wasn’t too surprised by the outcome.

It was evident that this wasn’t the real Guillaume Bénet—a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator. The way the man reacted to the attack, coupled with his lack of familiarity with Beyonder powers and mysticism, made Lumian believe that the substitute was an ordinary person thrust into an unfamiliar world.

Disregarding the bewildered butler, Lumian swiftly turned on his heels and sprinted out of the compact living room.

As he ran, he whispered, “To Dill!”

Franca, draped in her hooded, leather-armored black robe, materialized in front of Lumian.

Lumian grabbed her shoulder, allowing the black mark on his right shoulder to flicker with a dark light.

Amidst the swirling maelstrom of vibrant hues, the duo found themselves on the balcony of Dill’s sixth floor.

Having sent Jenna to inform Albus previously, Lumian had already memorized the coordinates.

Upon seeing her companion arrive, Jenna, dressed as a female mercenary, emerged from the shadows. She pointed at Room 602 and lowered her voice.

“It’s not over yet.

“Dammit, he’s dragging this out!”

“The second round, perhaps?” Lumian chuckled.

According to Albus, the occupant of Room 602 had already blown his load once before having afternoon tea. Now, it had begun again.

“The soundproofing here is impressive,” Franca remarked, her head tilting as she listened for any signs of activity from within Room 602.

Jenna observed as Lumian wiped his face, disguising himself as a typical Dill brothel attendant. She clicked her tongue and voiced her thoughts.

“That woman in there screams occasionally. Dammit, is that perverted padre into some abusive stuff?”

Jenna, an underground singer frequenting bars and dance halls, had cultivated an open and passionate image. Her close rapport with Franca, who managed the dancers, exposed her to a world beyond the ordinary. She had zero experience, but her insights were substantial.

Lumian, his Niese Face transforming him, glanced at Franca, silently requesting her to sprinkle fluorescent powder in the corridor outside Room 602.

Lumian knew that the invisibility didn’t erase traces or scents. Should Guillaume Bénet escape into the corridor during combat, the fluorescent powder would create a luminous trail, guiding Lumian’s pursuit.

However, Lumian reconsidered and decided that the use of fluorescent powder might be too conspicuous. Guillaume Bénet could easily detect the abnormality and escape using his bizarre abilities before Lumian could launch a surprise attack.

After a moment's reflection, Lumian leaned in to whisper to Franca, "Deploy Invisibility to conceal yourself in the corridor. Use invisible spider silk to create a web that covers the target's door from the ground to the ceiling."

This approach would neutralize the effectiveness of Invisibility, while also entangling Guillaume Bénet if he attempted to employ Slow Flight.

"No problem." Franca adjusted her black hood and entered the corridor.

In a blink, her form dissolved, as if a snowman had melted in the sun.

Seven to eight seconds later, a gentle breeze brushed against Lumian's legs.

He was taken aback for a moment before comprehending.

Franca is using the invisible spider silk to signal readiness.

Since this dude advanced to a Demoness of Pleasure, everything she does carries a sense of teasing… Yeah, she just advanced and might not have full control over the potion's power. She could be unwittingly affected…

Muttering inwardly, Lumian shifted his attention to Jenna and instructed, "Conceal yourself in the shadows here. If Guillaume Bénet flees this way, you can shoot or execute an assassination. If that fails, withdraw immediately. If he heads in another direction, don't pursue." New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"Got it." Jenna, well-versed in these situations, didn't push for more involvement.

She understood that her capabilities could be effectively deployed only under specific circumstances.

With his team arranged, Lumian pivoted and directed his gaze at the wooden door of Room 602.

He inhaled deeply, exhaling slowly to steady his nerves.

With that, he fetched an armchair from the balcony and positioned it in the corridor.

The invisible spider silk avoided him as he moved some distance away from Room 602 and set down the chair.

In the following moment, he lightly tapped the chair's back. Crimson flames flowed from his palm, slithering over the chair like serpents.

As the armchair caught fire, Lumian jogged toward Room 602 without attempting to conceal his movements. He rapped his knuckles against the wooden door.

"What is it?"

A voice tinged with contained anger reverberated from within Room 602, indicating a pivotal juncture.

"Fire! There's a fire!" Lumian shouted in feigned panic.

Simultaneously, Hunter Lumian detected a distinctive motion—someone getting off the bed.

Two to three seconds later, the door swung open, revealing a naked man wearing an iron-colored half-mask and a white shirt, his lower half exposed.

A brunette, clad in a fishnet nightgown, was still draped over him.

Holy heck, can't you even let go of her? Franca's amused commentary echoed in Lumian's mind from her invisible position diagonally across.

However, Lumian's focus was unshaken. When the suspected Guillaume Bénet appeared, his gaze flickering towards the smoky, flaming chair, Lumian acted swiftly.

"Ha!"

Another yellowish beam shot forth, piercing through both the man in the iron-colored half-mask and the woman in the fishnet nightgown, enveloping them.

A glimpse of shock and panic flashed across the eyes of the supposed Guillaume Bénet, revealing his grasp of Beyonder powers.

Then, his eyes dulled, and he collapsed, a fraction after the woman.

As the sound of something heavy thudding to the floor echoed, Lumian seemed to enter a surreal trance.

Impossible. A Fate Appropriator like Guillaume Bénet couldn't be knocked out by a Contractee's Spell of Harrumph…

Is he a decoy?

The one at 50 Rue Vincent was an imposter too!

Where is the real Guillaume Bénet?

Shaking off his momentary daze, Lumian knelt, peeling off the iron-colored mask from the unconscious man.

The face beneath was unnervingly familiar—it was the hooked-nose countenance of Guillaume Bénet.

Darkening with concern, Lumian pushed the half-dressed woman away from his target and tore open the white shirt.

In the next heartbeat, his eyes fell upon three black marks resembling signatures on the unconscious man's upper body—one on the left chest, one on the right chest, and another on the abdomen.

This wasn't Guillaume Bénet!

Guillaume Bénet held more than three contracts—probably a dozen or more!

All fake? All substitutes? Lumian clenched his fists, his eyes igniting with an invisible blaze.

He rose, dragging the man, an identical look-alike of Guillaume Bénet, back into Room 602. Then, he found a blanket, swathed the unconscious woman, and deposited her in the corridor.

In the interim, Franca discerned the falsity of the prey once again, vanishing her invisibility. She summoned frost and doused the flames consuming the armchair.

As she transferred the woman from the corridor to a vacant room, Lumian extended his right hand, fingers closing around the throat of the Inevitability bestowed.

With a decisive snap, he broke the man's neck, rendering him unconscious and lifeless.

Following that, he shut the wooden door, drew the ritual silver dagger, and sanctified it. A wall of spirituality enshrouded Room 602.

Subsequently, Lumian initiated the Summoning Dance, opting to engage in a preliminary, purpose-driven spirit channeling through this method.

He had chosen not to enlist Franca's aid for a reason: he was uncertain about the peculiar creatures the deceased had contracted. It was possible they would induce corresponding corruption. Only Lumian, having long been an Inevitability bestowed, remained unaffected by the spirit channeling process.

The sedatives and the last remnants of truth serum from the Bliss Society were reserved for use on the real padre.

…

Diagonally opposite 50 Rue Vincent.

Perched on the second floor of the building and ensconced in cover, Anthony Reid, steadfastly observing the target, espied a graceful lady in a pale-green gown hurrying out, accompanied by her valet, maid, and butler. The group entered a carriage, deftly relocated from the rear to the front entrance, before embarking toward the far end of Rue Vincent.

Without precipitously giving chase, Anthony meticulously memorized specific details concerning the carriage and the horses.

…

Amidst the fervent and contorted dance, the departed spirit detached from its corporeal vessel, hovering midair. It cast a glare laden with animosity and perplexity upon Lumian.

Drawing his own blood, Lumian enacted a command, compelling the spirit to bind to him.

Although desire and voracity ignited within him, Lumian remained resolute, detecting an additional presence.

Summoning the Abyss Demon Flower…

Invisibility…

Transfiguration… Dammit!

An involuntary curse escaped Lumian's lips.

He began to grasp the unfolding situation!

The individual at 50 Rue Vincent was possibly a product of the Substitution Spell. The one at the Dill brothel, on the other hand, had been fashioned as a substitute by Guillaume Bénet, utilizing Transfiguration, exploiting its negative effects.

He was vigilant against anyone exploiting his negative effects to track him down!

Transfiguration was a contractual ability capable of altering a person's appearance, physique, and disposition. It also possessed a measure of resistance against divination. The price exacted was one's own visage, with the detrimental side effect manifesting as a desire for the exploitation of others.

Lumian steadied himself, summoning to mind the genuine Guillaume Bénet—his visage, his deeds. This resonance united with the memories that had left the most indelible mark on the spirit of the deceased, enabling Lumian to hunt for clues.

In due course, a cluster of seven or eight memories quivered slightly. Lumian selected one, striving to magnify it for deeper understanding.

Chapter 327 - 327 The Real Guillaume Bénet

327 The Real Guillaume Bénet

The memories of the false Guillaume Bénet surged, and Lumian found himself immersed in the familiar confines of 50 Rue Vincent's cozy parlor.

Draped in an air of regal poise, the counterfeit Guillaume Bénet stood before the armchair, addressing the recipient of these memories with calculated words, "Take this money and venture to Rue de la Muraille. There, seek out the renowned courtesan of utmost repute. But you must assume my looks, veiled by a mask."

With humility and deference, the memory's owner bowed. "Understood, Archbishop."

And thus, this memory concluded. Lumian held a steadfast conviction that the Inevitability bestowed before him was a meticulously crafted proxy, a construct devised by none other than Guillaume Bénet himself.

It appeared that he had likely garnered a cohort of adherents to Inevitability. From among them, he had singled out a candidate from southern Intis, one who swiftly reaped three successive boons. This candidate was meticulously endowed with the same abilities as him: the summoning of the Abyss Demon Flower and the shroud of Invisibility. This granted him an impeccable guise, perfectly mirroring the true him thanks to the contracts' negative effects.

Of course, Transfiguration remained an integral, indispensable ability.

From this vantage, it became evident that Guillaume Bénet hadn't

neglected the adverse ramifications of the specialized covenant. He might have contemplated this from inception or perhaps gained insight subsequent to a dire prophecy, reviewing his recent undertakings. Regardless, this counterfeit Guillaume Bénet—proficient in Transfiguration—appeared to be a deliberate ruse.

Lumian suspected the presence of other Inevitability devotees who clandestinely monitored the Dill brothel. They clandestinely shadowed the sham Guillaume Bénet, primed to relay swift notification to the authentic padre should danger befall his double.

In such a scenario, Guillaume Bénet enjoyed a distinct advantage—whether he elected to abscond, leaving the product of this Substitution Spell to grapple with looming peril, or opted to ensnare his antagonists using the doppelganger as bait.

Synthesized with the fragments of the fake Guillaume Bénet's recollections, Lumian surmised that the genuine Guillaume Bénet primarily resided at 50 Rue Vincent. Yet, he permitted the substitute to operate overtly, effectively obfuscating his true whereabouts.

Upon this realization, Lumian harbored a pang of vexation.

Had Albus not unearthed the sham Guillaume Bénet within the confines of the Dill brothel, Lumian wouldn't have been lured away from the decoy; he would have been affixed on the Guillaume at 50 Rue Vincent. This would have spared him the frenzied teleportation prompted after the incapacitation of the Substitution Spell's byproduct. Lumian would have gravitated towards scouring the building, conceivably unearthing the genuine Guillaume Bénet.

Granted, absent the synchronous "appearance" of Guillaume Bénet, Lumian wouldn't have entertained notions of a Substitution Spell. He'd have likely fallen prey to deception, swerving far from the path leading to the authentic padre.

With this epiphany at the forefront, Lumian cast aside his intention to scout for lurking Inevitability adherents. Recognizing that the bona fide Guillaume Bénet had been alerted, Lumian terminated his Summoning Dance and dissolved the wall of spirituality. Turning to Franca and Jenna, shrouded in separate shadows, he intoned, "Let's

head to 50 Rue Vincent now."

Presently, Lumian clung to the hope that vestiges of clues lingered or that Anthony Reid, entrusted with overseeing the locale, had gleaned pertinent insights…

Franca and Jenna emerged from the shadows one after another, wasting no time to inquire about the current situation. Lumian grabbed their shoulders and activated spirit world traversal once more.

In the blink of an eye, their forms solidified within the modest confines of 50 Rue Vincent's parlor.

Absent were the butler, valets, and maids, leaving an unattended figure—unconscious, the result of the Substitution Spell—laid out on the carpet.

A meticulous scan of the surroundings concluded with Lumian's approach. He knelt beside the proxy, employing a variety of techniques to rouse him from his stupor.

As the counterfeit Guillaume Bénet's eyes fluttered open, they met an unfamiliar visage.

Startled, he jolted upright, fear tinting his tone. "Who are you? Why did you barge into my house? Get out! I'll call the police! I'll call the police!"

He recollected the recent attack—a curse-like assault!

Lumian drew his revolver and pressed it against the fake Guillaume Bénet's forehead.

The substitute fell silent. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"Where is the true master of this residence?" Lumian's voice resounded, deep and steady.

As if pierced by a sudden realization, the imposter Guillaume Bénet spat out, "I am the true master!

“I’m the master here!”

Lumian’s lips curled into a smile.

“In that case, I offer my sympathies. Your wife, it seems, ran off with the butler with your valuables. The valets and maids, meanwhile, seem to have embraced an opportunistic approach—essentially relieving you of anything tangible except this house.

“In a while, the police will arrest you, citing your involvement in the slaying of a vagrant and perpetrating cultic rituals and extensive deceit.”

A mosaic of fact and conjecture, Lumian’s words emerged with an intent to intimidate the substitute, dismantling any fantastical illusions.

Considering the retreat of the madame, butler, valets, maids, coachman, and gardener from 50 Rue Vincent, Lumian inferred their conversion into believers of Inevitability, orchestrated by the genuine padre. This intricate maneuver camouflaged a multitude of cultic practices and eccentric observances, all harmonized through the Substitution Spell.

The false Guillaume Bénet at Dill, having reached Sequence 7 Contractee status, was indicative of multiple instances of boon-request rituals in Trier. Innocents would undoubtedly become sacrifices, and the best candidates were undoubtedly tramps.

At Lumian’s declaration, the imitation Guillaume Bénet gazed about, bewildered and panic-stricken, his voice piercingly beseeching, “Paulina! Paulina!”

Paulina… It’s indeed the Condiment Beauty. Unfortunately, she’s now a heretic… Lumian watched as the fake Guillaume Bénet fell silent, his eyes filled with despair.

“Any final words?” Lumian inquired once more.

The fake Guillaume Bénet shuddered and said, “I’m real. I’m really the master of this place!

“However, that woman—that woman is a succubus. She surreptitiously lured someone and ensconced him within the cellar!

“Sh-she’s having an affair with a devil!”

Affair with a devil… In the basement… Was she secretly meeting the real padre in private? Yes, the negative effects of Guillaume Bénet’s desire for coitus will always exist. They won’t disappear just because he has two substitutes… Lumian scrutinized the mock Guillaume Bénet, who tenaciously clung to his fa?ade as the genuine master of 50 Rue Vincent. Left hand poised, he controlled his might, and with precision, delivered a calculated blow behind the imposter’s ear.

The fake Guillaume Bénet fainted again.

Lumian’s strategy entailed swift exploration of the residence, as allowing the imposter to run amok could inadvertently trigger calamity.

He rose to his feet, massaging his throbbing temples, and turned to Franca and Jenna for an update. “Any word from Anthony Reid?”

“No.” Franca shook her head gently. “It seems he followed your directive to trail Madame Paulina.”

Lumian tersely acknowledged.

“Then let’s search this place and await his feedback.”

Franca adjusted her black hood and emphasized, “One team of three. Don’t split up.”

This was the “territory” of the heretics. Even if they had already escaped, residual vestiges might still remain. Should they split their efforts and encounter mishaps, timely rescue would be jeopardized.

When the authorities carried out such operations, they had to be at least in groups of three or within sight of each other if they wanted to split up.

Lumian issued a pointed gesture toward the staircase adjacent to the parlor, “Let’s proceed to the basement.”

The trio descended, and as they did, Franca leaned to Jenna, her tone hushed,

“Ciel’s exchange with the counterfeit was textbook instigation. When you return, dissect the intent behind each phrase.”

“Okay.” Jenna absorbed the counsel like a parched sponge.

In due course, they reached the basement door. Lumian turned toward his companions,

“Preparations before we venture inside.”

To thwart lingering echoes of Inevitability’s powers or unconventional creatures, precaution was paramount.

Promptly, Lumian, now adorned with altered visage and partially lengthened hair, pushed the door open, revealing the basement’s dim recesses.

Within, an unremarkable array of miscellaneous items cluttered the space. No conspicuous anomalies were apparent.

Just as Franca readied for Magic Mirror Divination, Lumian, with his Hunter’s acumen, discerned subtle traces.

With metallic clinks, he unveiled a concealed door.

Beyond lay a stairwell descending further into the subterranean depths.

The trio descended cautiously, arriving after moments at a vast yet rudimentary chamber, bathed in gas lamp radiance.

It was unknown if Guillaume Bénet had created it himself or if he had sealed off a portion of Underground Trier and modified it into a private “territory.”

In the center of the stone-floored hall stood an altar, surrounded by ghastly white human bones, complete sheepskin, cowhide, and giant canine skin.

Upon seeing this, Lumian was taken aback as he recalled one of the five special ritualistic magics that Alms Monk had:

Animal Creation Spell!

Simultaneously, remembrances of the felines, avians, and canines inhabiting the floor above, and the brown-furred dog nestled beside the mock Guillaume Bénet, surged forth.

Dog… Dog… Animal Creation Spell… With an epiphanic rush, Lumian pieced together the genuine Guillaume Bénet's concealment.

He had invoked the Animal Creation Spell to transmute himself into the hulking, brown-furred canine. In this form, he paraded brazenly before his counterfeit and the surrounding onlookers.

With a recitation of the preordained incantation, the true Guillaume Bénet could rapidly molt his canine facade, resuming his human guise.

…

In the confines of the parlor, the counterfeit Guillaume Bénet remained enshrouded in an unconscious reverie, utterly oblivious to the stark duality between reality and illusion.

Cautiously, he inched the guest room door ajar, greeted by a jarring tableau. Before him sprawled his beautiful wife, Paulina, ensconced upon the sumptuous bed, unclothed, whilst a hulking brown-furred canine loomed beside her. At the bedside, a plate bearing a medium-cooked steak was positioned…

…

Amidst clenched teeth, Lumian communicated the enigma of the Animal Creation Spell and his speculative hypothesis to Franca and Jenna, his words resounding, "I hope we find that damned dog. No, he should have shed his dog skin by now."

Animal Creation Spell… Humans turning into dogs… Jenna was alarmed.

The world of mysticism is so bizarre and terrifying!

The three of them worked together and swiftly searched for traces.

Before long, Jenna picked up something from a crevice in the stone slab and exclaimed in surprise, “I’ve found something!”

Franca ran over and realized it was brown dog fur.

Both approached Lumian, who continued his investigative fervor, presenting their find.

Lumian’s elation was palpable. He postulated Guillaume Bénet’s evasion via an underground covert route, disentangling him from Paulina and the rest.

Then, they discovered a few strands of brown dog fur. Following the fur, they found another hidden door.

After opening the hidden door in the rock wall, Franca performed a simple Magic Mirror Divination and received a revelation that nothing was amiss. Then, she followed Lumian and Jenna in.

At that moment, Jenna, who was in the middle of the group, lost sight of Lumian. Franca was still following behind her.

Without waiting for Jenna to speak, Franca surveyed the room and frowned.

“We’ve circled back to the sacrificial hall.”

…

Emerging through the secret door, Lumian entered an expanse echoing a quarry’s cavern.

With gas lamps conspicuously absent, Lumian summoned forth a crimson blaze to pierce the shadows.

Almost simultaneously, he sensed that Jenna and Franca hadn’t followed him.

We got separated just like that? Puzzlement swirled within Lumian's mind, overridden by a low voice that echoed from the abandoned mine's depths: "Lumian Lee!"

Chapter 328 - 328 Bottle of Fiction

328 Bottle of Fiction

“Lumian Lee!”

Lumian found himself frozen in place, his gaze distant as he reacted to the ominous growl.

In a shadowy corner of the abandoned mine, a figure outlined itself.

Clad in a complete coat of brown dog skin, the figure’s torso and abdomen burst open, revealing a human form adorned in a white robe, embellished with intricate silver and black threads.

Without a sound, the canine skin dropped to the ground, unveiling a man of slight stature, barely reaching 1.7 meters.

His thin black hair framed a face with sharply intense blue eyes, and a slightly upturned nose added to his air of authority. This was none other than Guillaume Bénet, the padre of Cordu Village!

At that very moment, a smile graced Guillaume Bénet’s lips. He held a white human bone in his grasp, his eyes aflame with a fanatical zeal that suggested he was on the cusp of receiving a newfound boon from the forces of Inevitability, a boon that could reshape his destiny.

Guillaume Bénet’s initial instinct was to flee from 50 Rue Vincent the moment he saw his decoy incapacitated by the strange spell, and his adversary vanishing through the aid of spirit world traversal.

In doing so, the decoy could fulfill its full potential of averting disaster. He would escape the looming catastrophe, embarking on a fresh start in a new location, unburdened by the present

circumstances.

Yet, within an instant, his abilities as a Fate Appropriator alerted him to the anomaly in the assailant's destiny and the lingering traces of a formidable entity aligned with the Inevitability pathway.

From this revelation, he deduced that the individual responsible was Lumian Lee, the very person harboring the angel he had once tirelessly invoked!

Rapid thoughts raced through Guillaume Bénet's mind. As a devoted adherent to the might of Inevitability, he was instantly consumed by zealous fervor.

He sought to capture or eliminate Lumian Lee!

He aspired to break the seal, allowing Inevitability's angel to truly descend upon the land!

He yearned to obtain a godhood boon, breaking free from the constraints of mortality. He longed to stand as Inevitability's chosen representative, guiding the troves of foolish humanity.

Having swiftly assessed the situation on both fronts, Guillaume Bénet ordered Paulina and the others to flee, luring any potential allies of Lumian Lee away from the scene. Meanwhile, he left behind the "substitute," creating a trail of clues for Lumian Lee to follow—leading him into the basement to unveil a hidden door.

With his preparations in place, Guillaume Bénet entered the sacrificial chamber, deliberately preserving the sheepskin, cowhide, and dog skin. This would enable Lumian Lee, already versed in the Animal Creation Spell, to swiftly uncover the truth.

Simultaneously, he shook off a tuft of dog fur, inadvertently revealing his escape route. He chanted the incantation he had prearranged, dispelling the Animal Creation Spell. Drawing upon his concealed power, Guillaume Bénet unlocked the door leading to Underground Trier—a contractual power known as the Bottle of Fiction.

This ability, a source of personal avarice, enabled Guillaume Bénet to convert designated, modest-sized spaces—those harboring symbolic

elements like doors and windows—into realms encapsulated within the Bottle of Fiction. He could impose simple entry conditions, permitting only those who met the prerequisites to enter, while others would be promptly returned to their original positions.

Guillaume Bénet's stipulation for entry was "one bearing the power of Inevitability."

This criterion was one he shared with Lumian Lee. Regardless of whether Lumian had embraced Inevitability's boon, as a carrier of the Inevitability angel, enmeshed in the threads of fate, he undeniably possessed Inevitability's power. This design ensured that Lumian's allies couldn't breach the Bottle of Fiction's barrier without a boon of Inevitability. It left only Lumian Lee and himself secluded within. And if they had indeed embraced Inevitability, they would both remain influenced by the great existence—transforming them into equivalent companions during pivotal moments.

Guillaume Bénet sidestepped the utilization of individuals hailing from Cordu as entry criteria into the Bottle of Fiction, as it posed a vexing challenge to confirm such origins. Such a determination demanded consultation with the spirit world, unlike the more direct assessment of one possessing a distinct power.

Furthermore, should Paulina and the others manage to elude their pursuers and return to this very spot, they could provide essential aid through the opening of the bottle.

Having meticulously orchestrated his plan, Guillaume Bénet concealed himself, poised for Lumian Lee's entry into the Bottle of Fiction.

As anticipated, upon seeing Lumian Lee, now under an altered guise yet devoid of any traces of the Inevitability angel's influence, Guillaume Bénet took swift action, invoking the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell.

Understanding that Lumian Lee wasn't the individual's original name but had been assumed for nearly six years, recognized by all those around him, Guillaume Bénet was certain this identity held a mystic connection that could serve as the true name.

Endowed with the knowledge of Cordu as its padre, he possessed a certain insight into Lumian Lee's circumstances. With conviction in the efficacy of the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, he anticipated it would gravely disorient Lumian Lee.

Observing Lumian Lee's form, frozen at the threshold of the Bottle of Fiction, head bowed and body swaying with instability, Guillaume Bénet's grin expanded.

Acting without hesitation or speech, he hurled the white human bone he clutched, intending to employ a curse spell capable of rendering the target comatose indefinitely.

With this achieved and Lumian Lee under his sway, his intention was to retrieve the pre-prepared ritual sheepskin, enshroud the captive, and intone the incantation, transforming him into a voiceless, nearly powerless sheep.

At that juncture, Guillaume Bénet could lead the sheep elsewhere, endeavoring to shatter the seal and unleash the imprisoned angel.

Once successful, he would ascend to sainthood, becoming a potent human figure bestowed with godhood powers!

Smack!

As the bone landed, Guillaume Bénet surged forward, rapidly enunciating a Hermes incantation.

"Blind, d…"

Midway through the chant, the padre—having made all of Cordu village a sacrificial offering—suddenly experienced a tightening within his chest, an uncommon premonition heralded by fate.

For him, such premonitions occurred rarely. Including this instance, it was the second occurrence. The prior occasion had led him to reassess his actions upon arriving in Trier, spurring him to execute the Substitution Spell and Transfiguration, generating a substitute.

With absolute faith in Inevitability, Guillaume Bénet ceased his chant and lunged to the side.

In the next second, he heard Lumian's voice. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"Hmph!"

A nearly imperceivable white beam shot forth from Lumian's nostrils, impacting the precise spot where Guillaume Bénet had stood. The beam streaked through the air, vanishing upon contact with the uneven gray-black terrain.

Lumian's gaze lifted, his eyes extraordinarily clear, seemingly untouched by the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell.

Concealed beneath his elongated hair, his ears were snugly filled with soft paper balls!

In anticipation of residual effects upon entering the basement, he had taken precautionary measures, blocking his ears and altering his appearance to fend off the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell's influence.

How could I be affected if I can't even hear you call my name?

Admittedly, the paper balls couldn't wholly stifle sound. A faint shout did reach Lumian, though he failed to discern it as his name. The impact was but a mild vertigo, quickly dissipating.

Capitalizing on this opportunity, he deduced the affliction he had confronted to be the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell. With feigned gravity, he baited his lurking adversary into revealing himself, launching a surprise counter with the Spell of Harrumph.

Yet, Lumian hadn't envisaged Guillaume Bénet as his assailant.

Unwilling to flee just yet, he clung to his resolve to confront the foe and liberate the imprisoned angel!

Such a determination heightened Lumian's intensity, a fusion of anxiety and exultation, an undercurrent of madness underscoring his elation.

Instantaneously, Guillaume Bénet vanished upon landing beside him. Ebony tendrils, contorted like serpentine forms, descended from the

mine's apex, shrouding the Bottle of Fiction in an enveloping embrace, blossoming into colossal flowers as crimson as blood.

Circling the entryway, Lumian retrieved the iron-gray military alcohol flask, uncapped it, and withdrew the Decency brooch.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Emerald-green arrows exuding a pale pallor streaked forth from the rear of the black vine, piercing the space Lumian had just vacated.

Where these arrows connected, the rocks and earth seemed to undergo the assault of concentrated acid, manifesting glaring and exaggerated signs of corrosion.

After donning the Decency brooch, Lumian's form agilely evaded the Ghastly Green Arrows, targeting his cranium. Simultaneously, he genuflected and inclined forward, palms pressed to the gravel and dirt.

Abruptly, vermillion flames surged forth, forging a crescent-like barrier.

This fiery barricade extended in all directions, kindling the obsidian vines in its path and inciting the vivid flowers, their fierce maws agape.

An inconspicuous, saccharine aroma permeated the air, inducing a drowsy haze, an inclination toward slumber.

Guillaume Bénet, unveiling himself after launching the Ghastly Green Arrows, nimbly shifted his position. Inhaling the anesthetic gas engendered by the blazing Abyss Demon Flowers, he beheld the crimson wall poised to transmute the entire abandoned mine into an inferno.

Why would Lumian Lee ignite the Abyss Demon Flowers, knowing they induce sleep? A momentary bewilderment flashed across Guillaume Bénet.

In a flash, his insight converged with Lumian's stratagem.

Lumian aimed to cultivate an environment saturated with anesthetic

gas, an environment impartial to ally or adversary alike!

In essence, this would induce slumber in Lumian Lee as well as Guillaume Bénet. Lumian's companions stood sentry outside the Bottle of Fiction. It was conceivable they would soon decipher a means to shatter the contract spell's hold!

Comprehending this, Guillaume Bénet emitted a disdainful snort, his visage adorned with a metallic sheen.

Steel Body!

This was also a contract ability he had never exhibited in front of Lumian Lee.

Temporarily morphing him into a metallic entity, it rendered Guillaume Bénet impervious to the anesthetic gas's effects!

Naturally, metamorphosing into a metallic entity would curtail his capacity to wield most of his abilities.

…

Outside the Bottle of Fiction.

Upon grasping that she and Jenna had returned to the sacrificial chamber while Lumian had mysteriously disappeared, Franca swiftly procured a mirror.

Stains of blood and black splotches marred the mirror's surface.

Puzzled, Jenna inquired, "Why are you employing Mirror Substitution?"

Wouldn't it be more sensible to make another attempt at traversing the hidden door?

With an air of solemnity, Franca explained, "This mirror carries the Mirror Substitution spell I prepared for Ciel prior to our mission. It allows me to cast a reversed curse on Ciel.

"Presently, I'll employ a milder curse to assess if I can establish a

connection with him."

Should she succeed in placing a curse upon Lumian, it would imply the connection remained intact. If the bond hadn't been severed, an alternative resolution had to be pursued!

Chapter 329 - 329 Metallic Creature

329 Metallic Creature

Simultaneously with Franca's explanation, inky flames emanated from her right hand, melding with the mirror that belonged to Lumian's substitute.

Jenna observed with a mixture of apprehension, her breath held involuntarily.

…

Within the Bottle of Fiction.

Just as the wall of flames surged forth, kindling the Abyss Demon Flowers, a pang of agony gnawed at Lumian's heart, birthing a faint shroud of black flames upon his chest.

In response, his Spirit Body descended gradually, drawn into an abyssal darkness, a void obliterating light.

Curse? Lumian, ensconced within the cradle of crimson flames, was caught off guard.

The reasons behind this unexpected curse eluded him.

On the one hand, he had preemptively plugged his ears, blunting the impact of the Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell. On the other, Guillaume Bénet lay concealed among the dormant Abyss Demon Flowers, offering no overt indications of invoking contract abilities. Furthermore, he remained unscathed, leaving behind neither flesh nor blood. Every strand of his discarded hair had been consumed by the encroaching flames.

As the black flames emerged, the curse lingered at a subdued level, manifesting as a faint affliction that refrained from impeding his movements. Instantaneously, Lumian formulated a hypothesis.

This curse came from Franca!

Employing Mirror Substitution, she sought to reach out to him!

With renewed determination, Lumian thrust his hands in the direction of the padre's covert location.

Resounding with crackling, another barrier of crimson flames materialized, fire enveloping the descending Abyss Demon Flowers.

Leveraging this veil to obscure Guillaume Bénet's line of sight, Lumian pivoted and sprinted toward the entryway of the Bottle of Fiction.

His actions and his overt choice resonated with unmistakable clarity, conveying to Guillaume Bénet: Why should I fight you within your chosen battleground? If my comrades are barred from entry, I'll venture outside and unite with them!

Emerging from his concealment behind a cluster of Abyss Demon Flowers, Guillaume Bénet radiated a metallic gleam across his exposed skin.

Blazing tongues of fire surged toward him, yet they could only "strip away" a fraction of fabric, unable to sear his flesh.

Through the fiery veil, the Cordu padre bestowed a smile upon Lumian's indistinct figure.

Given the capability to freely traverse the Bottle of Fiction with requisite conditions fulfilled, he had ingeniously laid a trap at the entryway, awaiting Lumian's unwitting ensnarement!

Having assumed a metallic form, his utility was confined to boons involving his body, fate, and three distinct contract abilities untouched by his transformation. Among the latter was:

Shadow Burial!

A black mark on Guillaume Bénet's torso wavered, summoning pallid-white and abyssal-black arms that extended from the encroaching shadows, ensnaring Lumian, mid-sprint toward the entryway.

Lumian, with a forceful stomp, catapulted into the air, seemingly aiming to vault over the eerie appendages emerging from the shadows, seeking sanctuary at the hushed, inky exit.

Behind him, a crimson fireball materialized, poised to detonate at a moment's notice, transmuting into a vessel of obliteration.

Simultaneously, fierce fireballs ignited to his left and right, as if poised to counteract the grasp of the arms.

Guillaume Bénet's metallic visage bore a smile more discernible than before, though it remained deprived of vitality—stern and emotionless.

He anticipated Lumian's imminent leap into the Bottle of Fiction's exit.

The strange arms accompanying the Shadow Burial served as a diversionary tactic, forestalling any suspicions from arising!

It's a pity that I can't use Bone Curse in my metallic state. Otherwise, this would be a good opportunity… Guillaume Bénet hesitated to dispel his Steel Body and deal Lumian another blow.

That way, he wouldn't be able to transform into a metallic creature again anytime soon. The abandoned mine now permeated with anesthetic gas would shortly transform into an inferno. For weak humans lacking godhood, this hostile terrain was untenable. Even Alms Monks could sustain themselves only a brief interval longer.

In the throes of hesitation, Guillaume Bénet ultimately opted to persist with Shadow Burial, permitting the nightmarish arms to continue their relentless encroachment upon Lumian.

With a vigorous leap, Lumian neared the exit of the Bottle of Fiction, almost within grasp.

At that moment, the pitch-black exit—a shadowed orifice devoid of

flame—suddenly writhed faintly, akin to a shadowy maw yearning for sustenance.

Undetected, a suffused aura of “shadow” had enshrouded the secret door’s surface, a profundity seemingly imbued with life!

This was a trap Guillaume Bénet had meticulously laid. The mechanism lay dormant during Lumian’s initial entrance, solely activating when Lumian attempted exit. This safeguard was devised to preempt Lumian from having any danger premonitions when initially entering the Bottle of Fiction, deterring him from braving its confines.

Lumian perceived the sensation of plummeting into an abyss, the final lifeline eluding his grip.

The deceptively thin veil of darkness coiled, an amalgam of endless shadows that converged into an abyssal maw, an aperture on the verge of engulfing him.

Mid-flight, Lumian extended his right palm, yet just before it made contact with the shadowy maw shrouding the hidden door, he abruptly withdrew it, mimicking a gesture of prying open a door.

In tandem, the Decency brooch nestled upon his right chest emitted a subdued golden glow.

Distortion!

Lumian distorted the action of opening the door with the concept of “unsealing this confined space!”

From the outset, his intent to depart the Bottle of Fiction was absent. Instead, he sought to find a way for his companions to infiltrate, thus furnishing reinforcement.

This enclave laden with combustible resources stood as a haven for a Pyromaniac!

Boom!

With a resounding detonation, the crimson fireball positioned to

Lumian's left erupted, issuing a horizontal thrust that exacted a substantial toll. His attire lay rent, and his flesh bore charred imprints, inflicted by the fiery onslaught. Gradually nearing the shadowy vortex, the forceful explosion propelled him away from the exit of the Bottle of Fiction and beyond the enshrouded region brimming with appendages swathed in pallid-white and abyssal-black. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Resounding with a thud, Lumian tumbled, ensconcing himself behind a rampart of surging flames. This maneuver forestalled the further encroachment of the shadowy expanse, obliging the strange arms to contend with the blistering blaze.

Outside the Bottle of Fiction.

A frigid zephyr brushed against Franca and Jenna, wafting from the hidden door's interior.

Swiftly, the chill metamorphosed into a searing fervor. Behind the hidden door lay a derelict mine engulfed in a sea of crimson flames, the blazing inferno punctuated by the descent of undistorted fire dragons, their incandescence unbridled.

The remaining black vines, the crimson flowers, and the strange arms all succumbed to the fiery onslaught, pursued relentlessly by the raging conflagration.

Signaling to Jenna, Franca receded into the shadows as she drew closer to the hidden door.

Jenna understood Franca's intentions and rationally retreated into the shadows outside the hidden door, concealing herself.

She knew that it would be difficult for her to participate in the battle with her strength. Thus, she chose to bide her time, awaiting the enemy's emergence through the threshold, poised to exploit a fleeting opportunity to deliver a decisive, lethal strike.

Within the ajar Bottle of Fiction, Lumian, having concluded his somersault, propped himself up with a single hand.

Locking his gaze onto the distant Guillaume Bénet—his form akin to

that of a metallic marionette—Lumian's lips curled wordlessly, yielding an eruption of crimson flames that engulfed his flesh and attire.

A familiar pang of torment reverberated across Lumian's psyche, jolting him awake from the lethargic stupor.

It's been some time! Lumian's grin was tinged with distortion as he hurtled toward the metal-encased Guillaume Bénet. His forward momentum stirred the encompassing crimson flames, elongating behind him like a shimmering, unfurled cape.

Wary of Lumian's earlier utilization of the harrumph spell, Guillaume Bénet, resembling a puppet forged from steel, evaded direct confrontation, executing artful shifts in position.

Discerning Lumian's strategy of harnessing the flames to stave off the Abyss Demon Flowers-induced anesthetic gas, Guillaume Bénet discerned this endeavor to be fleeting. At best, Lumian's fiery gambit would delay his descent into unconsciousness. Certain matters couldn't be resolved by self-harm!

Having adopted the form of a metallic entity via Steel Body, Guillaume Bénet remained impervious to the anesthetic gas's effects, even forgoing the need to draw breath. This form also minimized the conflagration's impact on him. Guillaume Bénet was convinced that Steel Body's efficacy would persist until Lumian Lee succumbed to unconsciousness.

Furthermore, his assessment revealed Lumian's substantial spirituality expenditure, coupled with Lumian's evident abstention from spirit world traversal.

This deduction led Guillaume Bénet to surmise that the harrumph spell likely bore limitations on its frequency of use.

Of course, sustained evasion was untenable. Lumian Lee's actions hinted at him using some unconventional means to open the Bottle of Fiction, suggesting his companions had likely infiltrated covertly through invisibility. Guillaume Bénet couldn't allow this duo to demonstrate the potency of their teamwork.

Nimbly maneuvering around the plummeting tendrils of flaming vines, Guillaume Bénet executed a sudden pivot, facing Lumian with unwavering intent.

His metallic countenance mirrored the flaming luminance, refracting a kaleidoscopic iridescence.

Myriads of diminutive “rainbows” coalesced, cleaving Guillaume Bénet as though he gazed upon his mirror image.

Light Incarnation!

One of the three contractual abilities accessible in his Steel Body state.

Its premise lay in leveraging light to forge a fleeting incarnation, capable of channeling an individual’s capabilities.

Two metallic Guillaume Bénets surged toward Lumian simultaneously.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Each stride they undertook fostered corporeal expansion, culminating in the metamorphosis into metallic titans, which tore asunder their white robes adorned with silver-black threads.

Elevating his right hand, Lumian summoned into being a host of crimson Fire Ravens that swirled about him.

The Fire Ravens promptly surged toward the two Guillaume Bénets, demonstrating no clemency.

Given the inherent challenge of distinguishing authenticity from imitation within a short span of time, Lumian adopted a stratagem of unleashing an onslaught indiscriminately—comprising both genuine and illusory manifestations!

For truth could not be falsified, nor could falsity be genuine!

In an abrupt detonation, the Guillaume Bénet before him disintegrated.

Rumble!

Accompanied by the explosion, amid which a multitude of Fire Ravens were prematurely engulfed in combustion, a Water Cannon sculpted from dark-green liquid surged forth from the fake Guillaume Bénet's fragmented remnants.

The Water Cannon, of astonishing alacrity and proximity, penetrated Lumian's fiery shroud, impinging upon his form. As a consequence, Lumian's physique began exhibiting telltale signs of liquefaction.

Draynere Gland Poison!

One of three contractual abilities he could use as a metallic entity!

With a brittle crack, Lumian's corporeal structure fractured, metamorphosing into mirrors.

A mere ten meters from Guillaume Bénet, Franca, owing to the activation of Mirror Substitution, involuntarily escaped her state of Invisibility.

Observing her emergence, Guillaume Bénet's blue irises assumed a pallor bordering on translucence. A deft push of his right palm propagated the emergence of an expansive river of mercurial sigils encircling Franca.

Pitting himself directly against Lumian Lee proved to be a disconcerting engagement for Guillaume Bénet. His paramount and most formidable Fate Appropriator ability remained inaccessible, for its utilization would catalyze a consequential backlash from Inevitability.

Since it couldn't be used on Lumian Lee, it could be used on his companion!

Chapter 330 - 330 Forewarned is Forearmed

330 Forewarned is Forearmed

A Fate Appropriator harbored two primary abilities:

Firstly, the capacity to magnify a corresponding fate tributary, thereby setting in stone an imminent destiny for the target. This process could be expeditious, yet its future influence spanned a mere ten seconds. The resulting efficacy was contingent upon environmental compatibility; a more congruent backdrop augmented the probability of the event materializing in the forthcoming future.

Secondly, the ability to swap an accumulated fate for a fragment of the target's own destiny. Absent a premeditated arrangement, one had to either kill the adversary to access their fate or employ their personal fate as a substitute. Relatively more protracted in execution than magnifying an impending fate tributary, this method prohibited one from assailing the target or inducing harm mid-process.

At this moment, Guillaume Bénet, who wasn't fighting one-on-one, clearly didn't want to engage in a fate exchange. His plan was to utilize the current environment and magnify Lumian Lee's female companion's fate tributary of being affected by the Abyss Demon Flower's anesthetic gas to make it a reality.

Of course, as the woman in the black hood hadn't fallen asleep and wouldn't be paralyzed or knocked unconscious for ten seconds, the sole recourse was to expedite the process while steering it toward the most dire outcome.

In a similar vein, this elucidated one of the rationales behind Guillaume Bénet's abstention from interfering with Lumian Lee's fate tributary.

What he refrained from attempting was the exchange of the adversary's fate or the inversion of key tributaries into the principal course, lest he suffered the backlash invoked by Inevitability. He wouldn't have a problem if he only made Lumian Lee slip and fall, achieving futures that wouldn't have significant impact.

The mercurial river encircling Franca was reflected in Guillaume Bénet's lightened eyes. After some discernment, he grabbed at one of the tributaries formed by the mercury symbol that wrapped around itself.

Concurrently, Franca arched her neck, thereby unveiling her supple neck and moist vermilion lips under the hood's shadows.

Peculiarly, a palpable flutter stirred in Guillaume Bénet's chest, reverberating to his nether regions as he recollected scenes of his liaisons with courtesans along Rue de la Muraille. Yet, these recollections paled in allure compared to the figure opposite him, despite her visage remaining partially veiled.

Despite his momentary lapse, Guillaume Bénet promptly reinstated his focus.

Capitalizing upon this fleeting respite, Franca—enlightened to the general scope of a Fate Appropriator's abilities courtesy of Lumian—sparked latent black flames, engendering frost that enshrouded her form.

Opaque filaments converged, manifesting palpable encasement amid the frigid shroud, akin to a cocoon.

Unperturbed, Guillaume Bénet's lips curled into a smirk, unfazed by the unfolding situation.

If a Fate Appropriator's abilities were so easily rendered ineffectual, they wouldn't be called Fate Appropriators!

Furthermore, as long as the target's fate tributary was magnified or underwent a fate exchange, they wouldn't be able to break free even if they used a substitute.

With measured deliberation, Guillaume Bénet extended his right

palm and executed a slight wrist rotation, magnifying a particular fate he had chosen.

Nonetheless, in this precise instant, he perceived the hooded lady's fate river adopting an uncanny semblance of illusory ambiguity, an etherealness so pronounced as to border on feigned fabrication.

A decoy!

Guillaume Bénet's endeavor to augment the fate tributary was abruptly thwarted. The cocoon disintegrated, frost fragmenting and black flames metamorphosing into coruscating beams of light.

Yet, the focus of the protection wasn't Franca herself, but rather, a mirror!

Capitalizing on Guillaume Bénet's momentary bewilderment, a casualty of the Demoness of Pleasure's allure and his self-imposed adverse effects, Franca seized the initiative. Employing Mirror Substitution, she ensconced herself in layers of black flames, frost, and spider silk, confounding the adversary while concealing the real lethal peril.

Thus, she extricated herself from the figurative crosshairs, evading the adversary's targeting.

Simultaneously with the failure of Guillaume Bénet's attempt to amplify the fate tributary, a figure garbed in an Assassin's attire manifested behind him, its visage partially obscured by a classic brass revolver, aimed steadfastly at the enemy's cranium before pulling the trigger.

Bang!

The iron-black round collided with the dodging Guillaume Bénet's head, emitting a distinct metallic clang.

Guillaume Bénet's head, bedecked in a metallic sheen, yielded to the impact, though its structural integrity endured, deflecting a potentially lethal strike.

Nearly in tandem, Lumian, having used Mirror Substitution to evade

the effects of Draynere Gland Poison, and draped in flaming clothes, emerged nearby. Dropping to a genuflecting posture, he pressed his palms to the ground.

In response, twin crimson fire serpents surged into being, consuming the incendiary vines while spreading the flames along their trajectory, ultimately converging to form a colossal pair of fire dragons.

Both entities surged toward Guillaume Bénet. However, their purpose wasn't to ingest their quarry, but to intertwine and coalesce, giving rise to an ostentatious and brilliant conflagration-blooming flower.

As the fiery flower unfurled before him, Guillaume Bénet grappled with comprehending Lumian Lee's intentions.

With his Steel Body, his resistance to flames was steadfast for the time being, but the other party wouldn't go as far as wasting an opportunity and do nothing but perform fire magic, right?

This was Bribe!

Lumian had "gifted" Guillaume Bénet with a blazing flower—an emblem signifying incineration and obliteration. Capitalizing on the Decency brooch, he had completed a Bribe, thereby attenuating the adversary's defenses.

Although Lumian Lee's true motives remained opaque, Guillaume Bénet's intuition kindled with the conviction that this augured unfavorably.

In rapid succession, Guillaume Bénet invoked Light Incarnation anew, fragmenting into three iterations as he advanced toward Lumian. As Franca's assault faltered, she vanished anew.

Witnessing the three iterations of the metalized Guillaume Bénet rapidly engorge, Lumian conjured a new cohort of Fire Ravens and distributed them evenly amongst the trio of adversaries.

Then, turning his form and slowing his pace, he primed himself for a prospective evasion of the ensuing Water Cannon conjured from Draynere Gland Poison.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The crimson Fire Ravens landed precisely on the three metalized Guillaume Bénets.

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

They exploded simultaneously!

A torrent of dark-green liquid surged forth from one of Guillaume Bénet's forms—Water Cannon. Lumian, braced for the assault, deftly evaded, his gaze fixed upon the collision of aqueous impact against the rocky wall, a tremor rippling through the Bottle of Fiction.

Yet, as Lumian's evasion completed, he detected a colossal shadow enshrouding his feet. Thereupon, a medley of pallid-white and obsidian-black arms extended forth from this obscurity.

In contrast, Lumian's other choice of direction was shrouded in a dark shadow.

At Sequence 5, Light Incarnation permitted Guillaume Bénet the creation of up to three incarnations, each incarnation fake. One harbored Draynere Gland Poison, while the other pair wielded Shadow Burial, intent on ensnaring Lumian within their shade-infused grasp.

Curved, grotesque limbs ensnared Lumian's ankles, striving to haul him into the nebulous depths.

Amid this peril, a figure emerged from the inky depths—a half-naked, metallic-finished Guillaume Bénet.

Shadow Burial was a form of shadow concealment for him!

By capitalizing on three Light Incarnations—which consumed a large amount of spirituality—to veil his position, thereby detaining Lumian temporarily, Guillaume Bénet engineered his stealthy approach via the shadows, orchestrating a decisive assault.

His body suddenly expanded as he punched Lumian behind the ear.

A thunderous crack resonated as Lumian's form fragmented akin to a glass pane, fracturing into myriad minuscule fragments subsequently

claimed by the pallid-white and obsidian-black arms.

Mirror Substitution!

It was precisely due to the implementation of Mirror Substitution that Franca refrained from intervening on Lumian's behalf when she saw him restrained by the strange arms extending from the shadow. Rather, she bided her time, anticipating Guillaume Bénet's advent to administer a terminal blow.

Amidst the cracking sounds, Franca's hooded, black-robed figure involuntarily appeared once more, quickly spotted by the padre.

Guillaume Bénet had been waiting for this opportunity to stop himself from being affected by the charm and turn his blue eyes light-colored again.

He saw the mercurial river of fate and began to choose the fate of being paralyzed by the burning gasses of the Abyss Demon Flowers.

Yet, an abrupt surge of peril seized Guillaume Bénet's consciousness, compelling a stark realization: interference with the adversary's fate would undoubtedly yield cataclysmic repercussions.

Impossible! Moments earlier, such consequences hadn't arisen! Yet, as he scrutinized the figure before him, Guillaume Bénet, who had been able to interfere with his target's fate normally previously to near success, saw a hooded woman hiding behind the hooded woman. The woman behind her held a palm-sized mirror that illuminated his figure.

In an instant, Guillaume Bénet understood what was going on. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

The hooded woman standing in front of him, revealing the river of fate, was Lumian Lee!

After activating Mirror Substitution, he took the initiative to appear in front of his companion. Seizing the opportunity, he used a Transfiguration-like ability to change his appearance and disguise himself as his companion!

You do realize, using the same trick won't work twice? Franca, who was hiding behind Lumian, chuckled when she saw this.

Seeing Lumian under attack, she took out her teammate's Mirror Substitution and threw it in front of her. Taking advantage of the cover and the enemy's drawn attention, she aimed another mirror at Guillaume Bénet.

Without hesitation, Franca's palm was enveloped in black flames as she swiped the mirror's surface.

Curse!

Demoness's Curse!

In a simultaneous eruption, a quietly smoldering black flame ignited from within Guillaume Bénet's metallic form.

Elated that his Steel Body rendered him impervious to conflagration, inflicting only minor wounds, he soon perceived an anomalous drain on his spirit, coupled with indications of severe ethereal scorching.

In the span of an eye's flutter, the Cordu village padre emitted a tormented cry.

Instantaneously, his metallic semblance plummeted to the earth with a cacophonous clatter, reconstituting into a form unadorned by metal, starkly naked and manifestly fleshy.

At the same time, Franca, too, experienced a visceral tremor, her countenance assuming a pallid hue.

"Rebirth!"

The contract ability in question facilitated Guillaume Bénet's revival within the slayer's body!

Guillaume Bénet's spirit smiled and hastened to replace the woman holding the mirror and take control of her body.

Yet, he confronted a disconcerting reality: before him stood an enshrouded woman brandishing a mirror, baring her lower visage in

a manner reminiscent of malevolent allure.

She's in front… Then whose body did I Rebirth into? A disorienting befuddlement inundated Guillaume Bénet.

Meanwhile, Lumian, ensconced within Franca's semblance, donned a knowing grin, gradually retracting his right palm from the padre's lifeless cadaver, the Decency brooch aglow with a dusky-golden luminescence.

Distortion!

How could he not guard against Guillaume Bénet's Rebirth ability when he already knew that Guillaume Bénet's mistress had chosen such an ability?

Lumian couldn't overtly commandeer Guillaume Bénet's Rebirth with his seal and corruption alone. Nevertheless, Lumian, resembling Franca with uncanny precision, had already instructed Franca to bring the Earth Blood ore.

Innately repellent to even the Montsouris ghost, the Earth Blood ore imposed an unseen force field compelling Guillaume Bénet's Spirit Body's circumvention.

Leveraging the Distortion afforded by the Decency brooch, coupled with the Earth Blood ore's obstructive efficacy and the Niese Face's transformation, Lumian orchestrated Guillaume Bénet's Rebirth within his very body!

Although Lumian's visage paled and his frame quivered slightly, a smile graced his lips as he extended his hand towards his left chest, gently declaring, "Padre, everyone is waiting for you."

Chapter 331 - 331 Spirit Channeling

331 Spirit Channeling

As Lumian's words reverberated, an inexplicable chill settled over Guillaume Bénet, even in his Spirit Body form. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

There, a colossal, semi-transparent vortex unfurled, ensconced in a wispy gray fog at its nadir. Within this haze materialized a dimly lit village, populated by spectral forms.

One of these apparitions gazed skyward, noticing Guillaume Bénet's struggle against the vortex's inexorable pull.

His pale-white face instantly lit up with excitement and fanaticism as he shouted, "Oh, my deity, my lord, you're here too?

"Quickly, join us! Hasten your approach!"

The figure belonged to Guillaume Bénet's brother, Pons Bénet.

Sensing Pons Bénet's abnormality, the figures lingering in the dim village looked up at Guillaume Bénet.

Among them, Madonna Bénet, Philippa Guillaume, and the others, who had once been Guillaume Bénet's mistresses, extended their pale-white arms to the sky and smiled blankly.

"Quickly, join us! Hasten your approach!"

Immediately after, Shepherd Pierre Berry, Lumian's comrade Guillaume Berry, Azéma Lizier, and more added their supplicating gestures.

In an instant, a peculiar, pallid forest seemingly sprouted from within the village's dim enclave, its spectral denizens directing their palms towards the padre.

Guillaume Bénet's descent escalated, his Spirit Body verging on fragmentation.

Struggling to counteract the vortex's pull, he sought to resist its sway, aiming to evade its dominion and flee Lumian's profoundly perilous vessel.

He couldn't care less about the Rebirth in the other party's body and the corresponding fate.

That was something he couldn't bear!

Lumian's grin expanded, seemingly attuned to the cacophony of terror and anguish echoing within his own body.

Indeed, possessing him via Rebirth and forcing a possession by luring others over via the Summoning Dance were completely different treatments!

The former would form a connection with his fate and, in an attempt to replace it, it would inevitably trigger the seal. Guillaume Bénet's profound corruption by Inevitability meant that the resonance of this seal's potency was inevitable.

Though Lumian remained ignorant of the precise ramifications, he intuited they would bode ill.

Perceiving Guillaume Bénet's vehement longing to extricate himself, Lumian opted to refrain from thwarting his escape, willingly relinquishing any interference.

Ultimately, Guillaume Bénet—having expended a considerable amount of his spirituality—struggled to escape from Lumian's body.

A dark-golden glimmer traversed his chest, heralding Guillaume Bénet's emergence within the palm-sized mirror clasped in Franca's grasp.

Franca's palm coalesced an unblemished frost, which she spread over the mirror's surface.

Instantaneously, Guillaume Bénet's form became ensconced within a veneer of ice, ensnared within the mirror's confines.

Concurrently, Franca summoned black flames, which enshrouded the icy enclosure.

Though the ice in itself was inadequate to bar a Spirit Body's escape from the mirror, the shrouding black flames bore that capability. Should Guillaume Bénet dare venture beyond the ice's protection, the flames awaited to engulf him.

With Guillaume Bénet's Spirit Body securely sealed, Franca glanced up at Lumian—who had removed the paper balls—and directed, "Channel his spirit after we're out. Your flames and anesthetic gas are everywhere."

With her physique and expenditure, holding on for another two or three minutes sans Mirror Substitution posed no undue challenge. Nonetheless, she sensed Lumian reaching his threshold.

Affirming Franca's directive with a nod, Lumian briskly pivoted and surged towards the Bottle of Fiction's exit.

Consequent to Guillaume Bénet's "demise," the concealed trap had naturally been lifted.

Having returned to the sacrificial hall, Lumian promptly dissipated the Niese Face, reverting his appearance from that of Franca's hooded visage and black robe.

His upper body bore the telltale markings of being charred, yet owing to his skillful management following the initial digestion of the Pyromaniac potion, his trousers remained unscathed.

This approach, evoking pain, stimulating cerebral activity, and rousing his senses, didn't necessitate subjecting his entire form to incineration—localized scorching proved sufficient.

Observing his somewhat unconventional appearance, Franca—torn

between concern and amusement—chimed in with an air of teasing, “Do you have a penchant for masochism? You go through this ordeal every time you engage in combat.”

Lumian directed his attention toward the mirror ablaze in Franca’s grip and casually responded, “That’s how Hunters are.”

“I’d be deluding myself if I bought into your fabrications. I’m an Instigator, after all!” Franca had borne witness to prior Pyromaniac skirmishes.

Witnessing their conversational exchange, Jenna deduced that their adversary had been ensnared and the situation had reached its resolution. Thus, she emerged from the concealment of the shadows.

Franca graced her with a smile before turning her attention back to Lumian, relaying, “Hold on for a moment. Don’t fret. Guillaume Bénet isn’t entirely dead yet. Once the Rebirth effect wanes, he’ll morph into a recently expired spirit, his faculties adrift. At that juncture, channeling his spirit will prove less hazardous, and we can be sure he doesn’t lie.”

Lumian calculated the remaining duration of the Decency brooch’s efficacy and remarked, “Let’s wait here.”

Leveraging the mystical knowledge gleaned from the boon, he discerned that the Rebirth effect endured merely two minutes—its termination was imminent.

Abandoning their current location to embark on a quest for a more secure locale for spirit channeling would necessitate identifying another concealed setting, subjecting Lumian to an additional hour of repulsion before spirit channeling could ensue.

The optimal time frame for spirit channeling would subsequently elapse.

Moreover, Lumian harbored a reluctance to further procrastinate.

Stepping toward the altar, she set the mirror upon the pitch-black ring symbol crafted from thorns, thereby maintaining the enshrouding black flames.

This facilitated Lumian's observation.

Fixated on Guillaume Bénet's pale and ashen visage, ensnared beneath the duality of black flames and ice, Lumian smirked with brilliant satisfaction gradually etched upon his lips. He uttered, "You're truly foolish!

"If I were you, I'd evade and refrain from launching an assault post Steel Body activation, awaiting the adversary's inevitable fatigue.

"Ah, I neglected to apprise you. My spirituality has plummeted below the safety threshold, thereby making spirit world traversal or even utilization of the Spell of Harrumph impossible. I'm barely able to kindle fire, changing my face, and using the brooch. Should you have bided your time, I would've neared my limit and fainted on the spot.

"I acted rashly and reacted relatively slowly towards the end. On the one hand, I didn't want to expend more spirituality and wanted to save them for critical moments. On the other hand, Mirror Substitution consumed Franca's spirituality. On the other hand, heh heh, it was a trap for you.

"Do you remember the flaming flower? Without this 'gift' to complete Bribe, Franca's curse wouldn't have been able to kill you, a Sequence 5…"

Upon hearing the term Spell of Harrumph and recalling Lumian's actions of knocking out two fake Guillaume Bénets in a row, Franca's eyelids twitched in shock and confusion.

Jenna looked at Lumian, who kept mocking the Spirit Body in the mirror, and tugged at Franca with a measure of concern. She whispered, "Perhaps we should attempt to assuage him?"

"No need." Franca shook her head and took the initiative to distance herself from Lumian, giving him a "private" space to vent.

Jenna tersely acknowledged and followed Franca to the edge of the sacrificial hall, casting a lingering glance at the visage of pallid, pale-white and ashen hues reflected within the mirror.

Guillaume Bénet emanated a mixture of hostility, terror, and

ultimately—despair.

…

Dill brothel, sixth floor.

On a distant balcony, Albus positioned himself in a discreet corner, his concealed gaze unwaveringly fixed upon Room 602.

Once Lumian and his companions had seemingly “teleported” away, Albus stepped out from his concealment, a wry smile tugging at his lips.

To think a mere Sequence 7 individual wields an artifact that enables traversal of the spirit world?

His connection with Red Boots isn’t simple. Whether Gardner Martin is privy to this or remains in the dark, I wonder…

As he muttered, Albus’s smile carried a hint of ambiguity and playful intrigue.

…

50 Rue Vincent, underground sacrificial hall.

Lumian’s continuous taunting endured until the Rebirth effect gradually subsided, a shadow darkening Guillaume Bénet’s eyes.

Meanwhile, Franca, intently calculating the elapsed time, positioned herself near the altar and erected a wall of spirituality, priming herself for the forthcoming endeavor.

With the moment at hand, she softly intoned the incantation, engaging her self-devised Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell.

Yet, just as success appeared imminent, Lumian summoned the Decency brooch’s Distortion once again, rerouting the inquiry of the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell toward himself.

In a final bid for success within a singular attempt, he even invoked the Niese Face, transfiguring into Franca once more.

Almost instantaneously, the mirror's surface dimmed, casting Guillaume Bénet's pale visage into a slightly blurred disposition.

With his capacity to sustain the Niese Face dissipated, Lumian reverted to his original form and shifted his focus back to Guillaume Bénet.

"Who led you to place faith in Inevitability?"

Although Franca harbored a degree of curiosity, she was mindful of the repercussions of Lumian broaching forbidden topics, thus jeopardizing her corruption. Subsequently, she parted the wall of spirituality, positioning herself at a distance from the altar.

Guillaume Bénet, in a somewhat dazed state, responded, "It was Aurore Lee!

"Upon discovering that the faith of an accursed deity was disseminating, she covertly approached me, affirming that I could harness superpowers without supplicating the bishops. Moreover, I was assured of the prospect of obtaining godhood in the future, potentially ascending to the rank of saint and thereby securing eternal life.

"At the time, I remained skeptical. Nevertheless, my curiosity compelled me to withhold judgment. Over time, however, I witnessed her burgeoning might, my reservations gradually subsiding."

After a brief lull, Lumian inquired, his blue gaze intense, "Who influenced Aurore Lee to embrace Inevitability?"

"I don't know." Guillaume Bénet's bewilderment was palpable as he shook his head.

Following a moment of contemplation, Lumian continued his line of questioning, "What profound impression did Aurore Lee leave upon you?"

Guillaume Bénet's countenance shifted, a semblance of recollection mingling with apprehension.

"S-she said that she wasn't Aurore Lee!"

Chapter 332 - 332 Sinners

332 Sinners

She said she wasn't Aurore Lee? Lumian felt as if a bolt of lightning had struck him, his thoughts freezing in their tracks.

In fact, he could deduce that Aurore Lee wasn't his sister's real name. Someone deliberately settling in a border village wouldn't likely use their true identity. Yet, after almost six years together, he could sense that his sister embraced the name "Aurore Lee." She never spoke of her original identity or her past life in his presence. Moreover, the forged identity documents she possessed seemed increasingly genuine. When she rose to fame as a best-selling author, their authenticity was unquestionable.

Why would she suddenly say that?

And how did it tie into her inexplicable faith in the enigmatic existence known as Inevitability?

A sharp ache throbbed in Lumian's head, jolting him back to reality. Anxiously, he inquired, "Did she mention who she was?"

On the mirror-like surface, no longer shrouded in black flames and frost, Guillaume Bénet, pallid and tinged with a bluish hue, responded with a dazed expression, "She claimed to be Roche Louise Sanson."

I've never heard of such a name… Lumian furrowed his brow and probed further, "Did she mention anything else about this identity?"

Guillaume Bénet shook his head.

"Nothing more."

Lumian pressed his left hand against his temple. After a brief silence, he pressed on, “Was Roche Louise Sanson involved in the plot to sacrifice Cordu in exchange for the arrival of the Inevitability angel?”

Guillaume Bénet appeared to wrestle with himself, but ultimately yielded to the sway of the spirit channeling. His response came forth, candid and unfiltered: “No, that was my doing.

“I was driven by the desire to attain godhood swiftly, to ascend as a saint. Aurore Lee initially approved, only to oppose my plan mere hours later. She was indecisive. Eventually, I chose to conceal my intentions from her and made covert preparations. Later on, she seemed to tacitly endorse our efforts, offering aid during critical junctures. Occasionally, though, she resisted and engaged in acts of destruction, yet she’d quickly relent.”

The Aurore you depict almost seems schizophrenic… Lumian found himself clinging to the image of Aurore, yet he couldn’t escape the memory of the lizard-like, diaphanous elf emerging from his sister’s mouth. He recalled her sporadic awakenings, her discussions on escaping their predicament.

But even in those moments of “clarity,” Aurore’s behavior hardly resembled normalcy. She even overlooked the option of summoning Hela’s messenger for swift assistance, the most direct solution out of their ordeal.

Lumian shifted the conversation, asking, “When did Aurore begin propagating the faith of Inevitability in Cordu?”

Guillaume Bénet appeared even more muddled than before.

“My initial investigation pointed to around May or June of last year. After that, she paid me a secret visit.”

Seems to be consistent with my suspicions… Something must have transpired back then to corrupt Aurore… If she was an original believer in Inevitability, she wouldn’t wait five or six years before proselytizing… Lumian’s expression flickered with pain, which he quickly suppressed.

“Have you ever come across diaphanous, lizard-like creatures in Cordu?”

“No,” Guillaume Bénet answered truthfully.

“Do you have any knowledge of a figure known as the Sufferer in Cordu?” Lumian inquired further.

Guillaume Bénet appeared taken aback.

“I don’t know. No.”

Lumian’s facial muscles twitched involuntarily.

“Have you observed an owl around Aurore?”

“No,” Guillaume Bénet negated again.

Lumian continued to pose inquiries regarding the Cordu catastrophe, yet the answers offered were far from satisfactory. Finally, he probed, “Is there a secret organization or a heretical Church associated with Roche Louise Sanson?”

Guillaume Bénet, his pallid countenance increasingly diffused, finally nodded.

“Yes, it’s called Sinners. I now hold the position of one of the Sinners’ archbishops.”

Sinners… The heretical Church which believes in Inevitability? Lumian’s intrigue grew as he delved further.

“Who leads the Sinners, and who acts as the intermediary for you?”

“I’m uncertain of the leader’s identity, but he’s the sole individual among all the sinners who possesses godhood,” Guillaume Bénet’s hollow voice responded with an eerie timbre. “The individual responsible for my contact is Bouvard Pont-Péro.”

Sole individual possessing godhood… Could it be the Sufferer lurking in my midst? Lumian’s mind raced as he continued his probing.

“How can I establish contact with Bouvard Pont-Péro?”

“It’s futile,” Guillaume Bénet’s ethereal voice replied, a hollowness to its tone. “Upon my demise, he will sense the shift in fate and preemptively erase all traces. Transfiguration is one of the abilities granted through a pact. He can become anything, but he is no longer himself.”

Can take on any form, but at the cost of his own identity… Prolonged use of Transfiguration might have driven him to complete madness… Perhaps I can visit the asylum and seek out any patients with similar cognitive impairments… I must be careful with acquiring further contract abilities. If there are only three or four negative effects, that’s manageable. However, if the list becomes extensive, it not only invites trouble but also provides enemies with exploitable openings… If the padre had encountered a member of the Bliss Society or a bestowed from the Mother Tree of Desire, he would undoubtedly fall victim easily… Lumian gazed at the altar mirror and posed another question, “Why did the Sinners organization send you to Quartier de la Princesse Rouge?”

Guillaume Bénet’s indistinct visage lit up with zealous fervor.

“It satisfies my desires and simultaneously serves as a recruitment ground for believers, all in preparation for the upcoming grand ritual. Only by allowing our lord to tread upon this realm can sinners like us seek redemption and baptism, thus escaping our predetermined fates.”

“Did the Sinners organization provide you financial support, or did you amass funds independently?” Lumian aimed to trace the origins of the money for potential leads. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Guillaume Bénet shook his head.

“It’s an anonymous deposit from Aurore Lee—no, Roche Louise Sanson. The sum totals 100,000 verl d’or.”

“Dammit, you swine!” Lumian cursed.

While he had foreseen this, the realization that the padre had been using Aurore's earnings to support a courtesan and sustain a lavish lifestyle for recruiting heretics ignited a seething anger within Lumian.

Suppressing his emotions, Lumian let out a scornful chuckle and stated, "Did the Sinners organization not provide you Beyonder characteristics? Have you never consumed a potion?"

Otherwise, the padre would have been even more formidable and difficult to deal with.

"Beyonder characteristics of the Seer, Monster, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways that Inevitability's bestowed are compatible with aren't easily acquired. I've been searching for them.

"Given the adverse effects those contracted creatures have on me, drinking potions from other pathways would undoubtedly lead to a loss of control on the spot."

Fortunately, my current negative effects remain minimal and feeble. If they were more potent, it could jeopardize my ability to ingest Hunter pathway potions in the future… Lumian's spirituality was dwindling, so he capitalized on the moment to pose one final inquiry.

"What are Sequences 6 to 0 of the Inevitability pathway?"

Guillaume Bénet's voice hollowed further.

"Sequence 6 is Ascetic, Sequence 5 is Fate Appropriator, Sequence 4 is Circle Inhabitant, and Sequence 3 is Sufferer. Beyond that, I am unaware."

Ascetic… It seems akin to the advancement of an Alms Monk… Why didn't Termiboros inform me? Right; as a victim, He will likely have the Ascetic boon extracted from Him in the future. It's only natural for Him to evade answering related queries. If He remained utterly impassive and too willing to provide an answer, I would have grown wary and suspected a trap… Lumian's gaze lifted slightly, his countenance involuntarily contorting.

"What abilities does an Ascetic possess?"

Guillaume Bénet's voice drifted as he responded, "An Ascetic is defined by endurance, accumulation, and eruption. After accruing one's usual strength within the body, it can be momentarily unleashed during combat, rendering the Ascetic akin to a giant. Accumulating ritualistic processes permits the simplification of certain special rituals, making them applicable in combat."

Akin to a giant… A momentary outburst… Lumian recollected the confrontation between Shepherd Pierre Berry and the investigator, Ryan, along with the metallic giant the padre had morphed into.

Had the metalized Guillaume Bénet not been overly cautious of the Spell of Harrumph and abstained from close-quarter combat, constantly maintaining a safe distance and shifting positions swiftly, thereby thwarting Franca's Psychic Piercing, by amalgamating Steel Body with Ascetic, the padre could have likely outmatched Lumian, who needed to use his spirituality judiciously.

This corroborated Lumian's rationale for disregarding the strange creatures that came with the boon's knowledge and opting to identify a contract target from the spirit world bestiary. If he hadn't, the padre would have been able to determine if the Spell of Harrumph was still at Lumian's disposal and gauging his remaining combat strength. In that scenario, his adversary's battlefield decisions would probably have starkly diverged from the ultimate outcome.

Guillaume Bénet had earlier "shared" details of the simplified ritual.

By enveloping an individual in sheepskin through ritualistic accumulation and intoning the incantation, they could be transmuted into a sheep. A cumbersome and intricate ceremony was unnecessary.

Just as Lumian was on the cusp of inquiring about the abilities of a Sufferer, an acute pang surged through his head, thwarting his continuation.

A pang of disappointment ensued, albeit one he could accept. Had Franca not devised the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell, Lumian wouldn't have been able to amass such a wealth of answers through his line of questioning.

Lumian engaged his Spirit Vision and concluded the spirit channeling. He took deep breaths as Guillaume Bénet's spirit drifted out of the mirror.

Having calmed down, Lumian suddenly extended his right palm, capturing the padre's Spirit Body.

Though his grasp couldn't control the intangible entity, crimson flames surged forth from Lumian's palm, immolating the already fragile spirit of Guillaume Bénet.

Amid the flames, which burned fiercer than the noonday sun, Lumian watched the apparition writhe instinctively, a pained visage etched upon it. A faint smile curved Lumian's lips as he proclaimed, "Praise the Sun!"

Momentarily bewildered, Guillaume Bénet's form swiftly disintegrated within the flames.

Chapter 333 - 333 Gains

333 Gains

Lumian's smile gradually softened as he watched the Spirit Body writhing and wailing within the flames.

This was one of the ways the padre died as he had predicted.

Certainly, when he initially ignited the Abyss Demon Flowers, transforming the derelict mine within the Bottle of Fiction into a fiery inferno, he hadn't anticipated Guillaume Bénet's direct incineration.

During that moment, he had relied on his combat instincts and seasoned experience to create an environment that favored his strengths and mitigated his most vulnerable points. The summoning of the Abyss Demon Flowers by the padre had presented an opportunity.

The anesthetic gas produced by the incineration of the Abyss Demon Flowers wasn't his intention. His aim was to battle within an infernal hell.

During that period, his remaining spirituality had been scarce. Nonetheless, a Pyromaniac's resistance to flames significantly outclassed a Fate Appropriator's. Moreover, this resistance was a physical attribute that didn't deplete his spirituality.

As the Bottle of Fiction transformed into a blazing inferno, even the very air could scorch the trachea and lungs. Lumian believed he would ultimately prevail. He could outlast Guillaume Bénet, enduring until the flames extinguished themselves due to lack of fuel.

With his grasp of the Inevitability pathway, and in the absence of unforeseen deviations for Sequence 6 Beyonders, Guillaume Bénet's constitution was merely more robust than that of an ordinary person.

His strength lay in his flexibility and tolerance, rather than fire resistance.

Lumian's observations during the Cordu confrontations validated this point. Both Guillaume Bénet and Pierre Berry, individuals who had clearly progressed beyond Sequence 7, exhibited remarkable combat capabilities, albeit lacking commensurate defensive attributes.

Lumian hadn't anticipated the padre contracting the Steel Body ability. This ability possessed pros and cons. On the one hand, it thwarted Lumian's initial plan for an infernal hell. On the other hand, it curtailed the padre's own capabilities, granting Lumian an opportunity to contend more effectively and unseal the entrance to the Bottle of Fiction. This would permit his accomplice to join the fray and offer assistance. Lumian subsequently exploited Guillaume Bénet's determination to eliminate unnecessary obstructions by dealing with Franca first. He then improvised, crafting a lethal snare.

Amidst the sizzle of burning air, Guillaume Bénet's wailing Spirit Body disintegrated swiftly, gradually dissipating. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

With the task accomplished, Lumian pivoted, acknowledging Franca and Jenna with a nod, signifying his completion.

In the ensuing instant, he staggered toward the altar, retrieving the skins of cow, sheep, and dog.

These items were whole, exuding a sinister aura upon closer inspection.

These constituted specialized hides, amassed through the initial half of the Animal Creation Spell ritual, harnessed by leveraging Ascetic powers for accumulation. Upon grasping the corresponding incantation and enveloping individuals and oneself with these skins, the Animal Creation Spell could be executed outright.

Although Lumian hadn't yet deciphered the predetermined incantation for animal creation or its nullification, these obstacles could be surmounted in due course. He could, for instance, detain Paulina, the padre's butler, and others to determine if they possessed

such knowledge. Alternatively, he could engage a Cryptologist of the Marauder pathway to decode the incantation. He could even resort to trial and error, applying his knowledge of the Inevitability domain and his comprehension of Guillaume Bénet's persona. Last of all, he could use divination to get any clarity on success.

Thus, these two sheepskins, a single cowhide, and two dogskins held considerable value. Employed judiciously, they could unleash unparalleled effects. Guillaume Bénet had nearly beguiled Lumian previously by adopting the guise of a massive, brown-furred dog, attempting to flee Rue Vincent and sever their destined encounter. However, his fanaticism in Inevitability's boon and his greed due to his contract had overridden reason. This led him to transition from prey to hunter, setting a trap in reverse.

When Lumian's body began to sway as if he had lost his footing, Franca and Jenna lent their support, each helping him bear a share of the cow, sheep, and dog skins.

In that instant, the Bottle of Fiction quaked.

Stripped of Guillaume Bénet's reinforcement and subjected to the infernal hellfire for a duration, it eventually fractured akin to ice, its fragments plunging into the void.

The derelict cavern, encompassed by its confinement, unveiled itself to Lumian and his companions through the secret door. All the Abyss Demon Flowers had been reduced to ashes and strewn across the ground. The flames had exhausted their combustibles, and bereft of Lumian's spirituality, most had dwindled to cinders. Only select regions persisted with a crimson luminescence, which was waning steadily.

Lumian glanced at Franca and said, "I'll head back to Rue des Blouses Blanches through Underground Trier. Carry the Earth Blood ore as you make your way to the surface."

Once the Decency brooch was removed, Lumian would inevitably be scorned by those around him. Should he retrace his steps, numerous mishaps could befall him. Alternatively, if he didn't remove it, an alert would be triggered within two to three minutes, attracting the

attention of nearby official Beyonders or concealed factions.

Given the potential complications involved in carrying the Earth Blood ore into the underground, coupled with the possible difficulties Jenna might encounter upon receiving it, Franca nodded, pursing her lips, and turned toward Jenna. “Follow Ciel. He’s at his limit. He might not even stand a chance against a dog.”

“If it’s the same dog as before, I wouldn’t be able to defeat it,” Lumian muttered.

As the exit on the opposite side of the abandoned mine remained unobstructed, a frigid gust swept into the sacrificial hall, dispersing the anesthetic gas with the fragmentation of the Bottle of Fiction. Lumian staggered onward, arriving at the charred remains of Guillaume Bénet.

He kicked the body and turned it over, ensuring nothing was concealed within.

Lumian picked up the iron-gray military alcohol flask and advanced toward the abandoned mine’s exit. There, he noticed a brown-furred dog skin that no longer bore a sinister aura.

This particular area had avoided incineration, leaving the dog skin intact. Nevertheless, the process of reconstituting the Animal Creation Spell ritual was mandatory. Only through the application of an Ascetic’s ability could it regain its status as a Beyonder item.

Beyond the abandoned mine’s exit, two objects were propped against the rocky wall.

One comprised a kerosene-lit lantern, while the other was a dark-green canvas backpack favored by adventurers and mercenaries.

Lumian hoisted the backpack, finding it surprisingly weighty. It was almost too heavy to lift.

Curious, Franca crouched down and unfastened the backpack. Within it lay gratifying gold bars, stacks of banknotes, and golden coins.

“Wow!” Franca exclaimed.

So much money? Lumian's initial thought was: Thank goodness, the padre didn't expend all of Aurore's accrued royalties. This was followed by a rather visceral reaction: F*cking dammit, this man is so sinister!

Evidently, Guillaume Bénet had anticipated the possibility that Paulina and the others might not escape. In such an eventuality, Lumian and his companions could deduce that the padre had chosen an alternate escape route based on the scarce funds carried by these Inevitability believers. Consequently, they would converge on the basement, inadvertently walking into a trap.

"Not too shabby, not at all," Franca remarked, grinning. "While these heretics might not drop characteristics, they do drop other spoils."

Indicating upward with her hand, she continued, "I'm heading back up. Pass me this dog skin."

She relinquished the three ritualistic hides to Jenna and returned to 50 Rue Vincent, clutching Guillaume Bénet's dog skin.

Jenna slung the dark-green canvas bag over her shoulder, gripping the five sinister hides. She observed as Lumian picked up the lantern and kindled it.

After a few strides through the dim tunnel outside the abandoned mine, Lumian promptly removed the Decency brooch and placed it in another military alcohol flask hanging from his waist, sinking it to the bottom of the liquor.

Lumian took a few more steps before suddenly shuddering. He turned around, glancing at Jenna who was trailing behind.

Jenna, clasping the cow, sheep, and dog skins while toting the canvas bag, bore a somber expression, marked by repugnance. She struggled to speak, her voice faltering, "I-I can control myself. Dammit, I won't beat you up!"

Though Lumian was skeptical, he had no choice but to continue his journey.

After seven to eight minutes, he encountered an abandoned tunnel

and settled into a corner, awaiting the dissipation of the Decency brooch's adverse effects. He seized the opportunity to rest and recuperate some of his spirituality.

…

The events that transpired at 50 Rue Vincent remained unknown to anyone as Franca methodically erased all evidence and conducted an anti-divination process in the manner befitting a Demoness.

Throughout this endeavor, she combed through every room. Vigilant against potential corruption, she refrained from delving too deeply, though her explorations yielded neither valuable clues nor significant items of interest.

Ultimately, she returned to the parlor on the ground floor, rousing the unconscious impostor Guillaume Bénet.

The imposter Guillaume Bénet gazed at the cloaked figure adorned in a black robe, a brown dog skin clutched within her grasp. For a fleeting moment, he experienced a sensation akin to being trapped within a dream, unable to awaken.

Franca emitted a soft chuckle.

"As you can see, we've killed that devil."

In her eyes, the imposter Guillaume Bénet was no longer identical to the padre. He had become very unfamiliar.

Perhaps this was his true appearance.

"I-I…" The imposter Guillaume Bénet stammered in surprise and elation, "Are you here to aid me?"

"We're Demon Hunters," Franca fabricated. "What else can you tell us about this devil?"

Though her Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell enabled Lumian to glean extensive information from Guillaume Bénet, its reach had limitations. It could not cover every facet. Further inquiry into relevant individuals was imperative to avert the risk of overlooking

crucial leads.

The imposter Guillaume Bénet found the shrouded woman before him remarkably affable. He contemplated briefly before responding, “Other than engaging in an affair with my wife and indulging in steak and mutton chops, there’s nothing particularly remarkable about that devil.

“Yes… I-it vanishes for one day each week before resurfacing without fanfare.”

Disappearing once a week? Franca acknowledged this detail and pursued further inquiries.

Having exhausted the potential for extracting additional information, she smiled and subtly instigated the imposter Guillaume Bénet.

“If I were in your position, I’d hastily depart this location. Your wife is akin to a devil.

“I would relocate any valuable possessions to regions where my identity remains unknown. I’d purchase a new residence, enter a fresh marriage, and embark on a new chapter.”

Guillaume Bénet’s heartbeat hastened, and his resolve to stand his ground waned.

In the ensuing moment, he observed the woman before him liquefy akin to melting ice.

Chapter 334 - 334 Clues

334 Clues

In the abandoned tunnel, Lumian's eyes snapped open.

Unintended slumber had overtaken him, but it also served to rejuvenate his spirituality. At the very least, the pounding in his head had ebbed away, and the searing fire coursing through his veins, organs, and flesh had altogether abated.

Lumian's sight plunged into unadulterated darkness. His hands groped for the lantern that had been snuffed out, and after lighting it, he noticed Jenna. Clad in the guise of a female mercenary, she sat diagonally across from him. She reclined against the tunnel's wall, her gaze affixed to the dark-green canvas backpack and the five ritualistic hides splayed before her.

Sensing the corresponding motion, Jenna looked up at Lumian.

After scrutinizing him for a few seconds, she playfully jested, "Finally, you're no longer as annoying."

Have the negative effects of the Decency brooch been lifted? Lumian instinctively exhaled a sigh of relief.

Jenna's lips curled into a grin as she rose, hoisting the dark green canvas backpack onto her shoulder. She told Lumian, "Earlier, I entertained notions of beating you up and painting your face with dog poop while you slept. But I managed to restrain myself."

"Much appreciated," Lumian said, his gratitude tinged with sarcasm.

With the backpack slung casually over one shoulder, Jenna stooped to gather the five ritualistic hides. Her smile bore an air of leisure as she uttered, "You're welcome."

And with that, she strode toward the tunnel's exit, a smile dancing on her lips.

"Chalk it up to me treating you as a friend?"

You're mocking me again… Lumian grumbled under his breath, picking up the lantern before following suit.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca, now dressed in her usual attire—a blouse and light-colored breeches—awaited Lumian and Jenna's return.

Her eyes traveled over Lumian's scorched upper body, and a grin formed on her lips.

"Jenna didn't take the opportunity to stab you a few times? Decency's negative effects aren't as potent as I'd imagined."

Jenna interjected before Lumian could respond, "For the first half-hour, it was a real struggle. I had to hide outside the tunnel where he was resting. Every few minutes, I checked for potential threats from below ground, the ceiling, or behind the rock walls. But even then, I seriously contemplated collapsing the tunnel and burying him alive."

That's not what you said just now… Lumian couldn't help but glance at Jenna.

For a moment, he couldn't tell if the Instigator was telling the truth in the abandoned tunnel or if she was telling the truth now.

Franca chuckled and gave Jenna a thumbs-up.

"That couldn't have been easy. You maintained your vigilance, even in a semi-enclosed, deserted tunnel. You anticipated attacks from below, the cave's ceiling, and the very walls surrounding him."

Jenna's brows relaxed, and her smug smile was unmistakable.

"You're always feeding me those horror tales, remember? Like hands

emerging from the earth to grab ankles, bloody heads dangling from ceilings, or figures springing from walls to embrace the protagonist."

Every night's entertainment involves retelling horror stories to Jenna? Lumian glanced at Franca, sensing that her intentions might run deeper.

"See? Those stories have their uses!" Franca beamed.

Then she turned her attention to Lumian.

"Need a doctor?"

The burns appeared quite severe.

"No need. For a Pyromaniac, it's merely a minor scrape." Lumian refrained from mentioning that he would be fully recovered by 6 a.m. the following morning. "And if things worsen, I can always seek out Rat."

His nurtured Planter hadn't risen to the ranks of a Sequence 8 Doctor yet, so his assistance was rather limited at the moment.

Observing Lumian's lack of visible discomfort, Franca's concern lessened. She picked up the dark-green canvas backpack Jenna had left on the armchair and prepared to place it on the coffee table to meticulously tally their spoils.

Casually, Lumian pushed aside cups, plates, newspapers, and magazines that cluttered the table, creating enough space.

Glancing around, he noticed the magazine's title: Women.

It was a widely read weekly among middle-class Intisien women, showcasing Trier's latest fashion trends, lifestyle advice, and beauty tips. The Loen Kingdom had its own bootleg version, Ladies Aesthetic.

Lumian raised his head with a smile, and his gaze shifted to Franca, a playful question in his eyes:"Oh, you read such magazines?"

Franca pursed her lips and puffed out her chest in response: "What's

wrong with me reading Women?"

After their brief exchange, Franca unzipped the backpack and removed banknotes, coins, and gold bars.

"Roughly 60,000 verl d'or," she assessed after a moment's calculation.

In a little over two months, the padre had managed to deplete 40,000 verl d'or of Aurore's savings. And all that without acquiring Beyonder characteristics or obtaining any mystical items… The more Lumian pondered, the more vexed he grew.

It wasn't that the padre lacked options for mystical items; rather, suitable ones were proving elusive. On the one hand, his status as a heretic warranted caution, limiting his exposure. He didn't frequent many mysticism gatherings, and thus remained ignorant about numerous aspects. On the other hand, his slew of contracted creatures came with many negative repercussions. Several mystical items would be counterproductive or perilous for him. Some might even bring about abrupt, fatal consequences.

Franca pondered for a moment before addressing Lumian and Jenna, "All the gold is Ciel's share. I'll take half of the remaining assets. Jenna, you and Anthony can divide the rest. Let's decide on the distribution once Anthony returns and we see what he's managed to acquire. Does that sound fair?"

This arrangement would allocate around 30,000 verl d'or to Lumian and 15,000 to Franca.

"I'm fine with that," Jenna responded with a hint of concern. "But Anthony still hasn't come back. Dammit, could something have happened to him?" Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

"If it were anyone else, I might suspect trouble, but Anthony is a Psychiatrist. He's highly skilled in reading people, so falling into a trap is unlikely for him. Plus, he's an experienced information broker. His tracking abilities are on par with mine or Ciel's," Franca explained with a smile. "Most importantly, while waiting for you

two, I used Magic Mirror Divination to ensure his safety. Heh, it might actually be a good sign that he's taking so long. It suggests he hasn't lost his target and might have gained something."

"Why do you have to explain so much instead of just saying you checked through divination?" Lumian quipped, finding amusement in the situation.

Franca made a tongue-clicking sound and chuckled.

"You don't get it. This is about not solely relying on divination."

She gestured toward the five ritualistic hides.

"Are those the components for the Animal Creation Spell? Can we use them?"

"At the moment, only I can utilize them," Lumian replied, shaking his head. "And I haven't obtained Guillaume Bénet's preset incantation yet."

Franca's expression showed a tinge of disappointment as she settled into her recliner.

After a few seconds, her smile returned.

"By the way, I've discreetly informed the authorities using my contacts that a wanted criminal is hiding at 50 Rue Vincent. Once Guillaume Bénet's death is confirmed, we should be eligible for a bounty of around 20,000. Should we stick to our initial plan for distributing that?"

Entrusting this task to Jenna wasn't feasible. It could raise suspicions that Lumian Lee was among the people she associated with.

Anthony Reid, the information broker, was the most suitable choice, but his absence raised concerns. Franca worried that further delays might lead the police to uncover the situation at 50 Rue Vincent before they could claim the bounty.

Once Lumian and Jenna acknowledged the plan without objections, the trio settled in to await Anthony Reid's return.

After a few minutes, the seated Lumian leaned forward, fixing his gaze on Franca and Jenna. In a measured tone, he said, “There’s a matter I need your analysis on.”

With Aurore’s affairs, he often found himself grappling with his emotions and straying from rationality. This was why he wanted to hear perspectives from Franca and Jenna.

One of them shared a connection with Aurore, yet their bond was markedly different from Lumian’s deep tie with Aurore. The other had no direct involvement, making their viewpoints invaluable in approaching the situation from diverse angles.

“Sure,” both Franca and Jenna responded in unison, adopting a professional demeanor by shifting their postures.

For the first time, Lumian recounted the events in Cordu. While he omitted certain details such as the Inevitability angel and anything related to the dreamscape, he provided an overview of the catastrophe. This encompassed Aurore’s unusual behavior, Louis Lund, Madame Pualis, Guillaume Bénet, and the rest.

Franca had some prior knowledge, but Jenna was largely unfamiliar with this narrative. As Lumian spoke, the underground singer of Salle de Bal Brise and apprentice actress at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons found herself transported into a world that seemed both distant and strangely familiar.

While the notion of the Animal Creation Spell was already unnerving, they weren’t prepared for concepts like “men giving birth” and “babies scaling walls like birds.”

It was madness, utter madness!

Franca’s primary concern, however, revolved around Aurore’s transformation. She had harbored curiosity about Muggle’s death in Cordu but hadn’t dared to probe too deeply, fearing it might agitate Lumian.

Franca couldn’t believe it when she realized the source of the problem was Aurore. This didn’t match her impression of Muggle at

all.

Aurore's revelation that she wasn't Aurore Lee in the presence of Guillaume Bénet caught Franca off guard. Her initial surprise morphed into a grave expression.

Soon, Lumian narrated the concluding sacrificial ritual. Aurore's sudden awakening within the altar and her act of shoving him to safety allowed him to survive.

In response to this account, Franca abruptly rose from her seat.

Baffling Lumian and Jenna with her actions, she hurried to her bedroom, returning with a stack of papers in hand.

These were Aurore's grimoires, transcribed by Lumian who harbored a suspicion that something might be awry. He had hoped Franca could offer insights.

The papers were spread across the coffee table, and Franca extracted one sheet, her expression morphing into a blend of trepidation and seriousness. She began, "I think I know what's wrong."

Lumian looked over in surprise and saw that the notebook had a copy of the Warlock spell known as Soul Summoning.

A supplementary spell designed to aid spirits in separating from the flesh or to help Astral Projections find their spirits when adrift in the spirit realm.

Having previously studied the spell structure, Lumian had discerned no problematic elements. It wasn't associated with any evil god.

However, Franca's words carried a weight that demanded attention. Lumian directed his gaze to the spell once more, focusing on the date and its origin.

"April 1, 1357, purchased from the April Fool's Gathering."

Chapter 335 - 335 Another World

335 Another World

Lumian withdrew his focus from the grimoire and turned his attention to Franca.

“Is there a problem with that?”

He had meticulously studied the Soul Summoning Spell on numerous occasions. If there had been a problem, he should have uncovered it sooner.

His limitation lay in his inability to learn the spell and discern its ultimate effects. However, as a Pyromaniac, he didn’t possess the necessary capacity for such learnings, being incompatible with the corresponding Sequence.

Franca remained silent for a few seconds before speaking up, “What happens when the Soul Summoning Spell is used on others?”

“It enables a spirit to reunite with the body from which it was separated, providing a means to call back Astral Projections lost in the spirit world, thus offering an opportunity for reconnection with their physical forms,” Lumian began, describing the spell based on Aurore’s grimoire before offering a personal example for clarity. “In the previous battle, if I had been afflicted by Guillaume Bénet’s Soul Assimilation Mystic Spell, resulting in severe disorientation, the Soul Summoning Spell might have roused me from unconsciousness. Naturally, the premise here is that there exist Beyonders with the ability to learn and employ this spell.”

Franca disregarded Lumian’s answer and inquired with gravitas, “What if one were to employ it on oneself?”

What kind of question is that? Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, “It would be ineffective. If no signs of separation between spirit and body are evident, the spell would have no impact when cast on oneself. If there’s already a problem resembling such a condition, then one wouldn’t be able to employ any spells at all.”

“But what if, hypothetically…” Franca began before her words trailed off.

Jenna, observant and quick-witted, glanced at Franca, then at Lumian before rising from her seat and flashing a smile.

“We’ve been engrossed in discussion for quite a while. Aren’t you both feeling hungry? How about I get some afternoon tea?”

“Sure,” Lumian agreed on Franca’s behalf.

He sensed that Franca was on the brink of revealing something that might be problematic if Jenna caught wind of it. This was why she stopped short in the midst of speaking.

Lumian had already contemplated introducing Jenna to Mr. Fool’s faith. They were comrades now, destined for numerous joint endeavors. In such scenarios, certain secrets couldn’t be concealed, and in constantly doing so, would inevitably hinder collaboration.

As for whether to share information about the Tarot Club and Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian hadn’t reached a conclusion.

After careful consideration, he determined that preaching to Jenna would be more fitting once she became a Witch. Her Sequence was still too low, and she lacked the strength to shoulder the weight of such knowledge. Too much information could make her vulnerable and inadvertently divulge secrets. However, Sequence 7 Witches of the Assassin pathway represented a qualitative transformation below the demigod tier, empowering Jenna to fend for herself.

While Lumian remained unfamiliar with the Sequence 5 of this particular pathway—its name and the Beyonder powers it encompassed—he believed that a Sequence 6 Demoness of Pleasure

didn't manifest a drastic metamorphosis compared to a Witch. The latter could even alter an individual's gender, illustrating the considerable gap in their capabilities.

Franca's gaze followed Jenna's retreating figure until the sound of her gradually fading footsteps reached her ears. She settled into a cross-legged position on the recliner, emitting a soft sigh.

"It's not that Jenna couldn't know about this, but I'm concerned that it might make her fearful of me, that she'll distance herself and view me in a different way."

Lumian didn't pose the question: "Aren't you worried I might react similarly?" He retook his seat, patience etched on his features as he awaited Franca's explanation about the Soul Summoning Spell.

Franca's lips pursed, her demeanor wavering between hesitation and apprehension. After a beat, she chuckled self-mockingly.

"It's also why I sensed a dangerous aura in this matter—otherwise, I wouldn't have even thought about sharing this with you. I would have kept it to my grave. Uh, there's another reason too—your Spell of Harrumph's origins are of great significance to me. I hope you'll lay bare all the details with me, just as I'm about to disclose my secret to you.

"Sigh, we, members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, share one commonality—we all come from another world!"

With that, Franca slouched further into the recliner, seemingly drained of energy.

Observing a Demoness of Pleasure adopt such a posture inadvertently fueled a subtle warmth within Lumian, despite his thoughts being directed elsewhere.

"Another world?" Lumian echoed, genuine surprise coloring his voice.

This was an outcome that hadn't even crossed his mind.

Such a possibility was one that ordinary individuals would scarcely

contemplate and a rarity even within the confines of fiction. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

In a fleeting moment, he sensed an odd alignment with this notion.

With a conscious effort to rein in his emotions, he inquired thoughtfully, “Is this the ‘home’ my sister often speaks of—the place she claims she can never return to?”

Initially, Lumian had surmised that his sister’s homeland had been ravaged by conflict or catastrophe, hence her assertion of being unable to return. Otherwise, armed with her Warlock strength, she could have surreptitiously revisited, even if she was being pursued by the entire world.

Subsequently, Lumian discovered Aurore’s status as a Trierien, causing him to find her references to an enigmatic “home” perplexing.

Franca’s expression shifted into one of complex emotions upon hearing Lumian’s question. Her countenance was a blend of wistfulness, melancholy, and sorrow.

“Does she frequently speak of ‘home’?” Franca inquired, her eyes briefly shuttered to mask the shifting emotions within.

Without awaiting Lumian’s reply, Franca’s lips pursed, and she continued, “Think of it as another planet or alternate dimension.”

Lumian dipped into his memories, muttering to himself, “No wonder she enjoys climbing up to the rooftop to gaze at the cosmos…”

“The cosmos…” Franca echoed with a sigh.

A hushed ambiance enshrouded Apartment 601 as Lumian and Franca delved into their introspective reveries.

After a pause, a memory resurfaced within Lumian’s mind.

Madam Magician had mentioned evil gods like the Mother Tree of Desire existing outside our world, separated by a barrier. These entities perpetually seek methods to breach that boundary.

Lumian's gaze shifted toward Franca, and he voiced his thoughts, "Could it be that all of you are spawn of an evil god released into this world?"

"Pfft!" Franca immediately shook off her contemplative state. "Do we look anything like that to you?"

"No," Lumian responded after a brief pondering, "You're far too weak for the efforts of the evil gods to be expended in sending you here. They could have instead focused on sending more of Their saints. Or perhaps They are pinning Their hopes on your potential growth?"

After all, being weak had its own advantages. Infiltration through the barrier would be less likely to be detected.

Amused and slightly annoyed, Franca was tempted to refute his words, but tangible evidence eluded her grasp, leaving her with little recourse.

"In any case, I've come to believe in Mr. Fool. Not one member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society whom I've encountered shares faith in an evil god."

"Even if they did, they might not reveal it to you…" Lumian muttered.

Franca ignored his comment and continued, "I also remain uncertain about the why behind our transmigration. I've been seeking an answer for quite some time. What I do know is that we arrived in this world as spirits and found ourselves reborn within other individuals' bodies. It's comparable to Guillaume Bénet's process of Rebirth."

Drawing on this analogy, Lumian effortlessly comprehended the situation of Franca and her companions in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

"In other words, you inhabit the bodies of other people?"

"Yes." Franca cast a sidelong glance at Lumian, remarking, "Are you disheartened to learn that the sister you hold dear is essentially a wandering spirit occupying another's body?"

“Why would I be disheartened?” Lumian responded casually. “Aurore Lee, the person who took me in and shared my life in Cordu for nearly six years, is my sister. I care not for the past of that body or its history.”

Franca seemed to seek Lumian’s perspective on her own behalf, “Don’t you find this situation morally dubious? Do you not consider your sister and me as thieves who appropriate the corpses and lives of others? Does this not present you with moral dilemmas or conflicts?”

“I have no morals,” Lumian replied calmly.

Expanding upon his statement, he added, “I show kindness to those who are kind to me.”

Franca’s mouth slightly agape, she struggled to find an immediate rejoinder.

Lumian glanced at her and said, “That person is already deceased. It’s a pragmatic use of available resources. If guilt weighs on you, treat her—no, his family well. Perhaps even fulfill some of his unfulfilled desires.”

“True.” Franca pressed her lips together, nodding in agreement.

Steering the conversation back to its initial trajectory, she inquired, “What might occur if individuals like us were to employ the Soul Summoning Spell on ourselves?”

“Could it summon a departed spirit? And if there’s an underlying issue with the spirit itself…” Lumian’s train of thought expanded abruptly.

Simultaneously, he recalled a line of inquiry introduced by Madame Hela, the vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

“Muggle’s parents and other relatives likely remain alive in this world. For some reason, she distanced herself from them and refrains from returning to Trier. It’s unclear whether there’s something amiss with them or if they’ve come into contact with heretics…”

Did Madame Hela already harbor suspicions? Lumian's brows furrowed as he whispered,

"Could Roche Louise Sanson be the original boyd's spirit? Is she and some of her family members associated with Inevitability, perhaps even linked to the Sinners organization?"

"Continuing our investigation in that direction is indeed a possibility," Franca admitted after a moment's contemplation. "Two other questions arise. Why did Muggle resort to the Soul Summoning Spell for herself? Did the April Fool's member who sold her the spell foresee this outcome?"

Franca had chosen to share the secret of their transmigration with Lumian, sensing that something might be awry within the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and discerning an impending threat.

Lumian offered a subdued nod, his expression void of emotion. A subtle smile played upon his lips as he ventured, "You mentioned that April Fool's Day was formed by members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society who are disheartened by the future and seek only joy. Could it be that the individual who sold Aurore the Soul Summoning Spell hoped to experience such amusement?"

Franca fell into a brief contemplative silence before replying, "I don't know. I'll take charge of locating the April Fool's member and delve into their motivations."

Lumian offered a curt acknowledgment. "I'll follow the trail of Roche Louise Sanson."

With the conversation surrounding the Soul Summoning Spell concluded, an interim quiet settled within the living room of Apartment 601.

After a pause, Franca exhaled softly and told Lumian, "You can now tell me about the Spell of Harrumph."

Chapter 336 - 336 Armored Shadow's Origins

336 Armored Shadow's Origins

Lumian shifted his focus away from thoughts of Roche Louise Sanson, the Soul Summoning Spell, and April Fool's. He began recounting the tale from the very beginning, all at the behest of Franca.

"In the wake of the Cordu disaster, I found myself tainted by the corruption of the evil god, Inevitability. Fortunately, the protection granted to me by Mr. Fool allowed me to retain my sanity, preventing me from transforming into a monster.

"This corruption, a curse and yet a blessing, is now being extracted in stages, as per the instructions of Madam Magician. The aim is to channel this corruption into my own power, finding equilibrium with the corresponding Sequence Beyonder characteristic."

Franca was enlightened.

"So, what you were referring to as a 'special contract' is essentially the power of a Contractee? No wonder you mentioned it's impossible for me to learn it."

Since Lumian didn't know the powers of a Sequence 6 of the Inevitability pathway, she deduced his current state as a dual Sequence 7 Pyromaniac and Contractee.

Lumian nodded.

"That's why Guillaume Bénet doesn't dare to meddle with my fate recklessly. The degree of corruption within me is rather substantial."

A sudden revelation crossed Franca's mind. "To require Mr. Fool's

safeguard, it means there must be godhood involved. Could there be a chance for me to receive similar boons?"

Do you want to give everything a shot? Lumian clicked his tongue and asked, "Are you prepared to seek out the Great Mother, engaging in daily cycles of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding? Alternatively, do you wish to put faith in the Mother Tree of Desire and drag stray dogs to bed?"

"Hiss…" Franca gasped and said, "I was merely musing. Engaging in the risky business of following an evil god is out of the question for me. The immediacy of gaining Mr. Fool's protection by merely brushing against the power of an evil god, much like you, is a rarity indeed."

"This isn't a mere brush against power." To dispel Franca's unrealistic thoughts, Lumian divulged a little more. "The power of Inevitability is sealed within me. In essence, I beseech Mr. Fool and the corruption within me, for a boon instead of the entity known as Inevitability. This approach is pivotal for ensuring my very survival. Otherwise, I risk becoming unrecognizable or just dying abruptly."

Franca instinctively exhaled and said, "Just tell me about the Spell of Harrumph."

Lumian restructured his narrative, stating, "To prevent any indirect influences from Inevitability, I gave up the strange creatures that accompanied the knowledge bestowed by the boon. Instead, I obtained a wealth of information about creatures from the spirit world through Madam Magician. You know the rest.

"The Spell of Harrumph originates from a creature of the spirit world that I summoned. Initially, I aimed to summon the Shadow of Shriek. However, whether due to my invocation being witnessed by Mr. Fool or my summoning incantation lacking precision, I can't say for certain, but the entity I summoned greatly diverged from the description of the Shadow of Shriek…"

Lumian delineated the relevant summoning incantation, the concept driving its formulation, the Armored Shadow's visual attributes, and its array of capabilities, all in meticulous detail. He even used his

barely-passable drawing skills to illustrate a rudimentary schematic.

Fish Scale Armor… Spell of Harrumph… Night Parade of Ten Thousand Demons… Soul Devouring Scream… Franca softly uttered these names to herself while gazing at the sketch on the coffee table, her gaze seemingly distant.

Lumian probed, “Is there an issue?”

Were Aurore present, would she also react in a similar fashion?

Franca snapped back to the present, her expression a blend of solemnity and exhilaration.

“That Armored Shadow might very well be from our world!”

“The world that you guys come from?” Lumian hadn’t expected such an answer.

Yet, it made sense. The armor’s design and the ability names bore a distinctive uniqueness, setting them apart from the present world.

Franca confirmed tersely.

“There are many countries in our world, and the culture and language of each country are different. The Armored Shadow is very similar to some entity in the myths and legends of the country your sister and I hail from.”

“Are you from the same country as Aurore?” Lumian was most concerned about this.

He paused a beat before continuing, “Did Mr. Fool’s might, combined with my imprecise incantation, summon the Armored Shadow from your world? Or did he transmigrate long ago, much like you, eventually transforming into a spirit world shadow after his demise?”

Franca said excitedly, “If it’s the former, it could signify a bridge between our two worlds. This implies the potential for our return! If it’s the latter, the question arises: how did he use the capabilities of our original world? Did he bring these skills along, or did he acquire them at a later time?”

Resolving these mysteries would inch her closer to the truth of transmigration, potentially paving the path back home!

Franca rose from her seat, her eyes gleaming with intrigue as she faced Lumian.

“Can you summon the Armored Shadow? I’m keen to witness it firsthand.”

“I have a pact with him. The need to invoke Mr. Fool’s intervention is eliminated for precise summoning,” Lumian observed Franca’s evident enthusiasm, as though she was readying to assist in setting up the altar. Steering the conversation, he added, “Nonetheless, I perceive him to be immensely dangerous. While under Mr. Fool’s aegis, the danger is mitigated. However, if that protection wanes, we could well find ourselves killed by the shadow. Yet, should we remain sheltered by Mr. Fool, direct communication remains an impossibility, precluding spirit channeling. We can solely execute the summoning rite.”

Franca frowned in disappointment.

“What’s our course of action then?”

Lumian pondered for a moment and said, “Wait till I gather 100,000 verl d’or worth of gold and fulfill the contract.

“By doing so, the pact’s power shall act as our shield, enabling us to figure out why the Armored Shadow demands such a substantial sum.”

After a thoughtful pause that spanned nearly a minute, Franca finally exhaled.

“That’s all we can do for now.”

Initially, her intention had been to promptly corroborate the situation concerning the Armored Shadow and extract pertinent insights from it. Subsequently, she planned to inform the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, pooling their collective effort to unearth viable solutions. However, for the time being, she had no choice but to defer these actions.

After a period of immersion in the summoning incantation, it became evident that Franca's success rate in summoning was rather low, presumably due to an imprecise methodology. While it was possible that a Shadow of Shriek could be summoned, Lumian surmised that by omitting a particular descriptive line and using "Lumian Lee's contracted creature," the target could be pinpointed more precisely.

After a while, Jenna returned with a spread of coffee, treats, and meatloaf. The ravenous appetites that had ensued from their prior battle now found their solace in afternoon tea.

As evening approached, Anthony Reid, masquerading as a clerk, made his return to Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"How did it go?" Lumian's concern was evident, unabashedly displayed.

With his weathered top hat set aside, Anthony nodded slightly.

"I trailed the lady, her butler, valet, maid, and carriage driver to 20 Rue de la Terrasse, within the library district.

"It appears to be an alternate residence of sorts, akin to a safe house."

Franca turned her gaze towards Lumian, inquiring, "Should we maintain surveillance?"

Lumian ruminated for a beat and then grinned.

"No need. Periodic checks to ensure they haven't left will suffice."

"Why?" Jenna had expected Ciel to rush to deal with them to gather more information.

Lumian's smile was radiant.

"Behind them stands an organization known as the Sinners. Their point of contact is likely aware of Guillaume Bénet's demise, prompting them to disengage and erase any traces, making investigation thorny.

"Yet, if the Sinners find that they had managed to evade our pursuit

and that there's no surveillance, what might come to pass?

"Perhaps a connection will be reestablished!

"Only authentic non-surveillance can convince the Sinners that the issue has faded. They could then become active anew, crawling out from their rat's nest!"

Dammit… Jenna cursed silently.

Ciel is so sinister!

Anthony, having garnered significant intel, claimed two-thirds of the final 15,000 verl d'or, leaving Jenna with a share of 5,000.

As banknotes were deftly stowed away within assorted pockets, Anthony Reid turned his attention to Lumian.

"I'm eager to delve into the secrets surrounding Hugues Artois and the truth behind his treachery. I hope to begin the investigation soon."

This was the primary reason for his involvement in the operation.

"Very well." Lumian had already discussed this matter with Jenna and Franca.

Jenna was set to glean relevant details from the Purifiers.

As Franca was highly excited about the Armored Shadow matter, she took the initiative to suggest,

"I have acquaintances from Loen. I'll see if I can obtain a battle record from the Loen military. It might shed new light on the situation."

"That's a good idea." Anthony Reid's eyes lit up.

The notion of soliciting the truth directly from the attacker had not previously crossed his mind.

…

On Rue Anarchie's forever-bustling nights, Lumian, relinquishing the task of divining the incantations to Franca, walked towards Auberge du Coq Doré. There, his intent was to summon the messenger of Madam Magician, intending to relay matters regarding Guillaume Bénet, the Sinners organization, and the Armored Shadow. Concurrently, he hoped she could relay to Madam Justice and Madam Susie his readiness for their final therapy session.
nove(l)bi(n.)com

Under the cool embrace of the night breeze, Lumian's thoughts unfurled languidly.

After learning from Franca about the shared trait among members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian's impression of Aurore crystallized.

Of course, the vagueness was something he didn't understand at first, but he deemed it of little consequence. Investigations were unwarranted.

It's no wonder that Aurore severed her familial ties to reside in Cordu, a frontier village. It's no wonder that she harbors a disinclination towards Trier. It's no wonder she always says strange words and likes to explain to me what they mean. It's no wonder her novels were different from the contemporary ones. It's no wonder she likes to say 'a certain philosopher from home once said' only to substitute it with 'Emperor Roselle once said'… Lumian ruminated in a wordless, contemplative cadence, a sensation of calm washing over him, as if he wasn't strolling on Rue Anarchie but Cordu.

It was a place he could never return to.

Simultaneously, Lumian gained an understanding of the symbolic elements in the dream.

Aurore's acquisition of the land previously occupied by a deceased Warlock—could this embody her possession of Roche Louise Sanson's body?

Consequently, might the legendary Warlock, Roche Louise Sanson, symbolize the original adherents of Inevitability?

Mr. Poet failed to interpret the dual symbolic meanings because he lacked crucial information previously. He had solely indicated to Lumian that they likely bore their own significance.

As his thoughts raced, Lumian returned to Room 207 and saw a simple folded letter on the table.

Letter? This doesn't seem like Madam Magician's… Lumian walked over, alarmed and suspicious. He picked up the letter and unfolded it.

Two lines of elegant Intisian script graced the parchment:

"I have arrived in Trier.

"Hela."

Chapter 337 - 337 Magician's Speculation

337 Magician's Speculation

Madame Hela has arrived in Trier? Lumian held the letter with a countenance etched in complexity.

She had advised Lumian to keep a vigilant watch over Muggle's familial roots, surmising it to be a promising avenue of investigation.

Sheer coincidence, or is there another reason? Lumian pondered briefly before easing into his seat. Beneath the carbide lamp's glow, he set pen to paper, commencing correspondence with Madam Magician.

In succinct prose, he relayed the day's occurrences, his discourse with Franca, and the conundrum of the Armored Shadow. While he withheld no mention of Hela's arrival, he refrained from disclosing the fact that the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's members hailed from an alternate world.

Approximately half an hour later, Lumian received a response from Magician:

"Giving up on the creature accompanying the boon and autonomously choosing a contract partner from the spirit world was a prudent choice. Your transition into an Inevitability Hunter, with the bestowed of the Inevitability pathway as your objective, proves that my subtle guidance bore fruit after all."

At this point, Lumian was a little puzzled.

When had Madam Magician ever hinted at forgoing the strange creatures that came with the boon?

Suddenly, a realization surged forth.

Before praying for a Contractee boon, unaware that the mystical knowledge it brought would encompass contract targets, Madam Magician had offered him information on creatures from the spirit world for his consideration.

It was indeed a hint, but did it have to be so subtle? Lumian mused that those skilled in divination or enamored with astromancy seemed averse to straightforward elucidation. Instead, they favored dropping crumbs of insight or weaving riddles imperceptible to others.

After figuring this out, Lumian lowered his head and resumed poring over Madam Magician's response.

"Sinners, a secret organization that venerates Inevitability, has been around for more than six years. Its origins can be traced back to the closing stages of the Loen Kingdom, the Feysac Empire, and the Intis Republic's war. Roche Louise Sanson, the name you mentioned, might have been an adherent of Inevitability, though perhaps not granted its corresponding boons. In sum, that war provided evil gods more crevices for invading our world.

"You've likely discerned the close connection between Roche Louise Sanson and your sister Aurore. To a certain extent, they're one, yet not wholly distinct personas. Much like the Rebirth ability, your sister carried a prior background, resurrecting within the departed body of Roche Louise Sanson. According to the normative progression, your sister should've taken such a path:

"Integration of Roche's memories and sentiments→internal conflict→a prelude to dissociative identity disorder→self-harmony→embracing a fresh existence.

"If self-reconciliation fell short, engaging a genuine Psychiatrist was requisite.

"Judging by your sister's behavior during the first five years, even if her self-harmony remained incomplete, she fared reasonably well. Likely, her disquiet was manageable. Yet, she found Roche's association with an evil god unacceptable. This unresolved matter

provided an opening for the Soul Summoning Spell.

“Just as you’re puzzled, why would she want to use the Soul Summoning Spell on herself? It’s a crucial question…

“I suspect that Sinners is not only the secret organization’s name, but also a Sequence 2 or Sequence 1 of the Inevitability pathway.

“The entity known as Inevitability does have authority over the past, present, and future. You glimpsed this in your dream, did you not? Sinners of the past and Sufferers of the present, do they not harmonize splendidly? But what befits the future?”

He was relatively calm now. Be it the real Roche Louise Sanson’s revival or Aurore’s dissociative identity and the vestige of spirit unveiled through the Soul Summoning Spell, he could embrace either without much hardship.

Lumian released a deliberate, slow breath, shifting his gaze towards the letter behind.

“The Armored Shadow problem is very complicated. Neither you nor the Two of Cups should be privy to the specifics at this juncture. In fact, prior to your summoning of such a shadow, I’d only heard of analogous entities from Mr. Hanged Man. He’s come across them only three or four times, one instance even within a dream.

“In the future, as you summon the Armored Shadow again and fulfill your commitment, remember to write to me and inform me of any noted changes.”

Mr. Hanged Man… The holder of the Hanged Man card in the Tarot Club? Responsible for addressing the problem with the other world? Lumian’s mind engaged earnestly, realizing Madam Magician’s implicit message: This entails a matter of high caliber. Details are beyond your grasp for now, but you can investigate and follow leads within your capabilities.

This implies the Tarot Club’s vested interest in the world represented by the Armored Shadow… Lumian tacitly nodded, his focus returning to the remnants of the letter.

“I’ll notify you when the timing for the final psychiatric treatment is confirmed…

“Your mystical item should be ready within the upcoming week…

“Meet Hela. No glaring concerns on my end. You might even hint that Aurore’s anomaly might have stemmed from the sale of the Soul Summoning Spell by an April Fool’s member, gauging her reaction. As for telling her about the Armored Shadow, it’s up to you and the Two of Cups.”

Lumian lightly brushed his fingertips, causing the crimson flames to set the letter alight.

After completing this task, he composed a response to Hela.

“Honorable Madame Hela, if it suits you, let’s meet tomorrow at 10 a.m. at Quartier de l’Observatoire’s Little Cow Café on Rue Ancienne.”

Lumian had initially planned to choose a meeting spot in the market district he knew well. But the risk of the Iron and Blood Cross Order spotting him with a stranger was too high.

His second option was to pick a café or beer house near a cathedral. However, he felt that this might come off as overly cautious. It would seem as if he could seek refuge in the cathedral if anything went awry. But the truth was, he didn’t dare to hide there.

In the end, he settled on Rue Ancienne, the street where Salle de Bal Unique was situated.

When the time came, if there was something amiss with Hela, he would draw the danger to the dance hall that set his nerves on edge. He wanted to see if he could manipulate the troublemakers into turning against each other.

After receiving Hela’s response and confirming the time and place, Lumian returned to Rue des Blouses Blanches with the Earth Blood ore. He knocked on Franca and Jenna’s door once more.

Franca was still dressed in her usual attire, not having changed into

her nightwear. She looked at Lumian with a puzzled expression and asked, “Why are you here again?”

Instead of answering, Lumian inquired, “Where’s Jenna?”

“Why do you need to know? She received a payment from you and left to visit her brother,” Franca replied, sensing that Lumian had serious matters to discuss.

Only then did Lumian bring up his meeting with Hela the next day. Finally, he posed the question, “Should I mention Armored Shadow?”

“Not yet. We’ll wait until we have a clearer picture,” Franca said after careful consideration. “For now, don’t mention me. Act as if we’ve never met.”

A chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips. “You’re suspicious of everyone.”

Once the details were confirmed, Lumian glanced at Franca. “Are you heading out?”

“Yes, I’m going to Rue des Fontaines to find Gardner,” Franca replied openly, a mischievous grin on her face. “I’m going to introduce him to some real pleasure.”

Lumian was momentarily speechless.

Franca let out a soft laugh. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

“I don’t have much of a choice. Since neither you nor Jenna are helping me, I need to find someone else to share in the pleasure.”

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, she added with a smile, “I’ll also tell Gardner that I took part in your operation against your enemy at Jenna’s request, and that I received a substantial share of the spoils.”

Lumian was surprised. “I thought you’d keep it a secret from him.”

Franca chuckled and explained, “That guy is actually a very suspicious person. In most cases, telling him the truth works better

than keeping things from him."

As Lumian nodded in agreement, Franca recalled something.

"The ritualistic incantations have been divined. The dispelling incantation is 'His Grace,' and the usage incantations are 'Cow,' 'Sheep,' and 'Dog.' It depends on the type of hide used. Everything's in Hermes."

With that, the Demoness waved her hand and left with a joyful demeanor.

The dispelling incantation is 'His Grace'… The padre sure has a taste for power… Lumian entered Apartment 601, grabbed the five ritualistic hides, and made his way to his safe house.

Of course, he didn't forget to lock the door for Franca.

…

The following morning, on Rue Ancienne, Quartier de l'Observatoire.

Lumian walked among the vintage buildings, realizing that Salle de Bal Unique and the Alone bar remained closed at this hour.

Ding ding ding. A postman pedaled by in a blue floral coat.

Lumian diverted his gaze from the firmly shut door of Salle de Bal Unique and continued his stroll, heading towards the café named Little Cow.

Chapter 338 - 338 Hela

338 Hela

Little Cow Café served the working-class folks of the nearby streets, offering them affordable breakfast and lunch options. Even amidst the bustling night market, patrons could enjoy a hearty and satisfying meal for just 1 verl d'or. Many individuals with modest incomes, such as motel attendants, restaurant handymen, and cleaning staff earning between 60 to 80 verl d'or per month, frequented the café either alone or with their families every couple of weeks to treat themselves.

When Lumian finally arrived, the bustling breakfast rush had subsided. The café had only a handful of customers, and the staff seemed somewhat fatigued, lacking any enthusiasm.

After placing an order for a cup of Macael coffee brewed from ground coffee beans, Lumian settled into the designated spot, patiently awaiting Hela's arrival.

As the cuckoo wall clock in the café struck the hour, a woman pushed open the door and stepped inside.

Clad in an intriguing black dress, she emitted an enigmatic allure, reminiscent of the attire one might expect from a widow.

Upon spotting the woman approaching, Lumian straightened up and scrutinized her intently.

Her skin possessed an unnaturally pale complexion, as though she had been shielded from sunlight for an extended period. Light golden hair cascaded naturally over her shoulders, soft yet lacking in luster. Her eyes seemed to absorb all available light, rendering them dark and impervious to revealing their true color. Though her facial features were rather attractive, they didn't leave a distinct impression

on Lumian. It was almost as though her cold demeanor had cast a shadow, preventing him from forming a complete assessment.

Her icy demeanor didn't merely create distance; it seemed to emanate from within her, causing the ambient temperature to dip slightly.

Before Lumian could discern more details, the woman seated herself across from him and inquired in a chilly tone, "Muggle's brother?"

Although Lumian had already surmised that this was Madame Hela, her directness caught him slightly off guard.

He hadn't expected her to appear without any attempt at disguise, seemingly unconcerned about potential betrayal.

Lumian didn't use the Niese Face or the Mystery Prying Glasses, but he usually employed basic disguises. Relying on his distinctive golden-black hair and simple makeup, he maintained enough divergence from the Lumian Lee depicted in the wanted posters.

Perhaps this is a form of disguise that I can't detect… Lumian offered a polite smile and nodded. "Madame Hela?"

The lady nodded slightly, acknowledging her identity.

"May I offer you something to drink?" Lumian asked politely.

Hela didn't stand on ceremony.

"A glass of absinthe, and a triple espresso shot."

Drinking liquor at 10 a.m., quite the match for my habits… And she even goes for a triple shot of Reem espresso… Did she have a sleepless night? Or perhaps a night of drinking, seeking absinthe to clear her senses? Lumian lifted his right hand and snapped his fingers, signaling the waiter.

Once the light-green absinthe and the strong Reem espresso arrived in front of Hela, Lumian surveyed his surroundings to ensure a secure environment for their conversation.

Gulp… Hela downed half the glass of absinthe in one swift motion,

her pale face gradually regaining some color.

Setting the glass down, she turned a ring on her right middle finger using her left thumb and index finger.

The ring possessed an elegant simplicity, a black diamond with numerous facets set into a base of pure silver.

As Hela rotated the ring gently, Lumian experienced a subtle shift in the surroundings, as if the ambient light had dimmed.

“No one can eavesdrop on us now.” Hela’s voice retained its chilly demeanor.

Impressive… This mastery goes beyond Franca’s abilities. Truly befitting of a member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society who has ventured farthest along the paths of the divine… Lumian maintained his gaze on Hela’s black eyes that possessed a light-swallowing intensity. He proceeded with calm composure.

“I’ve made some new discoveries recently.”

Hela remained silent, her gaze fixed on Lumian, awaiting further disclosure.

“I’ve caught Guillaume Bénet.” Lumian conveyed this without an air of boastfulness; it was akin to a bartender at Salle de Bal Brise mentioning the concoction of a new cocktail.

Hela’s response was a nod, displaying scant interest in the specifics of Guillaume Bénet’s capture.

Commencing with Guillaume Bénet, Lumian recounted the transformations of Muggle—Aurore—detailing the peculiarities that arose, including the appearance of the lizard-like elf and the name Roche Louise Sanson.

In conclusion, he presented a stack of papers.

“This is the grimoire my sister penned three months prior to the spread of Inevitability’s faith in Cordu. Please review it and ascertain any irregularities.”

Throughout the narrative, Hela remained an attentive listener. Yet, her emotional fluctuations and facial expressions remained limited. Only when Lumian mentioned the second appearance of the lizard-like elf and uttered the name “Roche Louise Sanson,” did she exhibit a slight frown.

Hela, who had maintained silence, swiftly perused the grimoire, her pace almost supernatural, as though she could glean mystical insights from its pages with each flip, detecting any anomalies.

After a span of five to six minutes, she extracted a page from her notebook.

It bore the Soul Summoning Spell that Aurore had documented.

Only members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and those sharing common experiences would detect the issue at a glance… Lumian found himself stirred by a sudden wave of emotion.

Hela raised the absinthe once more, finishing the rest of the dreamy green liquid in a single gulp.

After finishing it, she turned her gaze to Lumian and spoke, “What are your thoughts on the matter of the lizard-like elf?”

“I’ve heard rumors that Heaven has banished a group of elves in recent times. Among them are some who bear resemblance to diaphanous lizards,” Lumian responded. He refrained from delving into the symbolic interpretations that Mr. Poet had provided, instead opting to present the account provided by the official investigator, Ryan.

Hela’s complexion took on a slightly rosier hue, the chill in her demeanor diminishing. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“I possess certain insights into these elves and have conducted a degree of study on them.

“They were not banished from Heaven. It’s plausible that they originated from an alternate realm. Aligning certain folklore and events in the alternate realm, coupled with the passage of time, may have allowed elements from the alternate realm to permeate the

spirit world and enter our world.

“At present, this is a hypothesis I personally have. I haven’t substantiated it as yet. I simply wish to convey that I’ve studied the phenomenon of these elves in recent years and have personally encountered the diaphanous lizard-like elves you described. However, they differ from the diaphanous lizard-like beings you’ve mentioned.”

“Not true elves?” Lumian expressed no surprise at this assertion. After all, Ryan and his colleagues had been theorizing, and Mr. Poet’s perspective leaned towards an affiliation with a different faction.

Hela chose not to elaborate, confirming Lumian’s suspicion with a nod.

“I will continue to search for similar motifs in elf legends from various sources.”

Having said that, she spun the grimoire containing the Soul Summoning Spell and pushed it toward Lumian.

“This is likely where your sister’s problem originates.”

Lumian’s eyes conveyed his anticipation for an explanation.

He was genuinely curious to hear Hela’s perspective. However, he didn’t expect her to reveal the most closely guarded secret of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, as Franca had done.

Hela’s tone remained as cold as ice as she began, “I’ve had numerous interactions with your sister and have discerned that she had been grappling with psychological turmoil rooted in her original family.

“Something is amiss with her biological family. Consequently, your sister had no recourse but to distance herself from them and seek refuge in the border village. It mirrors your gradual realization of Cordu’s growing abnormality, prompting your desire to escape. That’s why I directed your attention to this avenue of investigation.

“And should one employ the Soul Summoning Spell detailed in this notebook upon themselves, it’s highly likely that your sister’s

psychological distress will escalate into a mental ailment, potentially leading to true dissociation of her personality."

Lumian pondered for a moment before inquiring, "Are you suggesting that Roche Louise Sanson is a dissociated persona of my sister? That the foundation of Inevitability's faith originates from her biological family?"

This deduction, while refraining from disclosing the most guarded secret of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, seemed to be the most logical conclusion. Yet, Madame Magician had also entertained the notion of dissociative identity disorder as one potential cause.

Hela took a sip of her triple-shot Reem espresso.

"The situation might be more complicated than a case of dissociative identity disorder. There seems to be some bizarre mystical phenomenon involved. That, however, remains contingent upon your future investigations."

Lumian acknowledged her response with a nod and posed his question with a serious demeanor,

"Is there any issue with the April Fool's member who sold the Soul Summoning Spell to my sister? Did they foresee a scenario involving dissociative identity disorder?"

Hela remained silent for a few seconds before responding, "It's suspicious, but I cannot definitively be sure. I intend to probe further, although it might take a considerable duration of time. As you're aware, the organizational structure of the Research Society is quite informal, and my connections with the individuals from April Fool's are limited."

"I understand." Lumian had heard a similar sentiment from Franca.

Hela glanced at him and pondered for a moment.

"In reality, you are the most suitable candidate to investigate this matter. Unfortunately, you lack the necessary prerequisites."

“Why do you say that?” Lumian questioned, genuine surprise lacing his words.

For someone known for wit and mischief in Cordu, the prospect of heading the investigation was unexpected. He had assumed that his role would merely entail supporting Franca.

Hela’s tone retained its chilliness.

“If you possessed a Beyonder power to physically alter your appearance, you could transform into Muggle and participate in various Research Society Gatherings as her.

“Then, when the occasion arises, you could observe any April Fool’s member who reacts oddly to Muggle’s presence and displays signs of abnormal behavior. You could even employ yourself as bait to draw out any individual harboring hidden motives.”

Me assuming Aurore and using the code name Muggle to become a member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society? Lumian had never envisioned such a scenario.

His brow furrowed as he remarked, “Can I really pull off being my sister even with a transformation item? Especially within your Research Society?”

He wasn’t familiar with their world and its intricacies. How could he effectively bridge the communication gap?

Just a sentence or two could potentially blow his cover!

Chapter 339 - 339 Purpose of Visit

339 Purpose of Visit

Hela continued in her cold voice, “Don’t worry, there’s no reason to fret. Our Research Society operates rather informally. Except for a handful of members who maintain close private communication, the rest only convene two to four times a year, all while in disguise.

“And many of the coded terms and expressions we employ for communication are familiar to you. Given your relationship with your sister, she won’t intentionally keep them from you or abstain from using them.”

“Understood.” Lumian’s mood suddenly soured. “She’ll also explain the exact significance to me and attribute it to a philosopher from back home or even Emperor Roselle.”

Upon hearing this, Hela responded, “If you truly possess the potential to masquerade as Muggle and engage with the Research Society members, there’s no need to forcibly cite philosophers from back home. Simply allude to the latter portion of the content.”

“Then, should I incorporate ‘Emperor Roselle once said’?” Lumian deliberated the specifics earnestly.

He lacked a key item and couldn’t authentically impersonate Aurore. And even though the Niese Face was primarily an illusion, it could be instantly deciphered by Beyonders equipped with the corresponding abilities—whether the other party held a rank as low as Sequence 9 Mystery Pryer, they’d discern his non-female identity at a glance. Yet, he remained determined to give his utmost. Who knew if a chance for Transfiguration with diminished negative effects would arise in the future?

Regarding mystic makeup achieved through the use of the Mystery Prying Glasses, it wouldn't provide psychological suggestions, given that attendees concealed their faces at the gathering. Furthermore, it couldn't alter his gender.

Hela lapsed into silence, her facial muscles twitching subtly.

"In the event that you're presented with an opportunity to enact such a role, make sure to avoid these mentions. You might not possess precise discernment about when such references are suitable.

"Just keep in mind, other members frequently employ the phrase 'Emperor Roselle once said' to liven the mood or offer amusement."

Why does it feel like Emperor Roselle's image in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society isn't too favorable… It's not that it's unfavorable. Instead, it assumes a comedic quality… Speaking of which, Aurore appears to do the same. Whenever her spirits dip, as long as I deliberately reference Emperor Roselle's words, she tends to loosen up and finds herself chuckling involuntarily… Lumian struggled to fully grasp the rationale of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members, but he refrained from further probing, recognizing the necessity to feign ignorance concerning their most profound secret.

If the opportunity arose, he intended to seek Franca's insights on the matter.

Hela continued, "While participating in the gathering, keep in mind to listen more than you speak. If you lack confidence, avoid delving into profound discussions. Should others delve into the past, if possible, shift the focus and maintain a patronizing tone. Emulating Muggle's traits and characteristics will aid in effectively acting as her."

Lumian pondered for a moment.

"This guise, however, remains merely a surface-level ruse. Your Research Society houses Beyonders adept in divination and possessing keen intuition. They could readily discern that I'm not my sister."

“No, quite the contrary. They might prove you to be the genuine Muggle,” Hela furnished an unforeseen response to Lumian’s expectation.

In the midst of his unveiled astonishment, Hela expounded, “To begin with, most of us remain unaware of the realities of our fellow members, impeding our capacity for efficacious divination or prophecy.

“Additionally, with my understanding of your sister, I employed an artifact to divine her state. Yet, I couldn’t ascertain her life or death status. It was akin to confronting a formidable anti-divination barrier.”

Wh— Lumian was caught off guard before grasping the underlying rationale.

As per Madam Magician, Aurore hadn’t entirely died. A possibility of revival persisted, her soul shard sealed by Mr. Fool, thereby rendering conventional divination unable to circumvent the seal and ascertain Aurore’s genuine condition. A potent anti-divination effect was at play.

Hela took another sip of her triple shot Reem espresso.

What? Lumian nearly blurted out the question.

“Perhaps this stems from the fact that a fragment of my sister’s soul has been specially preserved within me.”

Lumian let out a long sigh.

“What a pity…”

Post Hela’s analysis, he harbored the conviction that he could seamlessly stand in for his sister within the folds of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society without incurring exposure.

He yearned to do so. This way, he could not only aid Franca in her operation but also safeguard her from solitary risks. Together, they could operate—one in plain sight, the other in the shadows—ensnaring their adversary in a carefully orchestrated trap.

Simultaneously, Lumian recognized the potential of utilizing the society's gatherings to gather invaluable information about Aurore.

Regrettably, his one hindrance was his lack of Transfiguration abilities. The power to alter his gender, stature, or physique eluded him.

A brief silence hung in the air before Hela reiterated her commitment to investigating the April Fool's predicament.

Following that, she spoke candidly, "I've come to Trier this time to delve deeper past the catacombs. Do you have any information about that place?"

Deeper into the catacombs? Lumian's heart skipped a beat as he took the initiative to remind her, "It's very dangerous there."

Madame Hela's guidance from her letters and prior suggestion had been invaluable. With deep appreciation, he recounted his grasp of the catacombs and the bizarre phenomena he had borne witness to. Finally, he said, "For some inexplicable reason, I alone retain memories of the ill-fated couple. The rest feign ignorance, as though they never existed. True, Kendall, the administrator of the tomb, ought to have sensed it as well, yet he feigned ignorance."

Hela listened in quiet contemplation. Without astonishment or consternation, she inquired, "Have you heard of the Samaritan Women's Spring?"

"I have, though from the mouth of a charlatan…" Lumian mused, his brow furrowing as he tried to recall Osta Trul's narrative. "He claimed that the Samaritan Women's Spring on the upper level of the catacombs is a sham. Just a puddle left behind due to a construction error back then. The administrators spun it into a legend. But deep in the underground world, within an ancient tomb, there lies the real Fountain of Oblivion."

Hela refrained from commenting on Lumian's account and simply nodded.

"Thank you."

With her gratitude expressed, she downed the last of her three-shot espresso, rose from her seat, and made her way toward the café's exit.

As she rose from her seat, the heavy silence was shattered, and the sunlight once again flooded the area with its radiance.

Lumian remained seated a while longer, savoring the last sips of his Macael coffee. Afterwards, he strode along Rue Ancienne, his destination being Place du Purgatoire. There, he planned to catch a public carriage back to the market district.

Passing by Salle de Bal Unique and the Alone bar, a sudden, crystalline tinkle reached Lumian's ears.

His heart skipped a beat, and he swiftly turned around. He saw a figure he knew well, who had just entered the newly opened Alone bar.

Draped in a delicate, pale-white fishnet dress, the figure sported a small, circular hat adorned with silk flowers. Two dainty silver bells dangled from the intricate hair buns, complementing the similar accessories on the figure's dark-hued boots.

Leah… Bureau 8's Leah… Lumian recognized the person as Leah, the official investigator who had entered his dream.

Salle de Bal Unique is perilous. Could the Alone bar be used by Bureau 8 to monitor the opposing stronghold? After retracting his gaze, Lumian continued forward as if nothing had happened.

…

Returning to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian found himself summoned to 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative by Gardner Martin, just when he was hoping for some rest.

Inside a room adorned with bookshelves, Gardner Martin, donned in a light-colored shirt and dark trousers, greeted him with an energetic smile.

"Franca mentioned that your vengeance is complete?"

Lumian detected an odd thrill emanating from the Boss, as if he had indulged in immense pleasure and hadn't fully calmed down.

He responded candidly, "Yes, I've already killed Guillaume Bénet. Thankfully, Red Boots, Jenna, and Anthony Reid, the information broker I hired, assisted me."

He spared no details about the participants—there was no use concealing anything. They relied on "Rat" Christo and his pets to communicate, after all.

Gardner Martin nodded slightly and commented, "You've exceeded my expectations in terms of efficiency. Franca didn't delve into the specifics. Can you give me an overview of the overall situation?"

Lumian held nothing back when it came to the Sinners organization. He elucidated Guillaume Bénet's various abilities, detailing their specific impacts.

Gardner Martin listened intently and asked in thought, "What do you reckon is Guillaume Bénet's strength equivalent to in Sequence?"

Lumian replied without hesitation, "Sequence 5."

A brief pause ensued as Gardner Martin fell into contemplative silence before he uttered, "I've summoned you for a purpose, a mission."

"What mission?" Lumian didn't hide his curiosity.

Gardner Martin's smile reappeared. nove(l)bi(n.)com

"It's quite straightforward. Make your way to the Mechanical Café in Quartier de l'Opéra and establish contact with a literary and arts group named 'Black Cat.'"

"I lack any artistic inclination," Lumian honestly admitted.

Gardner Martin smiled and said, "No artistic inclination is necessary. Your primary role will involve sponsoring and befriending one of the members of Black Cat.

“His ancestor boasted an aristocratic title of a count, a fact he’s quite fond of calling himself that.

“Right, his name is Poufer Sauron.”

Chapter 340 - 340 Black Cat

340 Black Cat

Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra, Rue Lombar.

The street was famous for its array of sweets, and colorful candies adorned every corner.

At the end of Rue Lombar stood the Mechanical Café, nestled next to a small confectionery factory.

From the outside, it looked like an ordinary place, and even peering through the glass windows, there was no hint of its mechanical nature. The black Triangular Sacred Emblem on the weighty wooden door was the only reminder of its true identity.

Lumian pushed the dark-brown door, but it resisted as if locked from within.

After a moment's observation, he pulled the doorbell hanging by the secondary window.

Amidst the tinkling chimes, Lumian caught the soft clink of metal and watched as the door inched open.

A mechanical arm extended from its rear, reaching all the way to the bar counter like an ornamental display.

Surveying the surroundings, Lumian made his way to a corner of the café. Two single-legged tables were placed there, hosting five individuals.

Among them, a middle-aged man with fiery red hair stood out. Fair-skinned from cosmetics, with dark circles accentuating his brownish-red eyes, he was a captivating figure.

Clean-shaven, he sported an open brown velvet coat and a red shirt sans bow tie, exuding an air of refinement and casual elegance.

This was “Count” Poufer, the member of Intis’s former royal Sauron family whom Lumian sought.

Having inherited a substantial fortune from his father, he hadn’t ventured into politics, military service, or trade. Instead, he moved within various artistic circles as a literary critic and frequented “Black Cat” gatherings.

Approaching with a smile, Lumian inquired, “Are you Count Poufer?”

Poufer Sauron looked up casually, his tone relaxed as he asked, “Are you the friend Martin mentioned?”

“Yes, Ciel Dubois.” Lumian responded without any reservation, claiming a seat by pulling up a chair.

Poufer gave him a measured once-over, a satisfied smile playing on his lips.

“Not bad at all; you’re quite the beautiful friend.”

“Among literature, oil paintings, sculptures, poetry, and music, what’s your preference?”

“Novels,” Lumian replied without hesitation.

Poufer leaned back, gesturing towards the plump middle-aged man diagonally across from him.

“Anori, the author with the most literary eloquence in recent times.”

The author who delved into the realm of erotica, forgetting that the essence of writing is to explore human nature? Lumian naturally recollected Aurore’s assessment of this novelist.

Initially, Anori’s works had explored love as a means to understand humanity. But over time, the focus shifted, consumed by the former. Aurore believed that if not for restrictions, Anori might have penned something akin to ‘Monks Chasing Dogs’—a risqué novel.

Of course, Lumian cared little for probing human nature; he simply enjoyed the engaging parts.

“Your novels have certainly broadened my horizons,” he said to Anori genuinely.

With black hair and blue eyes, Arnaud puffed on his pipe and remarked, “Luckily, you didn’t mention appreciating my ‘Death of a Herald.’”

Death of a Herald… Isn’t that Adri’s work? Right, Aurore had mentioned the similarity in names, leading to frequent confusion. Enlightenment dawned as Lumian inquired, “You mean the Adri who’s backed by the government, earning a five-figure fortune yearly, yet only manages to produce dogsh*t?”

Anori erupted in laughter.

“That’s worth a glass of absinthe!”

With that, he tapped the silver-gray metal button on the single-legged table before him, thrice.

Count Poufer took pleasure in Lumian’s reception and proceeded to introduce the other members of the Black Cat organization.

Among them were Mullen, a painter with a pale and weary complexion, Ernst Young, a slightly stern-looking literary critic, and Iraeta, a poet who held a cherrywood pipe.

Just as Lumian was wrapping up his greetings, he witnessed the iron-colored surface of Anori’s one-legged table split open unexpectedly, unfolding like a blossoming flower.

Within the “stamen,” a glass of emerald absinthe, radiating a dreamlike sheen, appeared on a tray that ascended through a mechanical lift.

Author Anori picked up the glass of absinthe and tossed a silver coin worth 1 verl d’or onto the tray.

Gradually, the mechanical elevator descended, causing the parted

metal surface to seal shut, restoring the one-legged table to its original state.

Anori slid the absinthe toward Lumian, a smile gracing his features.

“Cheers to what you just said!”

It’s really a Mechanical Café… Lumian reacquainted himself with this place.

His gaze drifted to the table’s broad and sturdy leg, suspecting it to be hollow and linked to an underground conduit.

Taking a sip of the absinthe and savoring its familiar bitterness, Lumian directed his attention to the one-legged table.

“No change?”

“Here, a glass of absinthe costs 1 verl d’or,” Anori responded with a grin.

Isn’t that rather steep? Salle de Bal Brise and the basement bar only charge seven licks. Their quality is nearly identical… Lumian critiqued inwardly.

1 verl d’or was equivalent to 20 licks.

At that instant, Mullen, the pale-faced painter who seemed perpetually fatigued but was a handsome man, took a sip of his coffee and shared, “I heard that an elephant has arrived at Trier Zoo. Quite an uncommon sight.”

The pudgy Anori muttered, “What’s so intriguing about an elephant? It strikes me as utterly mundane.”

Count Poufer let out a soft chuckle.

“Shall we then discuss the ongoing clash between the parliament and the two Churches, the high-ranking government officials perpetually stumbling, the detestable censorship of publications, and the covert agents shadowing us like hyenas?”

Anori sighed in resignation.

“Let’s just stick to that elephant.”

Amidst the laughter of the Black Cat members, Count Poufer crossed his right leg and proposed, “Since we have a new friend, how about engaging in a game of mysticism?”

A game involving mysticism? Lumian’s eyebrows twitched.

“What sort of game?” inquired Iraeta, the poet, puffing contemplatively on his pipe. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Count Poufer smiled and said, “A game known as King’s Pie.”

Observing the perplexed expressions around the table, Count Poufer chuckled and continued, “Don’t any of you have a childhood or a family? Haven’t you played this game?

“The rule is to divide the King’s Pie into portions equal to the number of participants plus 1. The larger piece is ritually dedicated to a deity or esteemed ancestor we hold in reverence. Among the remaining portions, one contains a broad bean or coin, hidden. Whoever discovers it becomes the ‘king’ for the day, empowered to issue commands to the others. Naturally, these commands must remain within the bounds of reason.”

The mysticism aspect involves offering up the excess King’s Pie in sacrifice? Lumian cast a glance at Anori, Mullen, and the rest, intrigued by the idea and curious whether any Beyonders were part of the group.

Of course, none of them appeared to be.

In just over ten seconds, Count Poufer’s proposal garnered agreement from everyone except Lumian.

He commenced by pressing the corresponding button on his one-legged table, hitting it the appropriate number of times to signal the kitchen to dispatch a King’s Pie.

Reportedly, this dessert had been a favorite since the era of the

Sauron Dynasty.

…

In the underground of église Saint-Robert, within the confines of the Inquisition, a gathering of Purifiers was underway. Valentine, Imre, and their fellow Purifiers congregated in the office of Deacon Angoulême.

Dressed in a light-gold shirt and pale-white pants, Angoulême raised the dossier in his hand and addressed the group, “We’ve verified the body found at 50 Rue Vincent in Quartier de la Princesse Rouge to be that of Guillaume Bénet, the former wanted padre. Ensure that the police headquarters takes down the wanted posters from the market district.”

The market district case wasn’t under the Purifiers’ jurisdiction, but Valentine had heard about it. Finally, there was confirmation.

Sporting a formal blue coat, Valentine glanced at Angoulême and asked, “Deacon, have there been any developments in the investigation into Guillaume Bénet’s killer?”

“At the moment, no suspects,” responded Angoulême, his golden hair, eyebrows, and beard lending him an imposing aura. He continued, “What we can ascertain is that there were clear signs of incineration at the scene, and it’s likely that Guillaume Bénet succumbed to a Demoness’s curse.”

“At least a Sequence 7 Hunter and a Demoness? That’s an uncommon combination,” Imre remarked, clearly taken aback.

To his knowledge, most who followed the Demoness pathway were affiliated with the Demoness family, a formidable secret organization that seldom required collaboration.

“Uncommon doesn’t mean impossible,” retorted Angoulême.

As a Purifier deacon, he had access to more confidential information and experience compared to Imre, Valentine, and the others. He had even personally executed two members of the Demoness family.

Valentine furrowed his brow, ruminating for a moment before suggesting, “Could Lumian Lee be involved? He does have a solid motive.”

“But he lacks the power,” Imre objected. “How could he advance to Pyromaniac so quickly after leaving Cordu? Isn’t he concerned about losing control? Furthermore, based on your description, not even a Pyromaniac would be a match for Guillaume Bénet.”

Valentine clung to his conjecture.

“That’s why he might have sought help from a Demoness.

“Could he have joined the Demoness family to seek revenge and then transition into becoming a Demoness himself?

“If that’s true, this could become a major issue. Lumian Lee carries significant problems with him. And you mentioned the Demoness family’s penchant for sowing chaos.”

Angoulême nodded. “We must keep a close eye on this. I’ll report this matter. Meanwhile, intensify the scrutiny of suspicious individuals in the market district.”

Having made up his mind, he reassured Valentine, “Don’t be overly anxious. Lumian Lee isn’t the only one with a reason to eliminate Guillaume Bénet. There are powerful bounty hunters, official members of the Aurora Order, and the bestowed of other evil gods.”

Valentine acknowledged concisely, signifying his comprehension.

Following their discussion on recent Beyonder cases, Valentine and Imre exited the deacon’s office, passing by Charlie who was acquainting himself with a mechanical typewriter, before heading towards the tunnel leading to église Saint-Robert.

“Why do you think the quasi-Demoness is seeking us? Has she uncovered crucial information?” Imre inquired curiously, conversing with his fellow teammate.

Valentine ruminated briefly before responding, “Could it be related to Guillaume Bénet’s death?”

Imre was caught off guard.

“Are you suggesting she had contact with the Demoness family?”

Before Valentine could reply, Imre shook his head.

“That’s impossible. The Demoness family despises female Assassins. If they encounter one, they’ll surely eliminate them.”

Chapter 341 - 341 Branch

341 Branch

On Rue Doyle, nestled between the market district and the solemn Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, stretched a verdant street. Its clean pavements and modern architectural style set it apart from its surroundings. Jenna had deliberately chosen this location to rendezvous with the Purifiers. The individuals frequenting this place had little connection to her former life, and the likelihood of recognition was slim.

Nevertheless, her overall presentation remained faithful to a certain style: a portrayal of cleanliness, radiance, and vitality. This image was a composite distilled from the bishop's sermons and the impassioned advocacy she had encountered during her involvement in Church activities.

A Sun Talisman dangled around her neck, accentuating her brownish-yellow hair that was neatly tied up. She followed the elongated shadows cast by the trees, moving toward Apartment 17.

In the midst of her journey, a brown four-wheeled carriage rumbled by. The window was ajar, revealing an arresting visage.

Adorned in a black court dress, a lady graced the carriage's interior. A dark veil hat adorned with white feathers crowned her head, intricately framing her raven-black hair. Her face boasted soft contours; her chin held a graceful curve. A slender, elevated nose bridge led to plump, subtly upturned crimson lips. Within her dark gray eyes, a glint of brightness coexisted with a hint of melancholy, evoking a pang of sympathy.

How beautiful… Jenna sighed from the bottom of her heart as the carriage passed.

Even though Jenna herself could be considered attractive, she remained capable of appreciating the allure of others. Simultaneously, she acknowledged the stark contrast between her appearance and that of Franca, who had ascended to the rank of Demoness of Pleasure, as well as the lady who had just passed.

Shifting her focus, Jenna ascended to the roof of Apartment 17 on Rue Doyle.

Her wait was brief, for Imre and Valentine soon appeared.

Valentine's demeanor, though frosty, gave way to a proactive inquiry. "Have you obtained crucial intelligence?"

Valentine's gaze swept past Jenna's neck, where the Sun Sacred Emblem was suspended. A subtle nod confirmed his satisfaction.

Jenna shook her head slowly. "No."

Without permitting Imre and Valentine to voice their queries, she bared her emotions in earnest. "I want to repent."

Repent? Imre exchanged a quizzical glance with Valentine.

Had something gone awry?

Jenna's gaze lowered, a bittersweet smile touching her lips as she regarded the ground.

"My mother haunts my dreams, recurring persistently. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"And each time she appears in my sleep, I find myself grappling with a nagging question: Why did the Church permit someone like Hugues Artois to partake in the elections? Upon uncovering the truth, why did they not promptly apprehend his accomplices and thus forestall the ensuing catastrophe?

"I-I yearn for redemption. The pain gnaws at my heart, sowing doubt in my faith, and causing me to question whether God and the Church still watch over us."

These sentiments were sincere, albeit less intense than they seemed.

Valentine felt ashamed and didn't know how to respond to Jenna.

"Likewise, the Church isn't all-powerful. In Intis, we remain subject to the constraints imposed by the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, the National Convention, and the government. Our actions are bound by limitations; we cannot operate without restraint and probe at will.

Jenna fell into contemplative silence for a few seconds before exhaling, a slow release of tension. She extended her arms slightly, proclaiming, "Praise the Sun!"

"Praise the Sun!" both Valentine and Imre echoed in unison.

With her sincere performance, Jenna asked, "Who propelled Hugues Artois to the position of parliament member? And who facilitated his representation for an evil god?"

"We're in the midst of investigating. No substantial breakthroughs have emerged thus far," Imre replied after measured consideration.

Jenna's expression turned to one of anxiety and concern.

"Why the lack of substantive progress? Is it due to the limitations mentioned earlier, which hinder the acquisition of pivotal leads? Do you require my help? I operate unbound by restrictions and hold no fear of breaching the law!"

Imre and Valentine weren't caught off guard by Jenna's reaction. It echoed the same spirit as her abrupt assassination of Hugues Artois, albeit in a more subdued form.

The two exchanged glances, a wordless deliberation on whether to entrust this matter to an informant bound by contract, thereby affording greater flexibility and latitude.

Drawing upon Franca's counsel, Jenna refrained from invoking Instigation directly. She instead gauged the disposition of the two Purifiers and employed words to accomplish her intent.

“If the Church itself finds its hands tied, could it not delegate the task to capable devotees?

“Which holds greater importance—the Church’s dignity or the well-being of God’s children?

“With each thwarted catastrophe, numerous families and lives are spared. They all stand as devout supplicants to the Sun.

“An evil god was backing Hugues Artois!”

Valentine found himself swayed, and observing Imre’s absence of dissent, he addressed Jenna with gravity, “Are you sure you want to help us investigate this matter? It’s very dangerous. The odds of forfeiting your life are substantial.”

Jenna responded with a smile suffused with complexity, “I’m afraid of death, but I’m more afraid of becoming a sacrificial lamb for the heretics, much like my mother.”

She didn’t hide her hatred at all.

Imre then said, “In the course of our investigations, we’ve ascertained that Hugues Artois shared close ties with General Philip. Certain covert activities trace back to him. However, General Philip succumbed to illness last year, resulting in the loss of all leads.

“The other backers and supporters of Hugues Artois either owed their allegiance to General Philip or deemed him an asset worthy of support. Their involvement in heretical belief or secret organizations remains unverified.”

Jenna blurted out, “What about Philip’s family? What of the heretics who encircled Hugues Artois?”

“There’s nothing wrong with Philip’s family,” Valentine responded, his tone revealing traces of vexation. “We’ve apprehended only two heretics affiliated with Hugues Artois’s campaign. Their roles were comparatively inconsequential. The individual most knowledgeable opted for suicide when escape became unfeasible. His fanaticism stymied our quest for the sought-after leads. We’ve effectively eliminated two branches of the secret organization, the Order of All

Extinction."

Order of All Extinction… Jenna recalled the secret organization that believed in an evil god.

Imre supplemented, "The primary source of knowledge is the red-haired woman named Cassandra. She hails from the Sauron lineage, a collateral branch of the former royal family. A Beyonder and a heretic graced with a boon."

Imre shook his head.

"At present, no concrete conclusions exist. The noble families that supported Hugues Artois maintain standard relations with the Sauron family. Cassandra chose an adventuring life, as she encountered minimal regard within the Sauron family hierarchy. Subsequently, she became a Beyonder, ultimately joining Hugues Artois's team last year."

…

Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra, Rue Lombar, Mechanical Café.

Mechanical precision guided the King's Pie to Poufer Sauron and his associates within the Black Cat organization. The pie bore the appearance of a brown floral marvel adorned with intricate black motifs.

Poufer looked around and said to Lumian, Anori, and the others, "I suggest that this game of King's Pie serves as a tribute to one of my esteemed forebears. He held the title of the first Count Ardennen and the twenty-seventh Count of Champagne."

In his interactions, Poufer habitually designated himself as Count Ardennen.

"The Count of Champagne, the one who coveted Roselle's ass?" Novelist Anori quipped with a grin.

Over the past year, the most sought-after banned manuscript within Trier's covert book market had been "Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles." Within its pages lay a trove of Emperor Roselle-related

rumors, intermingled with an array of outlandish, sizzling revelations.

Poufer sighed and said, “That would be the thirtieth Count of Champagne, the great-grandson of my illustrious ancestor. He hails from a distinct Sauron family branch.”

“I have no objections.” The flaxen-haired painter, Mullen, steered the conversation back on track.

This was merely a game—no one else insisted on allocating the surplus King’s Pie to a specific figure, thus prompt consensus was achieved.

Considering Lumian’s usual style, he should have objected and angered Count Poufer. However, he recalled that his current role revolved around that of a friend of Gardner Martin, scion of a prosperous merchant family with a penchant for art. He was essentially playing the role of a spendthrift imbecile, a persona that basked in the lavish spending only to incur disdain.

Poufer shifted his attention to the more reticent literary critic, Ernst Young, and instructed, “You shall have the honor of cutting the pie.”

Ernst Young, his black curls framing his face, indulged in a self-deprecating smile.

“I despise the absence of waiters in the Mechanical Café. It makes me feel like a waiter.”

“Isn’t that a good thing? It signifies the absence of spies,” Novelist Anori muttered.

A puff of cherrywood smoke escaped the pipe held by Iraeta, the poet, as he chuckled in response, “Perhaps the spy is among us.”

At that moment, Ernst Young had already picked up the table knife, slicing the King’s Pie into seven equal portions.

Poufer delicately positioned one of the King’s Pie slices near the plate’s rim, hands clasped, cradling it against his chest. His voice, a soft cadence, invoked an invocation, “To you, member of the mighty

Sauron family, the great Vermonda Champagne Sauron."

Poufer repeated the incantation thrice. Lumian couldn't help but note that Mechanical Café, already bereft of its waiters, descended into an amplified hush, akin to the commencement of the bishops' sermons.

After offering the excess portion of the King's Pie to Vermonda Sauron, Poufer raised his gaze to Lumian and grinned.

"You're the guest. You'll be the first to choose."

Without observing, Lumian extended his hand to the King's Pie closest to him.

At that moment, Termiboros's resonant voice echoed in Lumian's ears: "Switch."

Chapter 342 - 342 Fright?

342 Fright?

Switch? Lumian hadn't anticipated that Termiboros would drop a hint at a moment like this.

Whether this Inevitability angel aimed to use the opportunity to set a trap or had some other intention, or if He simply sought to avert any trouble from befalling His vessel at this particular time and place, it was clear that this seemingly unremarkable game of King's Pie concealed profound hidden hazards. Once triggered, it would plunge all those present into a perilous abyss.

When Count Poufer brought up the mystical aspect, the act of sacrificing a piece of King's Pie to a deity or revered ancestor, Lumian suspected the presence of a Beyonder element. It resembled the divination games favored by many enthusiasts of mysticism. To his astonishment, the issue proved even graver than he had initially imagined. It had prompted an angel to believe that he—Lumian, a dual Sequence 7—was incapable of handling it or could be harmed by it.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian struggled to fathom Termiboros's motives. All he could manage was cautiously extending his arm and nonchalantly selecting one of the remaining five slices of King's Pie.

This time, Termiboros didn't intervene.

After Lumian, Anori, Mullen, Ernst Young, and Iraeta each acquired a slice of King's Pie, only the one nearest to Lumian remained.

"Seems like it's mine." Count Poufer leaned in, grinned, and seized the slice of King's Pie. He brought it to his mouth and delicately took a bite.

Lumian followed suit. The crust was crisp, the filling sweet, its aroma lingering on his palate. The quality was rather impressive.

After a few bites, Count Poufer chuckled and remarked, “Looks like I’m the king today.”

As he uttered the words, he extracted a broad bean from his mouth.

The instant Lumian laid eyes on the broad bean, a faint trace of blood and rust wafted to his senses.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in the Mechanical Café grew heavy, as if everyone dreaded receiving an order they couldn’t bear.

Count Poufer rose from his seat, his back to the window that faced the street, blotting out the sunlight, which cast a faint shadow over his face. His smile seemed somewhat dark.

Count Poufer’s gaze fixed upon the novelist Anori, a mischievous smile dancing on his lips.

“Step outside the café and declare to the passersby, ‘I’m dog sh*t.’”

Anori, who had been on edge, let out a sigh of relief and responded with a grin, “Sure thing.”

The portly man rose from his seat and hastened to the door, grasping the handle nestled in the side wall.

Amidst a grinding noise and faint clatters, the mechanical arm suddenly tightened, its grip “dragging” the weighty wooden door ajar.

Anori ventured outside and onto the street. He directed his voice at the pedestrians, “I’m dogsh*t!

“I’m a piece of dogsh*t raised by a sow! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“My whole family is dogsh*t raised by sows!”

The passersby stared in astonishment before erupting into laughter.

After cursing himself, Anori returned to Lumian and the others in high spirits.

“You’ve got an impressive mental fortitude.” Lumian compelled himself to rephrase “you’re really thick-skinned” in a more polished manner.

Novelist Anori chuckled and said, “Whenever I’m stuck in my writing, I’ll curse myself out on the balcony. It’s the simplest method.”

“You writers do have your peculiarities.” Lumian was reminded of his sister, who fancied herself afflicted by an advanced stage of procrastination syndrome.

Anori took a sip of absinthe and resettled himself. His attention turned to Count Poufer, who, with his back to the light, cast his gaze upon Mullen, the pale and handsome painter.

“Slap Iraeta.”

Mullen relaxed in his seat, opting not to rise. He leaned forward and delivered a slap to Poet Iraeta.

Iraeta, his hair thinning and his facial muscles slightly sagging, remained unperturbed. He merely drew another puff from his pipe.

Noticing Lumian’s scrutiny, he offered a casual smile.

“As a poet, I must learn to relish the malice around me.”

Finding joy in malice… What a poetic youth. Well, more accurately, a poetic middle-aged man… Lumian surveyed the participants of the game, realizing that aside from Count Poufer, who had consumed the broad bean, nothing else appeared amiss.

Count Poufer shifted his posture slightly, his features still shaded by the backlight.

He said to Ernst Young, “Express your loyalty to me.”

When the Black Cats convened, they often engaged in a variety of

audacious acts. In a more contemporary characterization, they were avant-gardes of performance art. Hence, Ernst Young felt no qualms about kneeling on one knee and professing loyalty. He even considered it insufficient, sensing that it lacked excitement or humiliation.

Count Poufer then turned to the poet, Iraeta, and dictated, “Give all your money to the beggar across the street.”

Iraeta was taken aback. His heart ached as he responded, “Alright.

“As you know, I’m a pauper. Over the past five years, I’ve scarcely earned 3,000 verl d’or from my poetry. Each day, I ponder which friend might organize an event and offer me a free drink.”

Quite the honest poet… Lumian pondered whether he should sponsor this individual and witness what kind of verses he could produce. After all, the “sponsorship fee” was supplied by Gardner Martin. Not employing it would result in it going unused. Conversely, by sponsoring certain artists, he could potentially pocket a portion for himself.

Before Count Poufer could reply, Iraeta suddenly burst into laughter. He fumbled in his pocket and exclaimed with excitement, “That’s why I only brought 5 verl d’or!”

“5 verl d’or? At the Vichy Café, that’d barely cover half a bottle of mineral water and two boiled eggs,” Novelist Anori murmured as he watched Poet Iraeta hastily depart. He tossed the 5 verl d’or to the beggar opposite.

Vichy Café resided in an alley off Avenue du Boulevard. It drew parliament members, high-ranking government officials, bankers, industrialists, financiers, famed courtesans, and esteemed authors, painters, poets, and sculptors from the upper echelons of society.

By this juncture, every participant had taken their turn, leaving Lumian as the last.

Count Poufer fixed his gaze on Lumian, his look profound as he spoke, “This is your inaugural time attending our Black Cat

gathering. I'll assign you a simple task. Take your slice of King's Pie and proceed to the last room in the café's basement. Exchange the pie for a sheet of white paper."

This bears a hint of mystique… If anything goes awry, I'll just burn down that basement… Lumian mumbled to himself as he clutched the partially-eaten King's Pie. As per Novelist Anori's guidance, he located a staircase leading to the basement close to the kitchen.

Before venturing forth, he ignited the gas wall lamps in the vicinity. Under their faint yellow radiance, he navigated a corridor cluttered with various items until he reached the last room.

The vermilion door stood tightly sealed. Lumian listened attentively but detected no movements from within.

There were no suspicious signs around the door either.

Lumian extended his right palm, gripped the handle, gave it a gentle twist, and gradually pushed inward.

As the gas lamps in the basement's corridor illuminated the space, objects came into view.

These objects were heads, clustered within the dusky shadows, their gazes devoid of emotion, fixed on the "intruder" at the entrance.

Lumian's pupils dilated as he recognized a few familiar heads.

They belonged to Novelist Anori, Painter Mullen, Critic Ernst Young, and Poet Iraeta!

Just before conjuring a fireball, Lumian, experienced and resilient, forced himself to steady his nerves and discern the situation.

The heads lacked the pallor of the deceased, and the room was bereft of the distinct scent of preservatives.

Lumian reined in his initial reaction and scrutinized the scene. He realized that these were wax heads that had been taken down.

Resembling melons, they were stashed within compartments on a

wooden frame.

Is this mission intended to startle me? Were it not for Termiboros's forewarning, how could such a prank perturb me? What's so mystical about this? Lumian ruminated for a moment before placing his King's Pie on a wooden shelf and extracting a sheet of white paper from one of the wax heads.

Upon returning to the Mechanical Café with the white paper in hand, he was met with smiles from Anori, Iraeta, and the others, as though gauging any lingering trepidation.

Count Poufer nodded in satisfaction.

"You executed the mission admirably."

What if I hadn't executed it admirably? What would have transpired? Lumian simulated residual unease and inquired,

"Those wax heads seemed so lifelike that they nearly stopped my heart!"

"Haha," Anori chortled. "This serves as Count's welcome gesture to every newcomer. He's rather fond of collecting wax figurine heads. Each individual he acknowledges receives an invitation from a wax sculptor to immortalize their heads as art and place them in the basement of the Mechanical Café."

It's almost as if your heads have been given to Count Poufer… Lumian eyed Anori and the others' necks, yet found no trace of sutures.

After delving into various rumors circulating within the novelists' circle and offering 2,000 verl d'or to sponsor the Black Cat, Lumian took his leave.

As he departed, his gaze inadvertently swept over the two-legged tables.

Abruptly, Lumian's pupils constricted.

He observed that Count Poufer, Anori, and the others still had

unfinished King's Pie on their plates, while the white-glazed porcelain plate that had previously held the pie now sat empty.

There should have been a slice of King's Pie intended for the Sauron family ancestor!

It was gone!

Lumian's perplexity couldn't be concealed. He gestured toward the snack plate and remarked,

"I recall there being a slice of King's Pie left."

Count Poufer chuckled and sipped his coffee.

"I ate it."

"Is that so…" Lumian smiled in realization.

Turning away, he exited the Mechanical Café, the smile on his face gradually waning.

Count Poufer had only taken two bites of his slice of King's Pie!

Chapter 343 - 343 Feedback

343 Feedback

As Lumian strode down Rue Lombar toward the nearest public carriage stop, a sense of unease settled over him. Observing the deserted street, he dropped his voice to a hushed tone as he muttered, “Temiboros, why did you make me choose the King’s Pie slice without the broad bean?”

What if he had consumed that fateful broad bean and ascended to the role of the “king”?

But Termiboros remained silent, withholding any response.

Lumian pondered for a moment, then rephrased his question.

“Though the entire incident held a few unsettling details, the outcome appeared unremarkable. It’s hard to discern whether it’s tied to mysticism or Beyonder powers.”

After a brief pause, Termiboros’s deep voice echoed in Lumian’s ears.

“Next time, you could consider defying the king’s orders.”

What if I chose to disregard the king’s commands? What if I indulged in my King’s Pie instead of placing it in the room of wax figurines or even walking away with the paper? Lumian’s mind plunged into contemplation.

Rather than heading directly back to the market district, he hailed a public carriage bound for Rue Scheer on Avenue du Boulevard.

As an official member of the Aurora Order, he bore the responsibility of promptly reporting his execution of Guillaume Bénet and the latest developments within the Iron and Blood Cross Order to Mr. K.

Simultaneously, he hoped to fleece something out of them.

Participating in three secret organizations came with the potential of receiving triple rewards, but it also entailed making three reports per mission.

19 Rue Scheer, underground of Psychic's headquarters.

Mr. K, perpetually unchanging, sat in the red armchair, attentively listening as Lumian recounted his strategic utilization of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's resources to pinpoint and eliminate Guillaume Bénet, the heretic.

When Lumian mentioned how the former padre of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church had embraced the entity known as Inevitability in pursuit of power and strength, Mr. K lowered his head and traced a cross upon his chest in a deliberate up-and-down, left-to-right motion. His voice, hoarse and subdued, chanted a prayer, "Merciful Father, forgive the world's transgressions."

Lumian's lips twitched, mirroring Mr. K's penance, although he couldn't fathom the necessity of such repentance.

Post-repentance, he succinctly recounted Aurore's dual nature and the sinister Sinners organization that underpinned Roche Louise Sanson. Finally, he said, "Mr. K, I request your aid in locating the original family of Aurore—or rather, Roche Louise Sanson. They may well be tied to the Sinners, a heretical group devoted to Inevitability."

Mr. K's face, obscured beneath a voluminous hood, remained shrouded in shadow. His words, tinged with satisfaction, hoarsely resonated. "I understand your desire to avenge Aurore. There is no problem in that. The benevolent Father and the omnipotent God do not bar believers from securing their own futures. If they can intertwine personal matters with the sacred crusade against heresy, all the better.

"In this endeavor, leveraging your assets and harnessing the resources of the Iron and Blood Cross Order to fulfill your objective is a strategy I admire. Strive for more of such feats.

“I’ll investigate the Sinners.”

He agreed to Lumian’s request as it aligned perfectly with his own aspirations.

By unearthing Roche Louise Sanson’s family, he could deal with the Sinners, a faction devoted to the evil god, Inevitability!

“Thank you, Mr. K,” Lumian said sincerely.

He pondered for a moment before proceeding, “The death of Guillaume Bénet might trigger an intensified pursuit from the official Beyonders. I’m wondering if there exists a mystical item that would suit my needs, enabling me to alter my appearance and stature at will?”

He was seeking a means to assume Aurore’s identity, infiltrating the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society as Muggle.

Mr. K’s tone shifted abruptly, infused with zeal.

“Only the Lifeblood I possess can accomplish what you seek. So long as you can master your flesh and blood, altering your height and appearance becomes attainable. While it may not provide an exact replica of your desires, it suffices to veil your true identity. The caveat lies in the necessity for early injection and its limited duration. You won’t possess the liberty to transform at your whim.”

Precision isn’t required; members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society assume disguises, masking their true selves during gatherings… Yet, that falls short. A perceptive Spectator might notice something from Aurore’s eyes or the contour of the chin. To fully pass off as Muggle and dupe everyone, the masked face must mirror Aurore’s flawlessly… Plus, the adverse effects of Lifeblood are beyond my tolerance… Lumian’s thoughts coalesced, and he articulated his response.

“I’m concerned that administering Lifeblood could revert me to the most primordial human archetype. Despite the Lord’s protection mitigating severe physical and mental consequences, the Iron and Blood Cross Order could easily detect the anomaly and discern my

true allegiance."

Mr. K sighed in disappointment.

"That's a problem. Though I believe the Lord will safeguard you, preserving your devout persona from exposure, your concerns bear merit."

Having declined the offer of Lifeblood, Lumian continued, "Recently, the Iron and Blood Cross Order tasked me with an interaction…"

He detailed Gardner Martin's summons, narrating until the culmination of the King's Pie game.

The sole omission was Termiboros's warning, the reason subtly placed on his intricate grasp of mysticism. A niggling suspicion prodded him to sidestep the matter, avoiding any potential anomalies.

Mr. K listened attentively, refraining from interjection. As Lumian concluded, Mr. K stood and paced the room.

"Your next objective is to figure out the Iron and Blood Cross Order's rationale for engaging the Sauron family. Are they coveting the Saurons' inheritance or considering collaboration?"

"Yes, Mr. K." Lumian recognized the need for him to remain well-informed, irrespective of Mr. K's order.

Mr. K halted his pacing, fixing his gaze on Lumian.

"Your intuition is sound. Should any mishap occur within that game, it could set off a mystical catastrophe.

"The central figure of Poufer's sacrifice, Vermonda Sauron, held significant standing within the Sauron royal family of that era. Born into the Champagne lineage, he was adopted into the main family by King Odo the 12th, who invested resources in his upbringing.

"Vermonda began auspiciously but met a negative end. His later years saw him vanish without a trace, dealing a heavy blow to the Sauron dynasty. In the ensuing two decades, several prominent

Sauron family members met untimely and mysterious deaths, or succumbed to sudden insanity. The family's power dwindled, paving the way for Roselle's eventual overthrow."

Emperor Roselle's successful usurpation of the Sauron Dynasty was partly facilitated by the apparent decline of the ancient royal line? Vermonda's inexplicable disappearance spanned two to three centuries. How could today's sacrifice catalyze a dangerous mystical shift? Lumian's thoughts raced, absorbing the details recounted by Mr. K.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Jenna, having gleaned some insights from the Purifiers, sought out Franca in hopes of sharing her findings.

As her gaze roamed the room, Jenna's attention was drawn to the slightly ajar master bedroom door, from which emanated a rhythmic tapping sound.

"Franca?" she called.

Franca's clear voice resounded.

"I'm here! Come inside."

Jenna, who had never entered Franca's bedroom, hesitated for a moment before walking over and pushing open the door.

A burst of amazement brightened her blue eyes as they fell upon an intricate apparatus nestled against the wall, distant from the window.

The contraption consisted of a myriad of interlocking gears encircling brass cylinders, interconnected through levers, crankshafts, and screws.

In awe, Jenna regarded the towering device and inquired, "What is this?"

Seated before the elaborate mechanism, Franca's fingers danced

across a state-of-the-art mechanical typewriter as she proudly introduced it to her companion, “This is a third-generation difference engine, cleverly modified—a sort of analyzer. It’s a truncated version, simplified and miniaturized. The complete model wouldn’t fit in my room.”

“Are you really a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery?” Jenna blurted out.

Franca chuckled and explained, “Sometimes.”

Jenna’s scrutiny lingered on the so-called analyzer, revealing the connection of a telegraph machine and two metallic mechanical typewriters at its lower end.

It wasn’t long before Franca ceased her typing, and the analyzer’s mechanical appendage set the second typewriter into motion, producing letters upon pristine paper. The energy and information seemed to flow from the radio transceiver.

“What… what are you doing?” Jenna felt illiterate.

Franca happily pointed at the analyzer and said, “When the coding remains consistent, this contraption can automatically decode telegrams and codes for me. Through the metallic fingers linked to the mechanical typewriter’s keypad, it types the corresponding letters, shaping the intended words.

“In essence, I can directly read the content of telegrams. No need to laboriously decode the encrypted messages I receive. It saves me considerable time and effort.

“Likewise, I can draft telegrams in standard language. The machine will autonomously encode them and transmit them via a predetermined radio frequency.”

Studying the gears as they turned in their various states, Jenna struggled to grasp Franca’s intent.

“But what’s the purpose?” she asked, befuddled.

Franca was caught off guard.

“Purpose? Well, the purpose is to simplify telegram conversations. Make it something mundane and routine. Though admittedly, it does consume quite a bit of paper.”

“Telegram conversations?” Jenna felt a touch of perplexity.

Franca had constructed such an intricate apparatus and embarked on such an elaborate matter simply for conversation?

The late-night typewriter sounds were Franca engaged in casual chatting?

“Exactly,” Franca affirmed with a self-satisfied grin. “A friend of mine in the Loen military agreed to share the information Anthony Reid seeks during that timeframe. We just had a brief exchange.”

While Franca could easily request the pertinent information from Madam Judgment, she preferred not to burden her Major Arcana cardholder unless absolutely necessary.

As Franca finished speaking, the analyzer completed its task of typewriting, and the telegram materialized in Intisian. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Snatching the paper, Franca’s countenance darkened as she scanned its contents.

…

At night, in Apartment 601.

Lumian, Anthony Reid, Franca, and Jenna reassembled.

Waving the paper in her grip, Franca addressed Anthony Reid, stating, “I’ve received a response. The Loen military’s official report on the encounter states: No such battle occurred!”

“No such battle occurred?” Anthony Reid’s eyes widened as he jolted to his feet.

No battle at all? Lumian arched an eyebrow.

Such a response was undeniably unexpected.

Franca nodded gently, her gaze fixed on Anthony Reid.

“To put it simply, it’s highly probable that the assault against you and your companions was not executed by the Loen army!”

Chapter 344 - 344 Boxing Gloves

344 Boxing Gloves

“Not by the Loen army…” Anthony Reid muttered under his breath, his eyes distant.

Franca’s demeanor, the subtle shifts in her expressions and body language—it all told him that Franca wasn’t lying; she wasn’t bluffing him!

This revelation rendered his years of suffering, of misattributed blame, into a cruel jest.

As a Psychiatrist, Anthony Reid was acutely attuned to the waves of disillusionment that crashed through his psyche. His emotional stability quivered, struck by a potent aftershock.

Instinctively, he used Placate on himself.

As Anthony Reid struggled to “save” himself, Franca elaborated, “Either the battle’s secrecy is of the highest order, barring my Loenese friend from obtaining the truth for now, or a different faction entirely orchestrated the assault on your unit.”

Her inclination leaned toward the latter possibility. In the grand scheme of the Loen Kingdom, this skirmish was a minor one. Anthony’s company held no strategic value, no pivotal figures, so there was no reason for a high-level concealment.

“Who could it be?” Jenna had already raised this question after reading the telegram, but both of them couldn’t come up with a reasonable answer.

She even speculated that an Instigator might have sowed seeds of internal discord amidst the Intis army to digest a potion. This made

one of the companies impersonate as Loenese soldiers, launching a deadly nocturnal assault on Anthony Reid and his comrades.

However, this was far too difficult. No matter how formidable an Instigator was, there was no hope of success unless Anthony Reid's company had discovered evidence of someone's serious crimes or formed a deep feud with other companies due to conflicts on the battlefield.

"Indeed, who could it be…" Anthony Reid, now more composed thanks to his Placate, intoned with a voice etched in determination.

He understood why the Loen army would attack him and his comrades—their animosity, though intense, was comprehensible within the context of war. But an attack from an unknown faction? That puzzled him.

Franca pondered for a moment and said, "Did your unit forsake allies on the battlefield? Or perhaps lay claim to spoils of war that weren't rightfully yours?"

Anthony Reid ruminated briefly before shaking his head resolutely. "No."

Lumian chimed in with conviction, "Absolutely not. This ties back to Hugues Artois. It can't be a squabble between comrades or external rivals."

Jenna, absorbed in contemplation, posed another question, "Did you defy Hugues Artois's orders? Or did your actions inadvertently cost him something?"

Anthony Reid shook his head again.

"If I had, I wouldn't have grappled with years of puzzlement."

Silence enveloped Apartment 601, a contemplative hush broken only by Lumian's recollection. A shard of Madam Magician's prior words tugged at his thoughts, and he ventured,

"Could it be a sacrificial rite? A blood offering to an evil god?"

“Blood sacrifice…” Franca and Jenna recalled the support various evil god factions had given Hugues Artois.

Anthony Reid fell silent for a moment before saying, “The heretics, disguised as the Loen army, orchestrated our annihilation with Hugues Artois’s complicity?”

Franca said insightfully, “It’s the most logical explanation, though the question remains—who gains? Certainly not Hugues Artois. He reaped no boons, not even in death.”

For a moment, no one could answer Franca’s question.

After a few seconds, Lumian said, “That’s one of the avenues we must delve into as we proceed. It might intertwine with Hugues Artois’s ascent to power and his parliamentary role.”

Upon hearing this, Jenna recounted the information she had obtained from the Purifiers and concluded, “The pressing issue lies in the fact that General Philip, who seems the most suspicious, is already deceased. It’s as if all the threads converge at a sudden dead-end.”

“He died just in time.” Franca chuckled. “A pre-emptive elimination, perhaps?”

Lumian stroked his chin and spoke slowly, “In the world of mysticism, certain deaths don’t necessarily mean true demise.”

Madam Justice had mentioned that an evil god’s boon had a Deceased Sequence. They could use death to escape their original fate.

Similarly, if General Philip had used the Substitution Spell, the one who died might not be the real him.

Franca, who had previously helped with finishing Guillaume Bénet, immediately understood. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

“Substitution Spell?”

“We cannot dismiss the possibility.” Lumian smiled. “Our immediate objective remains the investigation of General Philip, ascertaining the

truth of his demise. Even if he is truly dead, there may be traces he left behind, undiscovered by the Purifiers due to the constraints imposed on them."

Anthony Reid, though still grappling with the shattering revelations, felt the warmth of unity and purpose in his companions' discourse. It bolstered his resolve, a spark of renewed determination igniting within him.

He nodded slightly and said, "There's no need to rush. This matter must be very complicated. I'll first gather preliminary information about General Philip, his family, and friends."

After Anthony Reid took his leave, Lumian observed Franca preparing to head to Rue des Fontaines in search of Gardner Martin, so he left Apartment 601 with her.

As they walked down the stairs, Lumian broached the subject of his conversation with Hela, sharing the details with Franca.

Her excitement burgeoned as she absorbed his words, a fervor building within her.

"Great! Great! Quickly transform into Muggle. Let's make contact with April Fool's together!"

"Why are you so excited?" Lumian glanced at him.

Franca made a tongue-clicking sound and chuckled.

"Back home, there's a saying that goes— if you get drenched in the rain, rip up someone else's umbrella. Haha, it's all in jest, but isn't it interesting? Even though your appearance leans towards masculinity, a few simple adjustments can render you strikingly beautiful. Once the Pyromaniac potion has been digested, have you not considered having a potion of Pleasure? Sigh, forget it. There's still some risk before reaching Sequence 4."

Laughter and jesting flowed between them, Franca's demeanor then taking a more serious turn as they reached the street

"Unfortunately…" Lumian echoed the sentiment, a tinge of regret

shading his words.

His curiosity then led him to inquire about Emperor Roselle and the perplexing attitudes of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members.

Franca's expression turned strange, as if she struggled to suppress a bout of laughter.

After a moment, she exhaled and said, "This matter is quite complicated. It's difficult to explain in a few words. I'll explain in detail tomorrow or the day after tomorrow when I'm free. In short, be mentally prepared."

"How complicated can it be?" Lumian muttered. He bade Franca farewell and commenced his journey toward Rue Anarchie.

Upon reaching Room 207 at Auberge du Coq Doré, despite having already deciphered the issue with Aurore's grimoires and no longer needing to delve into them, Lumian's habits dictated that he retrieve the copies and skim through their contents, his thoughts wandering amidst the scattered pages.

Approaching midnight, a stirring within Lumian's heart drew his gaze toward the carbide lamp.

The light it emitted bore a dark green hue.

The "doll" messenger, clad in a light-gold dress, suddenly materialized. It glared coldly at Lumian, as if striving to contain its emotions.

With twin thuds, a pair of iron-black boxing gloves, adorned with multiple short thorns, landed soundlessly on the table. The impact carried a resonance more akin to wood meeting wood than metal striking wood.

Simultaneously, a folded sheet of paper drifted toward Lumian.

"Thank you." Although the "doll" messenger quickly vanished, Lumian still expressed his gratitude politely.

He refrained from touching the boxing gloves for now, opting to unfold the piece of paper and peruse the contents of Madam Magician's message.

"The Shadow Branch and the Lucky One Beyonder characteristic have been made into a mystical item.

"How does it fare? Has its form been modified, rendering it more convenient for transport? This is a masterpiece forged by a master.

"It remains nameless for now. With common words, you could dub it the 'Lucky Shadow Boxing Glove.' For a touch of panache, 'Flog' could be a stylish choice. The name is yours to determine.

"Any target struck by this glove, regardless of creating injuries, whether they defend with a weapon or not, will undergo a surge of desire or emotion. The specific emotion hinges on your luck. Yet, with the presence of Lucky One, you can envision or simulate the corresponding desires and emotions ahead of time, guiding the target's reaction. The success rate stands impressively high—around 70 to 80%.

"Following the trigger of a target's desires or emotions, a second strike won't engender new feelings. Instead, there's a likelihood of causing the pre-existing desires or emotions to erupt. This unleashes an overwhelming tidal wave on most targets, inflicting significant harm, even rendering them temporarily incapacitated.

"While the likelihood of invoking desire or emotion with each hit isn't substantial, repetitive blows will eventually yield the desired outcome—unless you are cursed with bad luck that counteracts the influence of Lucky One.

"However, the glove's most exceptional facet isn't its offensive potential, but its defensive capabilities. It possesses unparalleled sturdiness, capable of withstanding an assault from a Reaper without incurring any damage. (Note: Reaper refers to Sequence 5 of the Hunter pathway.) Naturally, this hinges on the attack squarely targeting the glove. In such a scenario, there's even a possibility of taking a strike infused with godhood, at the expense of shattering or fracturing the glove. This probably places the glove at Sequence 4.

“On the downside, carrying the glove will erode your self-control, intensifying the oscillations of various desires and emotions. Withstanding this requires exceptional endurance. Moreover, while donning the glove, you will attract the attention of a hidden entity since it originated from the Tree of Shadow. While They cannot directly harm you for various reasons, They can summon dangerous entities to your vicinity, influencing or attacking you.

“Hence, each use of the boxing gloves should be accompanied by a change of location, and their usage should not be for extended periods. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may attract hidden dangers. However, should you maintain your composure and endure one or two attacks, the world will expel those dangerous entities who can’t truly descend here.

“Ah, one last detail—your two Psychiatrists request a final follow-up consultation at the usual time tomorrow afternoon.”

Chapter 345 - 345 Dream

345 Dream

I need exceptional endurance to withstand the weakening of self-control brought about by carrying the Flog. The waves of various desires and emotions surge stronger… Alms Monk excels in handling such situations… While reading Madam Magician's letter, Lumian swiftly considered if he could fulfill the conditions for using the mystical item.

With this in mind, Lumian recollected the adverse effects of Contractee contracts.

A substantial portion of them seemed to be mitigated by Alms Monk's resilience and self-restraint.

First acquiring the Alms Monk boon prior to becoming a Contractee. Could it be that one must bolster their endurance to endure a contract? Otherwise, the padre with over ten negative effects would have self-destructed long ago…

Yes, Guillaume Bénet's utilization of Alms Monk and Ascetic powers wasn't overly adept. Could this stem from his ingrained indulgence, making change difficult? Or did he leap directly into being a Contractee before evolving into a Fate Appropriator? His grasp of the Alms Monk and Ascetic boons seemed inadequate, relying largely on instinct. Lumian murmured to himself.

Recalling how the padre in the dream transformed from an ordinary individual to a Fate Appropriator within a day, Lumian was more inclined to believe the latter possibility. He surmised that the events in the dream marked Guillaume Bénet's advancement to a Fate Appropriator with only two to three boons.

Lumian redirected his attention to the letter in his hand and read

through the remainder in one go.

Concerning the utilization of the Flog boxing gloves to attract perilous creatures, he intended to seize an opportunity and approach Franca for assistance to verify the precise circumstances.

If indeed hazardous, he would need to contemplate reserving one usage of spirit world traversal to escape any future influence or attack.

Crimson flames silently surged, setting the letter ablaze, its words turning to ash.

Amidst the dispersed ashes, Lumian reached out his hand toward the iron-black boxing gloves.

Although they lacked the metallic texture and chilliness, they were exceptionally rigid.

Almost in unison, two voices resonated in Lumian's mind:

One was the voice of the eloping couple, casting curses; the other was the voice of inebriated individuals shattering bottles and clamoring in the street.

The former set Lumian's imagination ablaze, while the latter spurred him to draw his revolver and open fire.

The sensations weren't overpowering and could be endured and repressed.

After confirming the fit of the boxing gloves, Lumian set them beside the pillow.

…

In the depths of night, in a hazy state, Lumian felt as though he had stepped into an ancient beige castle. Its exterior bore numerous dark and crimson stains, as if drenched in a copious amount of blood.

Hysterical laughter and shouts reverberated from within the castle. Lumian instinctively raised his gaze and spotted a deep-red visage

peering at him through a narrow window on the third floor.

Fine blood vessels detached from their sockets, leaving behind a pair of inky-black, blood-soaked cavities.

Lumian's thoughts blurred as he involuntarily stepped into the ancient castle.

What unfurled before his eyes were gruesome scenes: The maid rent her abdomen with a dining knife, drawing forth pallid intestines marred by blood. The valets ascended the staircase to the second floor, only to throw themselves back into the hall, repeating their falls in a macabre cycle. The butler clutched a comely female head, his lower body severed. He dragged himself with his elbows, leaving behind a broad and extended trail of blood. The headless mistress sat in an armchair, lifted her cup of coffee, and poured it into the gash on her neck…

The pungent stench of blood and the frenzied ambiance pierced Lumian's mind, snapping his eyes open.

He beheld the familiar, squalid ceiling and caught the ceaseless nocturnal clamor of Rue Anarchie.

Had it all been a dream? The scene from his dream lingered in Lumian's memory, a residual unease remaining.

As a Beyonder seasoned with the world of mysticism, he didn't underestimate such a dream.

It likely bore the marks of a revelation through Astral Projection or an external influence.

Swiftly reviewing the day's occurrences, Lumian zeroed in on two potential "culprits."

Could it be the lingering effects of the King's Pie game from earlier, or perhaps linked to the impact of the Flog boxing gloves?

He cast a glance at the iron-black spiked boxing gloves, left untouched beside his pillow, sensing that the game was the likely trigger.

An attempt to commune with Termiboros yielded no response.

After securing the Flog boxing gloves within a drawer in his wooden table, Lumian drifted back into slumber.

Throughout that night, nightmares plagued him repeatedly. Each instance, he encountered the bizarre ancient castle.

Fortunately, the dream's lucidity waned progressively, eventually melding into a commonplace nightmare.

…

The following morning, Lumian adhered to his routine of jogging and practicing boxing, then set out in search of a distinctive breakfast in the bustling market district.

After spending nearly the entirety of the morning at Salle de Bal Brise, he eventually found himself standing before Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

With a flush on her face and a lively demeanor, Franca answered the door. "You're quite the eager one."

Lumian was forthright about his intentions.

"Remember you mentioned wanting to discuss Emperor Roselle with me?"

"Well, well…" Franca's expression shifted oddly once more.

She grumbled, "I'm feeling unwell!"

As Franca led him to the living room, she muttered, "It's empathetic embarrassment!"

Lumian shut the door and took a seat on the sofa. After a moment's thought, he inquired, "Is this embarrassment on behalf of Emperor Roselle?"

"Exactly." Franca, seated cross-legged in a recliner, scratched her flaxen hair. "I'm seriously concerned that he might be so mortified

that he'll rise from the grave to strangle anyone who's privy to the information!"

After a rather odd comment, Franca sighed and explained, "In simpler terms, Emperor Roselle, like us, hails from another world."

"Emperor Roselle is also one of the transmigrators you mentioned?" Lumian blurted out in astonishment. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Franca confirmed succinctly, "Many of his inventions, beliefs, and ideas originated in our world. What's more significant, his diary was penned in the language of the nation your sister and I come from. That's why it remained undeciphered for so long until our transmigration."

Lumian's mind was a whirlwind of confusion. It all seemed too fantastical, like something out of fiction. However, Aurore's attitude toward Emperor Roselle and his diary lent credence to Franca's words.

Seeing his silence, Franca added with understanding, "Nonetheless, he's an extraordinary individual. Progressing from a mere Sequence 9 individual, he ascended the paths of the divine step by step, overthrowing the Sauron Dynasty and enacting monumental changes upon Intis and the world. His impact on the history of the past two to three centuries and generations of humanity is profound."

That's true. Emperor Roselle once said that a hero is a hero, irrespective of their origins… Where Emperor Roselle came from was immaterial… Lumian quickly collected his thoughts and asked with curiosity, "Did Emperor Roselle's famous quotations originate from philosophers in your world?"

"Many of them did." Franca, in a way, supported her fellow countryman's public image. "But some are genuinely his own. Consider this: a person who's undergone so much, tasted both triumph and failure, must possess unique insights across various domains. He's not lacking in memorable sayings."

Now I understand why Aurore chuckles whenever I mention something Emperor Roselle said… A realization dawned on Lumian.

He grasped his sister's sentiments at that moment and the jesting tone the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society adopted toward the Emperor.

He then inquired, "Did one of you write Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles?"

"Yes, but I'm unsure who the author is," Franca honestly admitted. "The writer possesses quite the literary talent."

"Is everything in there accurate?" Lumian contemplated seeking out an underground bookseller to procure a copy.

Franca chuckled. "About half of it. Even among the portions based on actual events, half of that is a sensationalized expansion of a couple sentences from the Emperor's diary into a narrative rife with explicit details. For instance, the Emperor once shared more than just friendship with a Demoness…"

Franca suddenly paused.

Realization dawned upon her that she herself was now a Demoness.

A worthwhile addition to my collection… Emperor Roselle does seem to live up to the legendary reputation of being a flirt… Lumian's anticipation for the underground book grew.

He opted not to delve further into the topic of the Emperor and the Demoness. Instead, he brought up the King's Pie game from the prior day and the subsequent nightmarish dreams. He then sought Franca's insights as an adept practitioner of divination.

"What revelations are hidden in that dream?"

"I can't decipher it," Franca said after a prolonged pause. "It conveys a sense of danger and advises to stay away. Also, those nightmares appear to be lingering effects from some form of insanity."

Lumian contemplated for a moment, deciding not to probe deeper for the time being. He planned to consult the two Psychiatrists later in the day.

…

At 3:20 p.m., Lumian reached Mason Café in Quartier du Jardin Botanique and took a seat in Booth D. He requested a cup of aromatic Intis coffee and two cream-filled cupcakes.

Once the coffee and confections were served, he patiently waited for a minute or so before catching the sound of Susie's gentle, feminine voice.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Lumian Lee."

Lumian responded with an easy smile.

"Good afternoon, Madam Susie. Good afternoon, Madam Justice."

Chapter 346 - 346 Follow-Up Visit

346 Follow-Up Visit

“How did you know I was here?” Madam Justice’s voice held a smile.

Lumian gazed at the chair across from him and responded, a grin tugging at his lips, “Can’t hurt to extend a greeting.”

Susie steered the conversation forward, “Congratulations on completing the initial phase of your vendetta. Care for a brief discussion?”

“No problem.” Lumian’s composure remained unshaken, not even flinching at the mention of “vendetta.”

Of course, part of his calm demeanor stemmed from the fact that he hadn’t brought along the Flog boxing gloves. This was a psychological evaluation, after all. He couldn’t allow external influences to taint his thoughts and skew the doctor’s judgment.

From the point of seeking assistance and crafting a strategy, he recounted his experiences of the past two days. He glossed over the secret of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society but provided a concise account of everything else.

Following a momentary silence, Susie’s soothing voice resumed its course.

“Your mental state has held up admirably. A certain degree of overreaction in specific scenarios is par for the course. Psychiatric therapy doesn’t strip a person of their emotions or feelings. Instead, it aids in unburdening oneself, fostering reconciliation, and discovering inner resilience. Nightmares won’t deal a devastating blow to you any

longer. Otherwise, according to the more dubious therapists who advocate severing the frontal lobe for eternal tranquility, you'll forever be at peace."

"Removing the frontal lobe?" Lumian's ears caught wind of this concept for the first time.

Susie's tone tinged with revulsion.

"It's a notion that has cropped up in the last couple of years. It doesn't yield the intended outcomes; rather, it inflicts grave harm upon the patient. There's an evident malevolence behind this treatment proposal. It's as if some callous individual propagated it with the sole intention of making a mockery out of medical professionals and those seeking solace."

A prank that toys with the lives of others? Lumian shifted gears, steering the conversation onto a different course.

"Madam Susie, you haven't even delved into my emotions or analyzed my thoughts, yet you've already deduced that I've made some strides towards recovery, and a follow-up might not be necessary?"

Susie's demeanor lifted rapidly, and she replied with a grin, "At times, a person's actions can be more telling of their psychological state than their thoughts. Understand that humans excel at deceiving themselves. They concoct a slew of rationales for their actions, which often stand less grounded in reality than their deeds. To decipher an accurate psychological portrait from this labyrinth of complex and contradictory thoughts requires meticulous analysis. But such scrutiny can easily unearth problems. Hence, I chose to commence with an examination of your actions.

"Evidently, whether you're willing to admit it or not, you've successfully reestablished social connections and fostered a level of trust in others. You've also exhibited a willingness to extend your trust to others.

"Prior to your ambush of Guillaume Bénet, you demonstrated the capacity for calm contemplation and thorough preparation. While

there were impulsive undertones and hints of macabre inclinations in your operation, they were inevitable. Their absence would only have hinted at more severe psychological turmoil. And once the affair concluded, you swiftly reverted to your norm and dived right back into life, embarking on another investigation.

“Grounded in the sequence of actions you’ve undertaken, I extend my congratulations. The pronounced self-destructive tendencies have lost their grip, and you’ve truly extricated yourself from the abyss of agony.

“Naturally, the pain won’t dissipate entirely. It will wane and recede. Perhaps it might resurge abruptly in the future, once again occupying your mind. Yet, there’s no need to succumb to panic. Armed with this period of experience, I trust you’re equipped to navigate it adeptly. Psychologically speaking, this signals a path to recovery.

“In similar fashion, the past invariably leaves its imprints upon us. Your self-destructive propensities, your extremities, your pathological behaviors—no doubt they’re more potent than in most individuals, but they all abide by the bounds of reason and normalcy.”

In response, Lumian let out a slow exhale and murmured, “I sense it myself, honestly. The present me is an entirely different person from the one who initially set foot in Trier.

“Thank you, Madam Susie. Thank you, Madam Justice.”

He realized that his transformation from an initial state of apathy was thanks to the efforts of these two psychiatrists and his escapades in the market district. The prospect of death itself had lost its sting. He had shifted from a vindictive malevolent specter to an individual fueled by an ardent thirst for retribution, driven by a potent desire for action.

“In essence, this is your own redemption.” Susie’s tone brimmed with a delight not present before. “The primary contributors to this turnaround are none other than yourself and your sister, Aurore. Were it not for the tiniest ember of hope that you harbored, coupled with your will to persist, and were it not for Miss Aurore gifting you nearly six years of cherished moments to savor and to mold your

thoughts, we might not have been able to reel you back in."

As Lumian processed these words, a montage of scenes flickered across his mind: Aurore inhaling deeply, using the breaths to temper the vexation derived from instructing him. The tempestuous storms of combat training, coupled with her impromptu "attacks." The two of them ensconced in the study, each absorbed in their respective books, relishing the tranquility of the night. And, as the number one experimental subject, he was obligated to consume the culinary reproductions of food back home that his sister conjured, be they successes or failures…

Lumian's expression softened as he recollected a line from his sister's novel: The joy and pain of days past are equal to the me of the present.

After a pause lasting more than ten seconds, he straightened in his seat and queried, "Were last night's nightmares all rooted in the King's Pie game?"

This time, it was Madam Justice who responded, her voice soft with understanding, "Indeed. Considering the current situation, it's likely that you were mentally corrupted during that time."

"Mental corruption? Does it actually involve Beyonder powers?" Lumian asked with genuine curiosity.

Madam Justice replied, "Ordinarily, the simple act of sacrificing a King's Pie wouldn't have yielded any results. Otherwise, the game wouldn't have remained a popular tradition in Intis for centuries, fading into obscurity only after the establishment of the Republic. Only a handful of families still recall it."

"Yes, that's what I assumed back then. Poufer didn't employ any mystical language or invoke a complete honorific name. It's implausible for the sacrifice to succeed," Lumian concurred.

Madam Justice continued, "Nevertheless, exceptions exist—sacrificers who share blood ties with the subject of the sacrifice and exhibit numerous similarities.

“If you participate frequently in Poufer’s King’s Pie game and repeatedly endure the mental corruption it entails, the ramifications won’t dissolve with a mere spate of nightmares. Rather, before they fully dissipate, they’ll progressively warp your psyche and lead you into madness.”

“Could the content of these nightmares be symbolic?” Lumian inquired succinctly.

Madam Justice’s response flowed measuredly.

“It’s highly probable that they’re a fusion of specific deranged occurrences from your past, projected into your dreamscape through the taint of corruption.”

“So, that ancient castle and those deranged individuals could really exist…” Lumian mused, nodding in contemplation.

As Lumian engaged in a conversation with Justice and Susie for a while, he intuited that the day’s follow-up session was drawing to a close.

In that instance, Madam Justice took the lead, saying, “Didn’t I mention previously that I might require your assistance with something?”

“Of course, no problem,” Lumian swiftly agreed.

Consider it the cost of the psychiatric treatment!

Moreover, he held the belief that Madam Justice wouldn’t have entrusted him with the task without assessing his capabilities. The endeavor couldn’t be excessively dangerous.

Madam Justice chuckled and said, “Should you succeed, I shall bestow an additional reward upon you, one that will cater to your requirements in a specific manner.”

“Something capable of altering my appearance?” Lumian’s heart skipped a beat with excitement.

“Something along those lines.” Madam Justice’s initially gentle tone

turned solemn. “I’m hoping you can venture to an ancient tomb situated on the fourth floor of Trier’s catacombs, specifically to retrieve a vial of the Samaritan Women’s Spring for me.”

Samaritan Women’s Spring? Lumian was taken aback.

Madame Hela had previously mentioned that she had journeyed to Trier in pursuit of an artifact hidden deep within the catacombs. Concurrently, she had inquired about the legend surrounding the Samaritan Women’s Spring!

Wasn’t this too much of a coincidence? Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Almost as if she sensed his thoughts, Madam Justice chimed in with a smile, “Don’t you find it too coincidental?

“Yes, what I’m hoping for is that you can leverage Madame Hela’s exploration to assist me in securing some Samaritan Women’s Spring water. Doing so yourself might yield slim chances of success.

“In truth, I could ‘arrange’ for you to undertake this task in a more clandestine manner, but that approach contradicts my philosophy and principles. I still require face-to-face communication with you and your explicit consent for such matters. I’m disinclined to ensnare you passively through covert cues to fulfill my objectives.

“For me, indulging in the manipulation of others’ minds is a treacherous endeavor.

“Of course, honesty is also an effective way at influencing others’ thoughts.”

Lumian’s skepticism and doubts gradually ebbed away. He inquired, perplexed, “Madam Justice, given that you possess a general awareness of the Samaritan Women’s Spring’s approximate location, why wouldn’t you retrieve it yourself? Why involve a Sequence 7 Beyonder like me?”

The Tarot Club’s Major Arcana card was definitely a demigod, countless times stronger than him!

Madam Justice laughed.

“To put it succinctly, certain locales become progressively hazardous with an increase in Sequence.”

A location where higher Sequences meet with increased danger? Lumian found this notion confounding.

Madam Justice added, “As Sequences rise, proximity to the Oldest One increases, accumulating more madness along the way. Consequently, individuals in higher Sequences are more susceptible to particular forms of corruption.

“Hela is also beneficial in this matter. At the very least, this approach will save her time and permit her to narrow down her search to a designated area.”

After a brief contemplation, Lumian agreed to Madam Justice’s request. From her, he gleaned the approximate location of the Samaritan Women’s Spring—situated within the westernmost ancient tomb on the fourth floor of the catacombs.

…

Following the session, Lumian made his way back to Rue des Blouses Blanches in the market district, his objective being the retrieval of the Flog boxing gloves from the iron cabinet.

Upon his arrival at the safe house, an odd inkling settled upon him.

Intrusion!

Someone had infiltrated his safe house!

Lumian’s heart tightened as he advanced with purpose, unlatching the iron cabinet.

While observing that Aurore’s grimoires and the Flog boxing gloves remained, a sigh of relief escaped him involuntarily.

However, he proceeded to conduct a thorough inspection, and his scrutiny bore fruit. One article was conspicuously absent—the Earth

Blood ore was gone!

Chapter 347 - 347 Strange Theft

347 Strange Theft

Looking at the open iron cabinet, Lumian found it absurd and surreal.

The thief had entered the house without taking the most valuable Flog boxing glove, nor did they flip through Aurore's grimoires to see if there were any banknotes inside. They had only taken a mineral specimen that didn't look like a gem at all.

Disregarding the traps, if the thief were truly a Marauder with Beyonder powers, he wouldn't have given up on the boxing gloves made of unique materials and capable of powerful abilities. If he were just an ordinary thief, he wouldn't have just taken the Earth Blood ore. He might have even casually thrown the seemingly worthless item to the ground.

All of this led Lumian to suspect that the thieving intruder had only one motive: take away the Earth Blood ore!

The other party clearly knew what was special about the mineral specimen and was attempting to exploit it!

"Termiboros, who stole the Earth Blood ore?" Lumian couldn't identify any suspect no matter how hard he thought.

Apart from dealing with Guillaume Bénet a few days ago when he retrieved the Earth Blood ore and handed it to Franca, he kept the mineral specimen in the safe house. He never carried it with him to avoid being targeted.

Of course, the thief might have divined or prophesied to narrow down the area. He searched every room and finally found the target item.

Termiboros's magnificent voice suddenly resounded.

"I don't know."

Don't know… Lumian was alarmed.

This answer was meaningless, but coming from Termiboros meant many things.

While Termiboros, sealed within Lumian's body, couldn't exert any direct power, his angelic nature granted Him unique insights. As an angel of the Inevitability domain, He possessed an uncanny ability to detect problems and traces that eluded many Low-Sequence Beyonders through Low-Sequence Beyonders's eyes and fate.

But now, He claimed ignorance!

This revelation carried significant weight, suggesting that whoever had stolen the Earth Blood ore was no ordinary individual. It hinted at the involvement of a high-level power, possibly tied to a secret organization or cult.

Hiss, I have to write a letter and inform Madam Magician about this. After all, she once predicted that the Earth Blood ore would bring me some misfortune. However, the item is lost before the misfortune arrived… Lumian had initially hesitated to burden his Major Arcana card holder with this matter, as he didn't attach much value to the mineral specimen. Its applications were limited, and its loss seemed inconsequential. However, with the situation taking a bizarre turn, he couldn't simply dismiss it.

In the world of mysticism, negligence often led to painful lessons.

Truth be told, Lumian didn't harbor anger over the loss of his possession, nor did he feel compelled to retrieve it. Though the Earth Blood ore might lead to fortuitous encounters, it remained an abstract concept, difficult to quantify or cherish.

Moreover, Madam Magician's warning of potential misfortune made him view its loss as a means to mitigate risk.

Lumian meticulously inspected the safe house once more, confirming

that none of the traps had been triggered. Only the Earth Blood ore had vanished. He settled down to compose a letter.

This time, the summoned puppet messenger displayed a less frigid demeanor, no longer suppressing intense emotions.

In mere minutes, Madam Magician's response arrived, concise and to the point: "There's indeed something amiss in this matter. I can't identify the thief of the Earth Blood ore either. If you're not fearful, you can venture to the entrance of Salle de Bal Unique and seek anyone with a monocle in their right eye. Even if they aren't the culprits, they should possess knowledge of the suspect. If you find it too risky, exercise patience. Someone will inquire on your behalf."

Salle de Bal Unique… That makes sense. The Sequence preceding a swindler is Marauder. Could those monocle-wearing individuals hold sway over all the thieves wielding Beyonder powers in Trier? Lumian pondered this in silence.

Aurore's grimoires had mentioned that Marauder occupied Sequence 9 on one of the paths of the divine. Above Marauder was Swindler, and further up was Cryptologist.

After careful consideration, Lumian opted to wait for someone to inquire on his behalf. He had no immediate need for the Earth Blood ore.

The thought of Salle de Bal Unique, Monette, the monocle-wearing Islander swindler, and the swindlers who emulated his style sent shivers down his spine. He preferred to avoid any unnecessary contact for the time being.

After burning the letter, Lumian shifted his attention to the iron cabinet, the repository of Aurore's grimoires, Flog boxing gloves, and various other items.

The once-secure safe house had become compromised, and he needed to find a new location for these possessions.

I'll take Flog with me. I'll carry the rest if I can, and sell what's sellable. If not, I'll secure another safe house… For Aurore's grimoires

and the gold, I'll rent an anonymous safe deposit box at a large bank for their safekeeping… When this property's current lease expires, I wouldn't renew it… Lumian had a clear strategy in mind.

His plan encompassed the items he couldn't easily transport or wished to part with, which primarily included the five ritualistic hides, in addition to Aurore's grimoires and his accumulated gold. Finding a new home for these items was a priority, along with securing another safe house for himself.

With these considerations in mind, Lumian began drafting a letter addressed to Hela.

In the letter, he revealed that he had acquired information about the approximate location of the Samaritan Women's Spring through a secretive channel. The information source had tasked him with venturing underground to retrieve a genuine bottle of water from the spring.

However, as Lumian was writing, he felt a sense of puzzlement. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

It seemed unnecessary for him to be directly involved when he could have entrusted Hela with the task of obtaining the spring water on his behalf.

Madam Justice should have considered this. Why am I required to descend into the fourth level of the catacombs personally? Is it because of the perceived difficulty Hela might encounter in procuring the water by herself? She needs my assistance?

What's so special about me? Apart from the angel sealed within me, my Sequence isn't high…

Madame Hela's Sequence is relatively high. It's relatively dangerous for her to approach the Samaritan Women's Spring and she will be prone to madness. Am I responsible for monitoring her condition and awaken her if needed?

I previously believed that Madame Hela was at least a Sequence 4. She claimed she could resolve the Cordu problem before the descent

ritual, but now it appears she hasn't ascended to a demigod. Otherwise, she wouldn't be able to enter the fourth level of the catacombs, let alone approach the Samaritan Women's Spring… Does she possess a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact or a mystical item equivalent to a saint? Lumian combed through the entire situation and made some guesses and judgments.

Continuing to write, Lumian used the information provider's request as a pretext to express his personal desire to enter the ancient tomb.

After the summoning ritual, the skull, crafted from pure silver and radiating a gentle glow, retrieved the letter and departed.

Before long, a messenger returned with Hela's response: "No problem. I'll meet you at the gates of the Death Empire at 4 p.m. tomorrow."

Phew… Lumian exhaled a sigh of relief, his body trembling with a mix of excitement and trepidation.

His adventurous spirit and penchant for experimentation had always defined him. The bizarre vanishing of the couple in the catacombs had etched a profound mark on his psyche.

…

The next morning, at 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Lumian dutifully arrived at Gardner Martin's villa and reported the details of his meeting with Count Poufer and the other Black Cat members.

Inside, Gardner Martin, unusually excited, sat behind his desk and spoke with a hint of joy,

"Despite your claim of lacking artistic inclination, your background allows you to converse with them effectively. That's precisely why I chose you instead of Albus.

"I was concerned you might not exhibit enough generosity, but you handled it admirably. You even sponsored them with 4,000 verl d'or on your first visit."

Gardner Martin, the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, implied that Lumian's status as the younger brother of best-selling author Aurore Lee, even without artistic inclination, provided him with a wealth of insider knowledge about the scandals, grudges, and grievances within the literary and artistic circles.

Lumian, however, didn't waste any time and cut straight to the point. "What I don't understand is why the King's Pie game gave me a sense of danger. I even had a few nightmares last night."

Gardner Martin nodded thoughtfully.

"That's because Poufer is quite unique. He bears a striking resemblance to his ancestor, Vermonda. They share a strong blood connection, which allows them to bypass many crucial steps during a ritual."

"Has his ancestor turned into an evil spirit? How can he still accept sacrifices after centuries?" Lumian asked, basing his question on logical reasoning, without mentioning Mr. K's account.

Gardner Martin responded with solemnity, "That's something you should investigate when you approach Poufer. Don't worry; as long as you don't participate in the King's Pie game every two or three days, the only aftereffect you'll experience is those nightmares. Keep that sense of danger intact and resist becoming a king. It's easier for you to become a king than anyone else, except for Poufer himself. If you're uncertain about making the right choice, let Poufer choose first."

The Iron and Blood Cross Order wants to uncover the whereabouts of the mysterious Vermonda Sauron, who has been missing for centuries? Heh heh, why didn't they warn me about the dangers of the King's Pie game beforehand and advise me to be the last to make a choice? Lumian suspected that Gardner Martin hadn't mentioned it to confirm a crucial matter.

…

In the afternoon, near the Trier Opera House, within a concealed quarry cave, Franca and Jenna, wearing half-masks, once again met

the Warlock in the black robe.

He was the same client who had previously commissioned the investigation of the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister's gatekeeper.

Franca scanned their surroundings, her voice intentionally hoarse as she spoke,

"We've made some progress in our investigation regarding the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister's gatekeeper. We wish to discuss it with you privately."

The man fell silent for over ten seconds before finally nodding. "Very well."

Their iron-masked skeletal escort led them, along with the client, into a secluded "conversation room" within the quarry cave.

…

With an hour left until their agreed meeting time, Lumian equipped himself with a carbide lamp and entered the market district's corresponding entrance to Underground Trier.

Chapter 348 - 348 The Bustling Underground

348 The Bustling Underground

The carbide lamp emitted a bluish-yellow light, casting an eerie glow over the tunnel, which was divided by stone pillars.

Lumian strolled casually, carrying a black canvas bag that had become popular among university students in recent years. Inside, he had stashed the Flog boxing gloves and a stack of white candles.

After conducting numerous experiments, Lumian had discovered that carrying them in his bag was less risky than tucking them into his shirt or pants pockets. While it didn't make a significant difference, it was still better than the alternative.

As he followed the route marked on Gardner Martin's map, leading him toward the underground of Quartier de l'Observatoire, Lumian suddenly perked up his ears, listening for signs of approaching footsteps.

A cacophony of faint footsteps echoed in the air, barely audible.

Lumian scanned the path ahead and to his right, unsure which route the unidentified group would take. To remain inconspicuous, he clambered up to a stone pillar supporting the tunnel's ceiling, extinguishing his carbide lamp, and disappeared into the shadows.

Before long, a group of men emerged.

Most of them wore tattered jackets or were shirtless, hunched over while carrying heavy crates. Over a dozen burly men, dressed in well-worn attire with sinister expressions, held various firearms and carbide lamps, interspersed throughout the group.

Smugglers… Lumian peered out, examining the crates illuminated by the smugglers' lights. They appeared to emit a metallic gleam.

Firearms or something else? He mumbled silently, observing the smuggling caravan as it entered the right tunnel.

As they advanced, possibly due to a shadow that moved too much like a human, one of the smugglers raised his gun, took aim, and fired.

With a resounding bang, the alarm ceased, and the group pressed onward.

Lumian clicked his tongue and shook his head, finding their reaction overly tense and excessive.

In Underground Trier, such actions could easily lead to trouble!

It was well known that aside from university students exploring and citizens cultivating mushrooms to eke out a living, most individuals venturing underground were not to be underestimated. The chances of encountering Beyonders were significantly higher below ground than on the surface. Firing upon any passerby could potentially provoke members of secret organizations, bestowed of evil gods, anti-government militants, or formidable cave adventurers.

With this in mind, Lumian drew his revolver and squeezed the trigger in the direction of the smuggling caravan, which was about to disappear at the end of the tunnel to his right.

He wasn't aiming at anyone, just firing into the air.

Bang! The armed smugglers either spun around or scrambled for cover, unleashing a barrage of bullets at the crossroads.

However, Lumian was no longer concerned. He was already scaling the rock wall, almost reaching the top.

After exchanging gunfire with the empty air for a brief moment, the smugglers shifted their positions nervously, puzzled and flustered.

Lumian observed their backs and couldn't help but smile.

No need for thanks. Consider it a free lesson!

He leaped to the ground and relit his carbide lamp.

Smelling the lingering scent of gunpowder, Lumian grinned and holstered his revolver before continuing along his planned route.

A few minutes later, he came across a group of quarry police officers dressed in dark uniforms, armed with semi-automatic revolvers.

The officer leading the group, upon seeing Lumian's youthful appearance, backpack slung diagonally, and well-dressed attire, muttered under his breath, "Son of a bitch, why is it another college student!?"

He then exhaled loudly and asked, "Did you hear anything just now?"

"There was a gunfight over there. Bang, bang, bang. I wanted to go over and take a look, but I didn't dare," Lumian replied, concealing nothing about the smuggling caravan.

The quarry police officers exchanged glances and swiftly passed Lumian, sprinting toward the intersection.

…

In the "conversation" room.

Observing the iron-masked skeletal host's departure, the man dressed in Warlock attire turned his attention to Franca and Jenna and said,

"What did you discover? As I mentioned, you need to find the gatekeeper or his remains to claim your reward."

Jenna replied calmly, "We haven't really thought about payment yet. We believe the situation is more complex than you described.

"One night, we infiltrated the Deep Valley Quarry…"

Upon hearing the term "Deep Valley Quarry," the man, hidden under a hooded shadow, subtly lifted his gaze.

Franca keenly observed his body language.

She had consulted with Anthony Reid and knew the kind of subconscious reactions ordinary humans would exhibit in such situations.

The man's actions suggested he was highly sensitive to the mention of Deep Valley Quarry.

Only someone aware of the issue would react in such a way.

Jenna continued to recount their discoveries, including the cybernetic-eyed monk and the secret cave adorned with limbs.

The Warlock-dressed man remained composed, making no unnecessary movements. However, to Franca, this indicated that he understood the abnormality within Deep Valley Quarry.

After hearing Jenna's account, the man deliberately raised his voice and said, "I can't confirm if it's related to the gatekeeper's disappearance, but if you can enter the secret cave, capture a few photographs, or retrieve valuable items, I'm willing to offer half the payment upfront. Perhaps you'll find clues about the gatekeeper's whereabouts inside."

Do you take us for fools? Are you expecting us to take such a risk for a mere 10,000 verl d'or? Franca muttered silently.

Had this mysticism gathering not been organized by her friend, she would have found a way to tail the client and uncover his true identity. She could then extract more detailed information from him and have Jenna sell it to the Purifiers.

…

"Halt!

"The Death Empire lies ahead!"

Lumian once again found himself standing in front of the natural arch, adorned with a peculiar mix of white bones, sunflowers, and steam symbols carved into the stone.

Before he could reach for the pocket watch he had borrowed from Salle de Bal Brise to check the time, Hela, dressed in a mysterious widow's black robe with withered blonde hair, approached from the other side.

The woman nodded slightly and said, "Since you're already here, let's proceed ahead of schedule."

"Very well." Lumian opened his bag and produced two white candles.

After lighting them and handing one to Hela, he grinned and remarked, "Aren't you worried that the information I obtained about the Samaritan Women's Spring might be incorrect?"

"Success comes after numerous failures," Hela replied with icy detachment.

A chuckle escaped Lumian's lips.

"I thought you might say that failure is the mother of success."

"This isn't the Research Society," Hela replied tersely.

Lumian didn't waste any more time. He extinguished his carbide lamp and advanced toward the rocky arch, clutching the white candle, its flame now an intense orange.

As expected, a figure emerged from the shadows beyond the door.

The figure sported a blue vest and yellow pants, with gray hair and few wrinkles. His light-yellow eyes held a faint cloudiness, marking him as an elderly man.

The old man cast a disapproving look at the white candle in Lumian's hand and asked with a furrowed brow, "Didn't you find a guide?"

You… Not you guys? Lumian glanced at Hela out of the corner of his eye and realized that the candlelight around her had dimmed, as if it had been corroded by the underground darkness or shrouded in dense fog.

In this state, she appeared to have vanished from the tomb

administrator's view.

Lumian flashed a smile at the old man.

"I don't require a guide. I've been to the tomb many times, though I'm more accustomed to entering through the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative entrance. Don't worry, I remember all the taboos, and I won't deliberately break them."

The old man snapped, "You college students! Remember, exit before your candles burn out!"

With that, he stepped aside and disappeared into the darkness behind the door.

As Lumian passed through the rocky passage and entered the Death Empire, he turned to the aged tomb administrator and asked curiously, "Why can you hold a lit white candle?"

The tomb administrator's faintly turbid light-yellow eyes suddenly darkened, and an icy aura emanated from him.

In a deep voice, he replied, "I'm just stationed by the entrance, not venturing too deep."

Is that so? Lumian, who had already entered the catacombs, rationally abandoned any further inquiry. He focused on the chill in his heart and the unseen gazes from the surrounding darkness.

He couldn't help but sense a resemblance between the tomb administrator's current aura and Hela's presence.

Under the ever-watchful gaze of the corpses in the stone pit and the heaps of bones lining the sides of the passage, Lumian pressed on through the musty air. He walked alongside Hela, passing landmarks like the chapel tomb and the memorial pillar tomb.

Hela broke the silence, her tone frosty. "Which level are we heading to?"

"The fourth level," Lumian replied, holding the white candle aloft and pointing to a nearby tomb sign, not withholding any information.

Hela nodded once more and picked up her pace, striding ahead of Lumian.

She seemed intimately familiar with the first level of the catacombs. After a few twists and turns, she led Lumian to a staircase that descended to the second level.

Compared to the previous level, there were far fewer tourists here. Occasionally, they encountered university students singing, dancing, or testing their courage under the “gaze” of the candlelit corpses.

Hela showed no signs of slowing down. Soon, Lumian spotted a weathered stone door.

With the candle’s flickering yellow glow illuminating the way, he read the Intisian inscription on the stone door: “Entrance to the Old Ossuary.”

“Down here, we enter the third level. Just beyond the door is the Sun and Steam altar. Keep walking until you reach the Krismona Night Pillar, and that’s where we enter the fourth level,” Hela explained, her voice still cold.

“Do you have a complete map of the catacombs?” Lumian couldn’t help but inquire, aware that only the map of the first level was readily available on the market. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Hela shook her head.

“I know less the deeper we go. From the third level onward, you have to rely on the road signs and the guiding black line on the cave ceiling.”

Lumian chose not to press the matter further. With Hela leading the way, they crossed the threshold of the Old Ossuary and descended a wide stone staircase, imbued with a palpable sense of history.

Upon reaching the third level of the tomb, they encountered a flickering candlelight and a makeshift altar composed of two weathered boulders.

The candle's flame belonged to a young man with black hair, brown eyes, and a pale complexion.

Upon spotting Lumian and Hela, he rushed toward them as if grasping at a lifeline.

As he ran, he shouted, "M-my friends vanished! Just like that!"

Chapter 349 - 349 Sacrificial Square

349 Sacrificial Square

His friends had vanished? Lumian, clutching a white candle, watched as the young man dashed over, his eyebrows twitching slightly.

He wasn't a tomb administrator, nor did he have an angel sealed within him!

Any anomaly that occurred meant that something was wrong!

"Stop!" Lumian drew his revolver with his free right hand and pointed it at the black-haired, brown-eyed, and pale-faced young man.

In the flickering candlelight, the lad shook his head frantically and said, "Help! Save me! They've all vanished!"

He slowed down slightly but didn't stop.

Bang!

Lumian pulled the trigger of the revolver, sending the yellow bullet grazing the lad's body into the distance, disappearing into the darkness that couldn't be illuminated by candlelight.

Sensing Lumian's determination to stop him, the lad finally halted and revealed a pleading expression.

"Save me! Save me!"

Observing Hela's silence with no intention of making conversation, Lumian had no choice but to inquire, "What happened?"

As he spoke, he used the yellow candle flames in the trio's hands to survey the environment on the third level of the catacombs.

Unlike the first two levels of the tomb, which were surrounded by white bones and had corpses lining both sides of the path, this level had a small square devoid of corpses.

The square was paved with mottled cobblestones, with no moss or soil in the crevices. It was unbelievably clean.

Two grayish-white pillars made of boulders stood on either side of it. Their surfaces were severely weathered, leaving peeling marks.

Even so, Lumian, with his keen eyesight, discerned the Sun Sacred Emblem and Triangular Sacred Emblem engraved on the two pillars. Surrounding them were symbols like Sun Flowers, crankshafts, and connecting rods.

Around the square, where candlelight couldn't penetrate, the darkness was dense, as if countless figures stood there, casting gazes that made Lumian's skin prickle.

The young man with black hair, brown eyes, and a pale face replied fearfully,

"I don't know. We were just about to leave the square where the altars of the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery stand to explore the ancient tomb on the third level. Suddenly, they stumbled over something and fell, one by one. Even the candles in their hands fell to the ground and went out.

"I-I was at the back and saw them vanish just like that!"

To him, the most pressing question wasn't how they vanished but why the witness still remembered their disappearance.

It's clear that if you aren't affected by the strangeness and manage to escape, your faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun would surge… Lumian couldn't discern anything amiss with the other party, so he casually posed another question.

"Are you college students?"

The lad nodded again.

“Yes, we’re students from Trier Normal College. We formed a team to adventure here. My—my name is Gérard.”

Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle. He even considered inviting Gérard to join him and Hela in their search for the Samaritan Women’s Spring. After all, the chances of a student like him surviving until graduation seemed slim. He might be more useful as bait.

As he contemplated how to determine if there was anything wrong with Gérard, Hela suddenly spoke with a cold tone, “We’ll escort you back.”

Surprisingly kind? Lumian turned to Hela, taken aback.

His impression of this lady was that even her blood ran cold.

Gérard was so grateful that tears and snot streamed down his face. He continued to thank them profusely as he approached.

Lumian observed his every move. He retrieved a white candle from his canvas bag and tossed it over.

Desperately, Gérard caught it and lit the new candle with the old one, which had only a small segment left.

Seeing the flickering candlelight, the college student breathed a sigh of relief and followed Hela and Lumian down the stone staircase leading to the second level. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Just as he took ten steps up, Gérard was suddenly stunned.

Lumian looked over and noticed that the lingering fear on his face had disappeared.

“Will it be a problem for you to return to the surface by yourself?” Hela asked again, but her words were entirely different from before.

Gérard chuckled.

“No problem. Thank you for the candle. Sigh, losing the spare candle

is troublesome."

Uh… Lumian's heart stirred as he probed, "Did you venture to the third level of the tomb alone?"

Gérard nodded proudly. "Of course, I possess enough courage and experience."

He has finally forgotten about his schoolmates… Did he not forget because he was at the sacrificial square? Did Madame Hela notice that, thereby suggesting escorting him? Lumian nodded in enlightenment.

After watching Gérard ascend the stairs and leave through the entrance of the Old Ossuary, Lumian and Hela returned to the sacrificial square.

This time, when Lumian looked at the two sacrificial pillars representing the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery, his feelings for them were entirely different.

However, even with the deity's gaze and protection, the two stone pillars inevitably showed signs of weathering and corrosion after countless years in the depths of the catacombs.

Lumian believed that more protection meant greater confidence. He wouldn't lose anything by giving it a try. Facing the sacrificial pillar engraved with the Sun Sacred Emblem, he raised his body slightly and spread his arms.

"Praise the Sun!"

Hela watched silently, not interrupting his prayer.

After Lumian finished his concise praise, the two of them made their way toward the Krismona Night Pillar to the north, following the black line above their heads and the road sign at the edge of the square.

Lumian, holding a white candle, had only taken a few steps away from the sacrificial square when his heart stirred. He cast his gaze forward.

At some point, a skeleton, covered in dark-green mold, had collapsed by the road. The bones of its hands lay across the road, as if it wanted to grab a passerby's ankle.

If Lumian had walked faster and failed to carefully observe the environment, he might have tripped over the corpse!

This instantly reminded him of Gérard's description: The college student's companions stumbled over something and fell to the ground, extinguishing their candles. Only then were they "swallowed" by the catacombs, leaving no trace of their existence!

Did they trip over these fallen bones? Lumian thoughtfully kicked the hand bone away.

Amidst the clanking sounds, he and Hela continued forward. However, after a few steps, they encountered another white skeleton with half its body lying on the road.

Lumian frowned and instinctively looked back at the spot where he had almost tripped.

The dim candlelight barely reached there, but Lumian could barely make out the details with his Hunter's eyesight.

His pupils dilated as he realized that the pale-white hand bone he had kicked had returned to its original position, still serving as an obstacle for passersby!

"They're still alive? Undead creatures?" Lumian asked, his nerves on edge.

"No, but it's a possibility," Hela replied succinctly.

Seeing Lumian's puzzled expression, she explained, "They must have been affected by the environment deep within the tomb and are exhibiting certain abnormalities. When the hidden dangers and horrors in the environment erupt, it's likely that they will all turn into undead creatures."

All of them turning into undead creatures… Lumian instinctively shuddered as he imagined such a scenario.

Whether complete or incomplete, there were at least a million skeletons on this level. It might even be an order of magnitude more. If they all became undead creatures with a hatred for the living, the situation would be terrifying to the extreme!

Seeing that Hela had no intention of turning back, Lumian followed. They relied on the guidance of the road sign and the black lines above their heads to navigate through the bones that were trying to obstruct them and slowly made their way toward their destination.

After an unknown amount of time, they finally reached the Krismona Night Pillar without encountering another living person.

It was a colossal pillar made of black marble, its upper end reaching the cave ceiling. There were no patterns or symbols engraved on its surface, nor were there any signs of weathering or corrosion.

Lumian was taken aback.

In the sacrificial square, the two stone pillars symbolizing the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery had been weathered and corroded!

Is this pillar more special than the sacrificial ones?

As if sensing Lumian's thoughts, Hela spoke coldly, "Krismona is a member of the Demoness Sect, which can also be called the Demoness family.

"She was a Sequence 2 Demoness of Catastrophe. She perished in the War of the Four Emperors in the previous epoch, dying inside Fourth Epoch Trier. However, her characteristics were retrieved by the Demoness family.

"Apart from the Krismona Night Pillar, there are also the Marianne Night Pillar and Lius Night Pillar on the third or fourth level."

"Who are these two?" Lumian believed they were angels as well. Otherwise, they wouldn't be on par with Krismona.

"Marianne was the pope of the Church of Evernight back then, and Lius was a Blessed of ancient Death, a Death Consul. Their

characteristics were also retrieved by their respective factions. As for whether other angels perished here, I'm not sure, but many of the angels who followed the Blood Emperor must have perished." After Hela briefly explained, she pointed at the stone staircase behind the Krismona Night Pillar. "Let's go to the fourth level."

Lumian tersely agreed, and they quickly replaced their rapidly burning white candles before ascending to the fourth level.

…

After attending the mysticism gathering, Franca and Jenna retraced their steps to the underground area corresponding to the arcade of the opera house.

As they turned a corner at a fork of the road, Franca leaned over and whispered into Jenna's ear,

"Someone's following us."

Someone is following us? Jenna's heart skipped a beat.

Chapter 350 - 350 Negative Effects

350 Negative Effects

“How can that be?” Jenna exclaimed, her surprise and confusion evident.

She recollected the mysticism gathering’s conclusion, where participants dispersed through various routes at sporadic intervals. The two of them had been cautious, ensuring they left no clues. So, how had they been followed?

Observing Jenna’s restraint from looking back, Franca calmly moved ahead and whispered,

“Who knows? Perhaps another participant chose this route and stumbled upon someone ahead. They might want to tail us, hoping for an opportunity to strike it big. Or maybe someone with unusual skills tracked us in an unexpected way.

“Let’s keep moving forward as if nothing’s amiss. We’ll be safe once we reach the street under the arcade.

“If our pursuer strikes before then, drop the carbide lamp immediately and hide in the nearby shadows. Depending on the situation, you can decide how to join the fight.”

Jenna nodded subtly, indicating her willingness to follow Franca’s instructions.

Unintentionally, she tightened her grip on the carbide lamp.

After traversing the dark, damp tunnel for a hundred to two hundred meters, Franca slowed down and glanced back with confusion.

“The stalker has vanished…

“It’s also possible that he found a way to bypass the spider silk I left behind…”

As she finished speaking, a figure emerged from the darkness ahead, illuminated by the carbide lamp’s glow.

Jenna reacted swiftly, dropping the carbide lamp in her left hand and blending into the shadows.

Relying on her Mirror Substitution technique, Franca didn’t rush to evade. Instead, she fixed her gaze on the stalker who had circled around to confront them.

It was the man masquerading as a Warlock, his face concealed beneath a hooded shadow.

The entrustee!

He gazed at Franca and deliberately spoke in a high-pitched voice, “I want to strike a deal with you guys.”

…

Behind the Krismona Night Pillar, Lumian trailed behind Hela, clutching a new white candle that flickered in the dim light. They followed the worn stone steps, seemingly descending into the depths of hell.

The stone walls on either side slowly gave way, revealing intricate reliefs of human heads. Dark gray figures clustered together, reminiscent of the countless bones piled high in the upper tomb.

As Lumian completed the descent and stepped onto the hushed fourth level of the catacombs, an overwhelming restlessness overcame him. It was as if he had been imprisoned for a long time, yearning for freedom.

This sensation wasn’t unfamiliar; it was a side effect of the Armored Shadow contract, but it had never been this intense before!

It was as if his spirit felt trapped within his body, finally becoming cognizant of the truth.

It sought to break free from this "cage," to shatter this world and gain true freedom.

Phew… Lumian exhaled slowly, calming himself down.

Even without the Alms Monk boon, he believed he could manage these turbulent emotions. With the Alms Monk's power, he could control them even better.

According to Madam Justice, the higher one's Sequence, the more susceptible they are to madness and the hidden corruption of the fourth level of the catacombs. Is that what I'm experiencing? Is it because my Sequence isn't high that I could endure and control it? Lumian quickly made a guess about the current situation. He instinctively looked up and cast his gaze diagonally at Hela.

Her neck is slender, mostly concealed in the widow-like attire's collar, a suitable target for snapping…

Just as this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he hurriedly shook his head, dismissing the negative effects of the Abscessed Hand's contract.

Simultaneously, he noticed that Hela's face had turned pale-whiter, resembling a corpse that had been dead for many days rather than a living human.

In an instant, Hela produced a military flask, unscrewed the cap, and downed its contents.

Lumian caught a whiff of the strong scent of alcohol.

Silently, he muttered, It should be liquor… Could Hela be like the alcoholics in Feysac, carrying multiple flasks with her?

After finishing a third of the bottle in a single gulp, Hela's complexion flushed slightly as she inquired, "Which way should we go?"

Lumian responded honestly, “It’s in an ancient tomb on the westernmost side. We have a general idea of the area, but not the exact location.”

Hela nodded and glanced at the top of the tomb, where a thick black line was drawn with arrows pointing in various directions.

Combining this with the signs near the entrance, Lumian could roughly discern the route leading west.

Nevertheless, he pulled out a compass he had prepared beforehand to confirm.

Under the feeble candlelight, the compass needle oscillated continuously, erratic and unceasing.

“It’s acting crazy,” Lumian commented, attempting to alleviate his pent-up irritation with humor.

“We’ll have to rely on the road signs and black lines,” Hela responded, seemingly expecting this. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian sighed, eyeing the erratically moving compass. He chuckled self-deprecatingly.

“If it never stops, could it power a perpetual motion machine?”

Hela glanced at him.

“Aren’t you a believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun?”

Lumian replied sincerely, “At least for now, I am.”

Hela didn’t press the topic further. Following the road sign beside her and the black lines above, she stepped to the right.

“The Marianne Night Pillar and Lius Night Pillar are both on this floor. There’s also Fran?ois’s Tomb, the Blood Order Hall, and Crazy Shrooms Cave… Uh, the style of this name is completely different from the others,” Lumian rambled, diverting his attention from the road sign.

The most noticeable difference between the fourth and third levels was the absence of corpses lining the path. It appeared wider and cleaner, yet it was eerie in its silence.

The ancient tombs had sealed entrances, concealing their contents from prying eyes.

Without turning around, Hela remarked, “Does your mental unrest manifest in talking and rambling more?”

“Not exactly. Talking just helps me cope with the irritation,” Lumian admitted.

They continued to navigate, using the road signs and black lines to adjust their direction as they went along.

As Lumian passed by the partially natural tomb cave named the Order Hall, the outer soil tinged with a hint of blood, he suddenly spotted someone.

It was a woman in a plain white robe, her black hair flowing down her back, and her features extraordinarily exquisite, perfectly harmonious. Her aura was so pure that she seemed out of place in this silent and filthy tomb.

Despite having seen a Demoness of Pleasure frequently, Lumian couldn’t help but be amazed. He even felt an unholy urge to ravage her.

This wasn’t just a drawback of Flog’s boxing gloves; it was a dark impulse from the depths of his heart.

Lumian snapped out of it. The woman had sparkling blue eyes, cold and lifeless, and her hands were empty, holding an unlit white candle!

In the catacombs, the living would vanish without the protection of the white candle’s flames!

Lumian’s body tensed as the woman slipped into the surrounding darkness, blocked by the outer wall of the Blood Order Hall, and disappeared without a trace.

“What are you looking at?” Hela’s cold voice cut through the silence.

“Didn’t you see?” Lumian recounted the scene he had witnessed in detail.

Hela fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “I didn’t see it indeed. However, as soon as you stopped moving, I cast my gaze in that direction.”

“Was I the only one who could see it? Or was I the only one allowed to see it?” Lumian couldn’t be certain if it was due to Termiboros’s influence, his Sequence, or his gender.

Hela pondered for a moment and replied, “Don’t concern yourself with such matters. It’s normal for special wraiths and evil spirits to linger in the depths of the catacombs, but this place is like a powerful seal. As long as you don’t break the rules and trigger an anomaly, you should be safe.”

Lumian nodded.

“I was just thinking,” Lumian began, “Ordinary tourists and adventurous college students wouldn’t be able to pass through the third level of the tomb to reach this place. Why did they produce the guiding black line and accurate road signs? Who are they for?”

Hela answered as she took another step forward, “Official Beyonders who come here regularly to clean up and tomb administrators who patrol the area every day.”

She then offered a simple reminder. “Based on your description, the female figure you saw earlier resembles a high-ranking Demoness.”

Lumian’s heart skipped a beat.

“Could it be the lingering vengeful spirit of the Demoness of Catastrophe, Krismona?”

“I’m not sure,” Hela replied, taking another sip from her military flask.

Lumian casually glanced around, his eyelids twitching.

He noticed a purplish-red patch on the back of Hela's right hand.

It hadn't been there before.

It resembled the livor mortis seen on the deceased!

Is this the effect of the corruption on the fourth level of the catacombs? Is Madame Hela using alcohol to resist it? Lumian continued his small talk.

Amidst his babbling, they meandered through the unmarked ancient tombs and eventually reached the westernmost area of the floor.

At the edge of the rock wall, dozens or possibly hundreds of ancient tombs stretched out of sight.

Just as Lumian was about to ask Hela if she could expedite the search for their target, he heard knocking from an ancient tomb nearby.

Both Hela and Lumian tensed, their eyes fixed on the tomb as more of its damaged stone walls crumbled, revealing a dark cavern that humans could enter and exit.

A figure emerged, hunched over.

Lumian, filled with tension, wanted to unleash a Giant Fireball, but he restrained himself, opting to observe first.

The man who crawled out of the ancient tomb held a lit white candle, dusted off his clothes, and slowly straightened up.

Dressed in a black seer's robe commonly seen in circuses, he had brownish-black skin, a slender build, curly black hair, and deep-set eyes. A crystal-like monocle adorned his right eye. He was none other than the Islander swindler, Monette.

Monette flashed a smile at Lumian and Hela.

"What a coincidence!"

Chapter 351 - 351 Killing Intent

351 Killing Intent

Dammit! Lumian couldn't help but curse inwardly when he saw Monette.

A mix of anger and fear washed over him, a reaction to the stress of the situation.

Why is it him again?

Why did he appear underground in front of me at such a critical moment?

What is he up to?

Why is he like the bedbugs at Auberge du Coq Doré, the cockroaches in the trash, and the rats in Underground Trier, ubiquitous and unavoidable?

"Who are you?" Hela asked coldly.

Her deadpan demeanor swiftly soothed Lumian's emotions. His mind raced as he analyzed the intentions of the Islander swindler, Monette, and the Salle de Bal Unique dance hall backing him.

Monette, with a sly smile, pinched the monocle in his right eye socket and replied,

"Like you guys, a tomb adventurer."

Tomb adventurer… You make grave robbers sound so honorable… Madam Justice once said that the higher a Sequence, the more dangerous it is to enter the catacombs… Therefore, the angel Monette believes in can't provide him with any assistance here. The saints with godhood in Salle de Bal Unique don't dare enter either… In

other words, if Madame Hela and I join forces, we have a high chance of keeping Monette here forever, preventing him from roaming around like a cockroach! Lumian narrowed his eyes as he gazed at Monette.

The fear in his heart dissipated significantly, and the dangerous thoughts of using this opportunity to eliminate the swindler in front of him rapidly multiplied.

Lumian smiled and looked at Monette.

“Tomb adventurer? Do you know this place well?”

Monette smiled and said, “Of course.”

He raised his right hand and pointed at an ancient tomb at the edge of the candlelight’s range.

“That belongs to a member of the Fourth Epoch’s Zoroast family.”

Immediately after, Monette pointed to a few nearby tombs.

“That’s a member of the Jacob family, a member of the Abraham family, a member of the Blood Legion…

“Unfortunately, there are no Beyonder characteristics left behind.”

Lumian’s surprise and puzzlement grew as he realized that the Islander swindler had genuinely answered his question. This raised even more questions about Monette’s motives.

He cautiously pointed towards the ancient tomb from which Monette had emerged.

“Whose tomb is that?”

Monette took a few steps forward, noticing the subtle shift in Lumian’s demeanor. He stopped and maintained his enigmatic smile.

“A member of the Fourth Epoch’s Amon family.”

This swindler’s knowledge of the Fourth Epoch families and the

catacombs' fourth level is far more extensive than what should is written on the road signs…. Amid Lumian's bewilderment, Hela spoke again.

"Then do you know where the Samaritan Women's Spring is?"

Monette stroked the outer edge of his monocle and wore a smirk.

"Why should I tell you? What kind of reward can you offer?"

"Why should we believe you have the exact location of the Samaritan Women's Spring?" Lumian asked instinctively.

He suspected that Monette was about to embark on his habitual deception.

Monette chuckled lightly.

"I really don't know. The name Samaritan Women's Spring isn't that impressive. It seems to come from an ancient book I once read. However, after coming to this level many times, I discovered some strange phenomena. Some occasionally animated bones will automatically gather in this area, enter a tomb, and never come out."

The undead animated by the environment will be affected by this tomb's abnormality and drawn to it automatically? Or is that the Samaritan Women's Spring? Western side, some ancient tomb. The conditions match… Lumian's heart raced as he became even more vigilant.

Monette, the Islander swindler, voluntarily disclosed such crucial information without receiving any payment ?

This was completely out of character for him!

Any anomaly that occurred meant that something was wrong!

Lumian suspected two potential scenarios: either Monette was luring him and Hela into the ancient tomb where the undead gathered, hoping to lead them into a trap, or he was using them as scouts to navigate this dangerous territory.

Both possibilities were equally plausible. Although the former didn't benefit Monette, some people did enjoy seeing others suffer.

"That's all I know." Monette pinched the monocle in his right eye socket and said with a smile, "I'll search the other tombs. If you can find the so-called Samaritan Women's Spring, remember to leave a note for me in the tomb of the Amon family member; tell me what's so special about it."

As he spoke, he advanced toward Lumian.

In Lumian's tense state, poised to strike at a moment's notice, the Islander swindler sidestepped him and headed for the distant tomb, carrying a lit white candle.

Soon, his silhouette disappeared at the crossroads, plunging the area into darkness once more.

Has he truly left? Lumian remained vigilant, his attention focused on Termiboros's reaction.

The Inevitability angel remained silent, seemingly unperturbed by Monette's reappearance.

Hela took a few steps back and positioned herself beside an ancient tomb, pushing open its rickety stone door.

Confronted by the pale-white bones strewn at the tomb's entrance, Hela raised her right hand.

As if pulled by invisible threads, the bones swiftly converged, morphing into a swaying humanoid skeleton with a creaking sound.

Hela refrained from issuing any commands to the undead creature she had summoned. She observed coldly as it slowly departed from the tomb, drawn by an unseen force into the darkness.

Is Madame Hela from the Corpse Collector pathway, or does she possess a corresponding mystical item? Lumian roughly discerned Hela's intentions. She intended on utilizing the undead creatures' characteristic—the automatic attraction to the problematic ancient tomb—to chart their course.

The most probable anomaly in this region was the Samaritan Women's Spring!

Holding their burning white candles, the pair followed the humanoid skeleton through the westernmost tombs.

Suddenly, another figure emerged from the darkness around the corner, a candle flame accompanying him.

A crystal monocle adorned his right eye socket, and an enigmatic smile graced his face. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

It was that Islander swindler Monette once more!

As Lumian jumped in fright, Monette asked with a smile, "Is that Samaritan Women's Spring interesting? Can I accompany you?"

Why didn't you ask previously? Lumian's killing intent surged.

Without batting an eyelid, he said, "We haven't even located it yet. How would we know if it's interesting? Why didn't you conceal yourself in the shadows, awaiting the completion of our exploration and confirmation of any dangers or traps before venturing forth? That way, the risk would be considerably lower. And even if we succeed, we won't be able to remove the Samaritan Women's Spring in its entirety."

Monette pressed the back of his right index finger against the monocle and nodded in agreement.

"You make a valid point."

The swindler grinned and retreated into the darkness around the corner.

The candle's flame promptly dwindled until it vanished.

He left so easily? Lumian's thoughts raced, but he couldn't quite decipher Monette's intentions.

He glanced at Hela and noticed that she was sipping liquor again, but her complexion had a pallid, almost bluish hue.

She resembled a corpse even more now.

“Do you have any idea what’s up with these monocle-wearing folks?” Lumian inquired.

Hela placed the empty military flask back into her hidden pocket. As she continued to follow the humanoid skeleton, she replied in a cold, ethereal voice, “It’s tied to the Fourth Epoch’s Amon family.”

Fourth Epoch’s Amon family… The ancient tomb Monette emerged from belonged to a member of the Amon family… They control the Marauder pathway, much like Franca mentioned the Demoness family’s control over the Assassin pathway. Seeing that Hela wasn’t inclined to share more, Lumian had no choice but to keep silent and follow.

Monette’s reappearance pushed aside any thoughts of idle chatter to ease his restlessness.

As they proceeded, the candles held by Lumian and Hela took on a faint, eerie shade of dark green.

The “resurrected” skeleton turned into a massive, decaying tomb with a partially open stone door.

Lumian’s spirits soared, sensing that the Samaritan Women’s Spring lay ahead.

At that moment, another figure poked its head out from the side of the tomb.

Under the yellowish candlelight, the crystal monocle gleamed with an unsettling brilliance.

It was the Islander swindler, Monette, once more!

He grinned and inquired, “Do you have any messages for your family and friends? I can help convey them.”

Lumian was so startled that he almost couldn’t contain the urge to strike down Monette right then and there!

There couldn't be a better place to deal with him!

"No," Hela replied icily, choosing not to engage.

Lumian exhaled slowly and said, "Neither do I."

"What a shame." Monette returned to the dark tunnel beside the tomb, looking disappointed.

The yellowish candlelight flickered slightly, indicating that he hadn't gone far and was waiting nearby.

Lumian couldn't help but glance at Hela and gesture with his right hand as if cutting a throat.

He was asking if they should eliminate the Islander swindler in advance.

Hela remained silent for a few moments before gently shaking her head.

"We'll leave as soon as we obtain the Samaritan Women's Spring."

She intended to stay focused on their objective and avoid stirring up further trouble.

Yes, once I've collected the spring water, I'll teleport away with Madam Hela… Lumian agreed and replaced their candles with fresh ones.

After some time, the skeleton still hadn't emerged. Cautiously, they entered the massive tomb through the partially open stone door.

At that moment, a raspy, elderly voice echoed from the depths of the tomb.

"Halt!"

Within the perimeter of the yellowish candlelight, a figure trembled into view.

Chapter 352 - 352 Spring Source

352 Spring Source

A figure staggered out from the depths of the tomb.

As the figure entered the range of the candle flames, it seemed uncomfortable with the light. It raised its right hand to shield itself from the glare.

Similar to the tomb administrators, the figure wore a blue shirt and yellow pants. However, his face bore deep wrinkles and light-brown patches. Sparse, dry, white hair adorned his head, and his eyes were an unusual pure black, giving off an icy coldness.

For some inexplicable reason, Lumian found it challenging to discern the features of the aged tomb administrator. His form seemed to blur at the edges, blending seamlessly with the surrounding darkness, impervious to the white candle's glow. His breath was so faint it bordered on non-existent.

In a hoarse, emotionless voice, like that of a corpse capable of speech, he uttered, "Get out of here!"

"Since it's open for viewing, there shouldn't be any restricted areas!" Lumian retorted, echoing the tone of college students in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, attempting to reason with him.

But the aged tomb administrator repeated, "Get out of here!"

Lumian turned to Hela, hoping she might succeed in persuading the gravekeeper.

If that failed, he was prepared to take more direct action, either restraining the other party or even rendering him unconscious.

The Spell of Harrumph was perfectly suited for such tasks.

However, Hela shook her head slowly and began to exit the tomb.

…

Deep underground near the arcade of the opera house, Franca gazed at the entrustee and inquired, “What kind of deal?”

The Warlock-dressed man responded in a shrill tone, “I’ll increase the reward to 50,000 verl d’or. Go to the Deep Valley Quarry and create a huge commotion, exposing the secret cave.

“If you’re willing, you can sign the contract now. I have a way to ensure the contract’s binding powers on both parties.”

Fifty thousand verl d’or to create an explosion capable of shattering the stone wall at the secret cave’s entrance? Why seek us out for such a straightforward task while offering a generous compensation of 50,000 verl d’or? Franca’s suspicion deepened.

With a subtle movement, Franca produced a fist-sized grayish-white cloth bag and tossed it into the shadows beside her. She assumed a guarded posture against the man across from her and as though it was inconvenient for her to find a necessary item.

“Help me find my seal.”

Seal? Jenna materialized from the shadows and caught the small coin bag, hearing the metallic clinks within.

She was baffled by Franca’s request.

Isn’t the bag supposed to be filled with coins and the Ring of Punishment?

Franca smiled at the entrustee.

“What are the specific terms of the contract?”

She sensed the possibility that the other party might manipulate the contract using Beyonder powers from the corresponding domain.

Franca had a plan to attack before committing to any contract—capture him, clarify the terms, and then consider whether to sign it!

…

Baffled, Lumian followed Hela out of the tomb and asked, “What do we do now?”

“Grab my right arm,” Hela’s voice was colder than before, devoid of warmth.

Lumian roughly grasped her thoughts and quickly complied, reaching out to firmly grasp her right arm.

Almost instantly, Hela twirled the black diamond ring on her right middle finger with her left palm.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt a profound shift. He was no longer in the same world as the tomb entrance.

Surveying his surroundings, he noticed that everything, including the dim candlelight, had become hazy, shrouded in dense fog.

Guided by Hela, Lumian moved cautiously through the thick fog, taking one step at a time.

There was no movement in the depths of the tomb, and the two of them slowly advanced in silence.

Before long, within the limited visibility of five meters, he spotted a rotting coffin standing upright on the ground. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The aged tomb administrator lay motionless in the coffin, his eyes wide open and devoid of life.

Lumian couldn’t detect any sign of breathing this time.

In this foggy state, the aged tomb administrator seemed to pay them no mind, allowing Lumian and Hela to pass by as they headed towards the end of the tomb.

There, they found a gentle downward slope leading to an unknown destination.

Hela gestured for Lumian to release his grip, and the enigmatic concealment dissipated.

Standing at the top of the slope, Lumian held a candle flame in his hand, illuminating a path lined with scattered, broken bones.

An unsettling chill emanated from the depths of his heart, stifling his emotions and desires. Yet, an unshakable anger and malice of wanting to snap someone's neck persisted, growing stronger. Lumian felt as though he was observing his own duality—a sane self contrasted with a crazed, unfamiliar self.

He couldn't help but glance at Hela, who downed a flask of liquor in one go. Her face remained pale, and purplish-red patches marred her skin, making her look as if she had been dead for some time.

"Are you alright?" Lumian remembered his primary role as a constant reminder to Hela to prevent her from being corrupted by the catacombs and undergoing any abnormalities.

Hela put away the empty flask and replied in a lifeless voice, "I'm fine for now. I've made preparations to deal with this situation. As long as I don't linger too long, I should be alright."

Lumian pressed, "How long can you stay?"

"About half an hour," Hela replied, beginning to descend the slope.

Lumian planned to grab Hela's arm and use spirit world traversal to force her out of here a few minutes in advance, regardless of what they found later.

Descending deeper, the slope became littered with more bones, gradually taking on complete and original forms. Some resembled humans, while others appeared monstrous.

The skeleton Hela had awakened earlier knelt on one knee on this slope, unable to proceed further.

As they continued, Lumian noticed a thin grayish-white fog up ahead, contracting and expanding, as if it had a life of its own.

Hela slowed her pace and regarded the fog with heightened caution.

“Is there a problem?” Lumian asked, finding the fog oddly familiar.

Hela nodded and said, “It’s very dangerous. I’ve prepared as best as I can, but I’m not certain it will work.”

As Lumian listened to Madame Hela’s response, he continued to observe the grayish-white fog.

Suddenly, he recognized it.

Isn’t this the same fog that shrouded Cordu’s ruins?

The very fog that provided protection when I prayed for boons?

In that moment, Lumian realized the true reason behind Madam Justice’s insistence that he accompany Madame Hela in the search for the Samaritan Women’s Spring.

He cautiously extended his right palm towards the grayish-white fog, and as they touched, he felt warmth in his left chest.

He knew that Mr. Fool’s seal had been activated.

He pushed forward, his right palm passing through the grayish-white fog without encountering any danger or abnormality.

With newfound confidence, he couldn’t help but think, Praise The Fool!

After a brief prayer, Lumian turned to Hela with a confident smile.

“I’ve also made the necessary preparations, and they seem effective.

“I’ll grab your arm.”

Hela didn’t inquire further about Lumian’s preparations or the information he possessed. She allowed him to grab her left arm, and together, they ventured into the grayish-white fog.

The surroundings grew even quieter, and an unusual, almost palpable aura seemed to fill the air. Before long, they heard an ethereal and faint splashing sound.

The sound of water… Lumian felt a surge of excitement and relief.

They were in the right place, and the Samaritan Women's Spring was likely nearby!

They continued to move forward, and as they did, the grayish-white fog rapidly dissipated, revealing a pond-sized spring.

Around the spring, a dark substance of an indescribable color encircled the pale-white water at its center.

In the water, wet, black seaweed-like hair floated, and a few vague figures struggled to crawl out from the depths.

A woman stood beside the spring. It was the white-robed figure Lumian had seen before, suspected to be a high-ranking Demoness.

Her face was pale-white and translucent, her eyes blank and cold. White bones were scattered around her.

Splash!

Suddenly, the pale-white spring water receded with a splash, leaving behind a pitch-black hole that seemed to defy the presence of light.

With another splash, the spring water surged from the dark hole, filling the pond-sized spring once more.

This time, it was dimmer, less pale-white, and appeared empty and dark, containing countless indescribable colors.

In an instant, the spring water blended with the surrounding grayish-white fog, restoring its original appearance when Lumian and Hela first laid eyes on it.

In this place, their memories began to blur as if they were slowly fading away.

In a hurry, Lumian reached into his pocket, intending to retrieve the metal canister he had prepared to collect the pale-white spring water.

But he touched something stone-like.

He had never put anything similar into his pocket!

Lumian retracted his right hand in surprise and saw a brown stone in his palm. The stone was riddled with potholes, each filled with dark-red speckled spots.

Earth Blood ore!

It was the Earth Blood ore he had previously lost.

When did it return? Why did it suddenly appear in my possession? This is a part of Underground Trier! As Lumian's pupils dilated in alarm, a frenzied, terrifying aura saturated with blood and rust emanated from the dark hole that had swallowed the pale-white spring water once more.

The mere presence of this aura froze Lumian and Hela simultaneously, rendering them immobile.

Beside the suspected high-ranking Demoness, a skeleton raised its palm and touched its right eye.

Simultaneously, it bared its white teeth and emitted a chilling, delighted laugh.

"You've already obtained it. How can you not give it a try?"

Around the spring, other white skeletons joined in, their mouths opening to produce the same voice: "You've already obtained it. How can you not give it a try?"

Chapter 353 - 353 Crazy Figure

353 Crazy Figure

“You’ve already obtained it. How can you not give it a try?” The ghastly white skeletons stared at Lumian, their terrifying aura intimidating him. They laughed mockingly, their laughter exaggerated and crazed.

The dark spring water, not pale-white enough, gushed from the dark hole and filled the small “pond.”

Compared to before, there was an additional figure in the water.

The figure seemed to be engulfed in an intense inferno, almost colorless flames covering its entire body.

Despite occupying only a corner of the spring, Lumian, frozen in fear, felt it was abnormally huge, like a mountain peak.

Within the nearly intangible flames, the figure revealed long, blood-colored hair. Its sculpted face was marred by decay and pus, and its bones gleamed with a metallic luster. Its iron-black eyes seemed rusted, emitting a sinister blood-red glow.

Yellowish “magma” dripped from the figure’s body, quickly extinguished by the pale-white spring water.

As the Samaritan Women’s Spring surged again, the dense white bones that had made the sound fell silent, as if they were about to decay into mud.

Seeing the decomposing mountain-like figure, the stench of blood and rust intensified in Lumian’s nostrils. His stunned mind was tinged with a madness that yearned to destroy everything, igniting his already violent and ferocious aura.

If he hadn't been on the brink of death, his thoughts completely stalled, he might have lost his mind and become a lunatic.

He could lose control at any moment if that happened.

In any case, he stood frozen in place, as if facing his most feared natural enemy. All he knew was to tremble, forget to resist, and forget to escape.

Splash!

The highly decayed figure, shrouded in intangible flames, entered the pitch-black cave, determined to reach the edge of the Samaritan Women's Spring. It reached out its right palm, dripping with a faint yellowish-red liquid, trying to grab Lumian, who stood there.

The spring water surged, and a faint fog gathered, preventing the figure, which appeared as massive as a mountain, from leaving the spring.

A low growl escaped the figure, and its iron-black eyes emitted a corrupting redness, capable of unsettling anyone who lay their eyes on them.

Under this influence, Lumian's mind buzzed, and he went blank. The Samaritan Women's Spring trembled violently.

Although the terrifying figure couldn't break free from the spring's constraints, it successfully blocked the spring water's retreat into the dark hole.

Simultaneously, the decayed and shadowy figures within the spring surged toward the shore, driven by the low growl.

Among them, there was a woman filled with pus exuding a serene night-like temperament, a decaying corpse adorned with a golden crown, an iron-colored skeleton sprouting greasy feathers, a figure entwined with countless shattered maggots, and a strange black entity…

The white-robed woman lingering around the Samaritan Women's Spring was instantly ensnared by the long black hair. Lumian's figure

reflected in her stiff, cold blue eyes.

His body grew colder, and his thoughts went blank.

At that moment, all light suddenly vanished, and he was consumed by a most profound darkness.

Melodious singing and chanting echoed from afar, soothing the area. The blurry and shadowy figures no longer displayed the same level of madness as before, as if they had been pacified.

The terrifying palms that had clutched Lumian's feet and nearly froze his spirit and flesh retracted. The long black hair that had tugged at his body lost its vitality and fell to the ground, powerless. The figure suspected to be a high-ranking Demoness lingering around the Samaritan Women's Spring also came to a halt, as if listening to a nocturnal symphony.

Even the most terrifying and frenzied figure slowed down, its terrifying aura significantly weakening.

Lumian snapped out of his daze and instantly comprehended what had transpired.

The thief who had stolen the Earth Blood ore was none other than Monette of Salle de Bal Unique!

Monette had deliberately orchestrated a coincidental encounter with him on the fourth level of the catacombs. Using his thieving skills, he had surreptitiously returned the Earth Blood ore, enabling Lumian to bring the ore specimen to the Samaritan Women's Spring without detection, triggering this bizarre turn of events!

Lumian had never intended to take the Earth Blood ore underground, deeming it too dangerous given his current abilities. Monette's theft and return of the ore had been a passive way to provoke an encounter, the nature of which remained uncertain!

As for Monette's motives, Lumian knew he might only uncover them after this ordeal concluded.

With his thoughts racing, Lumian instinctively reached for Hela's

arm, intending to activate his contract mark and escape using spirit world traversal. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

In the process, he attempted to rid himself of the Earth Blood ore, hoping to distract the crazed figure with long, blood-colored hair.

However, the Earth Blood ore appeared to be affected by the abnormal environment, showing visible signs of deterioration.

Silently, it crumbled, dissolving into the air. The hidden blood stains marked Lumian's palm, corroding his skin.

Meanwhile, the flame of the white candle Hela held flickered precariously, on the brink of extinguishing. The black diamond ring on her right hand emitted a profound darkness.

After grasping her arm, Lumian realized they were both frozen in place.

This area seemed to be cut off from the spirit world, rendering escape impossible!

I can't escape… Lumian retracted his hand decisively and addressed the fiery figure, who gazed at him with madness: "Ha!"

A pale-yellow beam emanated from his mouth, striking the dark, mountain-like figure.

The figure swayed, but remained unharmed. It unleashed an intangible roar once more.

Receiving this new "command," the bizarre figures, previously calmed by the tranquil night, trembled. They extended their decaying or repulsive hands once again, clutching at Lumian's feet. The black hair, previously lying dormant, rose again.

Realizing evasion was futile, Lumian's body erupted in fiery flames.

The pale-white, pus-filled hand was the first to seize Lumian's right foot, "silencing" him as his thoughts rapidly waned.

The highly decayed hand, the iron-colored skeleton adorned with light-yellow feathers, and the form intertwined with shattered maggots fulfilled their tasks one after another. They dragged Lumian, who appeared as if in a trance with wide-open eyes, toward the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Hela found herself encircled by layers of long black hair. It pierced through the tranquility of the night, enveloping the lady, who displayed signs of decay.

Lumian stared vacantly at the rigid, decomposing countenance, at the iron-black eyes tinged with blood. He sensed an overwhelming, unadulterated madness but could summon no coherent thought.

His body grew more rigid, and purplish-red livor mortis emerged on his flesh.

He was now just a step away from the pale-white spring.

At that moment, the Samaritan Women's Spring, which had been held at bay by the colossal figure for an extended period, finally surged forward, breaking through the barrier. It swept all the figures, including the colossal one engulfed in invisible flames, back into the lightless abyss of the dark hole.

The colossal figure emitted a furious roar, but it was helpless against the relentless flow of pale-white spring water, vanishing into the depths of the abyss.

Lumian "woke up" and spotted the white-robed woman lingering nearby. He swiftly turned and sprinted toward the crest of the slope.

His plan was straightforward:

Since the abnormality stemmed from the Earth Blood ore, which had partially melded with his palm, he needed to seize this chance to escape. It was not the time to collect the remaining spring water.

As long as he could make his getaway before the pale-white spring surged again and the menacing figures resurfaced, Hela would be safer left behind. She could gather the water calmly and share it with him later.

To escape, given that teleportation had failed, his legs were his sole option now.

As Lumian ran, he readied himself for any potential setbacks.

Harnessing his Pyromaniac abilities, he steadied the flame of the white candle and retrieved the Flog boxing gloves from his bag, fitting them onto his hands.

Concurrently, he attempted to invoke The Fool's honorific name in Hermes.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era…"

This inspiration was triggered by the grayish-white fog enveloping the Samaritan Women's Spring!

Splash!

Midway through his invocation and while covering some ground, Lumian heard the sound of the spring water surging.

It was faster than he had anticipated!

The growl, steeped in the scent of blood and rust, reverberated through the surroundings.

Unaware of Lumian's thought process, Hela's body shuddered once more, as if she had transformed from an emotionless corpse into a frightened living being.

Out of the corner of her eye, she caught sight of the colossal, invisible-flame-shrouded figure with blood-colored hair and tattered, bloodstained armor.

Lumian, too, was taken aback. He even felt an inclination to surrender and give up his resistance.

He strained to endure, unable to continue invoking the honorific name. His only recourse was to place his faith in the Flog boxing gloves.

If he could hold out just a little longer, the hidden evil gods might direct Their attention toward him because of the material of the boxing gloves, sending forth dangerous creatures to influence or assail him.

In the past, Lumian would have prayed for the impending abnormality to remain manageable. But now, he hoped that the more dangerous it became, the better!

Only by muddying the waters would a fish have a chance to escape!

Chapter 354 - 354 Palm

354 Palm

Underground near the arcade of the opera house.

The Warlock-dressed man spoke to Franca in a shrill voice, “It’s simple. There are only three specific terms. First, you two must promise to blow up the hidden door of the secret cave in Deep Valley Quarry, creating a commotion that can attract everyone nearby. Second, I’ll pay both of you 50,000 verl d’or with an advance of 20,000. Third, you’ll face consequences if you don’t uphold your end of the bargain. This restriction applies to both parties. We can discuss the details.”

The man had no intention of deceiving the two Beyonders in the contract. Instead, he planned to use his abilities to modify the mission’s content the moment the contract was established, forcing them to infiltrate the secret cave in Deep Valley Quarry and retrieve what he wanted, along with sufficient evidence.

This entrustee had once purchased a human soul for 1,000 verl d’or using this unique ability to tamper with transaction terms. He believed he wouldn’t be disappointed this time.

As Franca conversed with the Warlock-dressed man, Jenna, hidden in the shadows, reached into the small money bag and idly stroked the gold, silver, and copper coins inside.

She was certain that there was no seal inside the money bag.

Or rather, Franca didn’t have a seal!

What does she mean? Jenna’s gaze shifted to the entrustee who had stated the terms of the contract, finding it rather peculiar.

If he wanted to strike a deal, why not apply for notarization at the mysticism gathering just now?

If he were afraid that the contents of the commission would be exposed, he could have gone to the “conversation room” and borrowed the host’s mystical item. There was no need to secretly follow us for the commission!

Something is definitely off!

Jenna understood why Franca had tossed the coin bag to her.

As soon as she realized that something was amiss, she was to immediately use the Ring of Punishment to attack the other party and take control over the situation!

Phew… Jenna exhaled slowly and put on the Ring of Punishment. Using the shadows, she closed the distance between herself and the entrustee.

Franca glanced at the shadows not illuminated by the carbide lamp and smiled at the entrustee dressed as a Warlock.

“That sounds reasonable, but I need to confirm if you’re lying and if there’s a problem with this matter.”

As she spoke, she gently tossed the carbide lamp in front of her and retrieved a mirror from the Assassin suit’s hidden pocket. She smiled and said, “Coincidentally, I’m skilled in divination.”

Upon hearing this, the entrustee dressed as a Warlock’s pupils dilated, and his entire body tensed up.

He wasn’t sure if Magic Mirror Divination could expose his scheme!

Hidden in the shadows, Jenna detected his abnormality. Without hesitation, she raised her right hand slightly, causing the iron-colored ring covered in tiny spikes to glow.

Simultaneously, two blinding bolts of lightning shot out from her eyes.

Psychic Piercing!

…

At the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Lumian and Hela were once again gripped by a horrifying terror, consumed by pure madness. They stood frozen in place, their bodies quivering slightly.

While this madness immobilized them, it paradoxically spared them from imminent death. Their frozen bodies burned with an intense heat, and their dormant thoughts ignited with fury and brutality.

However, their purplish-red livor mortis and decaying skin continued to worsen, showing no signs of improvement.

Darkness descended once more, and Hela used the black diamond ring on her right hand to try and pacify the spectral figures hovering in the Samaritan Women's Spring, including the burning giant in rotting armor.

Lumian recollected his thoughts and realized that his escape with Hela had not been in vain.

They had distanced themselves more than ten meters from the spring, and the decaying, shadowy figures could not leave the Samaritan Women's Spring or reach the shore to grasp their legs and drag them underwater.

These figures clustered at the spring's edge, their vacant eyes staring into nothingness. Their heavily decayed or distorted hands occasionally reached out from the water, only to be forcefully pulled back by some mysterious force.

Silently, they emitted roars that made the entire slope tremble, inducing drowsiness and feelings of submission in Lumian and Hela, causing various adverse reactions.

However, the madness that had ignited their thoughts and the strange effects that had led to signs of dissociative identity disorder had failed to take hold.

Around the Samaritan Women's Spring, only the lingering female figure and the long black hair, resembling seaweed, could approach Lumian. One gazed at him with eerie eyes, while the other extended itself, attempting to ensnare him.

Lumian was relieved. Even if his resistance failed, he would be dragged toward the Samaritan Women's Spring by the long black hair and the indistinct figure suspected to be a high-ranking Demoness. With more than ten meters to cover, he had a chance to hold on until the pale-white spring water overcame the terrifying figure with its reddening iron-black eyes and carried him back into the pitch-black abyss.

When the moment arrived, Lumian could make a swift escape. In two or three attempts, he could exit the area shrouded in the grayish-white fog and return to the chamber above.

Later, he would send Hela inside to retrieve the Samaritan Women's Spring's water, avoiding the adverse reaction caused by the blood ore and the colossal figure which was clearly more potent than the other "water ghosts."

But in the next moment, Lumian's body froze unnaturally.

White frost appeared and vanished repeatedly on his body.

In the blue eyes of the woman, Lumian was now imprisoned in ice.

The long black hair coiled tighter around him, dragging him toward the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Seeing Lumian in peril, Hela, who had remained relatively unaffected, swiftly aimed her right hand at the unknown entity, suspected to be the lingering spirit of a high-ranking Demoness, using the black diamond ring that emitted a constant darkness.

The night transformed into a shroud, enshrouding the other entity and inducing slumber.

Lumian seized this opportunity to release a harrumph, channeling a white stream of light through his nose and into the crystalline ice that bound him, targeting the seaweed-like black hair.

The black hair that ensnared him suddenly lost its strength.

Simultaneously, the curtain of night that had surrounded the entity abruptly constricted, leaving it empty.

Not far away, the female figure in the white robe reappeared, her gaze fixed on Lumian.

Though danger still loomed, Lumian felt a surge of relief. He believed that, even if he stopped resisting now, he could hold on until the pale-white spring withdrew into its depths.

At that moment, the iron-colored eyes of the colossal figure floating in the spring grew wilder, and the rust-like redness became as vivid as blood.

He tugged violently at the spring water, as if trying to break free from invisible chains.

Finally, amid a tumultuous earthquake-like upheaval, the figure draped in tattered, blood-soaked armor and engulfed in invisible flames reached the edge of the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Rumble!

The ground quaked, sending grayish-white dust raining down.

Lumian's mind buzzed, and he blacked out instantly.

When he regained his senses, he found himself back at the edge of the Samaritan Women's Spring, having covered over ten meters in an instant.

From the corner of his eye, he saw Hela rushing back towards him, her eyes vacant and bloodshot, resembling a puppet or a mindless soldier following orders.

Lumian could already guess that when he closed his eyes, he had returned to the spring's edge in a similarly empty and obedient state.

At this moment, he couldn't flee upon regaining consciousness. Behind him were the coiling black hair and the figure of the supposed

high-ranking Demoness. In front of him were the grotesque, decaying, and repulsive palms.

Simultaneously, they clawed at Lumian, intent on dragging him into the spring. The colossal figure with long, blood-red hair hanging over it was just a step away.

Gritting his teeth, Lumian seized the chance to bite the base of the white candle and reached into his pocket with his gloved left hand.

As he did, he cursed internally.

You dogsh*t evil gods have been observing me for so long. Why haven't you sent anything to harm me?

Where are the promised dangerous creatures?

Are you afraid to confront that insane figure here?

Despite his curses, Lumian didn't give up. He drew a dagger and was about to cleave off his right palm, which had been corroded by the Earth Blood ore.

If you want it, take it!

As for whether the 6 a.m. reboot each morning would cause his missing right hand to regenerate, he didn't care at this point.

At that moment, a pale-white hand emerged from the pitch-black hole at the depths of the spring, where the ground trembled and quaked. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The fingers of the hand were slender, with cracks running along its back. These cracks oozed pale-yellow feathers and decaying yellow pus. The skin on either side of the cracks was crystalline like jade, but pale and dark.

As the palm emerged, it crossed the barrier of the spring water and seized the right leg of the colossal figure.

The figure, clad in tattered, blood-stained armor and shrouded in intangible flames, swayed uncontrollably as it was pulled toward the

pitch-black abyss deep within the pale-white spring water.

It struggled and resisted with all its might, but the bizarre palm's retreat remained relentless. The only response was the falling of light-yellow feathers, pus stained with blood, and skin that was no longer crystalline but highlighted with black, living blood vessels.

Countless complex symbols—pale-white, pitch-black, or dim—appeared, carrying the frenzied and terrifying figure as it rapidly shrank toward the pitch-black spring.

Lumian couldn't witness the scene, nor could he see what was happening. All he knew was that the massive figure with a decaying face, blood-red hair, and iron-black eyes was moving away from him. The terrifying hands that had grabbed him stopped moving, frozen in place.

The crazed figure growled repeatedly but couldn't break free. In the blink of an eye, most of its body had been dragged back into the depths of the spring.

Just as it was about to disappear completely, its madness materialized. Two dark-red "rust spots" shot out of its iron-black eyes and darted straight toward Lumian.

Instinctively, Lumian raised his right hand to block. The two rust marks pierced through the Flog boxing glove and into his skin, which had been corroded by the Earth Blood ore.

Splash!

The pale-white spring water receded entirely, pulling all the floating figures into the pitch-black abyss.

The vicinity of the spring fell eerily silent.

Chapter 355 - 355 The Real Spring Water

355 The Real Spring Water

In the midst of the eerie silence, Lumian sensed an unusual heat in his right palm, as though it were ablaze.

Aside from this, nothing appeared out of the ordinary for now.

Given the circumstances, Lumian couldn't afford a detailed examination. Ignoring the cold creeping through his body and his "calmed" thoughts, he retreated to assess the situation at the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Indistinct figures and the long, weed-like black hair submerged in the water were drawn into a lightless abyss, swaying relentlessly, as though a fierce battle raged within.

The white-robed, corpse-like figure that had lingered nearby had vanished into thin air, leading Lumian to suspect that his encounter with the suspected high-level Demoness on the fourth floor was linked to a similar change in the Samaritan Women's Spring.

This sight sparked a daring idea in Lumian's mind.

Seeing the terrifying figure pulled back to the fountain by a strange power, one in fierce resistance and the other trying to suppress it, it seemed unlikely a victor would emerge quickly. Lumian decided to stay vigilant, pause his escape, and explore the possibility of setting a trap while collecting some of the pale-white spring water once it surged again.

The "water ghosts" were nowhere to be seen at the spring's bottom, nor were there any blurry figures lingering nearby. It appeared to be

a safe moment.

In the next instant, Lumian noticed Hela producing a golden bottle adorned with intricate, mystical symbols, reminiscent of the symbols he had seen at the basement door of the Highland Mystic Potion shop.

Hela didn't wait for the pale-white spring water to rise again. She squatted down and pressed the bottle's opening to the damp soil at the spring's edge.

The soil was dark-colored, and the closer they got to the pitch-black hole, the more it seemed to contain countless colors. The soil was more ordinary the farther it was from it. It was no different from the slope itself in areas where hadn't been submerged by the spring water.

The soil, dark and filled with countless colors near the pitch-black hole, dried up as the pale-white spring water receded into the abyss. However, the periphery remained slightly moist, producing droplets that were more tangible than the pale-white spring water and resembled the color of a nocturnal lake. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Seeing that Hela's target was the liquid, Lumian asked in confusion, "Aren't you going to wait for the Samaritan Women's Spring to resurface?"

Hela shook her head.

"This is the true Samaritan Women's Spring Water. The pale-white water is too dangerous to touch right now. Contact with it means instant death, wandering forever near the spring or its source. Our containers are no exception."

That terrifying? Could it be that the Samaritan Women's Spring is a byproduct of the pale-white water and not its true form? Lumian took out a metal canister he had prepared in advance and held it to the droplets seeping from the soil at the spring's edge.

With just one drop, the canister showed signs of rust and decay from

prolonged submersion.

Without a word, Hela produced a golden canister engraved with intricate symbols and tossed it to Lumian.

Only then did Lumian manage to collect the Samaritan Women's Spring. His attention remained focused on the dark spring.

As long as the earth-shaking tremors ceased, he planned to make a hasty retreat with the Samaritan Women's Spring water he had collected.

Lumian watched the sluggish progress, concerned that the pale-white spring water might surge again.

Hence, he silently cursed to relieve his pent-up emotions.

Drip, drip. He had only filled a third of the bottle when Hela decided to stop and seal the golden canister.

I mustn't be greedy… Lumian warned himself, putting an end to the collection of Samaritan Women's Spring with Hela.

Together, they sprinted toward the summit of the slope.

Before long, the sound of water echoed from behind them.

Once more, the pale-white spring gushed forth from the pitch-black hole!

Without looking back to assess the situation, they continued their sprint through the grayish-white fog, as if a relentless, intangible monster pursued them.

In a matter of seconds, they finally reached the fog's edge. Lumian grabbed Hela's arm and propelled himself forward.

Exiting the shroud of grayish-white fog, Lumian finally breathed a sigh of relief. The coldness in his body abated, and his thoughts settled significantly.

…

Psychic Piercing!

Jenna emerged from the shadows, her eyes crackling with lightning.

The man in the Warlock robe heard a surreal crack and felt an intense surge of pain radiate from the depths of his Spirit Body, gripping his mind.

Instinctively, he crumpled to the ground, curling up in an attempt to alleviate the agony.

Franca wasted no time and seized the moment. She pointed the mirror she held at him.

As the Warlock-clad entrustee appeared in the mirror, black flames ignited in Franca's palm and spread across the glass.

Demoness's Curse!

Black flames erupted from the man's body, weakening his struggling spirit.

Soon after, crystalline ice encased him layer by layer, and colorless spider silk cocooned him, revealing his form.

Franca's intention was to restrain him, not kill him. After all, nobody knew if he was involved in any corruption or high-level matters, and reckless spirit channeling could lead to accidents.

Seeing the man weakened and heavily restrained, Franca whispered in surprise,

"That's it?"

In the next moment, the man struggled to speak under the threefold control of black flames, ice, and spider silk, his voice faint but determined. "You're committing a crime!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a violent tremor emanated from deep underground. A rock from the tunnel's ceiling plummeted toward Jenna's head.

Jenna swiftly rolled to dodge, but she still felt the impact of falling debris.

Franca faced a similar predicament. She sensed that if this continued, the entire tunnel might collapse. Even with Mirror Substitution, she couldn't guarantee her safety in this segment of the tunnel.

Without hesitation, she clenched her right hand, reigniting the remaining black flames within the entrustee's body.

Black flames engulfed his Spirit Body, and the Warlock-dressed man quickly met his end.

The tunnel's tremors ceased, leaving nothing but dust hanging in the air.

Franca breathed a sigh of relief and wasted no time. She swiftly set up a spirit channeling ritual, while Jenna kept a vigilant eye out for any passersby while kneading her shoulders and back.

After a while, Franca completed the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell. Holding the mirror, she gazed at the pale-white face with a hint of arrogance and inquired, "How much do you know about the secrets of the Deep Valley Quarry?"

The man's spirit responded in a daze, "Some seek to use machinery to prolong their lives, while others seek machinery to acquire life.

"A portion of the Deep Valley Cloister is sliding into the abyss."

Can't you be more specific? Franca pressed, "Which organization are you from? Why are you exploiting the gatekeeper's disappearance?"

Just as the man was about to respond, an ever-changing fog suddenly enveloped the mirror.

Crack!

The mirror in Franca's hand shattered instantly.

Bang!

The man's body, encased in ice and spider silk, exploded. His flesh disintegrated into mist that filled the surroundings.

Almost simultaneously, Franca shattered like a mirror, breaking into fragments that fell to the ground.

Her figure quickly outlined at the tunnel's intersection and appeared beside Jenna.

"As expected, something was amiss," Franca said solemnly, watching as the indeterminate blood mist gradually settled and melded with the ground.

By that point, the corpse had transformed into a pile of minced meat, with only the metal items on it remaining intact.

Franca and Jenna conducted a simple search and found a brass key and coins worth 200 to 300 verl d'or.

They didn't dare linger. After erasing any traces of their presence, they made their exit.

Approximately two to three minutes later, a pair of legs clad in knee-length brown boots materialized beside the puddle of flesh and blood, clutching a shrunken, golden kettle with a protruding wick.

…

The scorching sunlight bathed the entrance to the catacombs of Place du Purgatoire, and Lumian felt as though he had returned from the kingdom of the dead to the world of the living. The chill that had permeated his body gradually dissipated.

Turning to Hela, whose pale-white complexion, purplish-red livor mortis, and signs of decay had yet to fully heal, he smiled and remarked, "Even though it wasn't a real battle, it's the closest I've come to death."

Hela replied simply, "Those who can retain a mark in the pale-white spring water for a long time were once formidable individuals."

As Lumian strolled to the edge of the square, he casually inquired,

“What’s the purpose of the Samaritan Women’s Spring? You can’t actually use it to forget the past and pain, can you?”

Hela shook her head.

“For me, it can serve as a replacement for a certain ritual, or rather, become the central element of another ritual.”

Lumian didn’t fully grasp the concept, so he didn’t press for more details.

Soon, however, he noticed that the residual chill in his body and thoughts hadn’t completely vanished just because he had left the catacombs.

While it had mostly dissipated, it seemed to linger within him, resurfacing gradually as night fell.

“The abnormality in our bodies is still present,” Lumian reminded Hela with a solemn tone.

Hela nodded.

“I have a solution. The one who tasked you with obtaining the spring water should have a solution as well.”

Lumian acknowledged her words briefly and bid farewell to Hela, making his way toward the public carriage stop.

Compared to the abnormality of gradually dying, he was more concerned about the Earth Blood ore that had corroded his palm, as well as the bizarre “rust.”

Chapter 356 - 356 Scar

356 Scar

As time ticked away, Lumian sensed his body temperature slowly dissipating. Even the blazing sun outside the public carriage window couldn't stave off this change.

His thoughts dulled, and the skin on the back of his hand turned a pallid white.

At last, Lumian made it to the market district.

As he disembarked from the public carriage, his limbs seemed to stiffen.

Just as he turned onto Rue des Blouses Blanches, a man who approached him was taken aback. He let out a quiet gasp, his eyes filled with fear.

Lumian instinctively glanced to the side, assessing his reflection in the café's glass window.

His blonde-black hair appeared as if it hadn't been washed for days, and his face had turned a sickly shade of pale blue. There were purplish-red patches and signs of decay on his neck, and his eyes mirrored the cold emptiness of a corpse that had lain dead for many days.

Lumian smirked at the man and remarked, "Well, what do you think? Have I convincingly transformed into a zombie?"

He noticed his voice adopting a colder tone, reminiscent of Hela.

The gentleman silently cursed and bypassed the fellow who appeared ready to attend a masquerade ball.

Lumian knew the corruption consuming him was worsening. He quickened his pace and reached the safe house he hadn't yet turned over.

Swiftly, he arranged the altar, unfolded a piece of paper, and penned a brief letter to Madam Magician.

"I've fulfilled Madam Justice's mission and acquired the spring water of Samaritan Women's Spring, but I'm also succumbing to corruption. It's worsening. How can I eradicate it?"

After neatly folding the letter, Lumian summoned Madam Magician's messenger.

The "doll" messenger materialized above the blue candle flame and gave Lumian an approving nod.

"I'm quite fond of your current demeanor, though your hair is too greasy."

The aura of near-death? Lumian's urge to mutter was weaker than before.

After watching the "doll" messenger depart, he set a fifteen-minute time limit. If Madam Magician didn't respond by then, he'd have to explore other avenues to rid himself of the corruption. One possibility was to perform a ritual and beseech Mr. Fool.

Tick, tock. The needle on the pocket watch borrowed from Salle de Bal Brise maintained a steady rhythm. However, Lumian had previously noticed that it was nearly ten minutes slow. It was as if the closer he came to the Samaritan Women's Spring, the slower it ticked.

Suddenly, starlight materialized from the void, forming a mysterious and ethereal door.

The door swung open, and Madam Magician emerged, dressed in a brownish-yellow gown. Beyond the door, there was a profound darkness adorned with starlight.

The Tarot Club's Major Arcana card holder glanced at Lumian and

gave a gentle nod.

“Pray to Mr. Fool for an angel’s purification.”

I’ll still have to pray to Mr. Fool? Lumian didn’t probe further. He proceeded with the ritual at the prepared altar.

He lit the candles in the correct sequence and let the extract drip. After burning the herbs, he stepped back, gazing at the candle flames, and intoned in a deep voice, “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…

“I implore you,

“I implore you to cleanse the corruption within me…”

Once the ritual concluded, Lumian once again saw an angel formed from light, surrounded by twelve pairs of luminous wings.

With only his peripheral vision remaining, he felt the chill in his body dissipate, and his body temperature quickly returned to normal.

Before long, the angel departed. Lumian looked at the full-length mirror in the room and realized that his complexion, hair, and eyes had completely returned to normal. The purplish-red livor mortis had vanished entirely. Only a few traces of decay remained, but there were no signs of deterioration. It seemed that these remnants would heal with time.

Lumian expressed heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Fool and concluded the ritual.

As he turned to Madam Magician, a sudden recollection struck him, and he hastily raised his right hand to inspect his palm.

The wound from the corrosion of the Earth Blood ore was still there. Though it was no longer as vividly red as when it first fused with the “rust,” it hadn’t faded either. It appeared as if he had marked his palm with a few scars using blood.

Sensing a faint undercurrent of madness and violence emanating

from his right palm, Lumian furrowed his brow in confusion.

“Can’t this be cleansed?”

Madam Magician fixed her gaze on his right palm for a few moments but didn’t provide a direct answer. Instead, she spoke, “Share the details with me.”

She took the initiative to pull up a chair and sat down, showing no inclination to continue the conversation standing.

Lumian settled into a chair at the wooden table, beginning with Madam Justice’s assignment and recounting how he and Hela had each extracted a third of a canister’s worth of Samaritan Women’s Spring water.

He narrated the encounter with the colossal, frenzied figure and the bizarre power. Simultaneously, he didn’t omit any details about Monette’s appearance and actions, as well as the curious “return” of the Earth Blood ore.

Madam Magician listened to Lumian’s account in silence before letting out a chuckle.

“It’s quite challenging for truly formidable figures to die completely. Even without Beyonder characteristics, bodies, or souls, they often leave behind mental imprints, death marks, residual auras, and other remnants. When the right conditions align, they may find a way back into the real world with a suitable vessel.”

“Like the Oldest One, the Creator?” Lumian grasped the gist of Madam Magician’s explanation and inquired further, “So, who is this figure?”

Madam Magician took a moment to reflect and replied, “It’s likely the Blood Emperor of the Fourth Epoch, Alista Tudor.”

“The Blood Emperor? One of the Four Emperors?” Lumian had heard this title and name mentioned by Gardner Martin.

Alista Tudor’s empire once spanned what was present-day Intis. The Trier, submerged underground, had served as His capital.

According to Gardner Martin, the Blood Emperor was a true deity who grasped the Hunter pathway, signifying that He was a Sequence 0 Red Priest!

“That’s correct,” Madam Magician affirmed. “The War of the Four Emperors was a genuine conflict among gods. Alista Tudor met His end in the submerged Fourth Epoch Trier, which also caused the capital to sink underground. He had long descended into madness and committed numerous atrocities. Rumor has it that He nearly entombed all the deities who participated in the war alongside Him. Even now, many remnants of that war lie buried beneath Trier, profoundly shaping some aspects of the Fifth Epoch’s history.”

The Fifth Epoch, the epoch in which Lumian and his companions resided, was often referred to as the Iron Age.

Nearly burying all the deities who participated in the war? The Blood Emperor was truly deranged… Lumian mused, genuinely intrigued.

“What occurred during the War of the Four Emperors?”

“I’m not entirely certain either,” Madam Magician admitted with a shrug. “I’ve only heard about it from two beings who personally witnessed the war. Even They don’t possess the full picture. After all, one should not look directly at a god. Remember, never look directly at a god, even if it’s an incomplete Mythical Creature transformed from a Sequence 4 saint.”

Beings who had personally experienced the War of the Four Emperors and still survived to this day? To have participated in such a divine conflict, they must be at least angels… Could they be the two angels beside Mr. Fool’s throne? Yes, the Holy Bible mentioned that Mr. Fool’s Angel of Time was an ancient angel, and one of them could be this figure? Lumian pieced together the information he had and ventured a guess.

Having heard Aurore mention the concept of Mythical Creatures and their associated complexities, Lumian had no doubt about the admonition “never look directly at a god.”

Eagerly, Lumian asked, “So, after the Blood Emperor’s demise, His

mental mark, death mark, or residual aura remained sealed within the Samaritan Women's Spring?"

"That would likely be a death mark, but I suspect it's intertwined with a mental mark, residual aura, and even some lingering spirits left behind for reasons unknown. Otherwise, Blood Emperor Alista Tudor wouldn't persist in a combative state within the spring. Heh heh, combat can indeed be considered a Hunter trait," Madam Magician speculated.

As Madam Magician spoke, she extended her hand into the void, disappearing from Lumian's sight. nove(l)bi(n.)com

After a brief search, she reappeared, holding a tempting glass of Kirsch.

"Didn't your sister teach you? When you have a guest, remember to ask if they want tea or wine, or perhaps offer snacks," Madam Magician chided playfully as she took a sip of the light red wine and shook her head.

How could I remember at a time like this? Where did she get her wine? Only then did Lumian realize that he had forgotten to ask about the most important thing.

He sincerely acknowledged the lesson and then raised another query.

"What's the origins of the strange power that dragged the Blood Emperor back into the spring?"

"I don't know," Madam Magician replied candidly. "Even a true god might not know. All I can be certain of is that it has no connection to the War of the Four Emperors."

Lumian decided to put this matter aside for now and turned his attention to his right hand, where the mysterious traces remained.

"What are these marks? Can't Mr. Fool cleanse them?"

"If this isn't corruption, it can't be cleansed," Madam Magician explained while sipping her Kirsch. "It's more similar to a mystical item embedded in your hand. It will bring about certain adverse

effects, and these effects can't be cleansed unless the item itself is removed."

"A mystical item… What's its purpose and what dangers does it hold?" Lumian hadn't anticipated this revelation.

"It's useless." Madam Magician chuckled. "I mentioned it's similar, but not equivalent. It certainly isn't a direct source of power enhancement. Rumor has it that in the underground of the Fourth Epoch's Trier, there are numerous treasures left behind by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor in various hidden locations. Only those with the Tudor family's bloodline can unlock them. And now, you can unlock them as well."

So, it's like my palm contains some of Tudor's blood and aura, unrelated to Beyonder powers? Lumian tried to probe the bright red scars on his right palm with his consciousness.

As soon as the two connected, he was abruptly engulfed by a surge of frenzied, violent, terrifying, and dominating aura. The entire room, and even the entire apartment, quaked uncontrollably.

Chapter 357 - 357 Monette's True Identity

357 Monette's True Identity

The sudden change and the frenzied aura that had affected Lumian instinctively made him withdraw his consciousness from the scar on his right palm.

Lumian surveyed his surroundings, concerned that the aura might attract unwanted attention.

At that moment, the room fell unusually silent, and the surroundings dimmed slightly, as if a layer of dark-colored soundproof glass had been added.

Lumian relaxed and turned his gaze back to Madam Magician.

"What happened?"

"The trace carries the aura of Alista Tudor, but it has no practical effect. It can't intimidate others or make them submit." Madam Magician held a cup filled with Kirsch and smiled. "With the Niese Face, you can act as The Blood Emperor at Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons."

It could only be used for acting or to frighten people under specific situations? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

"What kind of negative effects will these traces have on me?"

Madam Magician chuckled.

"You'll become crazier, more ferocious, and more impulsive, but you're not lacking in those qualities already."

What she meant was that you have many similar negative effects. As long as they don't exceed the limit, there wouldn't be any problems. Or rather, you are already used to it, so it couldn't get any worse.

"That's good." Lumian heaved a sigh of relief.

Madam Magician took a sip of Kirsch and reminded him, "For now, you mainly rely on your perseverance and Alms Monk endurance to suppress the negative effects and maintain your normal state. However, when the time is right, you need to vent. It's like a reservoir. You can't keep accumulating water. You have to find an opportunity to release a portion. Otherwise, if you accumulate it day by day, it will either break the dam or spill out of the reservoir, leaving behind psychological problems."

That's true. While Alms Monk's subsequent advancement to Ascetic emphasizes endurance and accumulation, there's also an explosive aspect… Lumian understood Madam Magician's words.

Simultaneously, he thought of something.

After joining the Iron and Blood Cross Order, he would inevitably explore Underground Trier. Although he possessed the Blood Emperor's aura and had the qualifications to enter specific places and open certain treasures, would he trigger more abnormalities and encounter more danger?

Lumian expressed his concerns, and Madam Magician nodded slightly.

"This is a completely foreseeable discovery.

"Like, uh, as the saying goes, it's both a boon and a curse."

"If you don't want to take such a risk, pray to Mr. Fool again in two or three days and ask him to help you eliminate Alista Tudor's aura. Remember, you must specify that it's the aura of a high-level Beyonder of the Hunter pathway to prevent any misunderstandings of removing any unnecessary things during the surgery."

Madam Magician shook her head.

Lumian fell into deep thought, contemplating whether to retain Alista Tudor's bloodline aura or use a ritual to remove it.

Recalling that entering the underground to search for the Fourth Epoch Trier would undoubtedly be a mission assigned by the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and triggering an abnormality was highly likely, he steeled his resolve and chose to keep the bright red scar on his right palm.

Unlike other members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order who had been corrupted by the building at 13 Alista, only Alista Tudor's bloodline aura could allow him to withstand the same underground "treatment" as the corrupted without losing his sanity.

As for the potential dangers, he was concerned, but he could only choose the option with fewer disadvantages.

In any case, searching for the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier wasn't his sole mission. When the time came, many members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order would undoubtedly join the effort. Gardner Martin might even lead the team. If the sky collapsed, they would all face it together!

Seeing that Lumian had made up his mind, Madam Magician didn't say anything else and quietly savored her Kirsch.

Lumian then inquired about something else.

"That group of Monette Islander swindlers, or rather, the people at Salle de Bal Unique? Could it be that they want me to obtain Alista Tudor's bloodline aura and open a treasure trove in the future? But why not obtain it themselves? They've already stolen the Earth Blood ore, and they can clearly enter the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring."

"Perhaps it's too dangerous for them, and they don't want to try it themselves. If you fail, it could unleash the Blood Emperor's remnant spirit. If you succeed, they just have to wait until you find the treasure," Madam Magician replied with a smile.

"Ushering in the Blood Emperor's remnant spirit?" Lumian expressed

his puzzlement. “Back then, I felt that as long as I came into contact with the pale-white spring water, I would die immediately and completely. I probably can’t become a vessel for the Blood Emperor’s resurrection.”

Madam Magician pondered for a moment and said, “Normally, that should be the case, but since you’re a Hunter and possess Mr. Fool’s seal and an angel from the Inevitability domain, once you’re dragged into the spring and fused with the Blood Emperor’s remnant spirit, it might trigger an unpredictable explosion, allowing Alista Tudor’s figure to escape its restraints and prevent death from imprisoning Him.”

Lumian pondered Madam Magician’s words and felt that the more he thought about it, the more questions arose, making him feel more terrified.

Madam Magician gently swirled her glass.

“That was just my guess. The true motives of those at Salle de Bal Unique remain to be confirmed. It might even be a prank that could endanger your life to interfere with our judgment of other matters.

“In short, you have to be vigilant. Don’t relax just because you feel that the other party has achieved their goal.”

Lumian tersely acknowledged, indicating that he wouldn’t let his guard down.

In fact, even if Madam Magician hadn’t mentioned it, he would have taken precautions against the Islander swindler who always appeared underground at critical moments.

This guy was close to traumatizing him.

“Should we report the anomaly at Salle de Bal Unique to the two Churches?” Lumian inquired.

Madam Magician wore a peculiar expression as she replied, “I’ve been observing the dance hall for some time and realized that most of the people wearing monocles in their right eyes are normal. Only a few are problematic, and the few who are problematic are irregular.

It's difficult to lock onto them as they can be one thing today and something else tomorrow.

"Furthermore, no one knows if He is among those who don't wear monocles with their right eye. To completely eliminate Him, we might have to apprehend everyone on that street and those who have visited the dance hall, either destroying or purifying them.

"However, this won't truly finish Him. It will only force Him into the shadows.

Lumian was abnormally confused. Puzzled, he asked, "What do you mean if He is among those?"

Madam Magician spoke as if the abnormal ones were the same person.

Madam Magician pondered for a few seconds and said, "He has already interacted with you several times. It's necessary for you to understand Him to a certain extent.

"He is the great noble of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire, Amon. He is also the child of the Ancient Sun God, who ruled the entire world in the Third Epoch."

"He's Amon?" Lumian recalled that the Islander swindler, Monette, had crawled out of the tomb of a member of the Amon family.

The person behind him was an ancient angel!

It's no wonder he knows so much about the Fourth Epoch tombs!

Madam Magician nodded.

"He was once a King of Angels and ascended the throne of a deity, but He was defeated by Mr. Fool. Now, He is an ordinary angel.

"He belongs to the Marauder pathway. High-ranking individuals of this pathway have a special ability called Parasitism. It is the separation of a portion of themselves and parasitize the bodies of others. There are shallow levels of Parasitism and deep levels of Parasitism. The latter can allow the host to become an avatar.

“The higher the Sequence, the more targets they can parasitize.”

Lumian was alarmed and afraid as he blurted out, “Island swindler Monette has been parasitized by him?”

He was actually a formidable figure who had once fought Mr. Fool!

Madam Magician agreed with Lumian’s guess. nove(l)bi(n.)com

“That’s right. Every member of the Fourth Epoch Amon family is Amon. The abnormal ones in Salle de Bal Unique are also Amon. The ones who haven’t shown any abnormalities are potential Amons, or potential believers of Amon.”

Lumian was rendered speechless.

He found it fitting to describe those wearing monocles with their right eyes as bedbugs in Auberge du Coq Doré and cockroaches from the trash.

It was too similar!

Monette had, in a way, risen from his own grave.

“How many avatars does He have?” Lumian inquired after a brief pause.

Madam Magician shook her head and replied, “Since the Fourth Epoch, He has been hunting Beyonders of the Marauder pathway for ages, gathering many characteristics. No one knows how many avatars there are. What you need to remember is that when you encounter an Amon, there are already many Amon lurking around. They can be rats, bedbugs, or even smaller creatures.”

“Isn’t this perfect for monitoring others?” Lumian’s hair stood on end.

He roughly understood why Amon knew he had the Earth Blood ore and could grasp his movements. He also understood why he had felt that something was amiss when he prayed for the boon the last time —the “illusion” of someone watching him.

“What’s the approximate Sequence of Amon’s avatar?” Lumian asked

with lingering fear, recalling his desire to eliminate Monette in the fourth-level tomb.

Madam Magician finished the remaining Kirsch and tossed the glass back into the void.

“He has a way to weaken His avatar, but He’s still an angel. You can’t underestimate His avatar because of this. Yes, it’s similar to a special scene on the third level of the tomb and below. You can determine and treat it according to the specific situation.”

Lumian rubbed his temples, feeling a headache brewing. Without a clear understanding of Amon’s intentions, every venture into the depths of Underground Trier was risky.

He changed the subject.

“What’s the purpose of the Samaritan Women’s Spring?”

Chapter 358 - 358 Negligence

358 Negligence

Madam Magician chuckled.

“Why do you care? You can’t use it. You can only use it to forget all your memories and original feelings and become a new person.

“Right, in the Corpse Collector, Sleepless, and Warrior pathways, the Samaritan Women’s Spring has different uses depending on usage, ritual, and compatibility. It includes, but isn’t limited to temporarily clearing memories, healing essential damage to the spirit, improving one’s spiritual perception, becoming an ingredient for important rituals, and unlocking various abilities, among other things.”

Corresponding to the three neighboring, exchangeable pathways, Corpse Collector, Sleepless, and Warrior? Lumian extracted crucial information.

At that very moment, Madam Magician glanced at him, her smile restrained yet knowing.

“Are there any more questions?”

Lumian took a moment to contemplate before responding, “Not for now.”

Madam Magician nodded. “Then it’s my turn to ask.”

“Ask what?” Lumian was puzzled.

He had recounted all the details.

Madam Magician tapped her finger against the empty air in front of her.

“Why didn’t you inform me that Miss Justice sent you to the Samaritan Women’s Spring?”

Lumian was taken aback.

“I thought she would have informed you herself. Moreover, since she’s also a Major Arcana card holder in the Tarot Club, I didn’t see any need to confirm it with you.”

Madam Magician wore a thoughtful expression.

“Normally, there would be no issue, but this world is filled with anomalies.”

Lumian, now feeling bewildered, asked, “Is something wrong with Miss Justice?”

Madam Magician shook her head. “No, that’s not it. The problem lies in the fact that shortly after you accepted the journey to the Samaritan Women’s Spring, the Earth Blood ore went missing. I had no knowledge of your impending trip to the fourth level of the catacombs, and Miss Justice wasn’t aware that the Earth Blood ore had fallen into someone else’s hands. It’s not a matter of whether you wanted to take it with you or not.”

“If we had communicated beforehand, I could have delayed the mission to ascertain the whereabouts of the Earth Blood ore or made suitable arrangements.”

Lumian reflected on her words, realizing the truth in them.

Having foreseen that the Earth Blood ore would bring about certain encounters underground, she couldn’t ignore the hidden connection between the loss of the Earth Blood ore and the journey to the Samaritan Women’s Spring.

Lumian’s negligence, or rather, his assumption of a reasonable course of action had led to the subsequent encounters that later awaited him.

Madam Magician fixed her gaze on Lumian for a few seconds before responding, “You can’t entirely be faulted for how you handled the

situation. I'm merely reminding you to exercise more caution in the future."

She paused, her words heavy with meaning.

"This will become even more crucial when you seek the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier in the days to come."

"Yes, Madam Magician." Lumian accepted her guidance wholeheartedly.

After Magician disappeared with the bottle of Samaritan Women's Spring water, Lumian swiftly tidied up the altar and settled back down.

He contemplated his errors during the operation.

Firstly, Madam Magician is right. I should have informed her about Madam Justice's commission. Even if they had already communicated privately and there were no issues, I should still mention it. After all, my Major Arcana card holder isn't Justice but Magician. Helping other Major Arcana card holders requires my own Major Arcana card holder's permission.

Secondly, before entering the Samaritan Women's Spring, I should check my condition and items for a final confirmation. Unless there's a battle or an emergency, this should be a necessary process.

If I had remembered and completed this matter, I could have avoided many problems in advance. I wouldn't have brought the Earth Blood ore into the Samaritan Women's Spring area undetected. Monette, no, Amon, appeared several times and deliberately frightened me to disrupt my thoughts and keep my attention on Him instead of my own state, causing me to neglect the Earth Blood ore's "return."

Thirdly, I didn't notice Termiboros's abnormality. He remained silent in the face of Monette's appearance, unlike His vigilance and anxiety from before. Heh, although He is sealed, He can sense His surroundings through me. As an angel, how could He not notice Amon stuffing the Earth Blood ore back into my pocket? The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Furthermore, His fate is intertwined with mine. When I entered the Samaritan Women's Spring with the Earth Blood ore, my fate must have changed. How could He not have noticed? Why didn't He warn me?

Does He also want to use the special environment of the Samaritan Women's Spring and the abnormality caused by the Earth Blood ore to find a way to escape the seal? Yes, He was the one who warned me that the Earth Blood ore was special and said it would bring me a fortuitous encounter!

The strange power ultimately prevented Him from achieving His goal. Who could it be?

It's true that an evil god's angel can't be trusted completely. Termiboros has been acting so reliably recently. He reminds me from time to time not only to avoid dangers that can affect Him but also to lull me. He's waiting for an opportunity to stab me in the back.

Heh heh, you're a Hunter too?

After entering the Samaritan Women's Spring, there was no problem with my choices. The adverse effects erupted, and with all kinds of mental corruption stacked on top of each other, it was already very difficult for me to react. Regardless of right or wrong… If the corruption hadn't conflicted and hindered each other, I might have gone crazy on the spot.

Lumian reviewed the entire matter and suddenly chuckled.

"Termiboros, how did you not notice Monette stuffing the Earth Blood ore back to me?"

But Termiboros remained silent, withholding any response.

Lumian roughly ascertained the role this Inevitability angel had played in the recent events. He examined the items on his body, fearing that they would also lead him to "death."

Thankfully, the inanimate objects were relatively unaffected and suffered no substantial damage. As for the "rust" that the Flog boxing glove encountered, it wasn't a true attack. Apart from leaving some

traces, it didn't affect its usage.

As for the gazes and dangerous creatures that wearing the boxing gloves would bring, Lumian didn't have any thoughts. He believed that the special environment of the Samaritan Women's Spring limited the corresponding negative effects.

After doing this, Lumian surveyed the surroundings. He felt an indescribable fear and disgust for the safe house that Amon had once entered. He felt as if there were eyes hidden in the surrounding air.

Of course, this was mainly psychological. After all, Madam Magician had already visited.

After dismantling the hidden traps in the safe house, Lumian opened the door and left with all his belongings. He planned to never return, preferring to waste the rent.

…

In Trier, in a verdant park.

Magician, adorned in a brownish-yellow dress, observed a golden retriever leisurely strolling on the grassy path. She turned to the woman standing beside the dog, who wore a simple white dress with delicate green patterns. Her long blond hair flowed casually down her back, tied loosely. Her eyes resembled sparkling emeralds, mirroring the nearby trees in their clear depths.

"The Samaritan Women's Spring has been retrieved."

The woman smiled and said, "Did something happen? You should have gotten a messenger to bring it over."

Magician nodded and summarized the key information. Finally, she said, "Coincidentally, we haven't met in the past few days and haven't communicated.

"This led me to know that he had lost the Earth Blood ore, suspected of being stolen by Amon, but I didn't know that he was going to retrieve the Samaritan Women's Spring. You, on the other hand, knew that he was going to retrieve the Samaritan Women's Spring,

but you didn't know that the Earth Blood ore had been stolen."

Justice listened in silence for a few seconds before sighing.

"It's very similar to that person's style…"

"Is it really that person?" Magician frowned slightly. When did He cast His gaze over? Did we fail to hide from Him since the beginning?

Justice pondered for a moment and said, "That's not surprising. The most important thing now is what arrangements He has in mind."

"I don't know," Magician replied with a self-deprecating smile. "But since the Samaritan Women's Spring incident has already occurred, I can foresee…"

As she stepped into the void, surrounded by starlight, she sighed and said, "It won't be long before Fourth Epoch Trier's door truly opens."

…

Outside an abandoned castle.

Justice materialized at the door, clutching the golden canister containing the Samaritan Women's Spring.

In front of her, a dark illusory sea materialized. She stepped into it and arrived in a special dream.

In the dream, not only was a portion of the inverted black mausoleum missing, but it had also split in half. Deep cracks covered its surface, and pale-yellow feathers stained with oil and various symbols of death were scattered everywhere.

Justice floated in midair, tipping the golden canister in her hand.

Under her guidance, a portion of the Samaritan Women's Spring's water transformed into dark rain that gently sprinkled onto the ground.

All the damage healed further, and the two halves of the mausoleum gradually closed in.

Amidst this transformation, Justice stowed away the golden canister and gazed at the remaining Samaritan Women's Spring. She muttered to herself, "Two more rounds should suffice."

…

On the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian's bedroom.

After taking a nap, he raised his right palm and realized that the bright red scar had faded significantly. It looked more like the marks left by compression.

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief. That won't attract too much attention.

His original plan was to wrap his right palm in a white bandage to prevent the Boss and the others from spotting anything amiss.

As for now, Lumian thought for a moment and wrapped the bandage around his left palm, which appeared normal.

After completing this task, he eagerly awaited the compensation Madam Justice had mentioned. He wondered when it would arrive.

He believed it wouldn't take more than a few days.

Suddenly, Lumian turned his head and looked at the window in the alley behind him.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

There were knocks on the glass.

Chapter 359 - 359 Malady God

359 Malady God

Lumian glanced over and noticed Franca, clad in a blouse, patting the glass.

He opened the window, a grin on his face, and asked, “Why didn’t you use the front door?”

“Don’t you often resort to window-climbing antics?” Franca leaped into the room with grace, followed by Jenna.

Jenna observed for a moment and pointed at Lumian’s left palm.

“Are you injured?”

Why’s it bandaged?

Lumian chuckled.

“I headed into the fourth level of the catacombs and crossed paths with a creature that seemed like an evil spirit. I had an intense battle with it and ended up with a few scratches.”

Franca examined Lumian’s left palm, perplexed. “Really? The fourth level of the catacombs…”

“Believe it or not, that’s your choice,” Lumian replied with a smile.

Franca got the message and dropped the subject.

Jenna, however, muttered under her breath, “I think it’s a mix of truth and lies…”

Lumian chose to ignore Jenna’s comment and asked, “Did something happen to you guys too?”

“That’s right.” Franca proceeded to recount their encounter in detail and produced a brass key. She eagerly suggested, “Should we try to divine which door this key opens? Whoever’s offering a bounty of 50,000 verl d’or must be loaded!”

Lumian scoffed.

“You’ve got an adventurous spirit, alright.

“Of course, a matter this dark should be left to the Purifiers for investigation. Besides, it involves some monks from the God of Steam and Machinery Church descending into the abyss. You don’t really want to explore the secret cave in the Deep Valley Quarry on your own, do you?”

Franca admitted sheepishly, “To be honest, I’m tempted. The idea of extending life through machinery and giving life to machinery fascinates me. But my rationality keeps me in check.”

Jenna stayed silent, indicating that she had discussed this with Franca on the way.

After sharing her delusions, Franca agreed to let Jenna find a way to hand over the key to the Purifiers and report their encounter.

She then turned to Jenna. “I plan to head to Rue des Fontaines. What about you?”

Jenna had already made plans. She said to Lumian, “Didn’t you ask me to find out where the factory owner lives? Well, I’ve followed him and gathered plenty of information. Now we can locate the families awaiting compensation and guide them into demanding what’s rightfully theirs.”

Lumian replied with a smile, “I didn’t ask you to do it; you wanted to.”

Franca acknowledged his response curtly before proceeding with her plan to visit Rue des Fontaines.

…

In Quartier du Jardin Botanique, at the intersection of Rue Pasteur and Rue Evelyn.

The buildings bore a mishmash of components that seemed like they didn't belong, like building blocks assembled by a careless child. The place exuded an unsettling vibe, akin to a wild and unstable forest.

Jenna pointed toward a woman crouched by the street, washing clothes, and said, "That's Madame Mogana. Her husband also perished in that accident a few years ago."

Madame Mogana wore a worn-out grayish-white patched dress, her face marked by wrinkles that spoke of over fifty years of life.

Lumian, having digested a bit more of the potion's effects after igniting the Bottle of Fiction, was in no rush. He replied, "You handle it."

Jenna gazed silently at the gaunt, high-cheekboned Madame Mogana. After a few seconds, she spoke, "Truth be told, I don't really like her."

Curiosity piqued, Lumian asked, "Why's that?"

Jenna let out a sigh and explained, "She's quite malicious. The kind of person who wishes ill upon her neighbor when she's going through a tough time. She does despicable things even when there's no gain for her.

"As you know, my mother was a theater actress and was somewhat literate. She used to work as a tutor for a middle-class family. It was a respectable job with good pay. But when Madame Mogana found out about it, she followed my mother and discovered the family. She told the servants who were out running errands that my mother was moonlighting as a street girl, that she was immoral and skilled at seducing her male employer. Before long, my mother was fired. She had to settle for jobs as a cleaning lady, a dishwashing maid, or even working in a chemical plant.

"Madame Mogana, illiterate as she is, had no chance of getting the job my mother lost because of her actions, but she seemed oddly pleased."

Lumian nodded in understanding. “Jealousy is indeed one of humanity’s cardinal sins. Why didn’t you take revenge on her?”

Jenna whispered with a chuckle, “That was a long time ago. Besides, in a place like this, similar things are bound to happen sooner or later. When my father passed away, my brother was considered a strong lad. Otherwise, our family would have been in an even worse state. If a widow moved in with her daughter, someone would come knocking on your door the next day, cursing you and claiming that her husband stole a few glances at you. The neighbor would pretend to be friendly and introduce you to her male relatives.

“If you refused, that relative of hers would sit outside your door and drink every day. The police didn’t bother with such matters, and you couldn’t count on anyone else for help. One day, when he got really drunk and bold, I don’t need to spell out what would happen, right?

“Sometimes, the police would arrest him, but arresting one would only bring in a second or third. They might even enrage his relatives. They’d smash your window every night, pile feces at your door, and recruit older kids to harass your daughter.

“But the worst part was being targeted by the mob.

“To survive in a place like this, you either needed a few adult men in the house or you had to be tough and make it clear that you wouldn’t back down even if it cost you your life. Thankfully, when our lease ended, my mother moved to the other end of the street, and the environment improved significantly.”

Jenna’s words were spoken as if she had witnessed such hardships many times before.

While Lumian had faced his own share of difficulties, ones worse than Jenna’s, he had never encountered anything like that. The conflicts and confrontations among wanderers were even more overt. It was a matter of either being beaten into submission, forcing others into submission, or hovering on the fringes like feral dogs, scavenging what remained of others. When he arrived in Cordu, his sister, a Beyonder, protected him, allowing him to play pranks without worry. The other villagers were mainly subjected to the padre’s family’s

bullying.

He looked at Jenna, who was recounting her past, and asked thoughtfully, “Didn’t you say that everyone around here is just trying to survive?”

Jenna cursed, frustration evident in her gestures as she gestured toward the woman washing clothes not far away with her chin. “Dammit, that doesn’t excuse their vileness. Take Madame Mogana, for instance. She works three part-time jobs a day just to give her son a chance to escape this place. Heh heh. You might not believe it, but despite maliciously slandering my mother, she sometimes slips me a piece of bread when I’m hungry and waiting for my mother to come home.”

Lumian glanced at Madame Mogana.

“People like her are easily instigated.”

“Exactly,” Jenna affirmed with a nod and walked over.

Her demeanor shifted dramatically as Jenna shouted at the woman washing clothes, “Madame Mogana, did you know? That damned Alphonse betrayed us!

“That piece of dogsh*t always tells us to wait a little longer. He claims that since the court has already passed the verdict, Edmund Sr. would surely compensate us. But that scheming swine plans to run away, with no intention of giving us a single coppet!

“That swine Alphonse must have secretly pocketed his share to say such a thing!”

Madame Mogana stood up, water droplets trickling from her rough fingers.

Her expression twisted with a mix of anger and concern as she asked, “Is that true? I’m going to confront that swine!”

Jenna’s face also contorted with resentment.

“We can’t waste time on him now. Edmund Sr. is on the verge of

escaping!

“Let’s hurry and stop him. I know where their family lives!”

Lumian stood about five to six meters away, listening as Jenna stirred up the locals who were waiting for compensation. He casually surveyed the area and realized that this place was similar to Rue Anarchie. Vendors, children, women, and a few men mingled together, crowding most of the road. Occasionally, regular carriages passing by would alter their route after a brief observation.

In the midst of this bustling scene, one individual stood out noticeably.

Draped in an old linen shirt and dark pants, his face was relatively clean, and his hair neatly combed. He contrasted sharply with the surrounding vendors and residents.

At that moment, the man was engaged in conversation with a few women holding long sticks of rye bread.

He presented a stack of banknotes, not too thick or thin, and counted them meticulously, one by one. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“195, 200… Check if it’s 200 verl d’or?

“If you don’t trust me, you can count it yourselves.”

The smallest denomination of the banknotes was 5 verl d’or.

The women had likely never held so much cash before. They trembled as they counted and confirmed that it was indeed 200 verl d’or.

The man took the banknotes back and counted them again.

“195, 200, 205… See, as long as you sincerely utter God’s name, you get an extra banknote with each count!”

Impressive magic tricks… A swindler? Whenever Lumian encountered swindlers, he couldn’t help but recall Monette and the Salle de Bal Unique. Anger and hostility welled up within him.

The women recounted the money and realized there were indeed 41 banknotes. There was an extra note—an extra 5 verl d'or!

Upon seeing this, the middle-aged man said with solemnity, "My Lord is the ruler of all diseases. If you believe in Him, you'll never fall sick again. Even if you do fall ill, you'll recover quickly.

"Illness is the punishment of the Malady God. If you have faith in the Malady God and devoutly worship Him, He will spare you…"

Hearing these words, Lumian's eyes narrowed as he approached.

He drew his revolver, flipped it skillfully, and then swung it at the middle-aged man's head.

Bam!

Instinctively, the middle-aged man crouched down, clutching his head. He couldn't even scream.

Between his fingers, bright red blood began to flow.

Amidst the bewildered and fearful gazes of the surrounding crowd, Lumian crouched down, shaking the barrel of his gun. He smiled at the middle-aged man and remarked, "Come, let's see how the Malady God heals you."

The middle-aged man yelled in shock, fear, and anger, "Malady God, hiss, the Malady God will punish you!"

Lumian picked up the banknotes that had fallen and handed them back to him.

"If you can't count an additional 100,000 verl d'or today, don't even dream of leaving."

With that, he raised his revolver and struck the man in the side of his face, causing blood to splatter in all directions. His face caved in, and his teeth were sent flying.

Chapter 360 - 360 Physical and Mental Wellbeing

360 Physical and Mental Wellbeing

The middle-aged man's fear-filled gaze locked onto Lumian, uncertain about what had triggered this sudden confrontation.

He wasn't the one being deceived, nor was he one of the mobsters who held sway over this neighborhood. He wasn't a relative or a friend of theirs. So, why was Lumian rushing up to assault him like this?

Adding to the confusion, Lumian didn't even give him a chance to defend himself. He unleashed a blow after each sentence!

His eyes fell upon the revolver, and he discreetly glanced at his aides concealed in the shadows. Their hesitance to intervene weighed heavily on his heart.

He couldn't afford to threaten Lumian or resist him. Trembling, he stammered, "I-I can't produce that much money. I didn't bring that kind of cash."

Lumian responded with a regretful smile, "How disappointing. I'm short of 100,000 verl d'or. Who taught you the magic of counting money? Who introduced you to the Malady God?"

The middle-aged man's throat tightened, and he remained silent.

With an air of calmness, Lumian opened the revolver's cylinder, revealing the yellow bullets to his captive.

He then closed the cylinder and pressed the muzzle against the middle-aged man's forehead.

“Three, two…” Lumian’s finger on the trigger moved back with each count down.

Panic and terror swelled within the middle-aged man’s eyes.

Though he doubted anyone would dare to shoot him in broad daylight, this man had started the encounter with an inexplicable beating. It was impossible to predict how much further he might go.

Just as Lumian reached the final count, the middle-aged man cried out in desperation, “It’s the Envoy!”

“Envoy?” Lumian arched an eyebrow.

With his psychological defenses shattered, the middle-aged man abandoned any hope of escaping unscathed. He blurted out, “The Envoy of the Malady God!

“He approached me, taught me some tricks, and told me about the Malady God. He asked me to help him recruit believers, promising a share of the profits.”

Is he a genuine believer in an evil god, a swindler exploiting a deity’s name for riches, or perhaps a blend of both? Lumian withdrew the revolver from the middle-aged man’s forehead and lightly tapped his still-intact cheek with it. A smile crossed his face as he remarked, “Now, that’s more like it. All it took was a little chat, didn’t it?”

Bang!

A bullet tore through the air, embedding itself into a nearby felled tree.

Lumian exclaimed.

“Sorry, it went off accidentally. I didn’t scare you, did I?”

The middle-aged man’s heart pounded wildly, and a small puddle formed beneath him.

Lumian cast a brief glance at the trembling man and offered another reassuring smile.

“What’s the name of this envoy of the Malady God? Where does he reside, and what does he look like? Lately, I’ve been running low on funds, so I thought I’d pay him a little visit.”

Inwardly, Lumian pondered,

He didn’t react to that little prank just now. He’s not a bestowed…

The middle-aged man vigorously shook his head.

“I-I don’t know.”

Seeing Lumian raise the revolver once more, he hastily amended his response, “All I can tell you is that he’s tall and slender, with pale skin, almost as if he’s chronically ill. His eyes are a grayish-blue shade, and he has black hair. It’s short, like the haircut of a wealthy boss’s secretary.

“He visits me once a week, but I have no clue how to track him down.”

Meanwhile, Jenna had joined Madame Mogana and the others, her curiosity piqued by Lumian’s actions. She stole a moment to cast a glance in his direction, wondering what her Hunter companion had uncovered and what he was up to.

However, the urgency of the situation prevented her from inquiring at that moment.

Jenna had effectively instigated several individuals who had been long-awaiting compensation. The more these wronged souls spoke, the fiercer their fury grew. Some had already taken it upon themselves to seek out other victims or their families, urging Jenna to lead them in confronting the factory owner named Edmund.

In the midst of this mounting outrage, Jenna found that she no longer needed to actively instigate. The collective anger had taken on a life of its own, and individuals were stepping forward to aid her in this quest.

As they hurried toward the neighborhood where Edmund Sr. resided, Jenna had an epiphany.

To instigate someone, she had to converse with them, but to instigate a group of people, she didn't need to personally converse with every member of the group to incite them. Understanding the situation and igniting the spark in a few initial individuals was sufficient. The ignited ones would, in turn, become agents of instigation, rallying more people to their cause in a snowballing effect.

While Jenna and the mob progressed toward their destination, Lumian remained behind to extract more information from the middle-aged man. After confirming that he couldn't elicit any further details, he rose to address the deceived women who had been observing the unfolding events.

"You heard him. This guy is trying to deceive you. Do you intend to let him off the hook?"

Lumian had discreetly employed the Niese Face to alter his appearance slightly when confronting the middle-aged man, ensuring that no one would associate him with the wanted criminal, Lumian Lee.

One of the women present had actually been the middle-aged man's collaborator, assisting in the preaching and swindling of money. In this dire situation, she dared not utter a word and looked to the others for guidance.

Among the women, some were brimming with anger, ready to hand the con artist over to the authorities, while others cowered, fearing that the swindler might have dangerous accomplices who would seek revenge.

Lumian observed in silence as they voiced their opinions, casually scanning the onlookers nearby.

Among the bystanders, he noticed three men attempting to slip away unnoticed.

These three were the accomplices of the swindler, responsible for resorting to violence when required.

Without hesitation, Lumian raised his revolver and discharged three

rounds.

The trio let out cries of pain and crumpled to the ground, suffering from wounds to their legs and calves, blood streaming freely.

“No need to worry about them seeking revenge,” Lumian assured the women with a grin.

The victims, their emotions running high, fell silent, almost like statues.

After a few seconds, they stammered, “It’s up to you…”

Lumian nodded with satisfaction and motioned for the trembling cheat and his injured accomplices.

“Take them to the nearest… Uh, Steam Cathedral.”

…

At the intersection of Quartier de l’Observatoire and Quartier du Jardin Botanique, 5 Avenue Sèlbù, a swarm of men and women dressed in tattered attire surged toward a beige three-story building.

The two guards stationed at the entrance observed the approaching, agitated crowd and swiftly withdrew their legally owned semi-automatic revolvers. Their voices rang out, commanding, “Halt!”

Confronted with the sight of firearms, even Madame Mogana and her determined followers involuntarily slowed their advance.

The presence of the weapons was undeniably daunting.

Sensing the hesitation, Jenna rushed to the forefront and hollered at the two guards, “We’re here to demand our rightful compensation. The court has already rendered its verdict!

“You sons of bitches, go ahead and shoot if you dare!

“Do you even have enough dogsh*t bullets? Can you take down all of us? If not, each of us will take a bite out of you that you won’t recover from!”

With fiery determination, she strode toward the entrance.

Beads of sweat formed on the palms of the two guards as they peered out at the sea of faces. The sheer number of debt collectors was overwhelming, their exact count obscured by the throng.

It was impossible to predict the response if they opened fire on the crowd. They felt exposed and isolated, like logs confronting a relentless flood.

Jenna, utilizing her Instigation ability, pressed forward with her rhetoric.

“If we disable or kill you, do you think you’ll still receive your compensation?

“Look at us. Our due compensation has been withheld for years. Are you certain you’ll get your payment from that stingy old scrooge? His family might flee town tomorrow!”

The two guards were taken aback.

This was indeed a problem.

Furthermore, they were well aware that the boss’s family had liquidated most of their assets and were on the verge of fleeing the city in two days, seeking refuge in another province. Would they take two injured and incapacitated bodyguards along? Would they seize the opportunity to withhold compensation?

The harsh reality was laid bare before them!

As the guards hesitated, Jenna had already reached the entrance, with the crowd of debt collectors close behind.

Instinctively, one of the guards followed standard procedure, raising his right hand and firing a warning shot into the sky, attempting to deter the approaching horde. The other guard tried to subdue an elegant-looking young woman who appeared to lack substantial combat prowess.

Jenna recoiled momentarily, grabbed hold of the guard’s arm, and

unceremoniously brought him crashing to the ground, causing his firearm to skid away.

Spurred by the gunshot and Jenna's boldness, Madame Mogana picked up the semi-automatic revolver. Although she wasn't familiar with its operation, her resolve surged, and she sprinted toward the entrance, cursing all the way.

The remaining guard hesitated for a fleeting moment before relenting, opting not to open fire on the advancing crowd and instead allowing them to swarm into the house.

Inside the living room, Edmund Sr. and his family, on the brink of departure, found themselves instantly encircled by Jenna's nearly hundred-strong assembly of debt collectors. It was an impenetrable wall of humanity.

Clutching a revolver, Edmund Sr. voiced his trepidation, "What do you intend to do?"

"We're here for our money!" Jenna seized the revolver from Madame Mogana's trembling hands and leveled it at Edmund Sr. She declared, "Without the compensation we're owed, we won't survive. Let's find out who meets their end today!"

Edmund's hand trembled, as though he had contracted an incurable ailment.

…

Outside a Steam Cathedral that bore a resemblance to a small factory, Lumian gave instructions to the woman assisting the injured swindler.

"Take them to the padre and have them explain the money conjuring magic and their association with the Malady God. If they refuse to talk, provide an account on their behalf."

The women nodded solemnly and, with their black eye, guided the swindler's group into the cathedral, a trail of blood marking their passage.

Lumian holstered his revolver and observed silently from the doorway.

He reflected with a touch of amusement, Madam Magician's suggestion is indeed on point. It's healthy both physically and mentally to let off some steam now and then.

Of all things to believe in, they choose an evil god, and on top of that, they're swindlers!

After a mere two minutes, Lumian casually strolled away, while the police officers hurriedly arrived on the scene.

…

Lumian unexpectedly crossed paths with Jenna and the jubilant debt collectors outside 5 Avenue Sèlbù.

"So quickly?" he inquired, surprise evident in his tone. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Jenna pursed her lips.

"I didn't anticipate it happening this swiftly either. I was prepared for someone to call the police and handle the situation accordingly. However, once we had Edmund Sr. and his family surrounded, and we issued our threats, he yielded and began paying according to the list.

"Damn it, his family's cash, gold, and other valuables added up to more than enough for our compensation. There's even a surplus. And that doesn't even account for his assets that haven't been liquidated yet. He delayed our compensation for so long!"

Lumian chuckled.

"Giving always stings. Sometimes things seem complex, but when you truly commit to them, they become simple. And then there are situations that seem straightforward but turn out to be fraught with twists and turns that nearly cost you everything."

His words carried the weight of experience.

Jenna knew that Lumian needed gold, and the compensation she had received came in the form of various types of gold jewelry, which were collectively worth 3,000 verl d'or at their pure gold value.

She offered, "Here, I'll sell these to you."

Lumian fell briefly silent before responding, "I'll withdraw the money from Salle de Bal Brise."

He only had banknotes and silver coins totaling just over 600 verl d'or on him.

In the evening, Lumian found himself with some free time and leisurely returned to Auberge du Coq Doré. He descended to the basement bar and spotted Charlie, beer in hand, regaling a group of patrons with stories.

Lumian grinned and declared, "Drinks are on me!"

Amidst the cheers of 20 to 30 people, Lumian added a playful twist, "Charlie's footing the bill!"

Charlie's expression froze.

Lumian chuckled and shouted again, "And if he does a strip dance, I might even cover that too!"

Chapter 361 - 361 Farewell

361 Farewell

Recently, those who frequented the basement bar had grown indifferent to Charlie's lectures on respectability and civility. Now, with a chance to tease him, they became exceptionally excited and engaged in a shouting match.

Dressed in a white shirt and an unbuttoned black vest, Charlie hesitated between buying drinks for nearly 30 people or performing a striptease.

Swiftly, he set down his beer and leaped onto a small round table.

In the past, when he was drunk here, he had done all sorts of foolish things. Why should he be afraid of a striptease?

Lumian smiled and applauded, taking out a 20 verl d'or banknote and placing it on the bar counter. He said to Boss Pavard Neeson, "A drink for everyone. Let them have whatever they want."

With that, he picked up his glass of Lanti Proof and watched as Charlie clumsily gyrated his hips and carefully unbuttoned his shirt amidst the cheers.

"More passion! More energy!" Lumian shouted, as if he were watching a show.

The other patrons chimed in.

Sweat beaded on Charlie's forehead, fearing that excessive energy from removing his clothes might damage his shirt.

This wasn't a cheap old linen shirt!

After some thought, he decided to take it off as one would a sweater

since the top buttons on his shirt were already undone.

Lumian took another sip of the Lanti Proof and leaned back at the bar counter. He glanced at Gabriel, who was wearing black-framed glasses and dark suspenders, and asked with amusement, “You’re early today?”

Hadn’t this playwright, accustomed to staying up late, only come here for a drink after midnight?

Gabriel held the green absinthe and smiled calmly.

“I’m moving out tomorrow.”

“Lightseeker has begun airing?” Lumian immediately had a guess.

Gabriel ruffled his disheveled brown hair and smiled.

“Not yet, but after rehearsing for a while, both Monsieur Lopp and the directors and actors at Théatre de la Renaissance think highly of me. They’re very confident. I won’t have to worry about my living expenses even after moving to a more expensive place and spending the 1,000 verl d’or advance. As you know, I don’t write trite stories for tabloids anymore.”

“Where are you planning to move to?” Lumian asked casually.

Gabriel said with a yearning expression, “Rue Saint-Michel in Quartier 2, where many authors and painters find their haven. Not far away is the National Museum, the Trier Art Center, various galleries, and sculptures of various forms.”

Quartier 2, also known as the arts district or financial district, was a blend of ancient charm and modern opulence, housing not only the artistic community but also the financial heart of the city. It was home to major banks like the Intis Central Bank and the Trier Bank, along with financial institutions, the Trier Stock Exchange, and the Intis Futures Market.

Rue Saint-Michel, on the outskirts of this vibrant district, offered affordable rent, making it an attractive choice for artists and writers.

Lumian couldn't resist recalling Aurore's teasing about Rue Saint-Michel, and he playfully paraphrased it, poking fun at the struggling poets. "What a fantastic place! You might toss a brick and hit three authors and two painters, and let's not forget those poets who die without anyone noticing."

Gabriel, slightly embarrassed, took a sip of his absinthe.

"However, that's indeed the most suitable place for artistic exchange and creativity. It's not like here, where it's relatively quiet only at night, but it's only relative. And the repulsive bedbugs…"

Gabriel suddenly remembered that the violent and elegant mob leader beside him was the current boss of Auberge du Coq Doré. He quickly shut his mouth.

At that moment, Charlie completed his striptease act and donned his shirt once more. He skillfully navigated his way out of the crowd of patrons, who had "maliciously" remarked on his physique, and settled beside Lumian. He casually remarked, "I've been swamped lately. Haven't been around for a few days. As soon as I get home, I feel like collapsing into bed. You see, this is the drawback of being a decent bloke. Sigh, why in the world are they suddenly launching such a massive investigation into those wanted criminals from Cordu?"

Oh, you've become much smarter. Lumian, who was keen on improving his rhetoric, replied with a smile, "What concern is Cordu's business to me, Ciel Dubois?"

Having contracted the Niese Face from the Human-Faced Mantis, he wasn't particularly concerned about being recognized by the authorities.

Seeing Lumian's self-assured demeanor, Charlie dropped the subject. He eagerly mentioned that a colleague had introduced him to a female teacher. Although she wasn't interested in him romantically, it marked another stride towards his quest for true dignity.

They continued to enjoy their drinks until nearly midnight. Lumian and Gabriel, who was set to move the following day, bid Charlie

farewell and ascended the stairs to the second floor.

Gabriel's gaze fixated on the corridor wall, illuminated solely by a gas wall lamp and adorned with newspapers and faded pink paper. Suddenly, he let out a heartfelt sigh.

"It's only when I'm on the verge of leaving that I realize there's something worth reminiscing about here.

"When I first moved in, I thought it wouldn't be long before I'd escape this dump—well, this wretched motel—with my talents. Who would've guessed I'd end up staying here for ten whole months? Even if I move to Rue Saint-Michel, I'll often think of that cozy little bar downstairs. I'll reminisce about the absinthe that could both sober me up and make me intoxicated, the pungent smell of sulfur, those pesky bedbugs, and the people who brought light to my darkness. Miss Séraphine, Charlie, and… you."

As Gabriel spoke, he paused, extending his hand to touch the crack in the wall where a fallen newspaper had revealed it.

Lumian couldn't resist a playful jab, "Do you authors enjoy launching into spontaneous soliloquies and lengthy speeches?"

Gabriel chuckled sheepishly and replied, "I don't know about other authors, but I do find myself doing it occasionally.

"I've called this place home for nearly a year, and I've witnessed numerous tenants abruptly vanish, leave in haste, or succumb to the pain of life. Yet, the very next day, or maybe just an hour later, new tenants move into the very rooms left behind by those chasing prosperity and dreams in Trier. Most of them fail and fade away like dust, but waves of people keep coming. Perhaps one or two among them will actually succeed.

"This is the wellspring of inspiration for the 'Lightseeker' script."

"You're the one who succeeded." Lumian couldn't help but recall Madame Michel, who had tragically ended her life while singing "In the Capital of Joy, forever Trier," a memory that left him with no capacity for mocking Gabriel.

“Hope.” Gabriel’s face lit up with anticipation. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

He took another step toward the second floor, as if driven to continue ascending.

“Where are you going?” Lumian could guess the answer, yet he asked politely.

Gabriel motioned upstairs.

“To bid farewell to Miss Séraphine and express my gratitude for her unwavering support.”

Lumian couldn’t resist a sly smile, pursing his lips and letting out a playful whistle. “Have a romantic night!”

“I am not!” Gabriel instinctively protested.

Lumian turned and headed towards Room 207, waving his hand dismissively.

“Can’t a person have a romantic night all to themselves?”

Gabriel was speechless.

After witnessing Ciel’s entrance into the room, Gabriel cleared his throat and continued his ascent to the third floor.

As he climbed, memories flooded his mind—the initial encounter with the human model, Séraphine, their first conversation about his creation, and the first words of encouragement…

He understood that human modeling was a meagerly compensated profession. Even the most popular male models barely received 80 to 90 verl d’or a month. Ordinary models scraped by on 60 to 70, equivalent to the earnings of an apprentice motel attendant. Female models fared even worse, with a meager 40 verl d’or, forcing them to take on part-time work. No one chose to expose their bodies as artists’ models out of laziness or greed for pleasure.

Séraphine was no exception. She endured the criticism to earn more

money and improve her circumstances.

Gabriel halted outside Room 309 and rapped gently on the door.

“Please come in.” Séraphine’s somewhat hollow voice responded.

Gabriel pushed the door open and found Séraphine standing by the wooden table near the window. Her lake-blue dress had slipped from her form and lay in a heap on the floor.

In the crimson moonlight, Séraphine’s brown eyes flickered, and her brown hair cascaded down her back. Her fair body bore the imprint of human faces.

Some were stunning, some sinister, some handsome, and some wicked. They all fixed their gaze on Gabriel simultaneously.

Gabriel nearly let out a startled cry.

“What’s the matter?” Séraphine’s voice, tinged with detachment, rang out once more.

Gabriel shook off his stupor and realized that the faces were nothing more than lifelike oil paintings. The canvas was Séraphine’s body.

Remembering that she was a human model, Gabriel refrained from probing further. He exhaled and expressed, “I’m moving out tomorrow. Thank you for your encouragement these past few months.”

As soon as he finished speaking, Séraphine extended her right hand, her eyes distant.

Gabriel couldn’t resist complying.

Half an hour later, Gabriel lay on the bed, holding Séraphine close, and spoke with sincerity, “Come with me to Rue Saint-Michel.”

Séraphine shook her head resolutely. “I’m moving as well. Somewhere else.”

Gabriel persisted, “Where to?”

“To a place called the Hostel. My friends are there.” Séraphine’s voice turned hollow once more.

Gabriel made several attempts to convince her, but the human model remained steadfast.

He had no choice but to leave disheartened. Séraphine rose from the bed, entirely unclothed, and watched him as he walked towards the door.

In that instant, the crimson moon was veiled, plunging the room into an unnatural darkness. The oil-painted faces on Séraphine’s body suddenly appeared to come alive, their mouths opening as Gabriel retreated.

Eventually, tranquility returned, and Gabriel respectfully closed the door.

…

The following morning, Lumian stuck to his routine—going for a run, practicing his boxing, and hunting for breakfast in his customary fashion.

Upon his return to the Auberge du Coq Doré, he noticed that Gabriel’s neighboring room was already open. There was no sign of Gabriel, nor any trace of luggage.

Intrigued, Lumian made his way to the third floor and discovered that Room 309 was in the same state.

He clicked his tongue and returned to Room 207 with a wry smile.

Before long, the “doll” messenger made an appearance, tossing a neatly folded letter and a silver mask onto the wooden table.

Madam Justice’s reward has arrived? Lumian’s delight was palpable.

Chapter 362 - 362 Lie

362 Lie

Lumian hesitated briefly before touching the silver mask. He carefully opened the letter and began to read the elegant handwriting, which was quite different from Madam Magician's.

"This is the promised reward.

"Lie:

"It allows you to truly transform your appearance, adjusting your form within a certain range, and altering your height.

"At the same time, it grants you the ability to use Flame Controlling and Damage Transfer like a Magician. You'll also have an enhanced sense of danger, as well as improved balance and agility.

"It can change its appearance at will. It can become anything you desire.

"But, when you wear it, your emotions will be amplified. You must learn to control yourself, or there will be significant problems.

"Also, remember:

"Don't lose yourself in Lie."

It's actually portable without any negative effects? Lumian's initial reaction after reading the letter wasn't one of delight that Lie's effects suited his needs but rather one of surprise that the mystical item's negative effects were far weaker than he had imagined.

It only amplified one's emotions when worn!

In other words, Lumian could store it in a bag, wallet, or any other

container and carry it with him at all times without facing any side effects.

Compared to Lie, Decency had to be ensconced in liquor, making it rather troublesome to retrieve and safeguard. Flog also exerted an influence while being carried.

With a sigh, Lumian couldn't help but make a self-deprecating remark.

Why does it always have to be something that messes with my emotions?

With this combination, even Alms Monk would explode on the spot…

This combination of dark corruption from the contracted creatures, the fluctuations in desire stemming from Flog, and the "gift" bestowed by the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor was sure to wreak havoc on his emotions. When you added Lie to the mix, the equation became something like $1+1+1+1>4$.

Having just finished psychiatric treatment for his past wounds and painful memories and returning to his normal state, Lumian realized that if he wanted to avoid descending into madness and losing control, he shouldn't let Flog's boxing gloves and Lie take effect simultaneously.

Lie is meant for the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society gatherings. It's for socializing; I don't need Flog for that. And when I'm not using Lie, I have the Niese Face to replace it, Lumian thought, pondering for a moment before tossing the satchel containing the Flog boxing gloves onto the bed.

After this decision, he reached for the silver Lie mask and covered his face.

The mask began to melt, its silvery substance seeping into Lumian's skin like mercury, completely enveloping his head.

In an instant, everything began to shift and transform. Lumian's contours and facial features swiftly adjusted.

Before long, the silvery liquid seemed to be absorbed or evaporated, and Lumian's skin returned to normal, now even fairer than before.

Then, his body underwent a sudden change, and his white shirt strained against his bulging chest.

Lumian lowered his head and scrutinized his appearance for a few seconds before muttering to himself, There's a limit of 10 centimeters for becoming shorter or taller…

I used to be 1.76 meters tall, just 8 centimeters taller than Aurore, but now I'm 1.81 meters tall. Yes, three centimeters of difference shouldn't be noticeable to ordinary people. Besides, it is quite normal for both men and women to use special shoes to appear taller…

I can even imitate voices. That's all part of the true transformation of one's appearance…

With his loose pants and a snug shirt, Lumian left Room 207 and entered the washroom, casting his gaze at the mirror.

A beautiful woman stared back at him in the mirror. She had long, thick blond hair, light-blue eyes, a tall, delicate nose, and red lips as bright as the morning sun.

The details of her facial features and the contours of her face continued to subtly change for dozens of seconds before settling into their final form.

Lumian gazed at the woman in the mirror, his eyes gradually softening as the corners of his mouth curled up.

After a few seconds, he chuckled and said, "Long time no see, Aurore."

…

Franca, returning from Rue des Fontaines, gracefully opened the door to Apartment 601.

What she saw when she entered left her stunned—a face identical to her own.

This person had a flaxen ponytail, bright, smiling lake-colored eyes, brown eyebrows that reached her temples, and thin red lips…

Franca's tension was palpable as she blurted out, "Who are you? Why are you impersonating me?"

The doppelganger also pointed at her and said, "Who are you? Why are you impersonating me?"

In exasperation, Franca laughed and secretly wrapped the spider silk she released around the imposter.

In an instant, crimson flames erupted, igniting the invisible threads around them.

Franca immediately understood the truth. She pointed at the fake Franca and said, "You Six-Eared Macaque, how dare you impersonate me!"

The fake Franca's face squirmed as she transformed back into Lumian.

His body grew taller.

After removing the Lie earring, Lumian asked curiously, "What's a six-eared macaque?"

Franca hesitated for a moment, debating whether to keep it a secret, but then she realized that Lumian already knew everything he needed to know. There was no need to hide such trivial details.

She replied, "Back home, there are many myths and legends for your sister and me. The Six-Eared Macaque is one of them. It can hear all your secrets and become identical to you."

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Franca asked excitedly, "Did you acquire a mystical item that can alter your appearance and figure?"

Lumian raised his left hand, wrapped in a few white bandages, and replied, "Can't you see I'm injured? I accepted Madam Justice's commission and helped her retrieve an object from the fourth level of

the catacombs. This is the reward: Lie."

As he spoke, Lumian flicked the earring-shaped mystical item with his right hand.

"Is that so?" Franca had suspected that Lumian's visit to the catacombs was likely arranged by the Tarot Club, so she hadn't inquired further in front of Jenna.

Curious, she asked, "What was the object?"

Lumian pondered for a moment and realized that neither Madam Magician, Madam Justice, nor Madame Hela had asked him to keep it a secret. Hence, he replied, "The spring water of the Samaritan Women's Spring."

"Is there really a Samaritan Women's Spring?" Franca was astonished.

She had read Trier's mysticism magazines and heard rumors about the Samaritan Women's Spring. She even went to the catacombs to find the one named by the administrators but found nothing magical.

"Yes," Lumian confirmed after some thought. "It's deep in the catacombs and has something to do with Fourth Epoch Trier."

Franca's eyes sparkled as she inquired, "Is it magical?"

Lumian glanced at her.

"It's magical, but it's only for Beyonders of the Corpse Collector, Warrior, and Sleepless pathways. If you want to give it a try, there's only one outcome. You'll forget who you were and the home you keep talking about. From then on, you'll become a true Trier Demoness."

Franca shuddered and subconsciously shook her head.

"What's the difference between that and being dead?"

She stopped asking about the Samaritan Women's Spring and said excitedly, "Can you transform into Muggle? Let me take a look."

Lumian gazed at Franca for a few seconds before finally donning the silver-white earring again.

Soon, Aurore, clad in a white shirt, black vest, and simple pants, appeared before Franca.

“Wow!” Franca exclaimed. “She’s even more beautiful than I imagined!”

“Is that the point?” Lumian asked in Aurore’s voice.

Franca smiled sheepishly.

“I’m not sure how close this is to the real Muggle, but we disguise ourselves at gatherings. This is enough.”

Lumian reverted to his original form. As he removed the Lie earring, he said, Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

“I’ve already written a letter to Madam Hela. She said she’ll inform me about the next gathering and bring me there.”

Franca averted her gaze in disappointment.

“Then there’s no need for me to worry. Yes, let me tell you about the different methods of the gathering and the characteristics of the members of the Research Society…”

Franca’s supplementary class continued until noon.

Seeing Lumian preparing to leave, she hesitated for a moment and said, “Um, can you… can you transform into me again?”

Lumian, puzzled but not refusing, frowned.

Before long, with a reference, he accurately transformed into another Franca.

Franca gazed at her face, seemingly intoxicated.

Suddenly, she extended her right hand and touched Lumian’s cheek.

“Hey!” Lumian took a step back.

Franca snapped out of her daze and smiled sheepishly.

“The feeling of a real person and a mirror is indeed different. However, I feel that you’re still lacking something, but I can’t tell what.”

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked with a smile, “Lacking a feminine charm?”

“Maybe.” Franca exhaled and watched Lumian walk towards the door.

Just as Lumian opened the door, he heard the Demoness of Pleasure shout from behind, “Dammit, were you secretly cursing me? What feminine charm!”

…

In Salle de Bal Brise, as Lumian sat down, Sarkota approached him with a wanted poster and said,

“Those black dogs have been asking around with it for the past two days.”

Lumian glanced at it and realized it was his wanted poster.

He smiled nonchalantly. “It’s fine. Let them search.”

Sarkota didn’t say anything else and informed Lumian, “The Boss wants you to make a trip to Rue des Fontaines today.”

What’s the matter now? Lumian pondered and nodded.

It was almost evening when he arrived at 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

The lawn seemed to have been ravaged, and the hall filled with weapons and armor was severely damaged.

Upon seeing Gardner Martin, Lumian didn’t hide his confusion.

“Did something happen?”

Gardner Martin, his face glowing, smiled and said, “After the Werewolf incident, they launched a sneak attack and were forced back. They suffered a loss.”

The Rose School of Thought ultimately fell into the Boss’s trap? Seeing that Gardner Martin didn’t want to elaborate, Lumian asked, “Boss, why did you summon me?”

Gardner Martin produced an exquisite invitation.

“Count Poufer invites you to his Red Swan Castle for a salon this weekend.”

Red Swan Castle? Lumian frowned slightly.

Chapter 363 - 363 Studying Leads to Improvement

363 Studying Leads to Improvement

Lumian still vividly recalled the night he played King's Pie. Nightmares haunted him repeatedly, and every time, he found himself in an ancient beige castle, its surface tainted with the marks of ages-old blood, its interior a horrifying canvas of madness.

"Just remember to let Poufer choose first in situations like the King's Pie game, and you'll be fine."

But I'm no longer the same person I used to be. Can I really depend on being the last to choose to avoid the problem when there's the Blood Emperor's aura corrupting my right hand? Lumian silently pondered for a moment before responding, "Yes, Commanding Officer."

He then inquired, "Where is Red Swan Castle?"

He intended to scout the area when the opportunity arose. At the very least, he needed to pinpoint the location of the nearest cathedral.

"Quartier éraste, near Emperor Roselle's Summer Palace and the West Lognes Forest," Gardner Martin replied succinctly.

Quartier éraste was designated as 17. In Roselle's time, it served as a suburban retreat for nobles and royalty, but now it was enclosed within the city walls, becoming one of Trier's largest districts. Known as the barracks district due to its multiple army encampments, it was situated in the northwest, boasting a national park, West Lognes Forest, a conference center, and numerous arsenals. Additionally, it was home to the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun's largest cloister

in Trier, the Sacred Heart Cloister.

Lumian recalled a map of Trier he had seen and nodded in acknowledgment.

“It’s near the square district.”

Emperor Roselle’s summer palace wasn’t situated in Quartier éraste; it resided in the square district, nestled between West and East Lognes Forest.

Gardner Martin cast a glance at Lumian’s left hand.

“Why are you injured?”

Lumian smiled candidly and said, “I recently delved into the catacombs with a friend I met at a mysticism gathering and got injured.”

He couldn’t shake the feeling that the Iron and Blood Cross Order had an interest in the underground world, possibly with spies lurking around the tombs. It was safer to focus the lie on something else. The Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society also doubled as a mysticism gathering, after all.

Gardner Martin nodded with approval.

“Avoid unnecessary explorations and risks in the future. They won’t bring you the mystical knowledge you seek, nor will they yield valuable items. Only danger, danger, and more danger awaits.”

Is that so? Does the Samaritan Women’s Spring count as a high-value item? Lumian inwardly criticized. Nevertheless, he earnestly agreed,”Yes, Commanding Officer.”

Had it not been for Madam Justice’s request, he would have had no inclination to venture into the catacombs’ fourth level.

Now, the odds drew closer to zero. He couldn’t help but wonder if he might stumble upon another of Amon’s tombs!

After bidding farewell to Gardner Martin, Lumian hopped onto a

public carriage headed back to Avenue du Marché.

Amidst the rhythmic sounds of horses' hooves and the carriage's wheels, a sudden thought struck Lumian.

The Bliss Society only lost Charlotte Calvino and Susanna Mattise, the high priestess. There are still other members to contend with, such as Maipú Meyer, the former manager of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, or the actresses who had once played lead roles there before departing.

I wonder if Susanna Mattise had divulged the details of the Tree of Shadow to these members. If she had, they would likely know that the high priestess's true target was either me, Ciel Dubois, or rather, Lumian Lee…

If that were the case, the Rose School of Thought and the Bliss Society might redirect their focus towards me. That could spell trouble…

How annoying. I really wish I could eliminate every member of the Rose School of Thought and the Bliss Society…

Towards the end, upon realizing the various negative effects on him, Lumian cursed inwardly before controlling himself.

If it weren't for the Actors' remarkable skill in disguise and concealing themselves, he might have seriously contemplated eliminating all members of the Bliss Society to eliminate any hidden threats.

He suspected that the Flog boxing gloves might have a miraculous effect on individuals with twisted desires, like those in the Bliss Society. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

How should I find them? Lumian fell into deep thought.

Just then, as the public carriage pulled into a halfway stop, a passenger boarded.

It was a boy, around seven or eight years old, dressed in a white shirt and a miniature black formal suit with matching shorts. He wore

white socks and black shoes, had short blond hair, and his brown eyes held determination. His chubby cheeks suggested he still had traces of baby fat.

Oh, isn't this Baron Brignais's godson, Ludwig? Lumian's mood brightened as he smiled.

Almost simultaneously, Ludwig noticed him

and his expression turned to panic. He swiftly attempted to disembark from the carriage.

He was still carrying the heavy dark-red hard school bag.

Running away from home again? Lumian thought as he stood up, alighting from the carriage ahead of schedule.

The boy had already disappeared from the vicinity of the stop sign.

He's quite fast… Lumian identified the nearby footprints and calmly chose a direction.

Escaping a Hunter's pursuit without addressing tracks promptly was nearly impossible.

After trailing the footprints for a couple of streets, Lumian turned into a secluded alley and approached a half-broken barricade that barely reached waist height. He couldn't help but chuckle as he said, "Come out."

Ludwig cautiously peeked his young face out from behind the barricade, a mixture of nervousness and resentment evident in his voice as he said, "You swindler, stay away! If you come any closer, I-I'll devour you!"

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"Why did you run away from home again?"

Lumian couldn't help but tease, "Yo, you've learned to curse. You've improved since last time."

He noted that Ludwig, even if his unusual appetite and eating habits were disregarded, seemed more like a real child now compared to their previous encounter.

With this in mind, Lumian concluded, “This proves that studying is still useful.”

Ludwig was momentarily taken aback and seemed to forget to retort.

Lumian sized him up and said sincerely, “You weren’t born with a high IQ; in a way, you’re relatively less intelligent. But if you don’t study, do your homework regularly, and occasionally take exams to gradually improve your thinking abilities, I can guarantee that someone like me could easily deceive you the moment you step outside, and you wouldn’t even realize how you fell for it.”

Ludwig muttered to himself in a daze, “Did I really improve? Is studying, doing homework, and taking exams really useful…”

You’re not born stupid, are you? Is your brain damaged? You believed me just like that? I can’t even imagine what would happen to you if you were thrown at the Salle de Bal Unique’s entrance… As Lumian muttered inwardly, his smile remained unwavering.

“That’s right. If you find it too burdensome, talk to Brignais about reducing the amount of homework. There’s no need to run away from home. Giving up on studying will only make you more foolish.”

At that moment, Lumian had a single prevailing thought:

It is better to keep such abnormal and brainless humans or humanoid creatures under the supervision of the orthodox Church.

However, wouldn’t the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom be too arrogant to think that Baron Brignais could control a fellow who ate everything he saw?

He has already escaped twice!

If he hadn’t encountered me every time, he would have caused trouble long ago!

Ludwig fell silent for a few seconds before he spoke up, “Will you negotiate for me?”

Lumian didn’t hesitate in his response, “No problem.”

Negotiating was something he was quite experienced in, especially when dealing with his sister.

“Then I’ll trust you again.” Ludwig hesitated for a moment before making up his mind.

He then flipped over the dilapidated barricade.

Don’t say that. It’ll only make me feel like scamming you again… Lumian muttered and led Ludwig to the nearest public carriage stop.

On the way, he glanced at the boy’s filthy clothes and said, “Did you bring a change of clothes?”

“No.” Ludwig shook his head.

Running away from home without any spare clothes? Lumian asked in amusement, “So, what’s in your bag? Food?”

Again, Ludwig shook his head, displaying a rather obedient attitude.

It’s not food or clothes… Lumian cast a puzzled glance at the dark-red hard school bag.

“It can’t be filled with books and papers, can it?”

“No either…” Ludwig suddenly shut his mouth.

What could it be? Lumian narrowed his eyes.

At that moment, Ludwig asked innocently, “Is there anything to eat?”

“No, we’ll eat when we return to Avenue du Marché,” Lumian replied mercilessly.

What a joke. With your appetite, why would I use my own money to treat you?

Disappointed, Ludwig let out a sigh and began sucking his finger, as if he wanted to take a bite out of it.

Fortunately, their destination, Avenue du Marché, wasn't too far away. After another stop, they arrived, and Lumian spotted Baron Brignais waiting at the entrance of the usury company. The gentleman visibly relaxed upon seeing Ludwig.

"This can't go on," Lumian interjected before the other party could speak. "Do you think I'll keep running into him every time? Reduce his homework by half."

Baron Brignais weighed the options for a moment. "Okay."

Ludwig interjected in a hushed tone, "And add another dessert meal."

With the godfather and godchild relationship seemingly back to normal, Lumian bid them farewell and couldn't help but wonder, Why did the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom send such an abnormal child to Trier?

…

In the hill district, in Deep Valley Town, in front of an old grayish-white house with only two floors, Valentine and Imre, now in possession of the brass key obtained from Celia Bello, stood behind the Deacon Angoulême with serious expressions.

According to the feedback from a Sealed Artifact, the brass key left behind by the mysterious entrustee of the gatekeeper's disappearance pointed to this very building.

Chapter 364 - 364 Red House

364 Red House

The door to the grayish-white old house creaked open, needing no key to grant access.

Inside, chaos reigned, with assorted items strewn about, as if someone had burglarized the place.

Valentine surveyed the disarray and remarked, “Someone’s made off with valuable items from here.”

His gaze fell upon the open and empty doors to the first-floor rooms, evidence of heavy boxes that once occupied the space.

“We’re too late. The entrustee’s companion must have sensed trouble and moved out,” Imre lamented.

The Purifiers fanned out, scouring the cramped area for clues.

Before long, Angoulême discovered a handful of white papers scattered near the stairwell’s edge. He carefully examined them in the sunlight.

Taking a pencil from his pocket, he began to gently shade one of the papers.

Gradually, faint marks emerged, forming a few legible words: “Albert Goncourt… Underground… Riot… Time…”

“Albert Goncourt…” Imre glanced at the paper in the deacon’s hand and couldn’t help but frown.

Albert Goncourt had been the mastermind behind the Trier uprising six years ago, a leader of the Carbonari—a prominent anti-government militant faction.

Angoulême remained silent, urging his team to press on with their investigation.

After thoroughly searching both the first and second floors, they descended into the cellar.

At the far end stood a black iron door, its brass lock gleaming in the dim light.

Angoulême patted the grayish-white humanoid machine by his side and inserted the brass key he had obtained from Celia Bello into its palm.

Immediately after, Angoulême adjusted a few knobs on the mechanical contraption.

From the high-energy pyrokinetic backpack on the robot's back, a billowing white mist erupted. Steadily, it pushed the rigid machine forward, guiding the brass key into the lock at the correct height.

Watching this spectacle, Imre couldn't help but sigh, "Deacon, among the Inquisition—no, the entire Church—you're truly the most fond of mechanical creations."

Angoulême glanced at his usually laid-back subordinate and replied, "I don't discriminate, whether it's a product of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery or not. I only care about its utility.

"When a robot malfunctions, we can fix or replace it. If a person breaks down, I'll be dealing with compensation claims and grieving friends and families."

The Purifiers recognized the deacon's protective tone and turned their attention to the grayish-white humanoid machine with a smile.

Currently, it could only be used to move things and hammer nails. It could barely walk and run. It couldn't do any intricate or brain-intensive operations, and it didn't last long enough. Otherwise, it would have saved them a lot of trouble.

With a mechanical click, the robot turned the brass key, and the heavy iron door swung open. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)

(l)biin.com

A thin fog billowed from within, distorting the door and revealing ethereal faces, etched in the mist, contorted with hatred and pain.

The faces were formed by white fog, filled with hatred and pain.

They clawed and cursed at the mechanical creation opening the door, but it remained impassive.

Rays of brilliant sunlight descended one after another, swiftly clearing the fog behind the black iron door.

As the fog dissipated, Valentine and the others saw what was there.

It was a small altar, made of grayish-black stones, rising only halfway up.

Angoulême, after repeated confirmations that the area was safe, guided the robot inside.

He observed a shallow, narrow groove on top of the grayish-black altar, suggesting that something had once been embedded there but was now gone.

“A ring?” Angoulême mused in a hushed tone.

…

In the market district, at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, at the entrance of Apartment 601.

Franca sported an exquisite shirt adorned with lace flowers at the collar and cuffs, paired with her beloved beige breeches under the sunlight. Her slippers completed the ensemble as she gazed at Lumian. Franca questioned, “Why are you here again?”

Not wasting any time for his response, she raised her hand and quipped, “If you transform into Muggle, you’re more than welcome!”

Lumian pushed his way into the room and scanned his surroundings.

“I need to discuss something with you.”

“What’s the matter now?” Franca, visibly apprehensive, inquired, “Can’t you wait patiently for the gathering next week?”

Lumian chuckled.

“How about a trip to Trocadéro, specifically the Red House Café?”

“The Red House Café known for hosting women’s orgies?” Franca asked in surprise.

Oh, you remembered it immediately. You must have been thinking about it a lot, right? Lumian replied with a smile, “Yes.”

Franca shook her head.

“Forget it, forget it. Fantasizing about it is enough. No need to actually go. It would be too indulgent. I must maintain control, resist desires, and avoid complete indulgence.”

Then, she scrutinized Lumian and remarked critically, “Don’t tell me you intend to use Lie and Transfiguration to disguise yourself as a woman and infiltrate the orgy for firsthand experience?”

Lumian mocked, “Did you truly think that through, leading you to believe I’d consider such a plan? This is a serious matter!”

He recounted the Rose School of Thought’s failure and his concerns.

“Someone from the Bliss Society mentioned that they’re in contact with members of the Moment Society and the Narcissus Society, who also participate in the Red House female orgies. They want to convert them into believers of the Mother Tree of Desire.

“If we follow this trail, we might uncover the core members of the Bliss Society, or at least eliminate Maipú Meyer and those who were aware of Susanna Mattise’s rough plan.”

Franca nodded slightly and said, “Moreover, we can’t entrust this to official Beyonders. If they extract any information, your cover could be blown.”

With a resolute expression, she declared, “Since it’s a serious matter, we have to be there.”

Then, with enthusiasm, she asked, “When are you planning to go? Do you know the party’s time and the conditions for an invitation?”

“That’s today’s objective. Visit the Red House Café, enjoy coffee for an hour or two while subtly displaying your feminine charm. See if you attract the attention of potential contacts among the homosexuals or identify any women who might be orgy participants. Initiate conversations and establish connections to gather further intelligence.” Lumian understood the importance of a methodical approach, especially in delicate situations like this one.

Franca nodded heavily.

“No problem.”

Lumian produced Lie, in the shape of a silver necklace, and handed it to Franca.

“Use this to alter your hair, eyes, and facial features. You can’t appear in your true form. What if Maipú Meyer is lurking? He’d recognize you as the current boss of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons in an instant!”

As soon as Franca finished donning Lie, she said eagerly, “Let’s go now!”

Lumian’s lips curled up.

“I forgot to mention that this mystical item amplifies the wearer’s emotions.”

“Uh…” Franca was taken aback. “No wonder I’ve been feeling so anxious!”

Lumian added with a smile, “Emotions that weren’t there before won’t be amplified.”

“…”Franca, clenching her teeth, retorted, “Well, my desire to punch you has definitely been amplified.”

Lumian ceased his mockery and began to earnestly explain the functions and precautions of Lie.

Franca walked to the full-body mirror and observed her hair rapidly turning black, her pupils turning dark brown, her skin becoming more delicate, and her lines softer.

Compared to her flamboyant beauty, she now appeared more composed and mature. Her facial features leaned towards elegance, giving her an indescribable charm.

Gazing at her altered reflection in the mirror, Franca remained silent for a prolonged moment.

“It doesn’t resemble your true appearance, but it’s still beautiful and charming,” Lumian complimented objectively.

He wanted to say that she had the charm of a Demoness, but he chose not to agitate Franca.

Franca snapped out of her daze and silently changed into non-red boots before walking towards the door.

Upon entering the corridor, she snapped out of her daze and glanced at Lumian beside her.

“If you’re giving me Lie, how do you plan to disguise yourself as a woman? Are you relying on the transformation illusion?”

Lumian replied with a hint of amusement, “Who says I’m masquerading as a woman?”

He led Franca to a new safe house on Rue du Rossignol, retrieved a brownish-yellow ritualistic dog skin, and wrapped it around himself.

Then, he recited an incantation in Hermes.

“Dog!”

A dark light suddenly surged from the ritualistic dog skin, enveloping Lumian completely.

In an instant, a large dog with brownish-yellow fur appeared in the room.

Franca, with her black hair and brown eyes, was taken aback.

She finally understood Lumian's plan for monitoring the situation at the Red House Café.

After a moment of curiosity, Franca asked, "What does it feel like to become a big dog? Are you sure you don't feel burdened?"

The brownish-yellow-furred dog rolled its eyes at Franca and opened its mouth. "Woof!"

Are you stupid? Do you think dogs can speak and answer your questions?

Franca clicked her tongue and, with Lumian in brownish-yellow dog form, hired a rental carriage to head to Trocadéro Town, west of Lavigny Docks.

Along the way, Lumian had the urge to bite her several times. From time to time, she would curiously stroked his dog fur, stomach, and head, hoping to find something distinct from a real dog.

After more than an hour, the carriage arrived outside Trocadéro.

Franca paid the fare of 2 verl d'or, and Lumian, in his dog guise, hopped out, behaving as if he had no connection to her. He began to scout the streets for the Red House Café, which emitted a distinctive aroma of fermented grapes.

Soon, he located the establishment near East Lognes Forest.

While the entire building wasn't red, it sported a magnificent mushroom-shaped red roof. The main structure was beige, adorned with bold graffiti on the walls.

Lumian settled near the café's entrance, lying down quietly, and watched as Franca, transformed into a black-haired beauty, entered the establishment.

Chapter 365 - 365 Observation

Observation

The ambiance at the Red House Café radiated a small-town charm. Enamelware utensils, wooden-framed decorative paintings, checkered tablecloths, and exposed ceiling beams gave it a simple yet elegant vibe, a striking contrast to its vibrant and trendy exterior.

Franca, seated by the window, ordered a cup of fragrant Intis coffee and basked in the sunlight.

With a casual glance around, she observed the clientele and waitstaff.

Most of them were women, particularly the waitresses, and their attire and graceful movements indicated specialized training.

Only two men, seemingly foreign wine merchants, sat across from each other, discussing the impact of this year's abundant rain and sunlight on grape quality. Among the three female patrons, one was a local elderly woman with gray hair, dressed modestly, occasionally greeting passersby. Another was in her thirties, wearing a veiled black hat and a blue corset dress, her features fairly ordinary. The third, a striking beauty with delicate eyebrows, had naturally cascading brown hair in wavy curls, dressed simply, and exuded a calm demeanor.

Apart from the local elderly lady, the other two might be participants in the orgies. Franca turned her attention away, thinking that the first floor, with a dozen or so tables, didn't seem like the place for such private affairs.

Her guess was that it might be happening in the basement or on an upper floor closer to the distinctive red mushroom roof.

From Franca's vantage point, she had a clear view of the café's

entrance. Lumian, in his brownish-yellow dog form, lay there quietly, soaking up the sun and keeping a close eye on everyone entering and exiting the Red House Café, as well as the patrons and waitresses inside.

No one paid much attention to the wild dog by the roadside, except for a few stray dogs that passed by.

One of them bared its teeth at Lumian, who occupied his usual spot, and growled menacingly.

Lumian felt somewhat helpless. Could he really engage in a dogfight in his current form?

This wasn't a significant concern for him, but what mattered was that the Animal Creation Spell had sealed most of his Beyonder powers, reducing his strength to that of a dog.

Of course, given his size as a large dog, intimidating smaller canines was a breeze. However, the dog growling at him was also quite substantial, albeit on the thin side.

Fight! Fight! Franca couldn't contain her excitement as she watched the scene unfold through the window.

She had no intention of intervening; it was a rare opportunity to witness Lumian in such an awkward situation. How could she resist the spectacle?

Lumian, sprawled by the door, raised his right palm—no, his right foreleg. Drawing from past experiences, he focused a portion of his consciousness on his paw.

A faint sense of madness and a scent of blood, perceptible only to Lumian, hung in the air.

The brown-furred dog, its skeletal frame visible, was taken aback and hastily retreated with its tail between its legs.

Oh… Come on! Be more daring! Why run away? Franca, inside the Red House Café, was left disappointed.

She couldn't fathom why the dog had suddenly become afraid of Lumian.

The Hunter couldn't unleash his full powers—he could exude an aura of provocation at best!

Simultaneously, Lumian chuckled self-deprecatingly.

If The Blood Emperor ever found out that I used His aura to scare off dogs, He might just skin me alive, wouldn't He?

After the brief interlude, Franca refocused her attention on the café.

Drawing from her experience and observations in fashion magazines, she gracefully sipped her coffee and occasionally performed everyday actions that highlighted her feminine charm, all learned over the past year.

It didn't escape her notice that nearly everyone in the café had their eyes on her. Some glanced discreetly, while others openly admired her, some even offering warm smiles.

The elderly local lady, who had been seated nearby, smiled at Franca, picked up honey-roasted chicken wings from her plate, and made her way out of the Red House Café.

Stopping in front of Lumian, she mumbled to herself in amazement, "It's another one…"

Lumian had an uneasy feeling as he watched the old lady squat down and offer the brownish-yellow roasted chicken wing to him.

After a moment's hesitation, he bit into the chicken wing like a real dog, allowing the old lady to stroke his furry head.

Truth be told, he wasn't accustomed to eating like a dog, but fortunately, the old lady stood up and departed after a couple of affectionate strokes.

Inside the Red House Café, Franca couldn't help but burst into laughter as she watched Lumian awkwardly nibble at the chicken wings. Unable to resist her amplified emotions, her body trembled

with laughter.

If she didn't need to maintain her image, she might have doubled over in laughter.

She also wanted to take something to feed Lumian!

In her natural state, Franca's true charisma shone through. Her black hair, brown eyes, and effortless elegance captivated those around her, giving her a unique and magnetic presence in the café.

The mysterious charm of her black hair and brown eyes, along with her elegant and casual demeanor, made her uniquely attractive.

At that moment, a woman wearing a light-colored hunting suit rode up on a brown horse from the nearby racetrack near East Lognes Forest.

She skillfully dismounted and removed her hat.

Her long, orange-red hair flowed like a waterfall, adding a touch of wildness to her otherwise clean, pure, and exquisite face.

Carrying a whip, the woman in the hunting attire secured her horse and made her way into the Red House Café. She approached the quiet and beautiful young woman.

Franca had ceased her laughter at Lumian's antics and couldn't help but feel that this new arrival seemed more like a participant in the orgies than anyone else present.

Despite being the most beautiful with exquisitely delicate features that gave her an innocent appearance, there was an aura about her that could easily pass for that of a man.

There was likely to be someone like her at a female orgy.

Franca elegantly raised her right hand and brushed back the black hair that had fallen across her lips, subtly displaying her own feminine charm.

The woman with long orange-red hair, who had been unconsciously

surveying the café's occupants, appeared visibly taken aback, as if she had been momentarily stunned.

However, Lumian, who had been lying quietly by the entrance, noticed a slight furrow in the woman's brow after her initial surprise.

She averted her gaze and continued her approach toward the quietly elegant woman with wavy hair. They engaged in light banter before they ascended the wooden stairs to the second floor amidst some chatter.

Franca observed them from the corner of her eye and began to form a rough idea.

There is a strong likelihood that these two are indeed participants in the female orgies, though whether they belonged to the Moment Society or the Narcissus Society remains uncertain.

Franca continued to sip her coffee leisurely, deliberately making no move.

After more than half an hour had passed, and with no sign of the women descending, she decided to leave her seat and walked out of Red House Café.

She planned to call it a day, so as to not risk arousing suspicion by approaching them too hastily.

Her plan was to maintain her cover as a resident of the nearby Lavigny Docks and return to Trocadéro every two or three days, or even more frequently. After all, this area was renowned for its wine production and scenic beauty, attracting numerous tourists daily. It would be entirely plausible for a lady who had recently moved nearby to explore the area.

Lumian, stationed at the entrance of the Red House Café, appeared disinterested, as though he had no connection to Franca's actions.

Almost simultaneously, his sharp senses detected the beautiful woman with long orange-red hair standing behind a glass window on the second floor.

The woman observed Franca's departing figure with a solemn, vigilant, and contemplative expression, devoid of any apparent homosexual romantic interest.

Why is there such a reaction? Did she discover something amiss with Franca? How did she discover it? Lumian felt puzzled as he stood up, as if he had soaked up enough sun, and moved to the alley between the Red House Café and the neighboring building, which was closer to Franca's departure direction.

Before long, the woman with long orange-red hair reappeared behind the second-floor window.

She carefully scanned her surroundings, confirming that no one was paying attention. There was only a brownish-yellow dog dozing off in a corner. Gently, she pushed open the window and gracefully descended to the alley below, as light as a feather.

Immediately after her descent, the woman with the clean and pure appearance blended into the shadows.

Lumian, pretending to be in a state of drowsiness, silently observed this unfolding scene, his mind racing. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Featherfall… Shadow Concealment… Beauty… Remarkable charisma… Could she be a Demoness?

Was it precisely because she is also a Demoness that she sensed something unusual about Franca's appearance and demeanor, prompting her to follow and observe?

Lumian discreetly stood up and began to follow Franca from a distance, giving the appearance of a leisurely stroll.

The orange-red-haired woman remained hidden in the shadows, elusive and difficult to pinpoint. Lumian couldn't ascertain her exact location, but he was certain that she was not far from Franca.

Franca, playing her part convincingly, didn't seem in a hurry to leave Trocadéro. She embraced the role of a tourist, visiting the nearest vineyard, sampling the free red wine at a shop, and purchasing some

regional specialties.

Just before noon, Franca entered the town's upscale department store and began trying on various styles of women's clothing.

As Lumian watched, nearly fifteen minutes later, he lost sight of Franca. It was then that he observed the clean-looking woman in hunting attire emerging from the shadows in a corner of the department store, her eyes scanning the surroundings.

Franca had successfully shaken her pursuer.

Lumian's guileless dog face lit up with a gratified smile.

The final stage of today's operation, getting rid of the would-be stalker, had been executed flawlessly. Franca, with Lie's assistance and her ability to counter divination, had done a commendable job!

She must have utilized the shoppers in the department store, changing into a different set of clothing as a ruse, transformed herself, and exited openly to evade detection.

After the woman in the hunting attire returned to the Red House Café, Lumian left Trocadéro and made his way toward Quartier éraste.

While still in his canine form, he intended to explore the vicinity of Red Swan Castle.

Guillaume Bénet's Animal Creation Spell had a duration of seven days, after which it would naturally dissipate, requiring a new ritual.

As Lumian had anticipated, Red Swan Castle stood atop the hill, its beige exterior tainted with the marks of age-old blood. It stood in eerie silence, surrounded by a small river.

Lumian conducted a few circles around the area before arriving at the closest church building—the Sacred Heart Cloister of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

Beneath the shade of the green trees, he squatted quietly and gazed at the magnificent golden building adorned with steeples.

During his observation, Lumian couldn’t help but notice a golden retriever squatting more than ten meters away, its attention also fixed on the Sacred Heart Cloister.

Chapter 366 - 366 Demoness Sect

Demoness Sect

Are all the dogs around the cloister so devout? He retracted his gaze while criticizing.

He quickly left the forest behind.

His primary concern was to chart a route from Red Swan Castle to the Sacred Heart Cloister, taking note of any advantageous terrain and hiding spots along the way. What the Sacred Heart Cloister actually looked like or if it held any special significance was of little concern to him.

By mid-afternoon, Lumian had thoroughly scouted the area surrounding Red Swan Castle. He discovered several potential escape routes, some following the main road, some along the freight railways, others winding through forests, past lakes, or over hills. Not only were they well-concealed, but they also featured natural traps.

Initially, Lumian had contemplated infiltrating Red Swan Castle in his canine form, but he soon realized that security was exceedingly tight. Stray dogs were not tolerated, and intruders faced certain death.

Unfortunately, the Animal Creation Spell only permits transformation into larger animals. The implicit requirement is that the hide must be able to envelop a curled-up human. Otherwise, I could transform into a rat. I don't believe they could guard against that! He sighed and retreated to a nearby secluded spot.

With his spirituality, Lumian manipulated the air within the dog hide and murmured two words of Hermes.

“His Grace!”

Creating a sound in this manner was not challenging for Lumian. What proved difficult was that his spirituality was constrained by the Animal Creation Spell. It could not extend beyond his body or the dog hide, and it was in limited supply. Thus, any sound produced remained confined to the dog hide, hidden from others’ ears. Furthermore, he could dispel the incantation after uttering a few words.

In a swift, shadowy motion, the brownish-yellow dog skin split open, revealing Lumian’s human form.

He crawled out, carefully folded the hide, and cradled it against his chest.

Though it had lost its mystical properties, Lumian had no intention of discarding it. Finding such a complete and large dog hide was a rarity.

I only have one ritualistic dog hide left. I must conserve it. Lumian muttered these thoughts as he resumed his journey along the familiar road toward the nearest town.

In a bustling metropolis like Trier, ritualistic dog hides proved more practical than ritual sheepskin or cowhide. Donning the latter two and transforming into the corresponding animals would undoubtedly draw attention. After all, who wouldn’t be tempted to guide a lone sheep wandering the streets home to prepare it into various delicacies? Moreover, in Trier, there were those with perverted inclinations, ones who fancied sheep buttocks.

…

As Lumian returned to Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, the night had already fallen, casting a dark veil over the city.

Franca swiftly changed back into her usual attire and settled into the recliner, her gaze fixed warily on the Lie necklace resting in a corner of the coffee table, as though it might spring to life and ensnare her at any moment.

“What’s wrong?” Lumian closed the ajar door behind him and casually stowed away the Lie necklace.

Franca’s expression shifted, and she sighed, confessing, “After I returned, I found myself with idle time, so I attempted to adjust my appearance, but…”

At this point, she let out another sigh, her emotions a mixture of fear and nostalgia.

“I became entranced by my own reflection in the mirror!

“I’ve never seen such a flawless woman. Just by gazing at her face, I could do so for an entire day—no, for eternity!”

Lumian contemplated her words for a moment before responding, “You can use Lie to deceive others, but never deceive yourself.”

“I understand, but the allure of the Demoness of Pleasure and the effects of Lie are genuinely potent,” Franca admitted earnestly. “It wasn’t easy for me to regain control. I forcibly removed the necklace and tossed it onto the coffee table. While my fixation may be partially due to its amplification properties, I can’t help but reminisce. I can’t help but yearn to give it a try. Heh heh, my mind has passed the test.”

With the Lie necklace out of her sight, Franca visibly relaxed. She chuckled and remarked, “Were you meme–uh, using your sister’s way of speaking to caution me?”

“Yes, in preparation for your upcoming gathering,” Lumian confirmed, making no effort to conceal the fact that he had been practicing Aurore’s manner of speech recently.

Franca nodded thoughtfully and commented, “It felt quite natural. If it remains at this level, deceiving them shouldn’t pose a problem.”

Without awaiting Lumian’s response, the Demoness of Pleasure playfully inquired, “So, how did the honey-roasted chicken wings taste?”

Lumian provided an objective assessment, “They were decent.”

Franca's curiosity and teasing spirit persisted as she asked, "Could it be that your taste buds were improved due to your canine senses? Had your sense of smell become more acute?"

Lumian replied with an experimental tone, "It does have some influence on me, but I haven't transformed entirely into a dog. I still retain a significant portion of my human senses."

Franca continued, "And what about other aspects?"

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian explained, "Other aspects? It's more like my soul is confined within a real dog's body. Everything I do is restricted and influenced by my physical form, including…"

Seated on the divan, he raised his leg, mimicking the posture of a canine taking a leak.

Franca exclaimed, "You really don't care about your image at all, do you? It doesn't bother you?"

Lumian shrugged, responding, "What's there to be concerned about?"

Franca thought for a moment before posing her final question, "One last thing, will you be affected by dog hormones and react strangely to other dogs?"

"The body is mine, and the dog is just a disguise. It's merely an external constraint." Lumian's expression suggested he wasn't a fool.

He then adopted a mimicry of Madam Magician and asked, "Are there any more questions?"

"I'm done." Franca was satisfied.

Lumian chuckled.

"Then it's my turn to ask. What are your thoughts on the ladies you observed today?"

Franca absently twirled a few flaxen-colored strands of hair that had come loose from her ponytail as she replied, "There are two potential

suspects…”

She proceeded to recount her speculation and added, “That woman with the orange-red hair still gives me an odd sensation, as if she’s drawing me in.”

Lumian smiled approvingly. “You’re onto something. She’s at least a Demoness of Pleasure or a Beyonder with a corresponding mystical item.”

After identifying that the Beyonder belonged to the Demoness pathway, Lumian sensed a magnetic allure in every gesture she made, similar to Franca’s. It was a bit challenging for him, with most of his abilities sealed, to resist such temptation. Fortunately, Alms Monk’s endurance held firm.

“Demoness?” Franca pondered the possibility and mused to herself, “That makes sense. How could a gathering of females dedicated to pleasure not attract one or two Demonesses…”

Lumian had a moment of realization and posed a question, “Is it to bring pleasure to others and oneself?”

He sensed that this might be a fundamental requirement for their acting.

“That’s one aspect of it. Even if it weren’t for the potion, I’d still want to attend. However, I can control myself, but the same can’t be said for other Demonesses,” Franca said with disdain and a sigh.

Lumian, not fully grasping the implication behind her words, remarked, “She followed you but you managed to shake her off.”

“Ah…” Franca was momentarily surprised. “She should be from the Demoness family.”

“The Demoness family you mentioned?” Lumian had previously heard Franca briefly mention this secret organization.

He had always been curious about how Demonesses could form families.

Matriarchal society?

Franca sighed and said, “Yes, it’s also known as the Demoness Sect. Its origins trace back to the descendants of the Primordial Demoness during the Fourth Epoch. The Primordial Demoness is a Sequence 0 of the Assassin pathway, essentially a true deity. She’s widely regarded as an evil god, also known as the Chaos Demoness.”

Primordial Demoness… Lumian committed the name to memory.

Franca continued, “The core of the Demoness family always includes a descendant of the Primordial Demoness, but they also recruit or cultivate Assassins with different surnames. It’s essentially a sect that controls all the potion formulas and most of the resources related to this pathway.

“Only a Demoness from the Demoness Sect would tail a wild Demoness upon their first encounter.”

“To retrieve the Beyonder characteristic?” Lumian inquired.

Be it recruitment or elimination, it was a way of reclaiming Beyonder characteristics.

Franca pursed her lips and responded, “Exactly. They don’t want the Beyonder characteristics of the Demoness pathway to be lost outside their sect. Moreover, they hold a deep disdain for female Assassins and eliminate any they come across.”

“Why?” Lumian couldn’t comprehend.

Franca shot him a resentful glance, as if blaming him for asking such a question.

She sighed and said, “It’s because the Primordial Demoness was originally male. During the process of attaining godhood through the Assassin pathway, She transformed entirely into a woman. This transformation left Her mind twisted and filled with agony. The Demoness Sect claims they want to emulate the Primordial’s experience.

“So, every Demoness in the sect was once male. After enduring

immense pain and suffering, they became profoundly distorted. They yearn to see other men undergo similar ordeals. Perhaps you don't know, but these Demonesses seek out men to father their children. Baby girls are sent away, while baby boys are kept behind to relive their mothers' lives."

As Cordu's Prankster King, Lumian couldn't help but shake his head in disbelief.

"Isn't this incredibly twisted?"

"What's even more twisted is that these children's fathers eventually become Demonesses themselves." Franca recounted the information she had obtained from Madam Judgment and exhaled in fear. "I've been avoiding them, not wanting them to discover me."

"But you're originally a man. Why should you be afraid?" Lumian asked, puzzled. "Are you worried that being around them might corrupt you and warp your senses after joining the Demoness Sect?"

Franca nodded solemnly.

"Yes.

Besides, I'm already a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club. How could I possibly join the Demoness Sect?"

Lumian fell silent for a few moments before speaking again.

"Didn't you want to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order too?"
Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

"That's different. It's a mission for the Tarot Club," Franca defended reflexively.

Lumian didn't press the issue and instead nodded thoughtfully.

"No wonder you mentioned that female orgies easily attract Demonesses."

Franca scoffed.

“It’s just that most Demonesses are members of the Demoness Sect and have connections either vertically or horizontally. Otherwise, half of the female orgies might consist of Demonesses.

“What’s even more extreme is that when you receive an invitation to a strip ball and attend with enthusiasm, it’s always packed with men.”

After muttering a few words, Franca looked at Lumian and asked awkwardly, “So, what should we do next?”

Chapter 367 - 367 Salon

Salon

Lumian understood Franca's concerns and smiled.

"First, consult with your Major Arcana card holder about the possibility of establishing contact with the Demoness Sect. Remember, you originally were a man, so there's no need to fret about being eliminated. As long as you can pass their background checks, you can tap into their resources to enhance yourself. And when pretending isn't an option anymore, have your Major Arcana card holder assign you a mission to steer clear of Trier and make a swift getaway.

"Think about it. You're already at Sequence 6. Most of the top-tier resources are within the Demoness Sect's grasp. Infiltrating their ranks and acquiring these resources from within is a much simpler and safer route compared to making enemies and taking risks to hunt them. Of course, this hinges on your Major Arcana card holder providing a way to elude the watchful eye of the Primordial Demoness."

Franca was taken aback and mumbled, "How do you sound so experienced…"

Lumian scoffed. "Are you amnesiac? I'm doing something similar right now. I'm infiltrating the Iron and Blood Cross Order on behalf of the Tarot Club.

"What's the major perk? Once I complete the Iron and Blood Cross Order's mission, I can claim rewards from Gardner Martin and report back to my Major Arcana card holder. I can use the pretext of my spying progress to secure rewards from her—two rewards with one mission. Otherwise, why do you think the number of mystical items on me have increased so rapidly?"

Of course, he didn't need to mention Mr. K's contributions to Franca.

"Two rewards with one mission…" Franca repeated it a few times before a realization dawned on her. "I've been cooperating with you on missions related to the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Will this clash with contact with the Demoness Sect?"

Lumian's expression said: "As expected, you're still inexperienced."

"There's no clash; why would there be? Simply convey to the Demoness Sect your desire to transition to the Hunter pathway at Sequence 4 and revert to your original gender. That's your motivation for pursuing leads on the Iron and Blood Cross Order. You've already left enough clues and made substantial progress.

"From what you've described, those Demonesses went from being men to women. I refuse to believe they haven't considered leveraging the pathway switch to regain what they've lost. That reason should be enough to convince them.

"Moreover, Demonesses and Hunters belong to neighboring pathways. They surely have ulterior motives concerning the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Given your opportunity to infiltrate them, they're more likely to embrace you than hinder you. In fact, they might even value your presence.

"Most importantly, if things go as planned, you could become the Demoness Sect's liaison responsible for matters related to the market district and the Iron and Blood Cross Order. If you want the higher-ups among the Demonesses to be aware of what's transpiring here, they'll be informed. If you prefer keeping it under wraps, they'll remain oblivious. For instance, Jenna being a female Assassin."

At this point, Lumian smiled.

"You can also exploit the Demoness Sect to nurture Jenna. When the high-ranking Demonesses discover that a powerful pure female Demoness is paid for by their own sect, won't they lose control on the spot?"

It was an intriguing thought. It could be described as extreme

provocation and mockery.

Franca nodded indiscernibly.

“Kid, if you had taken the Instigator potion, you might have fully digested it within a week.”

“I’m just kindling a specific fire within you.” Lumian leaned back on the sofa.

Franca couldn’t help but scoff in a half-mocking, half-teasing tone.

“If I were to genuinely join the Demoness Sect, and you reach the Sequence 5 qualitative transformation without obtaining a Sequence 4 potion formula and the corresponding main ingredient from the Iron and Blood Cross Order, would you consider becoming a Demoness?”

“…” Franca was taken aback. “Are you sure you won’t find it mentally burdensome?”

Lumian borrowed a phrase from his sister’s vocabulary.

“I’ll do whatever it takes.” He then added, “I’ll stop at nothing to achieve my goal.

“Besides, can’t we just switch back when we reach Sequence 3?”

“You can’t just switch at will. Most Beyonders never advance beyond Sequence 4 in their lifetime, let alone Sequence 3. As they ascend, it becomes increasingly difficult. Whether it’s the risk of losing control or obtaining the necessary resources, the challenges remain the same,” she cautioned.

Lumian let out a chuckle.

“Anyway, it’s all just a fantasy at this point, isn’t it? To confirm if it’s feasible at all.”

Franca was left momentarily speechless and then inquired, “You mentioned two directions. What’s the other one?”

“The other option is to track down the Demoness of the Demoness Sect and extract detailed information about the female orgies from her. Subsequently, focus on identifying potential members of the Bliss Society among the participants. As soon as you can, pinpoint the core members with close ties to Susanna Mattise and eliminate any hidden threats,” Lumian explained the alternative plan concisely.

“While it’s a viable plan, if the Bliss Society members aren’t directly involved in the female orgies and are merely associating with certain individuals, targeting the Demoness alone might not provide the information we need. Additionally, it’s bound to draw the attention of high-ranking members of the Demoness Sect, leaving little room for further investigation. I’ll start by reaching out to my Major Arcana card holder and inquire if she has any reservations about my contact with the Demoness Sect.” Franca analyzed after some thought.

She was clearly tempted by Lumian’s suggestion.

Lumian acknowledged her analysis without rushing her. After all, she wouldn’t return to Trocadéro’s Red House café for another two or three days, with an invitation to Count Poufer’s salon preceding that event.

…

Three days after scouting the surroundings of Red Swan Castle and informing Madam Magician and Mr. K of the invitation, Lumian arrived at the beige castle in a four-wheeled four-seater provided by Gardner Martin.

He chose not to dress too formally for the occasion. No tailcoat, top hat, or cane that stereotypically marked a gentleman.

Instead, he wore a light-brown hunting suit, off-white breeches, and brown boots. In his hand, he held a Loen-style deerstalker hat, allowing his golden-black hair to catch the wind.

Lumian was aware, through Aurore’s gossip, that appearing overly grandiose in a literary and artistic salon like this would make him appear out of place among the other participants, possibly even a laughingstock.

Of course, this outfit had been funded by Gardner Martin's recent contribution of 10,000 verl d'or, costing Lumian a total of 1,000 verl d'or.

Holding the invitation letter, Lumian underwent the guard's scrutiny and passed through the imposing several-meter-tall door.

In this area, there was a hall, but it was relatively modest. It served as a waiting area for the butlers, valets, maids, and guards accompanying the guests during a grand banquet.

Lumian scanned his surroundings and confirmed that this wasn't the hall from his unsettling nightmare.

Beyond the hall was the atrium, and on the opposite side stood Red Swan Castle's main edifice.

It rose six to seven stories high and was encircled by a ring of towers.

In his nightmare, a man with dark-red hair had gouged out his own brownish-red eyes from behind that very window.

Now, however, there was nothing behind the clear glass window but a slightly mottled light-colored wall.

Mottled… Shouldn't the rooms' walls have been repainted? Aurore had mentioned that the annual maintenance cost for such an ancient castle is astronomical… Lumian shifted his gaze away and proceeded to enter the main building.

The moment he crossed the threshold, his eyes narrowed, and his heart sank.

This hall was an exact replica of the one in his nightmare!

From the crystal chandelier hanging high above to the spiral golden staircase leading to the second floor, everything mirrored his dream with eerie precision.

Though Lumian had expected this, encountering it in reality stirred up complex emotions within him.

The male servants in the hall, adorned in their vibrant red uniforms with golden trimmings, stood in two neat rows to welcome Lumian's arrival.

Lumian's eyelids twitched, finding the vividness of the red to resemble flowing blood.

The salon was situated in a spacious living room on the first floor, elegantly decorated with a thick, dark red carpet adorned with intricate patterns. A set of plush sofas graced one side of the room, and bar stools and armchairs were scattered around them.

On the opposite end of the living room, a tall young woman sat at a brown piano. She wore a simple yet pristine sky-blue-patterned white corset dress, and her auburn hair cascaded gracefully down her back.

As Lumian entered the living room, the girl's fingers danced gracefully across the piano keys, conjuring a sprightly melody.

Count Poufer occupied an armchair, engaged in conversation with an elegant lady with black hair, blue eyes, and an air of refinement as she leaned against the armrest in a crouched position, chuckling merrily.

Novelist Anori, Painter Mullen, critic Ernst Young, and Poet Iraeta, each accompanied by their female companions, were either gathered on the sofa, engaged in conversation, or lingering near the table adorned with desserts and roasted meats.

In addition to these well-known figures, other guests filled the room. Lumian scanned the crowd and spotted a familiar face.

It was Laurent, the inhabitant of Auberge du Coq Doré, rumored to have used Madame Lakazan's hard-earned money to frequent upscale cafés and mingle with high society.

Laurent still donned the same pristine black tailcoat, and his neatly combed brownish-yellow hair followed a precise 30-70 cut. He stood out amidst the casually attired authors, painters, poets, and critics surrounding him.

He displayed no restraint in his interactions, his dark-brown eyes

sparkling as he exchanged pleasantries with the gathered guests.

Within moments, Laurent locked eyes with Lumian, and his pupils dilated, as if he had encountered an evil spirit.

I-Is this not Ciel Dubois, the current owner of Auberge du Coq Doré and the infamous mob leader?

In an instant, fear coursed through Laurent's veins.

He worried that Lumian might expose his true identity, jeopardizing the connections he had painstakingly cultivated.

He was on the verge of success! Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Oh, you're doing quite well. You've even received an invitation to such a salon… Lumian remarked with a smile, pointing to himself as if to suggest that they both belonged to a certain type and could feign ignorance of each other.

A sigh of relief escaped Laurent as Lumian approached Count Poufer.

With a hint of annoyance, he grumbled, "You didn't inform me about bringing a female companion. You're making me look like a fool!"

"Haha." Count Poufer and the others chuckled, delighted that their prank had succeeded.

After the laughter subsided, Count Poufer gestured toward the girl at the piano.

"If you don't mind, you can invite my cousin, Miss Elros."

Chapter 368 - 368 Speculator

Speculator

Lumian settled into an armchair with a polite smile aimed at Count Poufer. He responded, “That would be my honor.”

With a graceful gesture, he extended an invitation to Miss Elros.

Count Poufer, dressed in a crimson shirt, waved his hand.

“After she finishes playing this piece.”

Lumian shifted his gaze towards the piano, finally getting a clear view of Miss Elros.

Her chestnut eyebrows framed her expressive brown eyes, which sparkled with a youthful vibrance. The delicate curve of her cheeks and gentle facial contours suggested her age to be under 20, and there was no apparent trace of Sauron lineage.

Lumian surmised that Elros likely inherited her Sauron lineage from her maternal side.

He turned away briefly, his fingers wrapping around a glass of red, white, and blue liqueur resting on the coffee table. Engaging in lively conversation with Count Poufer, Novelist Anori, and others, Lumian discussed the latest trends and scandals circulating in their circle.

He had been diligently reading newspapers like Novel Weekly, Journal des débats, Youth of Trier, and Ghost Face to keep himself well-informed for occasions like these.

The black-haired lady who had been kneeling beside Count Poufer had already moved away to observe the newspaper editors engaged in a game of billiards.

Lumian was aware that she couldn't be Count Poufer's wife. Aurore had once enlightened him about the peculiar customs of Trier: in intimate gatherings and small-scale balls, the male and female hosts refrained from appearing together. It was considered improper and might invite unnecessary gossip. Therefore, when one of them hosted a salon, their spouse would attend someone else's event.

Back when Lumian first learned of this, he was barely fifteen, and it struck him as a bizarre set of rules. Now, reflecting upon it, he couldn't help but think:

You Trieriens have devised such absurd and comical unwritten rules to facilitate discreet affairs, and everyone willingly adheres to them!

As the musical piece concluded, Elros gracefully left the piano and made her way to the sofas. Her cousin introduced her to Lumian, pulling over a barstool for her. She sat with her legs neatly together, a silent observer of the ongoing conversation.

As time flowed by, others gradually converged in their direction. Laurent followed a casually-dressed, middle-aged man who sported an impressive beard.

Count Poufer took it upon himself to make introductions, saying, "This is Cornell, the editor-in-chief of Le Petit Trierien."

Lumian had perused the newspaper before, and he vividly recalled the advertisement for the "interstellar bridge to the crimson moon" featured in its pages.

Now, with that memory in mind, he couldn't help but suspect that it might be a cleverly disguised scam or perhaps a piece of Trierien performance art. He also harbored suspicions that it might be connected to devotees of some evil god.

"This is Ciel Dubois, the general manager of Coastal Import and Export Corporation," Poufer introduced the identity Gardner Martin had fabricated to Cornell.

Cornell extended his right hand with a look of surprise as he greeted Lumian. "You're quite the young lad."

Lumian accepted the handshake, offering a charming smile.

“This is the result of my unwavering diligence and hard work.”

Just as Poet Iraeta was on the verge of commenting on the diligence of most individuals present without becoming the general manager of a large company at such a young age, Lumian added a touch of self-deprecation to his tone.

“It’s precisely because I excelled in both areas that my father appointed me as the general manager of the import and export company.”

The room erupted in laughter as everyone grasped Lumian’s meaning.

Their perception of Ciel Dubois underwent a positive transformation.

In their social circle, there was no shortage of individuals who had landed important positions at a tender age due to familial connections. These people typically either avoided mentioning their parents and elders, striving to demonstrate their self-proclaimed abilities, or they struggled with confidence and maturity, endlessly fixating on their fathers or uncles. There were very few who exuded the kind of openness, honesty, and humor that Lumian effortlessly radiated. Back then, Count Poufer could scarcely be counted among them.

Lumian, with a touch of mischievous humor borrowed from his sister, turned his gaze toward Laurent and inquired, “Who might this be?”

Thud! Thud! Laurent’s heart raced in response.

While they had an unspoken agreement not to reveal each other’s true identities, Laurent lacked a thorough understanding of Ciel Dubois, the mob leader, and worried that Lumian might suddenly change his mind.

Cornell, the editor-in-chief of Le Petit Trierien, gestured to the young man by his side.

“This is Laurent. He’s remarkably talented, well-informed, and unfailingly polite. I’ve been observing him for nearly three months,

and I'm considering offering him a position as my assistant and deputy editor-in-chief. Laurent, how do you feel about this unexpected proposition?"

Laurent initially found himself taken aback, but soon, he was overwhelmed by joy and felt a slight sense of vertigo.

All the pains and anxieties he had endured, from his mother's tears to his neighbors' disdain, had led to this moment.

He had always believed that with his talents, he shouldn't be stuck at the bottom, and he had been actively seeking an opportunity, even if it meant squeezing his mother dry to maintain a facade of dignity.

Laurent refrained from displaying excessive excitement and responded to Cornell with a gracious smile, saying, "It would be an honor."

Not bad at all, Lumian thought as he assessed the situation. Speculation could be a risky endeavor, but the rewards could be substantial. However, there's the importance of changing one's mindset and genuinely starting from their current position. Speculating to improve social status might lead to losing everything in the long run. Lumian recalled his sister's comments after losing in the stock market as he considered Laurent's actions.

He was unlike Charlie and others; Lumian held a disdain for those who exploited their mothers in the speculative process. As long as Laurent's mother could accept it and didn't resort to violence against her son or show strong resistance, Lumian didn't pass harsh judgment.

With Cornell and the others now seated, Lumian's curiosity led him to ask, "Where did you first encounter Laurent?"

Cornell responded with a smile, "At the Vichy Café. He often visits to engage in discussions about various Trier-related matters and to share his opinions."

Vichy Café—the place where 5 verl d'or could buy half a bottle of mineral water and two boiled eggs? Laurent's mother, Madame

Lakazan, doesn't even earn 3 verl d'or after a long day's work. Yet, the investment has clearly paid off. Even a rookie deputy editor-in-chief at a newspaper like Le Petit Trierien earns nearly 5,000 verl d'or annually, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Lumian observed the differences and realized that Laurent's fixation on speculative networking had a certain logic.

Still, success in such endeavors was a rare occurrence—one in a hundred at best.

Lumian cast a glance at Laurent, who eyed him with caution, and smoothly changed the subject with a smile.

"Cornell, I happened to come across an advertisement for the Interstellar Bridge in Le Petit Trierien last month, or perhaps even earlier. It piqued my interest. Any comments about it?"

Cornell indulged in a puff from his pipe before bursting into laughter.

"I believe it's a bunch of delusional folks, but since they paid, there's no reason why I shouldn't run their advertisement. Maybe it can fool some fanatical enthusiasts of mechanics and science."

"How are they now?" Lumian chuckled. "I'm even thinking of investing in them, just to see if they're swindlers or if they can actually produce something."

Poet Iraeta picked up his pipe and muttered, "You might as well sponsor me instead of investing in them. At least then, you can berate me for writing like a piece of dogsh*t, and I won't have any comeback."

Lumian played along, acting as if money was of no concern to him. "No problem. How about 5,000 verl d'or?"

His intention was to give Iraeta only 3,000 verl d'or later, using the excuse of not having enough cash on hand at the moment.

Iraeta lowered his pipe and spread his arms theatrically.

"Praise the Sun and let Ciel's malice strike harder!" Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

“Haha, let’s head back to the old city together after the salon.” Lumian subtly hinted at his intention to sponsor Iraeta later but refrained from handing over the money directly to avoid the stink of money.

Following this brief diversion, Cornell seemed to warm up to Lumian’s presence.

“I’m not sure how those people are faring. They only paid for a one-month ad.”

As the conversation flowed, Count Poufer glanced at the setting sun and proposed a game with a warm smile. “Shall we play King’s Pie? Consider it a warm-up before dinner.”

Is this the only game you know? Do you have a childhood… Lumian couldn’t help but inwardly critique Count Poufer’s choice of games, but he refrained from objecting.

The others readily agreed, and Count Poufer promptly instructed his valet to bring out the sizable King’s Pie that had been prepared in the kitchen.

It resembled the lid of a grand saucepan, emitting a tantalizing aroma and color.

“Who shall be in charge of the cutting?” Count Poufer surveyed the participants, his gaze sweeping over each of them.

After a moment’s thought, he decided, “Elros, you do the honors. You’re the youngest and most beautiful lady here.”

Elros, seated on a barstool beside Lumian, gracefully rose and took up the table knife to start dividing the King’s Pie.

Rather obedient of your cousin. Living off the Sauron family, off Count Poufer? Lumian realized that Elros’s techniques were deft, perhaps from frequent practice.

In no time, the colossal King’s Pie was divided into roughly 29 portions.

As was customary, Count Poufer proposed offering the extra slice to his ancestor, Vermonda Sauron, and no one voiced any objections.

After completing this part of the ritual, the living room seemed to descend into an eerie silence, as if the very atmosphere outside the castle had solidified.

Count Poufer then turned his attention to Lumian and Laurent. “Laurent, this is your first time attending my Saturday salon with Ciel. You’ll be the first to choose.”

Lumian laughed and said, “Of course, the host should be the first to choose. Don’t you all think so?”

Instigated by him, the other participants readily agreed that the male host should have the honor of making the initial selection.

Count Poufer didn’t insist and took up a slice of King’s Pie, addressing the group, “Whoever bites into the gold coin shall be king.”

Seeing that the Sauron family member had made the first choice, Lumian felt more at ease and leaned forward to survey the slices.

This was double insurance. First, he would let Count Poufer make his selection. Then, while there were still plenty of slices left, he would exploit Termiboros’s aversion to the matter to choose a slice without the gold coin.

This time, Termiboros remained silent, not offering any warnings. Lumian naturally picked up the King’s Pie slice he had personally selected.

But as he settled back into his seat, his mind spun unexpectedly. It was as if he saw the narrow glass window once again, and the image of the dark-red-haired man who had gouged out his own eyes intruded upon his thoughts.

Chapter 369 - 369 King? No, Emperor!

King? No, Emperor!

Compared to his previous nightmare, Lumian could now “see” him more clearly. The dark-red-haired man behind the narrow glass window bore a striking resemblance to Count Poufer.

It was identical to Lumian Lee from Cordu Village, not the current Ciel Dubois!

When the dark-red-haired man with Lumian’s face gouged out the bloody eyeball, Lumian’s eyes ached, and his vision darkened.

Simultaneously, wild laughter echoed in his ears, infecting him to the point where he wanted to release his frustration, unleash violence, and satisfy his bloodlust.

Suddenly, his right palm heated up, and pure madness surged into his mind.

Out of nowhere, frustration, violence, and bloodthirst surged out of him as the maniacal laughter instantly ended.

Lumian’s vision returned to normal, and he saw Novelist Anori sitting across from him, with Count Poufer beside him.

They grinned as they observed the other participants selecting slices of King’s Pie, completely unaware of the unusual changes happening to Lumian.

Lumian counted the King’s Pie slices that had vanished and glanced at Laurent, who was engrossed in his choice. He realized that only a few seconds had elapsed, but it felt like an eternity.

Drawing upon his Alms Monk abilities, he resisted the emotional turmoil stirred by the Blood Emperor's presence. He faintly perceived a peculiar, insane, bloody, and ruthless mental impression lingering in the void above him.

The desire to infiltrate Lumian's body, sending shivers down his spine, remained suppressed by Alista Tudor's hidden aura; it dared not descend. Instead, it circled above the living room, akin to vultures eager to feast on carcasses but cautious of nearby predators.

None of the participants in the King's Pie game detected the existence of such a manic spirit glaring fiercely at them from above. They giggled and selected their slices of King's Pie.

Come, dance with the Blood Emperor! Let's see who's crazier, you or Alista Tudor! Lumian scoffed inwardly, his emotions in turmoil.

Of course, he understood that his Blood Emperor aura was a mere facade. If the spirit were to forcefully enter his body, he wouldn't have the power to resist it. All he could do was hope that Mr. Fool's seal would activate and yield some effect.

However, judging by appearances, the frenzied and cruel spirit lacked any rationality. It operated solely on instinct and harbored an innate fear.

Lumian took a moment to collect himself. While observing Elros and the others choose their King's Pie slices and sensing the frenzied spirit's erratic movements, he contemplated the corresponding dilemma.

This appears to be the core of the Sauron family's King's Pie game…

Poufer employs his bloodline and a simplified ritual to summon the lingering spirit of his ancestor, allowing it to inhabit the person who consumes the symbol and becomes the king…

If a frenzied and bloodthirsty spirit were to truly take control of my body and corrode my mind, I might lose my sanity instantly. It's nearly impossible for ordinary individuals to resist such a force. What does Count Poufer rely on to maintain his composure? At the very

least, he seems normal and has become king countless times…

No wonder Termiboros insisted I switch slices last time. If I were to lose control, He wouldn't fare any better…

Son of a sow! Why didn't you warn me today? Did you choose to remain silent because you knew I possessed the Blood Emperor's aura and wouldn't succumb to this insane mental invasion?

Could it be that the Sauron family has a special method for preserving the spirit of a high-ranking individual across generations? Or could Vermonda Sauron actually still be alive? Or perhaps the Beyonder trait he left behind has become too corrupted? Is the Sauron family attempting to gradually eradicate it using this method? But it's been two to three hundred years!

Hmm, this crazy spirit continues to hover above my head without descending… Will it eventually retreat, change its target, or trigger other alterations?

Lumian remained on high alert, keeping a constant watch on the frenzied spirit lingering in the air.

If it displayed any signs of forcefully invading through the Blood Emperor's aura or causing other unfavorable developments, Lumian would opt to "teleport" away.

Anori, Mullen, Iraeta, and the others each selected their King's Pie slices, leaving only the one reserved for Vermonda Sauron on the plate.

Count Poufer surveyed the surroundings with a grin and declared, "Everyone, let's dig in. The one who finds that gold coin will be the king for today."

With that, he elegantly sampled a portion of the King's Pie in his hand, then took a few more bites. His countenance gradually shifted from one of confidence to one of blank panic.

There was no gold coin!

Count Poufer stared at the other participants in disbelief, his

assurance of control crumbling.

In that moment, a single thought consumed his mind:

No, this can't be! I'm the one who most closely resembles my ancestor!

His eyes fixed on Elros, the sole guest possessing the Sauron family's bloodline.

Though Elros was perplexed by her cousin's frantic and intense gaze, she still took a few bites of her King's Pie slice.

Yet, still, there was no gold coin to be found.

Count Poufer's confusion deepened. His gaze darted around, his mind racing with conjectures.

Could there be an illegitimate son of a family member here?

No, even if there were, I bear the closest resemblance to the ancestor!

Could a high-ranking member of the Hunter pathway be present?

Impossible!

Or perhaps someone here has been tainted in the underground world?

Lumian noticed Count Poufer's distressed head-scratching, and most of the game participants had sampled their King's Pie slices. He gradually lifted his right hand and took a bite. nove(l)bi(n.)com

As anticipated, his teeth encountered a solid metallic object.

He spat out the item onto his left palm. It was, without a doubt, a 10-verl d'or gold coin.

Novelist Anori let out a chuckle.

"Ah, a new king at last. It being always Poufer tires me out. He was getting rather dull with his pranks."

Lumian picked up the gold coin and cast a cold glance at Anori.

“Who gave you permission to speak?”

Anori’s body quivered, and he instinctively clamped his mouth shut.

Lumian struggled to maintain control over the influence of the Blood Emperor’s aura. He sensed the frenzied spirit above him spiraling faster and faster, as if growing more impatient and savage.

He surveyed the surroundings leisurely and offered a smile.

“From this moment forward, I am your King. Or would you prefer to address me as Emperor?”

For some inexplicable reason, all the participants, including Count Poufer and Miss Elros, experienced a stirring in their hearts, as if they were compelled to heed Lumian’s commands.

Of course, it was merely a pulsing sensation, induced by the combined impact of his words and aura.

Among them, Poet Iraeta, who had recently entered into a sponsorship agreement with Ciel Dubois, rose nonchalantly, pressed his hand to his chest, and bowed.

“Indeed, Your Majesty!”

The others followed suit, either embracing the spirit of the game or yielding to the pulsing sensations in their hearts. They stood and offered their bows in their own unique ways.

“Indeed, Your Majesty.”

Lumian’s lips curled into a satisfied smile as he signaled for everyone to retake their seats.

Then, he turned his gaze towards Count Poufer and raised his chin slightly.

“I command you to present 30,000 verl d’or worth of gold.”

Count Poufer was taken aback, a whirlwind of complex emotions surging within him.

This was the first time he had been subjected to the King's Pie commands.

He had an urge to respond with a jest, but he remembered the gravity of the consequences if he disobeyed the king's orders during this mystical game. He would meet a dreadful fate.

Count Poufer clenched his teeth and rose from his seat.

"Indeed, Your Majesty."

Exiting the living room, he ascended to a floor of the castle's main building and retrieved five hefty gold bars from a secure vault.

For him, parting with 30,000 verl d'or wasn't a significant loss.

Seeing Count Poufer offering him gold bars totaling 30,000 verl d'or, Lumian couldn't help but feel a pang of regret.

Had he known that his orders would be followed to the letter, he might have demanded even more!

The dilemma now lies in how to discreetly make off with the gold later. In normal circumstances, even if I accepted 30,000 verl d'or in person, I would have to privately return it. Failing to do so could offend Count Poufer… Moreover, I need to figure out how to explain to Gardner Martin that I had become king while remaining unaffected. Lumian pondered as he tucked away the five gold bars.

Then, he turned to Novelist Anori.

"Your mission is to bestow a kiss upon someone here. Your target is…"

As Anori eagerly eyed the beautiful women present, Lumian pointed towards Poet Iraeta, who had just taken a puff from his pipe.

"Our poet."

A momentary silence hung in the air, followed by a whistle from one of the guests, and then the others joined in.

Reluctantly, Anori stood up and muttered, “I really don’t want to kiss that guy with bad breath. I could accept it if it were Mullen…”

Despite his reservations, he complied, giving Iraeta a gentle kiss on the lips.

Iraeta took it in stride, chuckling, and remarked, “I can sense your discomfort, Anori. Pull yourself together. Don’t act like a naive country bumpkin.”

Lumian observed with an impassive expression, his attention primarily drawn to the swirling madness.

Though it refrained from attempting to invade anyone’s body, the influence of the madness made everyone slightly restless, their emotions displaying signs of instability.

Upon hearing Iraeta’s teasing, Anori’s countenance turned icy, as if he contemplated picking up a table knife and stabbing him.

However, he ultimately restrained himself.

Lumian suspected that as the game unfolded, the participants would grow increasingly agitated, irritable, and prone to bloodlust while the madness continued to linger.

At that very moment, a piercing, terrified scream echoed from somewhere within the castle.

Chapter 370 - 370 Sending Off

Sending Off

A chilling scream, filled with terror, reverberated through the living room, causing the hearts of every guest to race with fear.

Painter Mullen was very sensitive to this. His pale-white complexion exchanged a concerned look with Count Poufer.

“What happened?”

Count Poufer furrowed his brow, puzzled by the sudden disturbance.

Upon hearing Mullen’s question, he snapped back to attention and casually reassured everyone,

“It seems there may have been an accident. I’ll have a servant find out the details. Don’t worry, it won’t disrupt our gathering. What could possibly go wrong?”

With that, Count Poufer signaled to his valet, positioned discreetly in a corner of the living room, to investigate the source of the scream.

Then, he addressed the assembled guests, saying, “Please, let’s continue.”

As he spoke, the Sauron family member directed his gaze towards Lumian.

Ever since presenting the gold bars, he had been closely watching Emperor Lumian, analyzing every subtle movement and expression. He was determined to unravel the mystery of how Lumian had chosen the King’s Pie slice with the gold coin and not him. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian fought to keep his composure in the face of the madness that

seemed to consume him and turned his gaze towards Painter Mullen.

“Create a piece of art using your buttocks.”

In his role as Cordu’s Prankster King, Lumian had an array of tasks in his arsenal to assign to each participant in the game, ensuring that none of them would forget their missions.

Yet, Lumian’s main concern wasn’t the playful antics but the malevolent presence that loomed over the sofas.

This sinister entity refused to dissipate, even after failing to infiltrate Lumian. It hovered in the air, exuding an impatient, bloodthirsty, and irritable aura.

Lumian suspected a connection between the earlier scream and this ominous mental vortex.

The handsome yet pallid and weary painter, Mullen, stood in bewildered silence, grappling with this bizarre request. Painting with one’s buttocks was entirely uncharted territory.

Novelist Anori and the others, having readily accepted their own missions, not only cheered with enthusiasm but also summoned the servants to bring paint and drawing paper. They even “assisted” Mullen by loosening his belt.

With no escape, Mullen reluctantly covered his posterior with paint and made a few awkward imprints on the drawing paper. The result resembled a child’s crude doodle.

Observing this spectacle, Novelist Anori was struck by an idea.

“Why don’t we frame it and send it to art critics? Let’s see their reaction to such a unique creation.”

“The painting’s signature is the word ‘The Emperor.’ For the title… Right, Mullen, any suggestions?”

Mullen, avoiding the crowd, cleaned himself up and contemplated for a moment before responding, “Let’s call it ‘Café.’”

Curious, Cornell, the editor-in-chief of Le Petit Trierien, asked, “What does it signify?”

Mullen shook his head as he discarded the paint-stained handkerchief and soft paper, pulling up his pants. “It doesn’t signify anything. This painting was meaningless from the start.”

As they discussed, Count Poufer’s valet returned to the living room and whispered something into the host’s ear.

Influenced by the unsettling aura of the Blood Emperor’s madness, Lumian struggled to make out the words despite his best efforts, catching only fragments.

“Lost… harm… danger…”

Count Poufer’s expression darkened, a hint of seriousness creeping in.

He nodded subtly, signaling for his valet to return to his previous position, maintaining an air of nonchalance.

Observing Count Poufer’s reaction, Lumian racked his brain, searching for a way to dispel the malevolent spirit.

I can’t wait for everyone to complete their missions, can I? No, there’s one crucial step missing. At the end of the previous King’s Pie game, Count Poufer had consumed the King’s Pie slice meant for Vermonda Sauron…

With this thought in mind, Lumian fixed his gaze on the untouched offering that remained on the plate. Leaning forward, he extended his right hand and claimed it.

Count Poufer had no doubts about this.

From his perspective, it would be suspicious if Lumian didn’t retrieve the offering!

Almost simultaneously, the frenzied entity, radiating negativity, reacted vehemently, positioning itself directly above Lumian’s head.

It emitted waves of negative emotions, as though cursing the

audacious human who dared to partake in its offering.

Lumian sensed anger, hatred, and an insatiable desire to rend his soul asunder.

Yet, he remained unfazed and even smiled.

This reaction confirmed that he had made the correct choice!

Had the agitated spirit not responded so vehemently to his appropriation of the offering, Lumian would have remained clueless about how to banish it from lingering above everyone's heads.

This wasn't a guarantee of success, and it might entail danger, but it was a preferable alternative to the participants of the King's Pie game growing increasingly agitated and bloodthirsty, ultimately turning on each other.

When the moment was right, Lumian could still "teleport" away. As for the others, barring Count Poufer, their chances of survival were slim.

Naturally, he couldn't predict whether there would be unforeseen changes or new threats after consuming the offering, but in this dire situation, it was better than nothing.

For the participants in the King's Pie game, Lumian's intervention was their only hope. Without his actions, their demise was certain. With them, there was a fighting chance.

Lumian raised the sacrificial King's Pie to his lips and took a substantial bite.

The frenzied spirit grew even angrier and more violent.

It no longer hovered above the others but remained directly above Lumian's head. At times, it seemed poised to descend upon him, while at others, it attempted to tear into its target. However, it was thwarted by Alista Tudor's aura, instinctively holding back from further aggression.

Another scream resounded.

It came from somewhere in Red Swan Castle—originating from a different person than the previous one.

A moment ago, it had been a man, but now, it was a woman.

Count Poufer's eyelids twitched, and he smiled.

"It seems the servant responsible for cleaning up the earlier mishap must have stumbled upon some rather terrifying sights."

Literary critic Ernst Young and the other guests readily accepted this explanation.

As guests, they lacked the authority to pry into the castle's internal affairs. Moreover, they had gradually become engrossed in the King's Pie game, growing a tad fanatical, impatient, and preoccupied, diverting their focus away from other occurrences within the castle.

Lumian relished the King's Pie offering, savoring the intangible anger and curse like a melodious symphony playing in his ears.

Compared to the horrifying ravings he endured whenever he received a boon, this was akin to the beautiful performance of an orchestra.

Unable to vocalize itself and hesitant to invade his body, the frenzied spirit could only indirectly influence his emotions and mental state.

During this process, Lumian turned his attention to assigning missions to various individuals, noting that the participants were fully immersed in the game, their gazes fixed on it.

Periodically, another scream would punctuate the air, sending shivers down the spine.

Finally, Lumian finished the offering, and the frenzied spirit hovering above him abruptly halted.

In the next instant, it vanished mysteriously, dissipating into thin air.

While the participants of the King's Pie game still appeared fanatical, their irritability and agitation had considerably waned.

Lumian let out a quiet sigh of relief and turned to Elros, seated beside him.

“Let’s see you do the Twist. If you’re not sure how, ask someone to show you.”

In contrast to the risqué Can-can dance, which was already laden with suggestive undertones, the Twist seemed relatively innocent as long as it wasn’t a male-female dance. However, it had a comical appearance.

Elros complied, rising from her seat and attempting the Twist with a hint of awkwardness.

Amidst the laughter of those present, Lumian continued to assign missions to the remaining participants.

After all the participants had completed their assigned missions, Lumian straightened up and assumed an air of superiority as he delivered his final instruction.

“Last mission:

“Keep everything that happened today a secret. You must not divulge anything about today’s game to anyone.”

“Yes, Your Majesty!” Elros and Laurent, still caught up in the game’s ambiance, responded in unison, their expressions displaying utmost respect.

This compliance was partly due to the lingering presence of the Blood Emperor’s aura that still clung to Lumian.

Observing the instinctive obedience of each participant, Lumian let out a contented sigh and offered a warm smile.

“That concludes today’s game.”

Count Poufer rose from his seat and gestured with a smile.

“Let’s proceed to the dining room.”

As they moved from the living room to the dining room, they had to pass through the castle's main hall. Lumian, who had returned to his usual self, noticed out of the corner of his eye that a few valets and maids were diligently at work near the corridor.

They were using mops to clean up a reddish puddle.

Red… Lumian's eyelids twitched as he swiftly averted his gaze.

Following dinner, the guests bid their farewells one by one. Lumian sought out Count Poufer and retrieved the five heavy gold bars with a smile.

Count Poufer shook his head.

"Since I proposed the game, I must adhere to its rules. Do you think so little of me, believing I can't do without the 30,000 verl d'or?"

"It's simply a gesture of courtesy," Lumian responded with a smile. He didn't insist and smoothly returned the gold bars to his pocket.

According to their arrangement, Lumian arranged for the poet, Iraeta, to join him in his four-wheeled, four-seater carriage. Using the pretext of having limited funds on hand, he handed Iraeta only 3,000 verl d'or.

Iraeta didn't seem to mind at all. He stashed away the banknotes and engaged in a conversation about his artistic preferences.

As the carriage began its journey, Lumian inquired, "Which district are you heading to?"

"Just take me to the Sacred Heart Cloister," Iraeta replied with a grin. "I'm meeting a friend there. Sponsored poets always find friends to share a drink with."

Sacred Heart Cloister… Lumian nodded slightly and instructed the carriage driver accordingly.

Before long, the carriage arrived at the picturesque cloister. Even in the darkness of night, the golden fa?ade of the building reflected the crimson moonlight, creating a surreal and dreamlike atmosphere.

After watching Iraeta enter the cloister, Lumian directed the carriage driver to head back to Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

As the carriage rattled along, leaving behind the woods and fertile fields,

Lumian suddenly heard the resonant voice of Termiboros.

“A dangerous creature is tailing you; it has been since Red Swan Castle. It brims with hostility and is preparing to strike.”

Dangerous creature… Lumian narrowed his eyes, calmly opened the carriage door, and effortlessly leaped out.

Facing the carriage driver, he spoke with the remaining authority of an Emperor, “Wait for me in the nearby town.”

The carriage driver hesitated for a moment before complying with the order.

As Lumian watched the carriage and its driver disappear into the distance, he calmly retrieved the Flog boxing gloves from his briefcase and methodically donned the iron-black gloves.

The nearby forest seemed to darken, and the river that flowed through it took on an eerie blood-red hue.

Chapter 371 - 371 Wax Statue

371 Wax Statue

A figure emerged slowly from the blood-stained river.

Lumian's mind seemed to freeze momentarily for some inexplicable reason as he observed the figure crawling ashore. Instead of an immediate attack, he watched the figure climb out of the water.

The unfamiliar man's face bore an eerie stiffness, and his clothes clung to him from being soaked in water. The latter seemed to merge with his flesh.

It was a wax statue, a wax statue that came to life!

Crimson blood seeped from the waxen figure, mixing with the river's flow before smashing against the wild grass along the bank.

The wax statue's light-blue eyes shifted slightly within their white sockets, casting a vague reflection of Lumian. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Meeting that gaze left Lumian feeling overwhelmed, unable to resist mentally or physically. Instinctual fear surged within him, drowning out all other emotions.

Suddenly, Lumian's survival instincts kicked in, fully erupting and overpowering all other emotions and states.

Lumian's vision was restored.

The wax statue, with its cold, unyielding eyes, was now less than a meter away. Its pale-white hand, dripping with blood, extended its fingers like deadly blades, thrusting toward him.

Lumian had no time to react. He raised his right palm to shield his

face, and there was a resounding impact as the wax statue's razor-sharp finger collided with his iron-black Flog boxing glove, adorned with short thorns.

Where the boxing glove fell short, the wax statue's finger pierced Lumian's palm, leaving a conspicuous wound on his face.

Had he not shaken off the initial intimidation, the blow might have punctured his skull and reached his brain.

The familiar searing pain jolted Lumian awake. Clenching his left hand, he conjured a blazing crimson flame and launched a powerful punch at the wax statue's face from the side.

Simultaneously, with a smile, he tightened his right palm, using his own flesh and blood to hinder the wax statue's right hand, preventing it from evading his fiery strike.

Bang!

The Flog boxing gloves knocked the wax statue's head askew, and the iron-black thorns on their surface etched exaggerated scratches onto its unyielding face, the wounds shifting from deep to superficial.

Despite the vivid flow of bright red blood, there was no flesh-like texture to the injuries, only layers of wax that seemed to melt under an invisible fire.

In response, blood-colored capillaries extended from the wax statue's light-blue eyes, exuding an intense, bloodthirsty desire that lent it an eerie vitality, making it resemble the living.

Lumian had chosen the Flog boxing gloves for its potency, a mystical weapon of utmost power, especially against the creature that Termiboros had labeled as dangerous. He couldn't afford to be careless. However, he never expected his enemy to be a wax statue rather than a living being.

It rendered the Flog's ability to evoke specific desires or emotions ineffective; it could only serve as a defensive tool.

If not for the bizarre intimidation, Lumian would have discarded his

boxing gloves and opted for the Decency brooch. Now, with his adversary before him, he had no choice but to stick with the Flog gloves, focusing instead on Fire Infusion.

To his astonishment, his punch had ignited the wax statue's bloodlust, suggesting that the entity retained a degree of life, along with faint emotions and desires of its own.

"Good to see you're still kicking!" Lumian's grin widened.

He pulled back his right palm, gritting his teeth through the pain, and his fiery fist realigned the wax statue's head.

The wax statue, its bloodthirsty desires now heightened, showed no inclination to increase the distance between them. It resumed its intimidating tactics, instinctively and desperately engaging in close combat with Lumian.

This played perfectly into Lumian's strategy. His iron-black boxing gloves, ablaze with crimson flames, consistently clashed with the wax statue's limbs, fists, shoulders, torso, and head in rapid, precise succession.

Each punch lacked brute force; what Lumian needed was a relentless onslaught.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bang! Bang! Bang! Lumian's fists, adorned with the Flog gloves, trailed crimson flames, effectively suppressing the agile and skilled wax statue to the point where it couldn't employ any other abilities.

His feet executed a fluid dance of stepping forward and raising knees to fend off the attacks from below.

Within a mere ten to twenty seconds, the wax statue abruptly ceased its movements, and an ethereal explosion emanated from its form.

The capillaries within its eyes ruptured, staining the once light-blue hue a vivid crimson. Cracks crisscrossed its head, connecting with the injuries inflicted by the Flog gloves.

Desire Detonation!

Lumian's relentless assault had triggered the Desire Detonation effect of the Flog boxing gloves.

In response, Lumian withdrew his fists and watched in silence as the wax statue's blood-red eyes revealed signs of pain.

Two crimson teardrops slowly welled up at the corners of its eyes, streaming down its waxy cheeks.

The wax statue opened its mouth as if attempting to speak, yet no sound escaped.

Rumble!

A muffled explosion emanated from within its body, and the exaggerated wounds extended across its form.

Crimson flames erupted from these regions, engulfing the wax statue entirely.

Fire Infusion!

Amidst the fierce inferno, the wax statue rapidly softened, its body dripping with blood-stained, viscous droplets.

Thud!

It collapsed to the ground.

What kind of monster is this? Lumian gazed at the fallen creature for more than ten seconds, his Hunter's instincts telling him that this prey couldn't possess Beyonder characteristics.

During this moment, he retrieved his briefcase and carefully stowed away the Flog boxing gloves.

Without hesitation, Lumian turned and exited the forest.

Behind him, crimson flames surged, consuming his dripping blood.

Within the blazing inferno, the wax statue had melted beyond recognition. Lumian's figure gradually faded, disappearing not far

from the scene.

Spirit world traversal!

To evade the attention of evil gods and the dangerous entities summoned by the Flog boxing gloves, Lumian shifted his position, effectively “teleporting” to a nearby town.

It was a location he had scouted in advance, with precise coordinates within the spirit world.

After several dozen seconds, the forest path was suddenly replaced by a desolate wilderness, with only a few flickering flames remaining.

The weeds gradually flourished, and the figure of a person in a white robe materialized swiftly.

This figure donned a light-colored veil, and her abdomen was notably swollen. An unmistakable maternal aura enveloped her form. It was Lady Moon of the Nightstalkers.

Lady Moon directed her gaze towards the entirely melted, blood-stained wax statue, silently observing the dance of crimson flames.

After more than ten seconds of contemplation, the woman and the desolate wilderness vanished.

…

In a room within the main building of Red Swan Castle,Count Poufer, clad in a red shirt and sleek black trousers, occupied a cluttered desk. His icy stare remained fixed upon the wax statue’s head placed before him.

The head bore an uncanny resemblance to a living being, with light-blue eyes and jet-black hair.

As the silence lingered, Count Poufer couldn’t conceal a hint of restlessness. Occasionally, he tugged at his collar, shifted in his chair, and even unbuttoned the top of his shirt, as if the air had grown unnaturally thin, impeding his breathing.

As time ticked by, the wax statue's head suddenly emitted an ominous cracking sound.

It shattered into numerous pieces, each one grotesquely melted.

Poufer shot to his feet in shock, his pupils dilating in disbelief.

Tiny blood vessels protruded from his eyes, ruptured, and dyed them a vivid shade of red.

It was killed? Poufer murmured to himself, his astonishment mingling with suspicion.

Ciel Dubois was even more mysterious and formidable than he had initially thought!

Even if he wasn't, the hidden faction operating behind him was!

Count Poufer paced back and forth with a solemn expression.

…

After Lumian "teleported" to the town ahead, he exercised caution, remaining concealed in the shadows while meticulously calculating the time.

Only when he felt that a Hunter could potentially reach his location from the forest by running did he cautiously make his way into the town. He located the carriage driver and arranged for his return to 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

In a room adorned with bookshelves, Lumian fixed his gaze upon Gardner Martin, who held a cigar in his hand. Lumian spoke frankly, "I was attacked."

There was no way to hide the truth from the Boss.

"Huh?" Gardner Martin responded in his distinctive nasal tone.

Lumian proceeded to recount the events, detailing how he had chosen the King's Pie slice after Count Poufer and subsequently felt a frenzied spirit attempting to invade him. He described how he had

utilized Fire Infusion to dismantle and melt the wax statue, displaying the wounds on his hands and face.

What Lumian chose not to reveal was that he had discerned why the frenzied consciousness hadn't fully occupied his body and that he had used the Flog boxing gloves. He attributed the former to an unknown cause.

Gardner Martin smoked his cigar, listening quietly, unsurprised that Lumian's mind had remained incorrupt.

Had he displayed any hint of astonishment or suspicion, Lumian would have swiftly "invited" Mr. K to eliminate the Iron and Blood Cross Order's stronghold.

With a cigar in hand, Gardner Martin smiled and remarked, "It appears that the official members of our Iron and Blood Cross Order are more favored by Poufer's ancestor's spirit than Poufer himself. However, we also instill fear in it."

Does this refer to Beyonders who have succumbed to the peculiar corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché? The frenzied consciousness won't invade the other formal members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, even in the absence of the Blood Emperor's aura? I wonder how true this is. Why don't you give it a try, Boss? Lumian suddenly felt the urge to goad Gardner Martin into playing King's Pie with Count Poufer.

"Now, I've confirmed something," Gardner Martin's expression grew serious. "The ancestor of the Sauron family, Vermonda Sauron, is not truly deceased. He exists in a manner beyond our current comprehension."

Chapter 372 - 372 Primary Mission

372 Primary Mission

Lumian couldn't quite understand how Gardner Martin could be so certain that Vermonda Sauron wasn't dead. Still, it seemed that the other party didn't intend to explain, so he could only give up on asking.

He was concerned about one thing:

"Does that mean my mission is over?"

Clearly, combined with Count Poufer's fondness for creating wax statue heads for friends he knew and the fact that a wax statue had attacked him, Lumian believed that he was now under suspicion by the other party. It would be very dangerous to interact with him again.

Gardner Martin shook his head slowly.

"No, you have to continue."

Holding the cigar, he stood up and paced towards the floor-to-ceiling windows.

"The fact that you became the king after Poufer will undoubtedly make him suspicious of your origins, but he will be more eager to find out the real reason for that incident. The subsequent wax statue attack was mainly attributed to this.

"Therefore, he will still invite you over to test you in different ways and extract your hidden secrets. For us, this is an opportunity to confirm the true state of Vermonda and the Sauron family's

ancestors.

“And through this, we can grasp the reason for the gradual decline of this once exceptionally powerful family. This is of great significance to us, who are also mainly from the Hunter pathway. It is our primary mission now.

“To put it simply, the Sauron family is like Red Swan Castle. They’ve been in disrepair for a long time, but they hide many secrets. They have guards that can deter spying. What we need to do is figure out the castle’s defense flaws and confirm if those secrets pose a fatal threat to us. Then, we can find an opportunity to break through the guards, bypass the traps, and take the treasure.

“Don’t worry, I’ll covertly provide protection for Poufer’s future invitations. The risk you’ll take won’t be significant.”

Lumian pondered for a moment and said, “Commanding Officer, you mentioned before that our primary mission is to find the true entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier.”

How could the primary mission change so easily?

Gardner Martin took a puff of his cigar and smiled.

“These two matters are connected to a certain extent and serve the same purpose, but you don’t need to know for the time being.”

What’s their motive? In other words, the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s current focus is on exploring the underground, finding the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier, investigating the Sauron family’s decline over the past 200 to 300 years, and securing something precious from them? According to Mr. K, one reason for the Sauron family’s decline is their descent into madness and the loss of many important members over time. Gardner Martin and I are mainly responsible for the Sauron family aspect. Are the other members, including Supervisor Olson, exploring the underground? Lumian had a clearer understanding of the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s recent plans.

This was also his primary mission.

Of course, he only knew what to do and didn’t understand why.

“Yes, Commanding Officer,” Lumian agreed without further ado.

He had a hunch that this would be an opportunity for him to digest the Pyromaniac potion and advance further on the Hunter pathway.

According to Madam Magician, the Sauron family was once a powerful faction with a Hunter angel.

Gardner Martin didn’t inquire about how much gold Poufer had offered to the “king,” hinting that Lumian could leave and await the Count’s future invitation.

Passing through the renovated hall, Lumian spotted Faustino, the butler, who was also an official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, leading a black-cloaked figure in.

The man was of average height, barely 1.75 meters tall. His attire was loose, and he was tightly wrapped, obscuring his exact appearance and physique.

Lumian could only determine that it was a man based on his walking posture, height, and strides.

Faustino nodded at Lumian as a greeting before leading the mysterious man through the hall and into Gardner Martin’s study.

Who could it be? What brings him here so late at night for a discussion? Lumian averted his gaze, his thoughts racing as he left 11 Rue des Fontaines.

…

In the market district, Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

Upon reaching the second floor, Lumian suddenly gave weight to his pace, producing thumping sounds.

He leisurely returned to Room 207, ignited the carbide lamp, turned around in the armchair, and sat down. He smiled at the unlatched door.

After 20 to 30 seconds, soft footsteps echoed from Room 201.

The footsteps hesitated before showing determination. Soon, they arrived outside Room 207 and gently knocked on the door.

“Please come in,” Lumian said, raising his chin slightly.

As expected, it was Laurent. He wore a linen shirt and black pants, completely different from whenever he headed out.

After closing the door, Laurent looked at Lumian and said, “Monsieur Dubois, I wish to borrow 500 verl d’or from you.”

Lumian was taken aback, not expecting this development.

He thought the man was here to plead with him not to expose his true identity. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Unexpectedly, he came to borrow money!

“Why 500 verl d’or?” Lumian’s expression remained unchanged.

Laurent’s voice deepened as he said, “I’m about to become one of the deputy editors-in-chief of Le Petit Trierien. Although I’ll be the most junior-ranking editor, I can’t continue living here. I have to invite my colleagues to gatherings at home regularly to build a good relationship with them.

“Therefore, I wish to borrow 500 verl d’or to rent a good apartment in Quartier de l’Observatoire or Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. I want to bring my mother there and use the time to teach her how to host a small banquet.

“Once I receive my salary, I’ll repay the debt in installments. How much do you think the interest rate should be?”

This is not only borrowing money to secure his job, but also taking the initiative to give me leverage and some benefits so that I won’t ruin his plans… Lumian thought a little higher of Laurent and nodded thoughtfully.

“I don’t need interest. You’ll definitely come into contact with some interesting news, information, and advertisements at Le Petit Trierien. I hope you can organize them regularly and give me a

copy."

As Lumian spoke, he took out his wallet and counted five banknotes worth 100 verl d'or.

"Just pay it back this year."

Laurent heaved a sigh of relief and said, "No problem."

After watching the speculator write the IOU and leave Room 207, Lumian took out the five heavy gold bars from Count Poufer's pocket and tossed them in his hand.

With this unexpected windfall, he had amassed 75,000 verl d'or worth of gold. At the same time, he had 2,000 verl d'or that hadn't been exchanged for gold and the remaining 4,000 verl d'or funds for his activities.

It won't be long before I complete the Armored Shadow's contract and summon it again… Lumian fiddled with the gold bars for a while before leaving the briefcase containing the Flog boxing gloves on the armchair. He washed up and went to bed, awaiting the inevitable nightmare.

…

In his daze, Lumian once again caught sight of Red Swan Castle, its beige outer walls stained with aged blood.

In a daze, he walked in and arrived at the large living room where he had played King's Pie.

Miss Elros, Painter Mullen, Le Petit Trierien's editor-in-chief, Cornell, and the other guests who often attended Count Poufer's banquet sat on the sofa, as if awaiting Lumian's arrival.

Laurent and the other guests' temporary female companions were absent.

This made the scene seem like another salon or a past one.

As Lumian approached the sofa, Count Poufer and the others stood

up and greeted him respectfully.

“Good afternoon, Your Royal Majesty,” they greeted in unison.

Instinctively, Lumian glanced at them coldly.

“Oh?”

Count Poufer and the others were taken aback for a moment.

“Your Imperial Majesty!”

Lumian nodded slightly and settled into an armchair, watching as the guests settled around him.

They chatted nonchalantly, their topics diverse and vague.

Suddenly, Novelist Anori raised his right hand and scratched his face.

With a tearing sound, he ripped off a large piece of skin, revealing squirming flesh and blackened tubes.

Almost simultaneously, Painter Mullen and the others either stabbed themselves in the heart or tore at their companions’ necks.

In an instant, the entire living room turned abnormally bloody, and there was a terrifying scene everywhere.

Lumian’s thoughts raced as his vision underwent an immediate transformation.

In another hall of the castle, surrounded by countless lit white candles was a coffin.

The coffin was made of bronze and its surface was rusted. It was unknown how long it had been there.

Lumian’s heart swelled with sorrow and helplessness, as if he had lost his kin and support. He slowly extended his right hand, attempting to caress the rusty bronze coffin.

At that moment, the coffin’s lid creaked open, revealing a deep crack.

Suddenly, a palm with dark-red, nearly-black blood vessels extended, holding an extremely withered heart with some blood seeping out.

The heart was still gently and indiscernibly contracting and expanding.

Upon seeing the withered heart, Lumian's thoughts raced chaotically, tainted with a certain madness.

His right palm felt slightly warm, and he suddenly woke up from his dream.

He wasn't surprised or flustered by the nightmare. As he calmed his racing heart, he recalled the details of the nightmare.

Gradually, Lumian frowned.

In the first scene, most of the King's Pie game participants eventually went crazy. They either mutilated themselves or others, but there were three exceptions. Even when the scene changed, they were still normal.

One was Lumian himself, and the other was Count Poufer.

There was another one Lumian hadn't expected: Miss Elros!

She's not as reserved and obedient as she appears. She has her own secrets… Lumian smiled silently.

As for what the bronze coffin, dead body, and withered heart represented in the second scene, he couldn't decipher them at all. He could only guess that it might be related to the Sauron family's secret.

Just like the last time, Lumian had several nightmares that night, but the clarity and completeness of his dreams gradually decreased.

Just before dawn, the nightmare was completely gone.

After waking up, Lumian quickly wrote a letter and sent it to Madam Magician while his memories still remained fresh.

Chapter 373 - 373 Summoning the Armored Shadow Again

373 Summoning the Armored Shadow Again

After fifteen minutes, Madam Magician replied with a brief letter:

Lumian's temples throbbed at Madam Magician's response. She had conveyed a lot, but the crucial details remained elusive. While he understood each word individually, their combined meaning eluded him.

What does the Iron and Blood Cross Order actually possess and what does it claim?

Lumian massaged his temples and continued reading.

"This situation presents both danger and opportunity for you. Investigating the truth behind the Sauron family's downfall is a mission I eagerly anticipate. Mr. Fool assigned this long-term mission to our Tarot Club, much like the Two of Cups interacting with the Demoness Sect to confirm the Primordial Demoness's condition. There's no need to rush. Take your time. Even if it takes years to complete."

"…" Lumian was taken aback.

He had expected Franca's Major Arcana, Madam Judgment, to agree to her contact with the Demoness Sect. But what kind of terrifying mission was it to ascertain the Primordial Demoness's condition?

That was a true deity!

Based on Lumian's recent knowledge from various sources, not only was direct observation of deities impossible, but attempting to

understand Their specific situation was exceedingly perilous.

As for the evil gods like the one known as Inevitability, mere awareness of Their existence equated to corruption.

A long-term mission… a task that could only be completed once Franca achieved demigod status? Lumian thoughtfully read the last sentence of Madam Magician's reply.

"Focus on this matter. If you need help or find yourself in a bind, contact me in advance. As for the Aurora Order, refrain from participating in other missions. Concentrate on the Iron and Blood Cross Order. I believe Mr. K will understand."

Madam Magician had previously tasked me with infiltrating the Aurora Order and slowly gaining Mr. K's trust, with the ultimate goal of becoming an Oracle. However, it is apparent from her tone that priorities had shifted. Now, she emphasizes giving precedence to the Iron and Blood Cross Order… Lumian discerned this as a significant signal from her reply.

Crimson flames erupted as Lumian burned the letter in his hand. He slung a satchel over his shoulder and placed the Flog boxing gloves inside. Then, he made his way to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

He located a random café and had breakfast there.

It wasn't until nearly nine o'clock that Lumian knocked on the door of Apartment 601.

Franca didn't express any annoyance at being awakened this time. She didn't appear to be asleep, wearing a troubled expression instead.

Upon seeing Lumian, she tugged at her flaxen-colored hair, which was left untied, and said, "Guess what? I've accepted a suicide mission!"

"Confirming the Primordial Demoness's condition?" Lumian chuckled.

Sensing that Franca had done so willingly, he no longer fretted about her.

“Do you want to hear the truth or a lie? For the lie, I divined it. The truth is, I just reported the recent situation to my Major Arcana card holder, and she mentioned your choice.” Lumian strolled over to the divan and sat down casually. “Where’s Jenna?”

“Ever since she received her father’s compensation, she’s been keen on instigation. Yesterday, she poached a supporting actress whose contract had expired and convinced her to switch to a theater in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. While it did boost her income significantly, I could have matched the offer if I had been informed. Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons has been quite profitable lately.”

Franca didn’t hold a grudge against Jenna because Jenna had sought her opinion beforehand and obtained her approval. She believed such instigations were beneficial. Plus, having a supporting actress leave opened up opportunities for apprentices like Jenna and the former dancers.

After recounting the matter briefly, Franca sighed and continued, “Madam Judgment only wants me to interact with the Demoness Sect. Under the condition that I control my desires and mental state, I can use their resources to enhance myself, monitor their activities, and understand their immediate plans. Confirming the Primordial Demoness’s condition can be considered once I truly attain godhood and become a saint. I can deduce certain situations through the Demoness Sect’s activities, their recent plans, and the reactions during prayers to the Primordial Demoness.”

“Aren’t you troubled by the mission?” Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Franca sighed.

“I am troubled by the mission, but what’s troubling is that I’ll remain a Demoness at Sequence 4. I won’t be able to transform back into a man.”

“You can wait until Sequence 3,” Lumian suggested with a relaxed demeanor.

“That’s true, although it would be even more challenging.” Franca

had thought it through and then asked why Lumian had suddenly reported the situation to Madam Magician.

Lumian briefly recounted his experience at Red Swan Castle from yesterday and Gardner Martin's words, omitting specific details.

Franca listened intently, contemplating for a moment before saying, "Our current missions combined involve the secrets and movements of the relevant factions within the Hunter and Demoness pathways.

"The Tarot Club appears to attach great importance to such matters…"

Lumian chuckled.

"That's the only way we'll have a chance."

Franca acknowledged his words tersely and suddenly remembered something.

"How much gold did you command Count Poufer to give you?"

"30,000," Lumian replied honestly.

Franca's eyes lit up.

"How much gold do you have now?"

"75,000. I can add another 6,000 at any time," Lumian disclosed without hesitation. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Franca's smile widened.

"Then I'll lend you 25,000 first, interest-free!

"Let's summon the Armored Shadow tonight and try to figure things out before the gathering next week."

He recalled that Franca had spent all her savings to advance to the Demoness of Pleasure.

Franca said smugly, "I received 20,000 verl d'or for assisting you in

dealing with Guillaume Bénet, and Gardner Martin has been quite generous lately. He entrusted me with managing most of the earnings from Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons and the dancers. Heh heh, Madam Judgment even provided me with 10,000 to support my activities."

Your earnings are quite impressive as well… Lumian realized that while the profits from Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons and the dancers might not match those of Salle de Bal Brise, they were undoubtedly substantial. If Franca could claim a significant portion of them, she could easily make around 20,000 per month.

He nodded and said, "Alright, we'll perform the summoning ritual at 11 tonight at the same place the other time."

Franca's joy was palpable.

"I'll arrange for someone to exchange the 25,000 gold right away."

…

Late at night, at Rist Docks, within the charred remains of a building.

Franca observed Lumian as he set up the altar and placed all the gold upon it.

Rather than staying outside the wall of spirituality, she chose to remain by her companion's side.

Lumian proceeded to light the candles one by one, letting the essential oil drip. Stepping back, he intoned, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"…"

Almost simultaneously, Franca chanted Mr. Fool's honorific name, ensuring her safety in the presence of the ritual's power.

Soon, amid the faint fog and a sense of impending danger, Lumian recited the final part of the incantation.

"I!

“In the name of the great Fool, I summon:

“The spirit that wanders the void, a combination of numerous shadows, Lumian Lee’s contracted creature.”

Within the wavering candlelight, an ethereal door adorned with enigmatic symbols materialized. From it emerged a shadowy figure clad in dark armor reminiscent of fish scales.

Just as before, each scale seemed to bear a face, each belonging to a different creature.

Those are indeed fish scales… Franca couldn’t tear her gaze away, her anticipation and anxiety

overriding the eerie ambiance that surrounded them and the evident malevolence emanating from the Armored Shadow.

Lumian locked eyes with the Armored Shadow and spoke in Hermes, “I will fulfill the contract and offer you gold valued at 100,000 verl d’or.”

To be honest, Lumian harbored some doubts about the 100,000 verl d’or worth of gold. The ever-changing exchange rates between verl d’or and gold left him uncertain whether he should prepare the amount based on the exchange rate at the time of signing the contract or the current rate. As a precaution, he had only acquired an additional 1,000 verl d’or worth of gold as a backup.

As Lumian finished his words, the gold bars, jewelry, and various items on the altar suddenly disintegrated, transforming into golden particles that flew toward the mysterious illusory door.

Most of these particles landed on the Armored Shadow, while a few passed through the open illusory door and disappeared.

Gradually, almost a fifth of the Armored Shadow’s pitch-black armor, resembling fish scales, transformed into gold. It was no longer dark and foreboding but radiated a holy and pristine aura.

Franca’s eyes widened.

Legends and terms from her original world rushed into her mind as she muttered to herself, “Could this be… the reconstruction of the golden body?”

In her memory, the golden body referred to the golden powder or gold foil applied to the surface of idol statues. Sometimes, it denoted the special form of someone with godlike status or significant achievements. The Armored Shadow now resembled a weathered statue that had been rejuvenated with a coating of golden powder.

When all the gold on the altar had vanished, Lumian sensed that the contract had been completely fulfilled.

Taking the opportunity, he asked on Franca’s behalf in Hermes, “Where do you come from?”

The Armored Shadow opened its mouth and spoke with a deep, dignified, and somewhat sinister voice.

However, Lumian couldn’t comprehend its words at all. He could only watch in confusion as the Armored Shadow returned to the illusory door.

Once the summoning ritual concluded, Lumian turned to Franca and noticed that her companion seemed lost in thought, her brows furrowed.

His heart stirred as he asked, “Did you understand the Armored Shadow’s response?”

Franca nodded slowly.

“The language he used is very similar to the language from my home world.

“He said…”

Franca paused and muttered to herself, puzzlement evident on her face,”The Blood Son of Heaven disrupted the netherworld, and the Underworld Daoist sacrificed himself to enter the river.”

Chapter 374 - 374 Preliminary Speculation

374 Preliminary Speculation

Despite Franca speaking Intisian, it left Lumian perplexed. He struggled to grasp her meaning or intentions.

Surveying the silent ruins around him, he found nothing out of the ordinary. Turning his attention back to Franca, he inquired, “Care to explain?”

Franca contemplated for a moment before responding, “The Son of Heaven is roughly equivalent to an Emperor. As for Daoist, eh—think of it as a mighty Beyonder.” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

“In essence, this Emperor, bearing the title ‘Blood,’ wrought havoc in hell, sowing chaos. As for the Daoist known as ‘Underworld,’ a powerful Beyonder, they made the ultimate sacrifice, entering a certain river to seal away this Emperor.”

The Emperor with the title of Blood… Lumian was alarmed.

“The Blood Emperor?”

Memories from the Samaritan Women’s Spring came flooding back.

In those vivid recollections, the Blood Emperor’s elusive figure burned with concealed flames, his battered armor soaked in blood. The dark waters receded within the fountain only to surge forth again, merging with the ethereal mist, transforming into a pale spring. Alista Tudor’s apparition was tugged back into the fountain’s depths by an inexplicable force. It appeared as though a fierce battle had transpired between the two entities…

With Franca's explanation, Lumian's mind began to piece together a new interpretation of the Armored Shadow's cryptic words and his encounter.

He said thoughtfully to Franca, "I suspect the 'Blood Son of Heaven' you mention is none other than the apparition of the 'Blood Emperor' Alista Tudor."

"But how did the Blood Emperor's apparition find its way to my home?" Franca didn't immediately connect it to Alista Tudor, but Lumian's deductions were beginning to make sense.

The special fish-scale armor and the Spell of Harrumph, which originated from myths and legends, made her suspect that the Armored Shadow came from back home. And now, the language basically matched, making her even more certain.

Lumian nodded, continuing, "I'll have to start with the events at the Samaritan Women's Spring, where Madame Hela and I fetched the water…"

"You went with Madame Hela?" Franca murmured, her curiosity piqued but allowing Lumian to proceed.

Lumian went on to recount the events at the Samaritan Women's Spring in detail, ensuring Franca remained focused on his narrative. He then presented his theory.

"I suspect that during the War of the Four Emperors, the Blood Emperor did not fully perish. For some extraordinary reason, He preserved a fragment of His lingering soul. During the godly war, a passage was opened between our world and your homeland, allowing a mysterious river from your world to infiltrate ours. Mr. Fool sealed it, creating the Samaritan Women's Spring.

"This river appears closely tied to the realms of death and the Underworld. The Blood Emperor's apparition, trapped in a state of death, traverses between your world, the Samaritan Women's Spring, and even the Fourth Epoch Trier.

"The Blood Emperor possesses an innate desire for resurrection, and

the first step to achieving that is to escape the river's confinement. In this process, He brought chaos to the Underworld of your homeland. The powerful Beyonder from the domains of Death and the Underworld had no choice but to make the ultimate sacrifice, immersing themselves in the mysterious river to harness its power fully and seal away the Blood Emperor's apparition."

Franca alternated between confusion and clarity. When Lumian finished sharing his theory, she responded with a mixture of surprise and suspicion, saying, "Your guess seems quite realistic and logical…"

His explanation shed light on the words of the Armored Shadow and the peculiar occurrences at the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Franca fell into a brief silence, then continued, "Back in my homeland, that elusive and mysterious river is known as the Yellow Springs."

"However, before I transmigrated, the Yellow Springs and the netherworld were nothing more than legends, unverifiable myths. There were no tales of the Blood Son of Heaven or the Underworld Daoist…

"Could it be that I was just an ordinary person who never had the opportunity to encounter such things?"

Lumian chuckled.

"Before I discovered Aurore was a Warlock, concepts like superpowers, demons, and ghosts were nonexistent."

Franca acknowledged his words, her expression gradually shifting towards excitement.

"Now that there's a passageway connecting our worlds, returning home is no longer an unattainable dream!"

Lumian, in a friendly tone, warned, "Madame Hela mentioned that the pale-white spring water is deadly to anyone who touches it."

Franca's expression froze for a moment, then she replied, "That may

be true for us now. But with the power of godhood and ascending to sainthood, we might be able to handle it."

Lumian reminded her again, "There are the figures of an angel and a true god imprisoned in the spring."

"…" Franca rolled her eyes at Lumian. "Aren't you a buzzkill! Compared to before, when we had no answers, no direction, and no hope, now there's a glimmer of hope. We know where to focus our efforts. One of the reasons Madame Hela went to retrieve the Samaritan Women's Spring might have been to confirm if it's connected to the Yellow Springs. She's truly exceptional at finding leads!"

Lumian simply shrugged, opting not to dampen Franca's newfound optimism and enthusiasm.

Franca's excitement was palpable as she paced back and forth before suddenly posing a question.

"Were you asking where the Armored Shadow came from? Why did it mention the Blood Emperor and Daoist Underworld?"

That wasn't an answer!

Could there be some hidden secret?

Lumian thought for a moment and said, "It's a shadow born after death, and some of its abilities clearly belong to the Death domain. It also has a strong urge to break free from its restraints and escape imprisonment… Given these factors, I believe it's a ghost-like entity sealed by Daoist Underworld. Asking about its origins would inevitably lead to uncovering the current state of the Daoist Underworld, which is why I received that answer."

Franca was enlightened.

"That makes sense!

"Underworld Daoist destroyed its golden body and sealed it. Could that be why it's collecting gold to reconstruct its golden body and break free from its imprisonment?"

Observing Lumian's puzzled expression, Franca clarified the concept of a golden body and her interpretation.

"Is that so?" Lumian nodded slowly. "It seems like we might be able to continue trading gold with the Armored Shadow in the future, but fully restoring it to its original state should be avoided. This entity is extremely dangerous and holds a deep malice. I wonder what it will do once it escapes its seal."

Franca agreed wholeheartedly. "At the very least, we need to advance to Sequence 4 before considering this matter."

Lumian snickered. "Didn't you mention that achieving godhood and becoming a saint is an arduous endeavor? Why the newfound confidence?"

Franca glared at Lumian. "Isn't it because I have a goal now? Can't I indulge in a little daydreaming with all the motivation I have? Seriously, did we switch roles?"

She recalled that not long ago, she had remarked that Lumian made the path to godhood and switching pathways sound too simplistic.

Lumian chuckled and said, "It's good to have a goal and motivation. Yes, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's gathering is coming up next week. Should I inform the others about the Armored Shadow, the Blood Emperor, Underworld Daoist, and the Yellow Springs?"

Franca pondered for a moment and said, "In the past, I would have shared this information, but now I can't do so until I solve the issue with April Fool's Day. However, we can inquire about the illusory river related to death and see if anyone has relevant information."

Lumian thought for a moment and said, "I'll do the asking."

Franca was momentarily surprised but quickly understood Lumian's reasoning.

Lumian had gone to the Samaritan Women's Spring with Madame Hela. It made more sense for her companion, who was posing as Muggle, to inquire about the situation at the Samaritan Women's Spring. There was a logical rationale behind it.

From Hela's perspective, Lumian and Hidden Blade were strangers who didn't know each other. If Franca were to casually mention the River of Death, it would undoubtedly raise suspicion.

…

On Monday, Franca arrived at Trocadéro's Red House Café once again.

This time, she had taken care to dress more in line with her usual attire, wearing a shirt, pants, and boots, even though she still maintained her black-haired, brown-eyed form.

Her intention was to create the illusion that she was a man who had transformed into a Demoness, which she hoped would deter any sudden attacks from the Demoness she was waiting for.

However, the long-haired orange-red Demoness did not appear throughout the morning. Instead, Franca found herself engaged in conversations with two female patrons who took the opportunity to strike up a chat with her.

Franca calmly sipped her coffee, seemingly unfazed by the interactions.

She couldn't help but notice that Lumian appeared unusually calm and encouraged her to take her time. Franca understood the urgency of eliminating the core members of the Bliss Society, particularly those close to Susanna Mattise. Failing to do so would mean Lumian would forever be overshadowed by the Rose School of Thought.

…

Lumian had already reported to Madam Magician about the Bliss Society, the Rose School of Thought, and the activities at the Red House Café. The response he received was concise: "Do not leave Trier for the time being, and there should be no major issues."

Lumian ignited the letter and departed Rue du Rossignol, strolling towards Avenue du Marché.

As he approached Salle de Bal Brise, he spotted a familiar figure—a

man with dark-brown eyes, a prominent nose bridge, and a flaxen-colored beard that covered his chin. This man wore a robe reminiscent of an ancient Warlock's attire. It was Secrets Suppliant Osta Trul, the same person who had introduced Lumian to Mr. K's mysticism gathering.

"My cabbage," Lumian inquired with a smile. "What brings you here?"

Osta Trul responded with a magnetic voice, "I've come to find Baron Brignais to settle my debt."

"You've got the money?" Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Osta Trul smiled and replied, "Yes, I've come to realize that some honorific names derived from the potion can be used for prayers. There's no danger involved. This discovery has been quite helpful to me."

Lumian was slightly taken aback by this revelation. With a dark look, he tapped his chest four times—up, down, left, and right.

Osta Trul mirrored his actions with an even warmer smile.

Lumian didn't continue the small talk. He simply waved his hand and walked past Osta Trul.

Quietly, he approached the white spherical statue constructed from skulls outside Salle de Bal Brise, releasing a soft sigh.

At 9 p.m., Lumian returned to Room 207 at Auberge du Coq Doré. He finally received a letter from a pure silver skull with pale-white flames burning in its eye sockets.

The letter was from Hela, and its content was brief.

"There will be a gathering in one hour.

"If you wish to participate, silently recite the following incantation within five minutes of 10 p.m."

Chapter 375 - 375 Gathering Venue

375 Gathering Venue

It's finally here… Lumian exhaled, folded the letter, and left Auberge du Coq Doré.

He hadn't prepared an additional iron cabinet. With a few traps hidden in the room, regular thieves couldn't approach the core area. Forcing their way in would only cost them their lives. An iron cabinet wouldn't stop exceptional thieves anyway.

When the time was right, Lumian donned a hooded black robe that bore a striking resemblance to the attire worn by Warlocks, all according to Madame Hela and Franca's descriptions of his sister's appearance at these gatherings.

Then, he pulled out Lie and transformed it into a simple yet exquisite silver-white earring. He secured it onto his right earlobe.

Gazing into the full-length mirror, Lumian maintained a calm demeanor as he observed a sudden transformation of him growing shorter. His hair morphed into a luxuriant shade of pure gold, growing thick and cascading down his back.

His facial features underwent a metamorphosis, mirroring those etched in his memories of Aurore. His nose bridge, now elevated and delicate, complemented his lips, neither too full nor too thin, painted in a subtle shade of red. His eyes, light-blue and clear, emitted a faint but captivating luminescence.

In the past, Lumian had always perceived his sister as a paradox, her inner self contrasting sharply with her outward appearance. She exuded an aura of sunshine, cheerfulness, and open-mindedness, yet

in reality, she was a homebody, reluctant to venture out for social interactions. Only those who had truly earned her trust were privileged to witness her relaxed demeanor, the quirky phrases she often uttered, and her playful and bullying side.

On the contrary, Aurore displayed no apprehension when stepping out into the world. Much like Lumian, she possessed the natural ability to connect with the elderly ladies of Cordu and regale the children with captivating stories, earning their affection.

Ever since Lumian had learned about his sister's true background, he had come to comprehend the stark divergence between Aurore's inner self and her external appearance and demeanor. Certainly, many people grappled with such contradictions, but Aurore's unique circumstances had magnified this incongruity.

Lately, Lumian often found himself pondering what his sister had been like and the kind of life she had led.

As he stared into the mirror, Aurore's light-blue eyes seemed to take on a misty quality, as if she too were lost in reminiscences of days gone by.

Lumian still held vivid memories of the first time his sister had mentioned her homeland. It happened during his second year in Cordu.

Back then, when the shepherds had returned to the highland pastures, Aurore had taken him to pat the newly born lambs and, "cruelly" bought their loved ones. They ventured into the green pastures adorned with white and yellow wildflowers, carefully selecting a spot that wouldn't disturb the serene surroundings. They then set up a charcoal grill for a picnic.

As night descended upon them, and the starry heavens unveiled themselves like a boundless river of glistening diamonds, Aurore suddenly drifted into a reverie, her fingers brushing away tears.

Lumian inquired about her thoughts, and she confessed to a profound sense of homesickness.

Aurore's gaze in the mirror seemed to lose focus, mirroring the soft, yellowish-blue glow of the carbide lamp.

The mountain village nestled beside those vibrant green pastures under the radiant sun—it was a place they could never return to.

After a while, Lumian opened the pocket watch he had borrowed from Salle de Bal Brise, confirming the time.

Then, he donned a sleek silver-white half-mask, revealing his finely sculpted lips and chiseled chin to the world.

Without delay, Lumian retrieved a piece of paper adorned with the ancient Feysac script and affixed it securely to his left breast, displaying the word "Muggle."

Despite hailing from the same world, the society's members hailed from diverse homelands, each with their distinct languages. Upon their transmigration to this world, they found themselves scattered across different countries, inevitably erecting language barriers. Initially, they relied on the linguistic prowess of fellow members who were polyglots. However, over time, they gravitated towards adopting ancient Feysac, the common tongue of the Northern Continent, as their shared language.

Naturally, there were exceptions among the society's ranks—those whose native languages diverged significantly from ancient Feysac—but they were a minority. They had to follow the majority, knowing that, until they mastered the language, someone would always be there to translate for them.

Lumian had already laid a strong foundation in ancient Feysac. Ever since his arrival in Trier, he had diligently immersed himself in Aurore's grimoires, plunging deeper into this linguistic realm. Basic communication posed no challenge for him any longer.

Approaching 10 p.m., Lumian made final adjustments to his appearance in front of the full-length mirror, ensuring everything was in its rightful place. He concealed an assortment of ritual components and the alcohol flask containing the Decency brooch within the concealed pocket of his Warlock-like black robe.

With Madame Hela's letter clutched firmly in his hand, Lumian began the recitation for the Hermes gathering.

"A Beyonder from ancient times, Ruler of the Nation of the Evernight, noble Mother of the Sky, I beseech your permission to enter your kingdom."

As the words escaped Lumian's lips, the world around him underwent a sudden and eerie transformation. He beheld his own reflection in the mirror, like a pencil sketch hastily erased by an eraser.

His vision dimmed, plunging him into what felt like the deepest of slumbers.

Abruptly, Lumian's consciousness drifted to the gathering, the pounding of his heart resonating within his ears.

He snapped out of his reverie, finding himself within a palace marked by crumbling stone walls and encroaching weeds.

In its heart lay a massive, weathered stone throne, yet no one ventured near it. Through the fissures in the walls and the timeworn windows, Lumian glimpsed a night shrouded in darkness and cold, veiled by a thick fog.

Faint starlight penetrated the fog, casting a feeble glow upon the palace and the dreamlike town enshrouded by the fog.

The town appeared utterly deserted, as if plucked from a dream. Within the palace, stone candlesticks embedded in the walls flickered, bathing the surroundings in their warm, yellow flames.

At that precise moment, over a hundred figures arrived, each attired in distinctive garments. Lumian scanned the assembly but could not yet spot Madame Hela. However, he recognized Hidden Blade Franca.

Clad in her favored assassin's garb—black robes complemented by leather armor, a hood drawn low, and a silver half-mask gracing her countenance—Franca engaged in conversation with a group of similarly attired individuals.

Yet, among them, Franca stood as the sole genuine Assassin.

Lumian didn't greet Franca. Following her instructions and the hints in Madame Hela's letter, he approached the huge stone chair.

Such a crowded gathering was no different from a marketplace. It was unlikely to form a unified communication and transaction. The gathering naturally fragmented into smaller groups. Only when there was a matter of particular significance would President Gandalf or vice presidents like Hela take their place by the massive stone chair to address the assembly.

Of course, someone could do the same if they wanted to share their intentions with the entire gathering.

Aurore had been a regular attendee at the Academy's gatherings. Their designated meeting spot nestled deep within the palace, tucked away to the left of the huge stone throne.

As Lumian advanced in that direction, he couldn't help but marvel at the mystical nature of the gathering.

After reciting the incantation, he had departed from the Rue du Rossignol safe house in the market district, only to find himself transported to this mysterious and ancient palace.

The members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society hailed from diverse corners of the Northern and Southern Continents, yet they had all managed to converge here within a specific timeframe.

What baffled him, however, was Franca's never sharing the method of entering the gathering. Even if they were face-to-face, he wouldn't hear it unless granted permission by Madame Hela.

But it was just reciting an incantation, wasn't it? How could he not hear it?

As Franca had explained, this power likely stemmed from a Sealed Artifact—an Artifact Madame Hela couldn't fully control but could employ to a certain extent.

Beyond this method of convening, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society possessed other means, although these were established by various groups for internal or clique gatherings. For

instance, Hidden Blade Franca had set up a telegram group with select members, utilizing a miniaturized and simplified analyzer for scheduled chats.

Recalling Franca and Hela's rough descriptions of Aurore during the gatherings and forming his own assumptions, Lumian's steps grew lighter.

He believed that, given the unique and shared origin of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members, even if his sister wished to remain guarded amidst the assembly, her relaxed demeanor, akin to his interactions with her, would prevail, possibly even more prominently so. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

This was a state devoid of profound secrets.

Additional figures began to manifest, their forms rapidly taking shape in the air, akin to oil paintings successfully duplicated.

Among the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, a diverse and eclectic array of disguises flourished. Some were clad in traditional iron-gray full-body armor, while others embraced vibrant red, yellow, white, and multicolored paint, transforming into clowns. A handful sported extravagant makeup veiling their true visages, resembling wicked witches from ancient folklore. Still, others adorned themselves with monstrous helmets sculpted from orange-yellow pumpkins or relied on makeshift hoods to become pale vampires with strikingly red lips. Some even chose horse-like attires that enveloped them from head to toe…

It was a spectacle more fantastical and imaginative than the masquerade balls documented in newspapers and magazines.

As Lumian strolled amidst the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's diverse members, a faint smile played on his lips. Occasionally, he would nod in acknowledgment of those who greeted him.

At last, he reached the corner housing the Academy team.

His eyes naturally swept over the code names displayed on their attires: Pettigrew, Professor, Griffin, Eagle, Bear, Headmaster, Periodic Table, Isotope…

Chapter 376 - 376 Different Teams

376 Different Teams

Pettigrew stood at just over 1.6 meters tall, his disheveled, yellow hair peeking out from under a face mask designed for performances. His right palm was encased in a flamboyant silver glove, and he wore an open brown jacket over a dark shirt.

As Lumian approached, Pettigrew stepped forward, exclaiming in surprise and delight, “Muggle, you’ve finally reappeared.”

Lumian replied with a smile in Aurore’s voice, “Something happened some time ago; it took me a while to recuperate.”

“Are you alright now?” Pettigrew asked with concern.

“It’s alright,” Lumian replied nonchalantly, unsure of Aurore’s friendship with him.

He turned his gaze to a lady sitting on the stone steps.

The woman donned a black butterfly mask, a white shirt adorned with a bow tie, and a long, dark coat. Pinned to her chest, a clearly typeset paper name tag read: “Professor.”

Lumian greeted her with a smile, “Did Associate Professor not make it?”

Associate Professor was a man. A few years back, due to their shared code names, they had met in real life and became husband and wife.

Both were avid Warlocks, delving deep into the study of various spells. Aurore’s grimoires contained the Weed Removal spell,

courtesy of Associate Professor.

Professor's lips bore a faint hue, and her gaunt face framed her beautiful brown eyes. She simply replied, "He's occupied in the real world, playing host to guests. He couldn't spare the time. Nevertheless, my presence is akin to his; it doesn't alter matters. Muggle, what's the matter?"

Lumian smiled faintly and said, "I want to thank him for his Weed Removal spell."

"What's there to be grateful for? Could it be that your home was overrun by a large number of weeds?" Pettigrew asked curiously.

Lumian mirrored Aurore's expression as he recounted the past. His light-blue eyes darted around as he continued, "Some time ago, I encountered a plant rumored to originate from the Abyss. It not only grew at an astounding rate but also possessed remarkable vitality. It emitted anesthetic gasses and devoured humans like a man-eating flower. Whenever it surfaced, it did so in the hundreds, if not thousands. The Weed Removal spell, however, could wither them all. While it didn't annihilate them outright, it rendered them dormant for a considerable duration."

"Weed Removal works on Beyonder plants?" Professor exclaimed in astonishment.

Lumian nodded and said, "But it's effective only against grass or vine-type plants."

These were the insights Aurore had penned in her grimoires.

It was evident she had conducted experiments with the Abyss Demon Flower of the Padre, meticulously documenting her findings with scholarly dedication, even when her condition was clearly off.

"This is an interesting discovery." Professor held Lumian's hand, delving into the intricacies of the Weed Removal spell.

Fortunately, Lumian had delved deeply into this spell and sought guidance from Franca and Madame Hela. Though he couldn't use it, his knowledge was sufficient for a conversation.

After a lengthy discussion on spells and mystical knowledge with the Academy team, Lumian suddenly sensed a looming presence, casting a shadow over his surroundings.

Raising his eyes, he beheld an immense figure.

This figure towered at an imposing 2.4 meters, draped in a plain linen robe. Its head was concealed beneath a hood, and in its grip, a formidable magic staff, capable of shattering the skulls of ordinary humans, was held.

It was none other than Gandalf, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Franca had suggested that he might have reincarnated as a middle-aged man within the Feysac Empire, endowed with a giant bloodline. He had a penchant for liquor and an insatiable thirst for mystical knowledge, yet the nature of his pathway remained an enigma. Sometimes, he displayed traits of the Reader pathway, embodying characteristics of a Savant and Mystery Pryer. At other times, it made people feel that with his physical condition, it would be a pity not to take the Warrior pathway.

High-end mystical knowledge like the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility originated from Gandalf.

Oddly, Franca's expression took on a peculiar twist when mentioning Gandalf, as though his code name didn't quite align with his towering stature and imposing presence.

Gandalf, his visage obscured by an eerie shadow, fixed his gaze upon Lumian and gruffly extended a smile.

"You've missed a few gatherings. I was concerned something might have befallen you."

Lumian responded with pursed lips, his momentary sigh and helplessness hidden beneath the surface. "Something did happen, but it's been resolved."

"That's reassuring." Gandalf nodded in relief.

Following a few more courteous exchanges with Lumian, he made his way towards the other teams.

This was Lumian's first time participating in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's discussions. Following Madame Hela's counsel, he adopted a stance of speaking less and listening more. Often, he remained in silence.

Throughout this process, Lumian, now seated on the stone steps, observed those who spoke with a faint smile, projecting an aura of extreme attentiveness.

Aurore often employed a similar tactic. When conversing with Madame Pualis and the elderly ladies in Cordu, she would grace the speaker with a warm smile, making them feel truly valued. The discussion might be captivating, but beneath her apparent engagement, Aurore's thoughts would occasionally drift. She would intermittently return to grasp the essential points, safeguarding against potential awkwardness when she needed to respond.

Of course, when it came to discussions of mystical knowledge or striking deals, Lumian remained fully engaged, simply mirroring Aurore's demeanor.

After a while, Lumian found a suitable moment to rise from his spot, signaling his intention to depart from the Academy team's gathering area. nove(l)bi(n.)com

A lady, her face adorned with removable oil paint, exclaimed in surprise, "Aren't you purchasing anything today?"

Do you really need to spend a small fortune at every gathering to find joy, Grande Soeur? Lumian muttered silently and smiled.

"I have two reasons. Firstly, I've recently hit a bottleneck and am more focused on gathering the formula and ingredients for the Scrolls Professor potion…"

He spoke earnestly while analyzing the absence of corresponding requirements. Finally, he said, "Secondly, I'm broke and owe someone a substantial sum."

Members of the Academy team chuckled warmly, their understanding evident.

They had all noticed that Muggle had met with a significant problem during her hiatus from the gatherings, transforming from a well-off individual into someone burdened with debt.

However, they weren't overly concerned for Muggle. Over the past few years, they had witnessed their companion's knack for accumulating wealth.

Gracefully, Lumian made his way to the third pillar on the right of the colossal stone chair, where the Purgatory team congregated. Madame Hela frequently engaged in their discussions.

The lady was already present, albeit with a noticeable reduction in the chill that enveloped her. Under her veiled hat was a blur, revealing only a pale, yet not dismal, white complexion.

Silently, Lumian observed the discussions and dealings of the Purgatory team. After a while, he inquired thoughtfully, "Have any of you heard of an illusory river associated with the domain of death?"

Hela cast a fleeting glance at Lumian but remained silent.

Another member of the Purgatory team, a man bearing the code name Cerberus, pondered the question and responded, "Muggle, why do you ask?

"I've heard rumors of an illusory river deep within the Underworld, within the realm of hell. It's said to be connected to one of the High-Sequence Beyonders of the Corpse Collector pathway."

He actually answered without hesitation and didn't seek compensation for the intel, even though it's only hearsay and not verified fact… Lumian smiled and said, "I've recently been intrigued by the presence of such a river in both the myths and legends of our homeland and here."

He raised the topic indirectly without delving into further details.

Cerberus pondered for a moment before commenting, "This might be rooted in the commonality between the origins of myths and human thought."

Lumian tersely acknowledged with Aurore's voice and didn't inquire further.

He listened for a while longer before turning his attention to a hole in the ancient palace.

With his previous preparations in place, Lumian could smoothly blend into the April Fool's team, allowing him to eavesdrop on their conversations.

As Lumian made his way to the designated location, he quickly reviewed what he had observed and heard.

He couldn't help but notice that his sister, Aurore, had garnered quite a bit of popularity. Both the members of the Academy and the Purgatory team had shown her kindness.

While moving diagonally through the ancient palace, Lumian's attention was drawn to a man with stockings covering his head. This individual leaped onto a broken pillar and addressed the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members, who were clad in various eccentric outfits.

"Allow me to recite a poem!

"Ocean, you are all water;

"Horse, you have four legs.

"Demoness, you truly taste great!"

This isn't a poem at all… Lumian had already purchased Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles, which included jests about the Emperor having a more than friendly relationship with a Demoness. In the diary, he even commented on the taste of Demonesses.

With one step following another, Lumian approached the April Fool's team. He spotted a man with his back turned to him, dressed in a black seer's robe. Behind this figure, an ancient Feysac word was inscribed in golden paint: "Loki."

Franca had mentioned that Loki was a figure from certain legends in

their world, associated with lies, mischief, and flames. This member bearing the code name ‘Loki’ is the founder of the April Fool’s team. Although he has progressed on the paths of the divine at a pace not inferior to Hela and the others, he hasn’t ascended to the position of vice president… Various pieces of information flashed through Lumian’s mind.

He entered the area where the April Fool’s team was, and all laughter abruptly ceased.

In unison, Loki and the others turned to face Lumian, who was clad in a half-mask and a black Warlock robe.

As Muggle, Lumian’s lips curved into a radiant smile.

“Long time no see, everyone.”

Chapter 377 - 377 An Earlier Transmigrator

377 An Earlier Transmigrator

Facing Lumian's greeting, the dozen or so members of the April Fool's team fell silent.

Among them, several people's gazes and body language gave Lumian the distinct feeling that something was amiss.

There was "Bard" wearing stockings to conceal his appearance, "Hisoka" with a half-mask, vertical red hair, and teardrop and star makeup on his face, "Mad Lady" sporting red, yellow, and white clown paint, and "Ultraman" in comical attire.

Some of these April Fool's team members appeared surprised and puzzled, while others subtly shrank back. Some narrowed their eyes, and others changed their postures, becoming even more vigilant than before.

If Lumian hadn't sought guidance from Psychiatrist Anthony Reid during this time and focused on observing the guilty's reactions when they realized their victim was still alive, he wouldn't have been able to discern these differences so clearly. He might have missed something important.

In contrast, Lumian's earlier suspects, "Loki" and "I Know Someone," had more normal reactions.

The former was the founder and leader of the April Fool's team. If anything unusual occurred within the team, the chances of him remaining unaffected were slim. According to Franca, he was believed to be a member of the Spectator pathway, possibly a Psychiatrist. However, Aurore's understanding of this pathway was

notably deficient. Her grimoires didn't align with the details uncovered in the dream.

Dressed in a black circus divination-style robe, Loki obscured his face with the shadows of his hood, seemingly unconcerned about being identified.

After a brief silence, he expressed his surprise, saying, "Muggle, you've reappeared.

"I thought you lost control and went mad after hearing the Hidden Sage's cram school classes, and that's why you haven't attended any gatherings for months."

"Rap, it's rap, not cram school classes," corrected Bard with a smile.

Lumian had learned from Franca that "rap" was a strange form of music that some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society liked to compare to the ravings of unknown entities.
nove(l)bi(n.)com

Muggle's thin red lips curled up slightly in response.

"I did show signs of madness, but I managed it."

In the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, this was a common topic. Many members had lost control for various reasons, turning into monsters or even dying. As a result, Psychiatrists could make a killing by treating their companions' psychological or mental problems during gatherings.

Dressed in a white coat and wearing a bird-beak mask, I Know Someone nodded.

"Last year, I assessed your mental and psychological state. There wasn't much of a problem, but you haven't had regular assessments in nearly a year. You need to be careful. I know someone who was careless and overconfident and ended up in an asylum."

This Psychiatrist appeared normal enough and was genuinely concerned about his patient's condition. However, his membership in the April Fool's team raised some suspicions for Lumian. At the very

least, his mental state didn't seem entirely healthy.

As a prankster, Lumian didn't despair about the future or made it his life's mission to seek fun. Having such circumstances would undoubtedly put a toll on their psychological well-being.

Loki didn't press further about Muggle's absence from numerous gatherings. He spread his hands and addressed all the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society in the April Fool's team's spot.

"Everyone, I've recently come across another transmigrator from history!"

"Who is it?" Bard with stockings blurted out, and the other members turned their attention to Loki.

Taking note of everyone's gazes, Loki gestured meaningfully and continued, "I've obtained ancient texts that mention the existence of an Ancient Sun God in the Third Epoch.

"Haven't we always been puzzled by the scriptures of the various Churches, especially the Eternal Blazing Sun Church? Don't they bear a striking resemblance to the religious texts of our world?

"Now, I believe I've found the answer."

As the leader of the April Fool's team spoke, he tapped his chest four times—top, down, left, right—as if indicating a religion from his homeland.

Lumian's eyelids twitched.

Mr. K had made the same gesture while praying to that entity!

Was it merely a coincidence, or was there an inevitable connection?

Furthermore, wasn't the Ancient Sun God the father of the angel at Salle de Bal Unique?

Loki continued in an exaggerated tone, "Yes, just as you suspect. The scriptures of the various Churches are derived from the Ancient Sun

God, but they have different focuses and have altered certain details.

“I’ve only managed to find a few of that entity’s books, but I can confirm they’re from our world.

“I hope you can gather more information about the Ancient Sun God and eventually confirm that He too is a transmigrator, possibly even predating Roselle. If you wish to see the books I’ve obtained, remember to request a trade later. 100 grams of gold or an equivalent currency for a copy is a very reasonable price, don’t you think? We’re all on the same side, and this discovery holds the key to our hopes of returning home. Otherwise, I wouldn’t sell it for such a small amount of gold.”

The comical-looking Ultraman let out a sigh and said, “It’s all rather pointless. I believe you think that this entity, who has become a deity, must have a better understanding of the world’s truth than us. He might have already unraveled the secret of transmigration and the way back. But according to your information, didn’t He also fail to return?”

“See the light!” Loki’s lips curled up. “And I suspect that the reason that individual couldn’t return is because He perished in a divine battle.”

“Sounds intriguing,” Hisoka, dressed in clothes with poker card patterns, suddenly chimed in.

Loki slowly scanned the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and flashed a smile.

“The information about that entity and the ancient books related to it has been deliberately erased, with only a small number of them circulating in secret. Most are hidden underground near the source of power left behind by that entity.

“It’s said that in those places, the higher your Sequence, the more dangerous it becomes. It’s easier to lose control. Ordinary Beyonders like us stand a chance to approach. Perhaps it holds the truth about the connection between our two worlds and a way to return to our homeland.”

At this point, Loki's gaze passed over Lumian's masked face.

Is he subtly encouraging Aurore and the other members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society to venture underground? Lumian maintained his vigilance against any potential "pranks."

However, there was another reason why he sensed a potential issue instantly. Madam Justice had mentioned that the higher one's Sequence, the more dangerous it would be when approaching the Samaritan Women's Spring. She had also explained the nature of the problem.

This led Lumian to suspect that the Ancient Sun God's location mentioned by Loki might be a place similar to the Samaritan Women's Spring. He knew firsthand how perilous and terrifying the Samaritan Women's Spring could be!

Inciting others to explore underground in their quest to return home while avoiding the risks himself, or is this merely a prank that could harm others without benefiting Loki? Lumian glanced at Loki's profile and deliberately interjected, "I've been pondering a similar question lately.

"Why do many myths and legends in this world involve an illusory river associated with the domain of death, just like in our homeland?

"Could it be the result of some senior who transmigrated back?"

Given Lumian's knowledge of Aurore, he knew she couldn't resist getting involved if she caught wind of any leads regarding returning to her hometown. Since he had questions of his own, he needed to steer the conversation away from Loki's direction. Finding a relevant topic was his best strategy.

This was a lesson Lumian and his sister had learned through their battles of wits and pranks over studies, homework, exams, combat, and pranks.

Mad Lady, adorned with red, yellow, and white clown paint, chuckled and remarked, "Human nature, my dear, humans tend to blend their own experiences into myths and legends. In ancient times,

they relied on water for survival, so they believed there should be a river in the afterlife. Likewise, when they dug graves, the deeper they went, the more likely they'd encounter an underground river."

Lumian, emulating Aurore's tone, responded, "Your explanation is quite scientific, but I think it lacks mysticism. And if we aim to return, mysticism might be just what we need."

He recounted the legend of the River Styx, which he had recently acquired from the Purgatory team, and concluded, "I believe this could also be a path worth exploring."

Loki's face remained hidden in the hooded shadows as he chuckled and remarked, "Although the Underworld should be somewhere in the spirit world, I believe it must be closely related to the underground. In numerous folklores from the Northern and Southern Continents, 'hell' is often depicted as being hidden underground.

"That's why our investigation needs to be centered on the underground. Whether it's the remains of the Third Epoch's Ancient Sun God or issues related to the River Styx, we must delve deep underground to truly connect with these mysteries."

Lumian couldn't help but mutter to himself, You just want everyone to meet their end faster…

He pretended to be engaged and continued sharing information about the Ancient Sun God, underground exploration, and the River Styx with Loki, I Know Someone, and the other members of the April Fool's team.

After almost twenty minutes of conversation, Lumian decided to step away from the April Fool's team's vicinity.

He had already sensed abnormal reactions from at least four members of the April Fool's team. The next step was to leave this to Hidden Blade Franca.

If there was indeed something awry with the April Fool's team, they would be highly cautious when dealing with Muggle. They wouldn't readily engage or probe, fearing they might fall into a trap.

Their primary objective should be observation and indirect information gathering at this point.

When it came to Hidden Blade, they could play pranks without reservations. Later on, Franca could use those pranks as an excuse to locate the April Fool's team members in the real world and confront them individually. She could win the support of other members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Whether they could extract any significant information during these confrontations remained to be seen.

As Lumian took a few steps away from the gathering, he spotted the 2.4-meter-tall president, Gandalf, approaching the massive stone chair and addressing the group with a resounding voice, "Everyone, I have something important to discuss."

Chapter 378 - 378 Investigation

378 Investigation

Lumian halted and turned his attention toward the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, who was dressed in a linen robe.

The nearly half-giant Gandalf didn't require mechanical contraptions or mystical techniques to project his voice throughout the ancient palace.

"I just had a conversation with Isotope and noticed a matter that deserves our attention.

"He mentioned that ever since advancing to Sequence 6, he's been encountering Beyonders more frequently and getting involved in Beyonder affairs.

"This aligns with my general observations over the past few years. You know I enjoy talking to every member and asking about the additional changes brought about by superpowers. For me, I've delved deeper into the paths of the divine than most, gaining a profound understanding.

"Having said that, I want to share a conclusion.

"There are almost no exceptions. As Beyonders progress in Sequence, the frequency of mystical matters involving them significantly increases. At Sequence 9, this phenomenon isn't prominent. But starting from Sequence 7 or even Sequence 6, even those who typically don't pay much attention to such matters will feel that they are constantly encountering Beyonder events.

"Let me illustrate with numbers. At Sequence 9, the assumed number of Beyonder incidents or encounters with other Beyonders each

season is 1. This can easily slip under the radar during mysticism gatherings and small circle activities you participate in. It's challenging to pinpoint precisely. Now, at Sequence 8, it's 2. For Sequence 7, it might surge to 5 or 6. In other words, one may come across one or two Beyonder incidents or unfamiliar Beyonders once or twice a month.

"Do you have any thoughts or speculations about this phenomenon? Can you discern the cause? Perhaps there are fundamental laws of mysticism at play."

Lumian fell into a daze.

Isn't this the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence?

This transmigrator, code-named Gandalf, possessed a sharp investigative spirit. He was astute in noticing even the smallest details and had actually uncovered the outward signs of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence!

He was also the one who had suggested that advancing to Sequence 9 and Sequence 8 in recent years would be easier than before, even allowing for the direct consumption of Beyonder characteristics. He had provided a more precise assessment of the increased risk.

A research-focused talent… Lumian sighed, using Aurore's usual terminology.

For someone like him, with an evil god's angel sealed within and a deity-level aura shrouding him, the manifestation of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence was so intense that it couldn't be ignored. Anyone would recognize the problem.

What do you mean one or two Beyonder incidents a month?

It's practically every week!

Including the Beyonders he had encountered, it could be said to be a daily occurrence!

However, at times, Lumian felt that the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence hadn't fully played its role. Only by

attracting members of the Sinners organization and Roche Louise Sanson's family to Avenue du Marché and coincidentally meeting them would it qualify.

Perhaps the power of a boon wasn't as potent as the convergence of Beyonder characteristics, or perhaps Termiboros's seal had mitigated the effect. In any case, his desire remained unfulfilled.

As someone who had taken his sister's place at the gathering, Lumian refrained from approaching Gandalf directly and offering a substantial price for information on the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence.

Casually scanning the area, he noticed Madame Hela and Hidden Blade Franca remaining silent, listening to the discussions among members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society regarding this phenomenon.

Lumian knew that Franca was familiar with the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence. With Hela's concealed knowledge from her exploration of the Samaritan Women's Spring, she should have observed such a phenomenon.

They didn't explicitly mention the term "convergence" due to their different motivations. For Franca, as long as she didn't seek to ascend to godhood, immediate understanding of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence wasn't necessary. She just needed to recognize the corresponding phenomena and avoid risks. The specific details could be sold at the gathering when she needed funds and gained Madam Judgment's approval.

As various groups engaged in fervent discussions about President Gandalf's topic, Lumian made his way toward the Academy team.

As Lumian continued on his path, he spotted Hidden Blade Franca approaching.

"Muggle? You're finally back at the gathering! I was genuinely worried something had happened to you!" Franca's expressions were slightly exaggerated, but it was well within the norm for her. In the eyes of all the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research

Society, she was known for her rich emotions and her love for interacting and experimenting.

Lumian pursed his lips and offered a smile.

“Something did come up, but it got sorted out.”

Impressive mental resilience. He didn’t react strongly when the Cordu disaster was mentioned. Franca looked at Muggle’s exposed lower face with curiosity and asked, “What happened?”

“A mysticism catastrophe,” Lumian replied, taking on a resistant demeanor.

Franca knew when to change the subject and shifted the conversation with a smile.

“Just a while ago, in the April Fool’s group, Loki mentioned that he stumbled upon another ancient transmigrator known as the Ancient Sun God.” Lumian took the initiative to bring up his conversation with April Fool’s. “Mad Lady, Hisoka, Bard, and Ultraman are a bit skeptical.”

Mad Lady, Hisoka, Bard, Ultraman… Franca and Lumian shared an unspoken understanding. She immediately grasped his intentions—take note of the four April Fool’s team members Lumian suspected of being problematic. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Including Loki and I Know Someone, who were often discussed as potential suspects, there were now a total of six individuals.

“Is that true? Besides Emperor Roselle, are there other ancient transmigrators?” Franca asked with genuine excitement.

She wasn’t faking it. She had always been interested in ancient transmigrators.

Seeing the opportunity, she bid Muggle farewell and approached the area in the palace where the April Fool’s team was located.

Lumian returned to the Academy team and listened as Professor, Isotope, and Pettigrew discussed the mysticism experiences they had

encountered.

The gathering had a strict two-hour time limit, but attendees could leave at any moment. They simply needed to recite an incantation, changing the last sentence to “I beseech your permission to leave your kingdom,” and they would return to their original location.

Many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society chose to depart early after conducting their business and sharing their concerns, to prevent any accidents from occurring in the real world. However, a significant number of members opted to stay.

For them, the opportunity to interact with people who shared their unique origins and not worry about accidental disclosures of their secrets was a pleasure. Even if their conversations veered into trivial topics, it still improved their emotional well-being and provided relief for their mental and psychological states.

Lumian believed that his sister had found these gatherings quite relaxing. Thus, he partly attended to impersonate her and show no difference while also enjoying the atmosphere on Aurore’s behalf, patiently remaining until the end.

Vaguely, he sensed that his emotions were becoming more sensitive and easily stirred. It was as if Aurore’s soul fragment had risen to the surface and was affecting his psyche.

As the gathering drew to a close, Professor, wearing a shirt with a bowtie, turned her attention to Lumian and inquired, “Muggle, are you still residing in the south?”

Hmm, she’s not referring to a specific country… Does she know that Aurore is in Intis? Lumian’s thoughts raced as he responded candidly, “No, I’ve already moved to the Trier greater region.”

A smile curved on Professor’s lips.

“Associate Professor and I are also residing in Trier. Would you be interested in an offline gathering?”

“I’m in the Trier greater region as well,” Pettigrew chimed in eagerly. Periodic Table and Isotope nodded in agreement.

An offline gathering… Aurore did occasionally go out for a few days in the past. Could she have attended a real-life gathering with Professor and the others? Different circles have different styles. Franca and her associates have a telegram group, and these individuals from the Academy participate in real-life gatherings depending on the region? Lumian pondered for a moment and replied, “Another time. After I’ve sorted out some personal matters.”

He intentionally brought up certain personal matters, hoping that this information might reach the April Fool’s suspects like Loki and Mad Lady.

“Alright.” Professor and the others acknowledged. After all, Muggle had previously revealed that something had occurred to her.

…

“A Beyonder from ancient times, the ruler of the Nation of the Evernight, the noble Mother of Heaven, I beseech your permission to leave your kingdom.”

With each repetition of the incantation, the figures in the ancient palace gradually faded away.

When Lumian regained consciousness, he found himself back in the safe house on Rue du Rossignol.

How magical… Compared to this, Mr. K’s mysticism gatherings are like comparing my safe house to Emperor Roselle’s summer palace. They’re on entirely different levels. The contrast is quite significant… Lumian sighed and returned to his original appearance.

He wasn’t in a rush to write to Madam Magician to report the Armored Shadow’s response or to inquire about the Ancient Sun God. Instead, after changing his clothes, he headed straight to 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches and knocked on the door of Apartment 601.

Jenna had gone to visit her brother and wouldn’t return until the next morning. Franca sat in a recliner, muttering as if cursing someone.

“What’s bothering you?” Lumian asked as he settled onto the divan.

“That rascal Loki. I wanted to buy some information from him, but he told me others could pay with gold, but not me,” Franca replied indignantly. “He said he wanted to experience the taste of a Demoness. Damn it, why didn’t he drink the potion and become a Witch himself? After I cursed him, he claimed it was a joke and sold me the ancient information.”

She chuckled after recounting the encounter.

“Although there’s a special barrier in the gathering venue that prevents us from tracing the ownership and location of the items we trade, the essence of the items can’t be concealed. Regarding the copy of the information, it includes details such as the type of paper, which factory it originated from, the model of the mechanical typewriter or printing machine used to produce it, and even the approximate location. This could provide some clues. It might help us locate Loki in the real world. Of course, that’s assuming he hasn’t taken any anti-divination measures, misdirection, or hidden anything.”

As Franca spoke, she took out a mirror and prepared for Magic Mirror Divination.

After reciting the incantation, the mirror darkened, accompanied by the faint sound of water.

Franca held the copy of the information she had obtained from Loki and inquired thoughtfully, “Where can we find the mechanical typewriter used to create this information?”

Within the mirror, an aged voice responded, “Trier, Alone Bar.”

Chapter 379 - 379 Bold Speculation

379 Bold Speculation

Alone Bar? Lumian was taken aback by the answer.

Isn't this a little too coincidental?

Lumian's impression of the Alone Bar was that it stood diagonally opposite Salle de Bal Unique. In the basement, there was a theater for marionette shows. The lighting was dim, and the colors were dark, giving it a slightly sinister appearance.

Initially, he didn't see it as a problem, but now that he knew that the monocle-wearing patrons of Salle de Bal Unique were in a superimposed state of being "Amon" and "Not Amon," he believed that the Alone Bar, which could compete with this dance hall and survive, wasn't simple.

Moreover, he had once observed Leah from Bureau 8 entering the bar. He suspected it to be Bureau 8's covert hideout, designed to keep an eye on the Amons at Salle de Bal Unique.

Could Loki also be a member of Bureau 8, a true official Beyonder?

Or was it possible that he merely resided in Quartier de l'Observatoire and recognized the uniqueness of Alone Bar? Was that why he used the mechanical typewriter there to create a copy of the information, preventing anyone from tracing it back to him?

"What's the matter?" Franca watched Lumian furrow his brow and plunge into deep thought. After a prolonged silence, she extended her right hand and waved it in front of his eyes.

Lumian contemplated for a moment and said, “There’s a significant issue with this bar.”

“You’re familiar with this bar?” Franca looked surprised.

This man appeared to harbor many secrets she was unaware of!

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips.

“We’ll need to start with Madame Hela and me searching for the Samaritan Women’s Spring.”

Franca was taken aback. “How many times do I need to have you give out every detail? Are you a tube of toothpaste, giving out a little with each squeeze?”

“The focus was on the situation at the Samaritan Women’s Spring, and this all happened along the way,” Lumian explained, without feeling embarrassed.

Starting from his encounter with the Islander swindler, Monette, and his repeated scares, he connected Charlie being swindled, the uniqueness of Salle de Bal Unique, and Madam Magician’s connection to Amon. Finally, he mentioned that Alone Bar was diagonally opposite Salle de Bal Unique, and an official member of Bureau 8 had once entered and exited.

Franca felt like she was listening to a ghost story. She subconsciously wanted to hug a pillow, but there was none on the recliner.

Quickly shaking off her daze, she straightened her back, trying to maintain an expression that suggested a “true man” wouldn’t be frightened by such a terrifying incident.

All this was used to torment Jenna!

After Lumian finished speaking, Franca hissed and said, “You’ve had quite the array of experiences. You’ve even encountered an old monster that only exists in horror stories.”

“It’s for your own safety. If you didn’t suspect anything when you encountered him, he wouldn’t pay you any attention. But now, if

your demeanor changes when you see him, he might become suspicious and involve you in his Parasitism," Lumian warned, half-scaring Franca.

She pushed aside her fear of the Amons and steered the conversation back to the main topic.

"This all ties into the Alone Bar. Investigating it in the future is going to be very challenging…"

Franca suddenly had an imaginative guess.

"Do you think Loki has already been parasitized by an Amon?"

Lumian struggled to follow Franca's train of thought and responded, "Huh?"

Franca continued, her tone grave, "Consider this. The books and legends of the Ancient Sun God have been missing for two to three thousand years, and since the Churches of the Seven Gods' bibles are copied from Him, they must have erased relevant information. How did Loki come by this information?

"While there are various possibilities, if he is indeed Amon, it would make sense. No one knows His father's situation better than Him.

"As a child of a transmigrator, not to mention that He can obtain Loki's memories through Parasitism, even if He can't, He can perfectly act as our companion. You also mentioned that He enjoys deceit and has frightened you a few times. This is very similar to Loki's usual behavior.

"And when Amon from Salle de Bal Unique created the duplicate, he deliberately went to the Alone Bar diagonally opposite to use a mechanical typewriter to mislead potential tracing. This also fits with this style."

Franca's bold imagination surprised Lumian. After a moment of thought, he responded, "This does explain why this information oddly points to the Alone Bar.

"Under the guidance of this evil angel, the April Fool's team

gradually felt despair for the future and pursued their own joy. It was a reasonable development for them to start targeting other members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

“However, Amon wouldn’t intentionally lead the information to the Alone Bar, as that would naturally make investigators suspect Him, who resides diagonally opposite…

“Perhaps He anticipated the investigators’ thoughts,” Franca countered.

Lumian shook his head slowly.

“If it were Amon, your divination would have been misled or you wouldn’t have received an answer.

“Yes, regardless, this is indeed a possibility. I plan to visit the Alone Bar for a drink in the next two days and investigate the situation on the ground, but I won’t delve further.”

Franca acknowledged his words tersely and sighed.

“In truth, I also realize that the likelihood of Loki being parasitized by an Amon is very low. Our primary purpose in attending the gathering is to transition into a special state. In this state, the Sealed Artifact borrowed from Madame Hela should be able to detect any abnormalities in each member’s bodies. It won’t transform the corresponding object and leave it where it is.

“Sigh, I’m just finding excuses for myself. It’s not wise for us to pursue Loki without substantial evidence and strong suspicion.

“It makes me feel like I’ve betrayed the Research Society and my companions. That’s why I hope that Loki was indeed parasitized by Amon. That way, I won’t experience a similar sense of guilt. I’d be helping the Research Society eliminate hidden dangers.”

Filtering abnormalities in the body by entering a special state and attending the gathering? But nothing happened to Termiboros… Lumian wondered if it was because Mr. Fool’s seal was unique or if Madame Hela’s Sealed Artifact lacked the ability to filter abnormalities and guard against parasitic angels like Amon.

However, he didn't voice any objections at the moment and instead smiled.

"In my view, there's definitely something amiss with Loki. It's just a question of whether it's a major or minor issue.

"He did," Franca confirmed. "He also mentioned that in such places, the higher the Sequence, the more dangerous it is. It's easier to lose control. Only Low-Sequence Beyonders like us can approach it."

"That's only a relative perspective. Did you find it dangerous when I explored the Samaritan Women's Spring earlier?" Lumian inquired.

"It was extremely dangerous," Franca acknowledged, knowing much about the matter.

And you don't even know that the Blood Emperor's apparition nearly caught me… Lumian muttered, "Searching for the remnants of the Ancient Sun God will likely be even more dangerous.

"If Loki doesn't make an attempt, he'll be essentially using you as cannon fodder by encouraging you to explore underground. And if he does try, he'll inevitably be corrupted and gradually mutate. He lacks the purification of a great existence like Mr. Fool.

"So, it's crucial to locate Loki as soon as possible. It's in both your and his best interests."

Franca bit her lip and agreed, "You're right. Loki clearly has malicious intentions in this matter. The other members of the April Fool's team might be curious and willing to participate, but I believe they're cooperating with him."

After persuading Franca, Lumian asked curiously, "Tell me, the prerequisite for entering the gathering is to enter a special state. What state is it?"

Franca, no longer hesitating, shared eagerly, "I've asked my Major Arcana card holder about it before. Although I couldn't reveal the incantation or provide a detailed description of the gathering, she speculated that it involves a 'Concealment' power based on my description and its effects."

“Concealment” power… Lumian nodded.

It was indeed well-concealed. Even the incantation had been hidden, preventing anyone from discovering it.

Franca went on, “The power of Concealment is associated with the Evernight pathway, which is the divine pathway controlled by the Evernight Goddess Church.”

She lowered her voice and added, “I suspect that Madame Hela is affiliated with the Church of Evernight.”

“Similar to 007?” Lumian inquired. He hadn’t encountered 007 today, as too many people had participated in the gathering, and he didn’t know the usual attire or team of 007.

Franca tersely confirmed his assumption.

“Something along those lines, but she may hold a more significant position. She’s at a higher level and has access to more concealed knowledge.”

Recalling Madame Hela’s actions in obtaining the Samaritan Women’s Spring, Lumian couldn’t help but agree with Franca’s assessment.
Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Indeed, the lady possessed a wealth of secret knowledge. Moreover, she wore a black diamond ring that clearly exceeded ordinary mystical items and was suspected to possess godlike powers.

Additionally, the Sealed Artifact she had borrowed to convene the gathering was beyond Lumian’s imagination.

In a casual manner, Lumian asked, “What are the primary manifestations of the Evernight pathway’s powers?”

According to Aurore’s grimoires, the first three Sequences of this pathway were Sleepless, Midnight Poet, and Nightmare. They primarily involved enhancing spirituality, increasing mental strength, reducing the need for sleep, the mystical application of poetry, and the unique ability to induce sleep in others.

Franca thought for a moment and replied, “The power of Concealment, command over spirits, and the ability to create realistic dreams…”

Realistic dream… Lumian was taken aback by the answer.

He couldn’t help but recall the realistic dream he had experienced in the ruins of Cordu.

Chapter 380 - 380 Bell Chimes

380 Bell Chimes

At the conclusion of the Cordu disaster, Lumian found himself not only grappling with the seal within his body and the fading aura of Inevitability surrounding him, but he had also been thrust into a vivid, lifelike dream. Surprisingly, even the investigators, Ryan and the others, succumbed to an uncontrollable slumber as they entered a specific area, becoming entangled in his dream.

During that time, Lumian, who was still unfamiliar with the intricacies of mysticism, failed to sense anything amiss. It was only later, when he enlisted the help of Mr. Poet to decipher the symbolic meanings woven into the dream, that he realized its origins were not tied to Termiboros's power or Mr. Fool's seal. It had a different source, one that conveyed protection and solace.

Ever since that moment, Lumian had tirelessly pondered the origin of this lifelike dream, but he had never unearthed a definitive answer. The possibilities were endless. However, with Franca's detailed account of the Evernight pathway and his own experiences at the gathering, a sudden revelation struck him.

The Evernight pathway, known for inducing nightmarish visions, could also weave the fabric of realistic dreams!

Could it be that Madame Hela, upon learning of Aurore's tragic fate in Cordu, had arrived too late to intervene directly? Perhaps she had resorted to employing the power of a Sealed Artifact to draw me into the lifelike dream, an attempt to provide solace for my tormented soul?

No, there's no need for her to hide this from me and feign ignorance. What's there to hide?

Moreover, if she were responsible, there would be no lingering traces of slumbering power left behind…

Could it be that the continuous use of the incantation involving Concealment powers during the gatherings somehow marked or corrupted Aurore with the Sealed Artifact's influence? When her body disintegrated, the Sealed Artifact sensed the disturbance and, albeit unsuccessfully in saving her, led me into the realm of this lifelike dream?

Yes, it makes sense. Leah and the others were compelled to slumber on the blood-colored mountain peak, situated near the sacrificial ground, close to the three-headed, six-armed giant. This aligns with my theory. The source of the dream's power is intricately tied to Aurore's fate…

Franca observed Lumian's prolonged silence, realizing he was deeply engrossed in contemplation. She wisely refrained from interrupting, allowing him to return to the present before gently inquiring, "What thoughts have crossed your mind?"

"Do you recall the Cordu disaster I mentioned? There's an area around the sacrificial ground, which became the blood-colored mountain peak. Anyone who ventured into it fell into a deep slumber and experienced a realistic dream," Lumian explained succinctly.

The more Franca absorbed his words, the more astonishment and trepidation filled her.

"Could it be that there's something wrong with Madame Hela too?"

"I don't think so." Lumian shook his head in response and outlined the crucial aspects of his conjecture.

Relief washed over Franca, and she couldn't hide her emotions.

"This theory does seem to fit the circumstances."

"Right, did you notice? The initial part of the incantation features a three-line honorific name. This implies that the Sealed Artifact either possesses characteristics of a living entity or was once alive. It's reasonable for it to instinctively influence those who beseech its

power.”

After careful consideration, Lumian recognized the validity of this point.

The two of them continued their conversation, ultimately deciding that Lumian should find a suitable time to pay a visit to the Alone Bar.

…

Returning to the Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian drew the curtains and settled at the table. Bathed in the soft glow of the carbide lamp, he began composing a letter addressed to Madam Magician.

The letter primarily centered around the Armored Shadow’s performance and its response. Lumian was particularly interested in gathering information about the Ancient Sun God and its connection with the Aurora Order.

However, mindful of the late hour, he decided to wait until he “naturally” woke up in the morning, had his breakfast, and then sent the letter.

At noon, Lumian received a reply from Madam Magician, and he felt a sense of satisfaction for having purposely returned to Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré.

“The Armored Shadow’s response and its current condition offer us valuable insights into the situation regarding ___.”

Lumian was taken aback by the first sentence.

His gaze fixated on the blank portion of the sentence, uncertain whether Madam Magician had intentionally injected humor into her letter or if some form of distortion had affected the message.

Drawing from his knowledge of Magician, Lumian’s initial assumption was that she had initially composed the entire sentence but later realized that certain information couldn’t be disclosed at this moment. Instead of redacting it or starting anew, she had employed some mystical means to erase the phrase.

Why can't I be privy to this information? It's merely another world, right? Lumian mused as he proceeded to read the subsequent sentence.

"While this is a valuable acquisition, its immediate utility may be limited, though Mr. Hanged Man will undoubtedly be pleased.

"In due time, when he deems it appropriate, he might get you to summon the Armored Shadow once more. He will be responsible for providing compensation in gold for the chance to pose inquiries.

"Let him determine the questions. Your role is to facilitate the communication, and the Two of Cups will handle translation. Oh, and do not forget to request a reward from Mr. Hanged Man."

Mr. Hanged Man… Lumian repeated the code name, his eyes continuing to scan the contents of the letter.

"The Ancient Sun God's problem is complicated, and my knowledge on the matter is limited. At this juncture, I can only offer this: He was the ruler of the Third Epoch, the one who brought an end to the tyrannical reign of the brutal ancient gods and ushered in an era of light for humanity.

"The entity revered by the Aurora Order maintains a complicated connection with Him. Understanding this connection carries risks. Consider Him as the inheritor of half of His legacy, while the other portion is shared among select members of the seven deities. This division directly gave rise to what we commonly term the Age of the Gods, also known as the Fourth Epoch."

If remnants of history, legends, documents, and artifacts were still available from the Fourth Epoch, the prior Third and Second Epochs existed mostly within the scriptures of various Churches, veiled in almost mythical obscurity. Lumian possessed only scant knowledge, recognizing the Third Epoch as the Cataclysm Epoch and the Second Epoch as the Dark Epoch.

In Madam Magician's words, Lumian sensed the majesty and allure of ancient history unfolding before him.

The brutal ancient gods, the Ancient Sun God who ended humanity's dark age, the ruler of the Third Epoch whose demise remains shrouded in mystery, and the Age of the Gods that emerged from His corpse…

Why would such an ancient deity give birth to someone like Amon? And who is Amon's mother? Could there be a connection between Amon and the figure revered by the Aurora Order? The more Lumian contemplated this, the more he discerned problems with the Ancient Sun God's method of raising offspring.

He harbored a favorable impression of this deity, not only because of His role in ending the dominion of the ancient gods and offering humanity a glimmer of hope, but also due to the suspicion that He might be an earlier transmigrator from the same world as Aurore and Emperor Roselle.

Simultaneously, Lumian began to understand why Mr. K and the Aurora Order held such vehement disdain for heretics. The one they revered was the rightful heir to the legacy of the Ancient Sun God.

A flame erupted, igniting the letter in Lumian's hand.

He tidied up and fastened the silver Lie earring, making subtle adjustments to his appearance to ensure he bore no resemblance to Lumian Lee.

With that done, he removed Lie and slipped it into a concealed pocket.

His recent insights indicated that his transfigurations from Lie wouldn't end when he was separated from Lie. It was a flesh-and-blood reconstruction. If he wanted to return to his original state, he had to use Lie to adjust it again.

Lumian grabbed his satchel and left Auberge du Coq Doré.

On his way to Avenue du Marché, he heard the chime of a bell, signaling that it was 1 p.m.

Lumian retrieved the golden pocket watch he had borrowed from Salle de Bal Brise and synchronized it with the distant tolling of the

bell.

The pocket watch would lose a minute every few days.

After a journey of more than half an hour, Lumian arrived at Rue Ancienne.

His steps led him toward the Alone Bar, and his gaze naturally drifted across Salle de Bal Unique.

At that moment, the establishment had yet to see many customers. Three guards, each sporting a monocle over their right eyes, lounged in various corners, engaged in sporadic conversations or drifting into daydreams.

A postman in a distinctive blue uniform adorned with floral patterns parked his bicycle by the roadside and approached Salle de Bal Unique's mailbox, clutching a stack of letters.

Like the guards, he too wore a monocle on his right eye.

An inexplicable shiver coursed through Lumian's scalp, prompting him to avert his gaze and continue his course into the Alone Bar.

Inside, the dimly lit atmosphere persisted, casting a shadowy ambiance even at noon. At present, Lumian found himself the sole patron.

The bartender stationed behind the bar counter was not the same individual as before. Instead, it was Leah, the Bureau 8 investigator, whom Lumian recognized!

She was attired in a white shirt, a bow tie, and a black knee-length dress. Her hair had been elegantly tied into a simple bun, adorned with tiny silver bells—a departure from her previous appearance, exuding a distinct charm.

"Gin on the rocks," Lumian stated as he settled onto a barstool at the counter, tapping the surface lightly.

A chuckle escaped him as he continued, "Why do we have a new bartender?"

Leah cast a playful glance in his direction and quipped, “Monsieur, there’s no strict rule that dictates a bar must employ only one bartender. That would surely lead to their exhaustion.”

“Fair enough,” Lumian agreed, paying eight licks for his drink and patiently awaiting the arrival of his iced gin.

After savoring his beverage for nearly ten minutes, he casually inquired, “Is there a typewriter available here? I’ve just remembered a document I need to complete.”

Leah, wiping a glass, responded, “In the room next to the theater in the cellar, there’s a typewriter reserved for scripts. It costs 2 licks and 1 coppet for each sheet of paper.”

“That’s quite pricey…” Lumian muttered as he rose and entered the cellar with his glass of gin. nove(l)bi(n.)com

He steered clear of the marionette theater, harboring some lingering unease from his previous encounter. Instead, he ventured into a nearby room.

There was indeed a brass mechanical typewriter here, and a man engrossed in reading a newspaper beside it.

Lumian, in line with his prior preparations, proceeded to type out a brief document.

Some of the worn letters on the typewriter matched the information provided by Loki with uncanny precision.

Satisfied with his work, Lumian offered payment to the silent man for his use of the typewriter and paper before promptly exiting the somewhat eerie basement room.

As he returned to the bar’s lobby, he was abruptly met with fugue, as he heard the faint chime of a bell.

Lumian swiftly regained his composure and directed his gaze towards Leah, noticing that she displayed no signs of alarm or surprise.

“Did you hear the bell?” Lumian inquired, placing his glass on the bar

counter.

Leah furrowed her brow. “The hour has not yet struck. Why would the bell toll?”

Suppressing his bewilderment, Lumian finished his drink and departed the Alone Bar.

While passing Salle de Bal Unique, he observed that only two guards with monocles remained stationed at the entrance. The postman was conspicuously absent.

Without further ado, Lumian continued down the street, putting distance between himself and the establishment.

As he boarded a public carriage headed back to the market district, the clock chimed two o’clock with impeccable precision. Instinctively, Lumian retrieved his pocket watch, opening it to check the time.

To his astonishment, the pocket watch, which he had meticulously calibrated just an hour earlier, had once again slowed down.

A minute slow.

Chapter 381 - 381 Elimination

381 Elimination

Lumian carefully examined the pocket watch, ensuring that there were no mechanical issues.

Ever since I calibrated my pocket watch, the only odd occurrence had been the fugue state and the faint ringing of a bell when I left the Alone Bar. Additionally, there is one less monocle-wearing guard at the entrance of Salle de Bal Unique. Could there be a connection between these events and the sudden one-minute slowdown of my pocket watch? Lumian pondered this seriously, trying to come up with possible explanations.

He planned to write and inquire with Madam Magician once he returned to the market district.

Normally, he wouldn't bother his Major Arcana card holder with such minor issues, but the pocket watch's abnormality had likely started on Rue Ancienne. Moreover, there had been changes in Salle de Bal Unique's Amons. These were reasons to be cautious.

Lumian stowed his pocket watch away. When the public carriage came to a stop, he swiftly disembarked and turned into a nearby street, keeping a vigilant eye on the people and animals passing by.

He changed public carriages three times, each leading to different destinations, attempting to identify and elude any potential pursuers.

This was the self-cultivation of a Hunter.

After completing this elaborate process, Lumian entered a department store. He placed the satchel containing the Flog boxing gloves in a public washroom cubicle, put on his Lie earring, and reverted to his original appearance.

He also swapped his brown jacket for a dark vest that he had kept in his satchel, transforming himself back into Ciel Dubois as he returned to Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman.

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief after sending the letter to Madam Magician, detailing his experiences with the fugue state, the faint bell chimes, and the alterations in Salle de Bal Unique's guards.

Whenever he visited Rue Ancienne, even though he never encountered a genuine disaster, he always felt an unsettling and inexplicable fear gripping his heart.

The puppet messenger swiftly returned with a reply from Madam Magician.

"Your instincts are keen and accurate.

"The fugue you experienced and the bell chimes you heard were the result of Mr. Fool's Angel of Time. He located his target and obliterated Salle de Bal Unique along with all the Amons in Trier. The reason your pocket watch slowed down by a minute was also a consequence of this clash.

"In the near future, you needn't concern yourself with what Amon might do to you. Nevertheless, you should be aware that dealing with such a Mythical Creature is far from simple, and they cannot be completely annihilated. There are still numerous Amons lurking in the various countries of the Northern and Southern Continents, and a few might even be concealed beneath Trier, beyond the reach of angelic powers."

As Lumian read Madam Magician's response, he was momentarily stunned.

That brief fugue he had experienced indicated a battle on an angelic scale?

Had he not recently calibrated his pocket watch, he might not have gathered any substantial evidence!

And if it weren't for the angelic Termiboros sealed within him, he might have suffered the same fate as Leah—unable to hear the bell or

even be in a fugue state!

Is this the might of an angel? The confrontation between the Angel of Time and Amon had not affected the ordinary people in the vicinity. Otherwise, the residents of Rue Ancienne would have died without even realizing it…

Once one crosses the threshold into divinity, their array of abilities take on a mystical quality. The Circle Inhabitant's repetitive loop, the Concealment power of the Evernight pathway, Madam Magician's Door of Starlight, and now the Angel of Time's bell chimes—all of these surpass my wildest imagination… For the first time, Lumian didn't long for the power of a High-Sequence Beyonder solely to resurrect his sister.

Lumian's spirits lifted at the prospect of no longer living in fear of Amons suddenly emerging from the shadows and thrusting him into peril. He offered genuine praise to Mr. Fool and the Angel of Time, as well as his Major Arcana card holder, Madam Magician.

With a sense of relief, he incinerated the reply and made his way to Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca was waiting for his return with information about the Alone Bar and Loki.

"Good news and bad news. Which one do you want to hear?" he inquired, still grinning, as he closed the door.

Franca sized him up.

"You seem rather cheerful…

"The good news is that you've found leads on Loki?

"The bad news is that we lack the strength to continue investigating?"

"Neither." Lumian seized Franca's reclining chair. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Franca was taken aback. She hadn't expected Lumian to be so

shameless.

Before Franca could voice her surprise, Lumian continued, “The good news is that Mr. Fool’s Angel of Time has taken action. Salle de Bal Unique and all of Trier’s Amons have been wiped out. If Loki shows up at the next gathering, it means he hasn’t been Parasitized by an Amon.”

“The bad news is that the copy of the information you bought was indeed created using a mechanical typewriter in the cellar of the Alone Bar. However, we can’t continue our investigation while in Bureau 8’s territory. I’m quite certain that it’s Bureau 8’s stronghold.”

Leah was already working there as a bartender.

Franca’s expression shifted between excitement and concern.

“Did you see Mr. Fool’s Angel of Time? But why didn’t I sense any obvious developments in Trier…

“Indeed, whether Loki is a member of Bureau 8 or not, asking directly about anyone who has recently used that mechanical typewriter will result in us being targeted by Bureau 8. And finding an excuse to use that typewriter to attempt divination with the last user might point to some members of Bureau 8 or even saints.

“There must be a High-Sequence Beyonder overseeing Bureau 8’s stronghold diagonally opposite Salle de Bal Unique!”

Franca, her attention diverted to serious matters, forgot to ask Lumian to leave her exclusive seat.

Lumian recounted the minute delay in his pocket watch and Madam Magician’s reply, leaving Franca amazed and fascinated.

After mentioning the Angel of Time, Lumian pondered for a moment and said, “Loki didn’t conceal his appearance well at the gathering. I suspect he possesses abilities similar to Niese Face or Lie.”

Franca nodded.

“If he’s truly an official member of Bureau 8, I believe he’s a

Beyonder of the Seer pathway. He's at least a Sequence 6 Faceless. Your Lie corresponds to this Sequence. Yes, many Beyonders in Bureau 8 are from the Seer pathway."

Above Magician is Faceless? After Lumian obtained Lie, he suspected that it belonged to the Seer pathway, but he didn't know the corresponding Sequence name.

After Lumian conversed with Franca about the Seer pathway, the two of them fell into a dilemma about how to find Loki in reality.

Just then, brisk footsteps echoed upstairs before Jenna opened the door to Apartment 601.

She glanced at Lumian, who was sitting in the recliner, and Franca, who was standing beside him, and asked in confusion, "What are you guys talking about?"

"We're pondering over a conundrum," Lumian clarified, informing Jenna that he and Franca were in trouble tracking an enemy with the code name Loki. Finally, he asked, "Any ideas?"

Jenna shook her head in amusement. "You've rejected all the solutions I can think of."

Without waiting for her companions to speak, she said thoughtfully, "Ciel, put yourself in Loki's shoes. Think of yourself as someone who likes to tease others. Think of everything that happened from their perspective and see if you can find any clues. Don't you also like pranks? You should have something in common with them."

My pranks are quite different from theirs… Lumian didn't say it out loud. He tried to recall his motives, thoughts, and changes in mentality during the pranks to analyze the actions and motives of the April Fool's team.

After a moment, he furrowed his brow.

"All pranks are meant to bring joy when the target is embarrassed or suffers a blow. Those people used my sister as a target for pranks, but they can't confirm the final outcome, so it's difficult for them to obtain true joy…

“Similarly, how are they going to track Franca’s movements and witness her tragic end by instigating her to explore the underground? You have to know that even if Franca never goes to the mysticism gathering again, she might have encountered an accident due to something else.”

The three people in the room pondered this question.

If a prankster failed to witness the end of a prank, they would lack a sense of accomplishment and the expected joy. How could Loki and the others determine Aurore or Franca’s encounter?

After a while, Lumian said in a deep voice, “Either the prank is a cover-up, and they have an ulterior motive, or they have a way to monitor the corresponding target.”

Franca suddenly felt a chill down her spine and subconsciously surveyed the room.

“What way?” Jenna asked on her behalf.

Lumian shook his head slowly. “I don’t know. This might be a lead.”

Amidst the alternations between silence and discussion, the three of them couldn’t come up with an answer, so they could only put this matter aside for the time being.

On his way back to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian gazed at the afternoon sun and probed, “Temiboros, can I find Loki through the Prophecy Spell?”

Termiboros’s magnificent voice resounded, “After you left Rue Ancienne, if you hadn’t done any anti-tracking, you would have encountered Loki.”

Chapter 382 - 382 Seizing the Opportunity

382 Seizing the Opportunity

If I hadn't used anti-tracking, I would have encountered Loki? Lumian was taken aback by Termiboros's response.

Lumian's mind raced as he dissected the information in that sentence.

After leaving Rue Ancienne, Loki had been tailing him for some time!

The source of the copied information had been a trap!

This noon, Loki had been at the Alone Bar!

He deliberately chose the Alone Bar's mechanical typewriter to make a copy of the information. His plan was that anyone chasing him would discover it, allowing him to start tracking the other party, aiming for a lethal strike.

And if the pursuer turned out to be formidable, he could ensure his basic safety by being inside Bureau 8's stronghold. He wouldn't be easily discovered. He could even manipulate Bureau 8, an official organization, to go after the other party. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

With this in mind, Lumian felt a mixture of regret and relief.

Regrettably, he hadn't spotted Loki's pursuit after leaving Rue Ancienne until the anti-tracking process was finished. This meant he had "missed" the founder of the April Fool's team. He could have had the chance to discuss Muggle-related matters with him.

But Lumian was also relieved because he wasn't prepared. If he had

discovered Loki and was forced to act prematurely, there was a high chance he would have met a tragic end. After all, according to Franca's description, a Sequence 7 Magician possessed many bizarre abilities. As a Marionettist, they could silently eliminate others.

If Loki had launched a surprise attack, Lumian wasn't sure if he would have had the opportunity to use Mr. K's finger. He also wasn't sure if he could have located the real Loki in time and escaped with the Spell of Harrumph.

However, at this moment, regret outweighed relief in his heart.

Lumian's pace toward Salle de Bal Brise involuntarily slowed. He recalled his experience at the Alone Bar at noon.

The bar was dimly lit, and it was well past lunchtime. Besides a couple of inebriated patrons chatting by the window, Leah, disguised as a bartender, appeared to be the only one on the first floor.

From the cellar, which doubled as a marionette theater, he could occasionally hear conversations from different people.

In the room with the mechanical typewriter, a man was reading a newspaper. He remained silent, his gaze fixed on the newspaper. Even when collecting the typing fee, he merely nodded…

Which one of them was Loki? Lumian stopped diagonally across from Salle de Bal Brise, his gaze unfocused.

Clearly, Leah couldn't be Loki. It wasn't due to gender differences but rather her lack of Sequence. According to Franca, Loki had a habit of revealing his appearance as of last year or even earlier. It was suspected that he had advanced to Faceless, and Leah was only a Sequence 7 Magician a few months ago.

In the lifelike dream, she likely couldn't conceal her specific Sequence.

Lumian's suspicion gradually settled on the man who was engrossed in reading the newspaper and watching the typewriter.

Lumian carefully recalled the man's appearance and realized he was

entirely unremarkable. He was in his thirties, with black hair, blue eyes, and an average appearance, dressed in a plain black suit like any common clerk.

But if a Marionettist can control people, can they also turn rats, cockroaches, bedbugs, and other creatures into marionettes?

In that case, the possibilities are endless. Every living thing in the Alone Bar could potentially be Loki…

How could I ever hope to find him? What a vexing individual. Though his manifestations differed from those of the Amons, they are equally vexing!

It's only thanks to the angel trapped within me, Mr. Fool's seal, and the Blood Emperor's aura that I could evade a Marionettist—a Seer Beyonder—so far. Relying solely on anti-tracking and Lie likely wouldn't be enough to escape Loki's grasp…

How frustrating. The Alone Bar is Bureau 8's stronghold. I can't simply flush the real Loki out with a broad sweep… The more Lumian contemplated it, the more exasperated he became.

Having successfully eluded pursuit, it seemed nearly impossible to bait Loki with a similar ploy. Anyone with a modicum of intelligence would smell a trap in this recurring situation.

What's worse, frequent visits to the Alone Bar would undoubtedly attract Bureau 8's attention, further complicating matters.

Lumian took a deep breath, exhaling slowly, forcing himself to regain his composure.

He concentrated on his analysis of Loki.

According to Anthony's theory, Loki and most members of the April Fool's team have high opinions of themselves. Otherwise, after experiencing despair for the future, they wouldn't seek solace in pranks. They would indulge in their desires and the pleasures of life…

Is it possible to lure such a person into a trap they believe they had

outsmarted?

Lumian dismantled and reassembled various pieces of information in his mind, searching for a viable solution.

His frustration grew, and he longed to storm into the Alone Bar and eliminate everyone except Leah.

Then, an idea struck Lumian.

While it might not form a direct plan against Loki, it could serve as a means to probe the situation at the Alone Bar, uncover exploitable details, and gather information. Additionally, it would provide an outlet for his emotions and anger, and perhaps even earn him some money.

After careful consideration, Lumian turned around and made his way towards Rue Anarchie.

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 401.

Lumian pushed open the unlatched door, where he found the bankrupt merchant, Fitz, sitting at a wooden table, dipping a long, stick-like rye bread into a thick, sticky soup.

Fitz glanced back, placing the food aside, and stood up, clearly confused and somewhat panicked.

“Monsieur Ciel, what’s the matter?”

The bankrupt merchant’s brown hair appeared greasy, yet he stubbornly maintained a semblance of tidiness. His dark-brown eyes and smile lines gave him a naturally ingratiating appearance.

In contrast to their previous encounter, Fitz’s clothes now bore a bit of dirt, as if he hadn’t had the time to clean them.

“Can you provide evidence that Timmons owes you 100,000 verl d’or? The owner of Salle de Bal Unique.”

Fitz's eyes lit up.

"Yes! I have a contract for our joint venture. It clearly states that he agreed to repurchase his shares within a specified time frame, along with paying me 100,000 verl d'or and the corresponding profits.

"Monsieur Ciel, you don't need to use Salle de Bal Unique to jog my memory about Timmons. I curse that scoundrel a hundred times a day!

"Monsieur Ciel, do you believe there's a chance of recovering my money?"

Lumian's lips curled up.

"This could be your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If you miss it, you may never see that money again."

Salle de Bal Unique was at its most vulnerable!

Without the Amons, it was now inhabited solely by humans with varying degrees of mutation!

Fitz was a mix of excitement and apprehension upon hearing this. He hastily retrieved the valuable contract and handed it over to Lumian.

While he didn't entirely trust the mob leader, he had no choice but to place his hopes in him, praying that Lumian would return with good news.

…

Quartier de l'Observatoire, Rue Ancienne.

Lumian changed his appearance and clothes. He walked towards Salle de Bal Unique in a shirt, vest, top hat, and thin formal suit.

He encountered a guard sporting a monocle on his right eye and dressed in a short black suit, who obstructed his path.

"Monsieur, you must wear a monocle to enter our dance hall."

Lumian responded with a smile.

“Monette introduced me here. He mentioned that I don’t need to wear a monocle on my right eye, like you gentlemen.”

The two guards exchanged meaningful glances and exchanged knowing smiles.

“Then it’s not an issue.”

From their appearances, it seems they are well aware of the consequences of being invited by Monette. They might even have been influenced by Monette’s devious personality and secretly are faithful to Amon. Unfortunately, they remain oblivious to the fact that Salle de Bal Unique is no longer the same as they remembered. Lumian sneered inwardly and decided to seek out someone most resembling Amon later, intent on shattering their monocle with a punch.

This act was both a release of his pent-up anger and fear from being manipulated and intimidated by Amon, and a means to catch the attention of the Alone Bar. After all, how would they know that someone could reclaim the money from Timmons?

It was already evening, and gas wall lamps and stained-glass chandeliers illuminated Salle de Bal Unique’s dance hall.

Dancers in monocles and short suits swayed on the dance floor while others leaned against the railings with glasses of wine, wearing smiles as they observed others dancing. Musicians played violins and the clarinet in one corner, contributing to the lively atmosphere.

It appeared as though nothing unusual had occurred here.

After observing for a while, Lumian made his way to the stairs leading to the second floor.

The guard with a monocle, stationed at the top of the stairs, extended his right hand to block Lumian’s path.

He asked with an inscrutable smile, “Who are you here to see?”

Lumian maintained a relaxed demeanor as he replied, “I’m here to collect some debts from Timmons.”

“Then you can’t proceed upstairs,” the monocled guard retorted, his tone almost amused, as if he were witnessing a comedy.

Lumian’s lips curled into a radiant smile.

Bang!

His left fist connected with the guard’s face, sending the monocle flying. It crashed to the ground with a resounding crack.

Chapter 383 - 383 “Forced Storming”

383 “Forced Storming”

Amidst the sound of the monocle falling and sliding, the guard tilted his head, surprise and confusion crossing his face.

His reaction was rather bizarre. He didn’t react with anger or call for backup. It was as though he considered what had just happened a part of some performance filled with mystery.

Lumian passed by with a smile, heading up the stairs without a second glance.

The guard’s expression flickered, but he eventually gave up trying to intervene.

Still filled with puzzlement and thought, his eyes darted around, and a strange, anticipatory grin played on his lips, as if he expected something thrilling.

As Lumian reached the second floor, the two guards with monocles simply watched him pass without hindrance. They wore similar enigmatic and expectant smiles.

No Low-Sequence Beyonders? Lumian muttered, disappointed.

He had braced himself for a confrontation, something to showcase for the Alone Bar across the street. But, to his surprise, the other fake Amons in the Salle de Bal Unique were just regular folks. None of them seemed inclined to engage with him.

It made sense, though. Amon wasn’t like Mr. Fool or the Great Mother, capable of granting large-scale boons to believers. As for the

Low- and Mid-Sequence Beyonders, they had likely been dealt with. In the undetectable angelic struggle, they might have been eliminated.

The remaining individuals probably had no idea that the dance hall had turned unusual, and many of their colleagues had vanished without a trace. They likely believed that Lumian was about to join them or go mad from some sort of prank.

With no imposter Amon to confront, Lumian had no option but to improvise and enact the situation himself.

He pulled his revolver from its holster and nonchalantly fired at the rooms on both sides of the corridor.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Each bullet hit a window with precision, the shattering glass echoing through the hall, accompanied by gunshots.

The second-floor guards were both surprised and perplexed by Lumian's actions. They suspected that he had been repeatedly fooled by a coworker, leading to a mental breakdown.

Otherwise, why would he be taking on the air and windows?

Instinctively, the guards raised their right hands to adjust their monocles in their eyes. Their expressions became increasingly eager, as if they were anticipating the climax of this thriller.

Go, confront the iceberg beneath the sea and the fear lurking in the darkness!

After firing four shots, Lumian reached the largest office.

He pushed the slightly ajar door open and found a man seated behind a massive wooden desk. nove(l)bi(n.)com

The man had a wide forehead and narrow cheeks. His dark, slightly curly hair framed his face, and his light-blue eyes seemed unfocused.

He also sported a crystal-like monocle over his right eye and wore a

loose, comfortable black robe.

“Timmons?” Lumian inquired, entering with a furrowed brow.

The man snapped out of his daze and responded with a sense of disappointment, as if he had lost something precious.

“I’m Timmons.”

“You’re not dead yet?” Lumian asked, both surprised and amused.

As far as he knew, the other members of Salle de Bal Unique were in a state of being Amon and not Amon. However, Timmons, the boss here, must have been deeply parasitized. Such a person should have perished in the angelic-level battle, losing his life.

But that wasn’t the case.

Timmons glanced at Lumian, maintaining the frustration and emptiness of someone who had lost their soul.

“Many people wish me dead, but they don’t seem to have the power to curse me.

“Perhaps I’m already dead. All that’s left is a shell.”

“That’s not important. What matters is that you return my client’s 110,000 verl d’or, along with the interest,” Lumian stated as he retrieved the contract from his satchel with his left hand, courtesy of the bankrupt merchant, Fitz.

He anticipated Timmons’ rejection of his request and an ensuing confrontation.

Timmons shook off his despondency, raised a hand to his forehead, and smiled.

“There’s cash and accessories in the safe. Help yourself. The password is 010103.”

“I thought you’d put up a fight.” Lumian sighed in disappointment.

Timmons gazed at the revolver in Lumian's hand and remarked, "I'm just a swindler, not a miser. I can swindle others again when I'm out of money. But if I'm dead, there's nothing left.

"Besides, I've already lost the most important thing today. Compared to that, 110,000 verl d'or is nothing."

What do you mean you can swindle others if you're out of money? Haven't you ever considered becoming wealthy through legal means? Lumian pursed his lips and made his way towards the mechanical safe in the office.

Three, two, one… As he approached the safe, he counted down, expecting Timmons to launch a surprise attack from behind.

Yet, the owner of Salle de Bal Unique remained motionless. He didn't cry out for help or attempt to summon the police.

Lumian crouched in front of the iron-gray mechanical safe. Using the password provided by Timmons, he twisted the knob repeatedly until he heard a satisfying click.

He glanced at the banknotes and gold bars that clearly exceeded 100,000 verl d'or, opened his satchel, and collected them all.

With that task completed, Lumian raised his revolver, shattered the office window, and climbed out.

Timmons's lips curled into a playful smile, one shared by everyone present.

However, at that moment, Lumian unexpectedly spun around and pulled the trigger.

Bang!

A yellow bullet grazed Timmons's hair and embedded itself into a cabinet nearby.

The monocle-wearing Timmons's body tensed, and his smile disappeared. His eyes were filled with bewilderment.

He even caught a whiff of something burning above his head.

Lumian grinned and waved his hand.

“Surprised?”

With that, he leaped off the windowsill and landed in the alley behind Salle de Bal Unique.

Timmons’s expression gradually shifted, now marked by confusion and bewilderment.

Inside Salle de Bal Unique, the dancers with monocles on their right eyes and short suits went about their business, eagerly awaiting the intruder’s descent, imagining him donning a monocle and officially joining their ranks.

However, amid the intermittent gunshots, they failed to witness the spectacle they had anticipated.

…

Near Place du Purgatoire in Rue Ancienne, there was a bell tower belonging to the Eternal Blazing Sun Cathedral. Adjacent to the bell tower stood a newly constructed ten-story building.

Franca, disguised as a typical female mercenary, positioned herself at the rooftop’s edge with a brass telescope, her gaze fixed on the Alone Bar in the distance.

Amidst the distant echoes of gunshots, Leah, the bartender clad in a white shirt, black bow tie, and a dark knee-length dress, emerged at the bar’s entrance, her eyes directed towards Salle de Bal Unique, situated diagonally across from her.

Before long, Franca observed gray rats emerging from beside Leah’s feet. These rats crossed the street and disappeared beside the ancient building.

After another two to three minutes, a man and a woman exited the Alone Bar, pushing their way through the guards and entering Salle de Bal Unique.

Franca scrutinized the pair through her telescope and noticed that their expressions seemed animated and their movements agile when they "interacted" with the guards. However, as they crossed the street and passed by the guards, their expressions grew stiffer, and their movements became somewhat robotic.

Marionettes? Franca speculated.

As for the whereabouts of the Marionettist who created and controlled these marionettes, she couldn't discern it at all. The only thing she could deduce was that the effective range of this ability spanned dozens of meters, if not more.

Simultaneously, she couldn't help but complain, When there are people, they appear as 'real people.' But when there's nobody around, the Marionettist can't be bothered to maintain their facial expressions and character details? Isn't this too unprofessional?

Or perhaps it's a tactic to intimidate occasional onlookers and passersby who happen to catch a glimpse?

Franca maintained her vigil until Lumian had returned to his original form, changed his attire, and completed his anti-tracking measures. Even then, she couldn't spot the Marionettist when he met up with her.

Other than Leah, everyone else appeared to be marionettes!

Franca conveyed her frustration to Lumian, "Isn't this level of caution and meticulousness excessive? I couldn't find anything conclusive. All I can confirm is that there's definitely a Marionettist here, and it's highly likely that there's more than one."

Just hearing her account made Lumian's head ache, much like when dealing with Amon.

Could it be that they became "neighbors" because they excelled at concealing their true forms and were exceptionally elusive and hard to uncover?

"Is there no way to use Magic Mirror Divination to gather some clues?" Lumian pondered briefly before inquiring.

Franca gently shook her head in response.

“This is the Seer pathway. Unless I can directly possess one of the marionettes, I won’t be able to locate their true bodies.”

Lumian fell silent as he gazed at the now tranquil Salle de Bal Unique.

“Let’s head back. At the next gathering, we’ll gather information from I Know Someone, Hisoka, and Bard. They shouldn’t be as elusive as Loki. We can still pretend to be duped and see if we can draw them out.”

When the time came, Hidden Blade couldn’t step forward; Muggle would have to handle it herself. Franca had already purchased a copy of Loki’s information and was among the potential suspects.

“Agreed,” Franca concurred, realizing that this was their best course of action.

The two of them promptly departed from the high-rise apartment and secured a four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage.

As the carriage reached the intersection between Quartier de l’Observatoire and Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Franca turned to Lumian.

“Aren’t you going to perform another anti-tracking procedure?”

“Wouldn’t relying on your anti-divination skills be sufficient?” Lumian responded with a smile. “Besides, after leaving Salle de Bal Unique, I’ve already undertaken several anti-tracking measures.”

Franca stared at him for a couple of seconds before letting out a resigned sigh.

“Fine.”

…

Avenue du Marché, market district.

Lumian, carrying a satchel filled with banknotes and gold, said his goodbyes to Franca and proceeded towards Rue Anarchie. Franca, on the other hand, headed back to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Rue Anarchie was as lively and crowded as ever. Lumian weaved his way through vendors and pedestrians, drawing closer to Auberge du Coq Doré.

Suddenly, he experienced an unsettling sensation. His body seemed to lose coordination, as if someone had injected glue into his joints.

Chapter 384 - 384 Stagnation

384 Stagnation

Not good! Lumian was both a Hunter and a Dancer, and his mastery over his body was amazing. Any unfamiliar or abnormal situation immediately triggered his instincts, alerting him to potential danger.

But in that critical moment, his thoughts seemed to slow down, shrouded in a dense fog. Each idea froze, demanding tremendous effort to clear.

I've been attacked…

Loki is really… here…

Is this… the performance… of a Marionettist's abilities?
nove(l)bi(n.)com

As it nears the end… I won't be able… to think… Will I… become his… marionette?

My sense of danger… is clouded…

Dammit… Termi… boros, it's impossible… that you didn't notice… the changes in my fate… You didn't… warn me…

Did He intentionally tell me… that Loki… nearly tracked me… to make me do it again?

Me becoming Loki's… puppet… aids… Him in escaping… the seal?

I can't just… wait like this… I must resist with all my might…

Where is… Loki…?

In these fragmented thoughts, Lumian strained to move. His hand

found its way into his pocket, and he surveyed his surroundings with stiffness.

Previously, he and Franca had discussed the limitations of the Marionettist's power. They agreed that it must have a certain range or require proximity. Otherwise, it would exceed the capabilities of a Sequence 5 and only be within the realm of a saint who had transcended into godhood. Those from different pathways that Franca knew couldn't resist it at all.

The duo believed that this ability either required a certain medium or could only be activated at a close distance. Just like the Ring of Punishment's Psychic Piercing, it could only be effective if the distance between them was reduced to five meters.

Lumian suspected Loki was hiding nearby in the crowd, perhaps no more than ten meters away.

What greeted his eyes were street vendors and passersby. Some of their faces were familiar, while others were unfamiliar. They were no different from usual.

In his haste, Lumian couldn't discern Loki among them. Adding to the challenge, Loki was a Faceless, skilled in transformation and disguise.

As Lumian continued his search for Loki, a crimson flame manifested in his left palm.

His motives were twofold: first, to test his ability to resist a Marionettist's control and invasion by inflicting pain upon himself, and second, to set a question and observe how Loki would respond. By studying Loki's reactions, he hoped to glean insights into Loki's exact whereabouts and weaknesses in his marionette-making abilities.

But just as the searing pain coursed through his mind, Lumian heard a distinct snap.

Instantly, the crimson flame in his palm dissipated into a harmless stream of light, unable to form anything explosive.

Lumian spun around, trying to identify the source of the snapping of fingers.

However, his joints had become encased in a sticky “glue,” and his movements grew increasingly rigid and sluggish.

This delay caused him to turn a second slower than he intended. Everyone within his line of sight appeared normal, and he couldn’t pinpoint who had snapped their fingers.

Marionettist… is indeed capable… of Flame Controlling…

Pain… doesn’t… help much… in the slowdown of my thoughts… and stiffening of my body… It only… marginally… increased… my reaction speed…

I can’t… waste time… on such matters… The most important thing… now… is to find… Loki. Otherwise… whether I use… the Spell of Harrumph… summon Mr. K… or wait for… Franca to save me… wouldn’t… significantly change… the situation…

I wonder… if spirit world traversal… can be used… If… the next… two or three attempts… fail… I’ll… give it a try… and see if I can teleport out… of a Marionettist’s… ability range…

Lumian’s thoughts grew increasingly sluggish, but they weren’t to the point where he couldn’t think, react, or dodge any attack.

Soon, with his rich combat experience, he came up with an idea.

From the… current situation… a Marionettist… indeed needs… to be at close range… to gradually transform… their target… into a marionette…

In that… case… I’ll make sure… there’s no one… or animals… within a ten-meter… radius!

Whoever… lingers… within the Inferno Hell… shall be Loki!

Once Lumian understood the situation, he immediately opened his mouth and shouted, “There… is… a… fire!”

Crimson flames surged from Lumian’s body as he finished his staccato sentence.

With his feet as the center, they spread out, igniting the fruit peels and litter on the ground.

Alerted by Lumian's warning, nearby street vendors and pedestrians swiftly gathered their belongings and fled toward the ends of Rue Anarchie upon seeing the rising flames.

Seeing their hasty retreat, Lumian's sluggish smile emerged.

Yes, you can use Flame Controlling, but I'm not going to do any delicate maneuvers now. My only move is to constantly ignite the surrounding things and increase the variety of fire sources!

Moreover, this will inevitably draw the attention of official Beyonders!

Crimson flames expanded in all directions, resembling a vibrant ocean gradually consuming the earth.

Despite his faltering gaze, Lumian still managed to catch a glimpse of a figure flickering within the flames—a figure with black hair, blue eyes, and an ordinary face, blending in with the crowd of clerks on the road.

…

After bidding Lumian farewell, Franca made her way toward Rue des Blouses Blanches.

However, her journey took an unexpected turn as she suddenly veered into an alley, disappearing into the shadows.

This Demoness of Pleasure began to stealthily make her way toward Rue Anarchie.

This was her prior agreement with Lumian.

If their initial plan of barging into Salle de Bal Unique failed to provoke the Beyonders in the Alone Bar or have them reveal themselves, they had a backup plan—a kind of "fishing" expedition after leaving Rue Ancienne to see if they could "encounter" their target.

Franca's earlier inquiry about Lumian's intention to engage in counter-tracking was essentially confirming if they should stick to their original strategy. Lumian's response had been affirmative.

As Franca approached Rue Anarchie, she retrieved a mirror from the shadows.

This mirror was a Mirror Substitution, crafted using Lumian's blood and hair!

While it couldn't be used as a substitute for death or injury at this distance, it had a profound mystical connection to the original body. It could be employed to monitor Lumian's general condition.

In simple terms, if the mirror were to suddenly shatter, it would signal that Lumian had met his demise. If it displayed a few deep cracks, it would indicate that Lumian had suffered severe injuries.

Likewise, Franca had placed a Mirror Substitution on Lumian. This precaution was taken because they were uncertain whom Loki might target after their separation. They had no choice but to conceal themselves in the shadows and continue their activities. Through Mirror Substitution, they could keep tabs on each other's well-being and provide timely assistance.

This method was more reliable than attempting to discern changes in luck, as Loki possessed formidable anti-divination abilities and could manipulate fate after making decisions.

Franca, deep in her stealthy advancement, was suddenly alerted as the mirror in her hand grew icy cold.

Utilizing her Dark Vision, she pierced through the shadows and witnessed the mirror's transformation into a lifeless gray, as if it had rusted or been submerged in the depths of an icy lake.

Ciel is under attack? Franca's heart tightened as she quickened her pace.

Upon reaching Rue Anarchie, she was met with the sight of spreading flames. Within the crimson inferno, a figure flickered intermittently. Occasionally, it opened its mouth, producing a sharp bang.

It sounded like a real gunshot, causing vendors and pedestrians to scatter in fear, believing a violent gunfight between the mobs was unfolding.

Lumian, on the other hand, struggled to evade the attacks, but he failed twice. The Air Bullets grazed his body, leaving noticeable wounds.

However, it was clear that the figure didn't truly intend to harm him. It seemed more concerned about the potential complications that injuries might cause before a specific juncture.

Relieved that Lumian was relatively unscathed, Franca retreated into the shadows and approached the battlefield cautiously. As she drew nearer, she retrieved a mirror and,

disengaging from the shadows, directed the mirror toward the clusters of flames. Her right hand became enshrouded in zero-temperature black flames.

When the figure appeared in the mirror's reflection, Franca swiftly ran her right hand across the mirror's surface.

Silently, the figure burst into pitch-black flames.

He swiftly thinned and shrank, transforming into an intricately cut paper figurine.

Among the crowd, roughly ten to twenty meters away, an unusually ordinary-looking man clad in a black suit emerged.

Lumian's thoughts snapped back to full speed, and his body shook off the stiffness that had hindered him.

In a flash, he vanished from his previous position and reappeared just seven meters away from the suspected Loki.

Lumian then exclaimed, "Hmph!"

A brilliant beam of white light shot forth from his nostrils, targeting the ordinary-looking man with black hair and blue eyes.

Simultaneously, Franca acted in perfect coordination. She conjured a transparent ice spear and hurled it toward their target.

Upon piercing the ground, white frost rapidly spread from the impact, chilling those nearby and causing their bodies to stiffen.

At that very moment, a thin-faced passerby with brown hair and brown eyes interposed himself between Lumian and the suspected Loki, intercepting the white beam created by Lumian.

He appeared unharmed, his blank eyes gazing upwards as he began to sing an aria.

“Oh, my Sun!”

In an instant, it was as if a blinding sun had risen within the minds of Lumian, Franca, and others nearby, rendering their thoughts sluggish.

Instinctively, the duo moved to evade, with one either retreating into the shadows while encasing herself in a crystalline and resilient frost or rolling to the side of the road and using the Niese Face to alter his appearance.

When the intense sunlight eventually receded, they found that both the man suspected to be Loki and the “passerby” singing the aria had vanished into thin air.

Fearful glances from vendors and passersby were directed their way. Those closest to the spectacle had shut their eyes tightly, tears streaming down their faces.

Chapter 385 - 385 Before and After Comparison

385 Before and After Comparison

Lumian swiftly assessed the surroundings, taking in the scattered gas street lamps and their flickering crimson flames. In the distance, figures moved about cautiously, but none dared to draw near. The individuals up ahead couldn't even open their eyes due to the blinding glare of the "sun."

"Son of a sow, did they just vanish into thin air?" Lumian couldn't help but curse under his breath, his anxiety and anger mounting.

Had they fled without even engaging in a proper battle?

Did they disengage once a single strike failed?

"Dammit, were you born in the year of the rat? Slippery as eels, and they vanish at the drop of a hat!" Franca cursed as she approached Lumian, using a peculiar phrase that seemed like a translation. "The Seer and Marauder pathways are truly interchangeable. Their styles are too damn similar, aren't they?"

This was primarily evident in their inability to strike or capture the primary target.

The key difference was that the Seer pathway started behaving this way from Sequence 7, while the Marauder pathway might have to wait until they reached Sequence 4 to exhibit such traits.

Lumian's mind raced as he pondered how to track down Loki and his marionette.

Perhaps they had already made their escape, or maybe they were

lurking somewhere in the evening streets of Rue Anarchie!

A marionette…

Yes, that aria-singing marionette had taken my Spell of Harrumph head-on without flinching. That suggests there's a high chance it's already dead. No active, conscious Spirit Body…

My near-transformation into a marionette confirms this indirectly…

If the marionette is dead, it probably doesn't possess the fate of a living being. No so-called luck. Even if there is, it's locked in darkness. That spells death…

If we can't locate Loki, who possesses Faceless powers, maybe we can start with his marionette!

With this plan in mind, Lumian concentrated, carefully observing the destiny of the people standing more than ten to twenty meters away.

He scanned everything that had a destiny and wasn't shrouded in darkness.

After a rapid survey, Lumian couldn't identify any potential marionette targets.

He let out a slow, disappointed sigh.

"Let's get out of here. The firefighters are on their way. Official Beyonders should be arriving soon," Franca warned Lumian.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and left Rue Anarchie before the crimson flames could be extinguished.

After taking a dozen steps, Lumian suddenly remembered Monsieur Ruhr, who had succumbed to illness, and Madame Michel, who had hanged herself while singing the Capital of Joy.

He feared that he might unwittingly bring a catastrophe involving Beyonder powers to Auberge du Coq Doré and his entrustee, Fitz.

As the leader of April Fool's, Loki took pleasure in manipulating

others' minds. He had no qualms about harming his comrades, let alone murdering innocent people he had never met. Therefore, the likelihood was high that he would commence with Lumian's acquaintances and employ their deaths to shatter Lumian's psyche. He would secretly revel in watching Lumian descend into madness before seizing the opportunity to end his life.

Though it was only a possibility, Lumian refused to take the risk. He halted and turned towards Avenue du Marché.

"What's the matter?" Franca inquired, her expression one of confusion.

Having regained his composure, Lumian flashed a reassuring smile and replied, "Let's grab a drink at Salle de Bal Brise."

The fate of the mobsters he frequently associated with was of lesser concern. Mobsters knew they had to be prepared for such eventualities!

Franca was momentarily taken aback but quickly grasped Lumian's underlying worry.

Loki had hooked a big fish but failed to capture it. It was clear he had seen through their true appearances. He could hide in the shadows and wait for the perfect moment. As for Lumian and herself, unless they abandoned their current identities and used their anti-divination and anti-tracking abilities to survive elsewhere, they would be left in a state of constant suspicion, fearing that any rat they saw might attack them.

Compared to Auberge du Coq Doré, the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise offered a quieter and more defensible location.

Furthermore, in the event of a Beyonder-level confrontation, it was better to involve mobsters rather than innocent bystanders.

"I'll change my attire as well," Franca hinted, indicating her desire to alter her appearance and remain hidden in the shadows, making it difficult for Loki to locate her and launch any potential attacks.

Similarly, she intended to have Jenna return home and stay with her

brother for a while to avoid becoming collateral damage.

In the face of such a bizarre and terrifying adversary, the survivability of an Instigator remained too fragile.

Lumian gently patted the concealed Franca's Mirror Substitution hidden beneath his clothing with his right hand, signaling the need for them to watch each other's backs.

Franca nodded solemnly, affirming her understanding of the situation.

…

Salle de Bal Brise, the café on the second floor.

Lumian settled at the far end near the window and turned to his bodyguard, Sarkota.

"Go to Auberge du Coq Doré and fetch a bankrupt merchant named Fitz."

With such an intermediary, Fitz would appear to have achieved his objectives through his association with the Savoie Mob, and there was no direct connection to Ciel Dubois. If Loki intended to select a victim, he would likely focus on the Savoie Mob members affiliated with Lumian.

With the weighty satchel resting on his lap, Lumian patiently awaited Fitz's arrival while contemplating the Loki-related issues at hand.

Having lost track of the April Fool's leader, Lumian was left with only certain phenomena to guide him in this matter.

One of the details was an option Lumian had predetermined before taking action.

Upon leaving Salle de Bal Unique, Lumian had intentionally followed the same anti-tracking procedures as before. He reverted to his original appearance, changed his clothing, and modified his satchel. However, as he traversed Rue Ancienne again and reunited with Franca, he refrained from employing any anti-tracking measures. This

was done to establish a comparative sample and identify any discrepancies.

After all, if he failed to capture the bizarre and seemingly unkillable Loki, his efforts would be in vain.

He needed to gain something valuable from this encounter.

This was a smaller trap concealed within a larger one.

Logically, if my anti-tracking procedures had shaken off Loki previously, there should be no reason for an exception this time. I had meticulously paid attention to the people and creatures around me, even avoiding the watchful eyes of birds in the sky. Even if a mere insect became one of Loki's marionettes, it would struggle to keep up with my swiftness…

Therefore, either Franca had been targeted early in the morning, or Loki recognized me when I passed through Rue Ancienne again after my anti-tracking.

Franca carried out anti-divination procedures and was a distance away from the Alone Bar and Salle de Bal Unique. She didn't even enter Rue Ancienne and had used non-mystical methods to observe. It's unlikely that she'll be exposed so quickly unless Loki was aware from the outset that such an observer would be present…

The likeliest scenario was that Loki had recognized me when I passed through Rue Ancienne again after my anti-tracking procedures. But how had this recognition occurred? I had reverted to my original appearance, altered my clothing, and even chosen to pass through in a rented carriage to avoid suspicion. According to Anthony, this should have concealed my unchanged leather shoes from prying eyes and hidden my typical gait and body language… This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

I had even applied cologne to mask my original scent…

What unique characteristics do I possess that allows Loki to discern my identity within such a brief period?

Lumian compared the differences and gradually arrived at a

hypothesis.

Either a Marionettist or one of his marionettes possesses the ability to directly identify a person at the level of their soul, consciousness, or some other aspect, or Loki can perceive distinctive traits that set me apart from others—such as Inevitability's angel, Mr. Fool's seal, or the Blood Emperor's aura?

Although Lie belongs to the Seer pathway, it does not have a readily detectable convergence force that corresponds to Loki's Sequence…

The more Lumian pondered, the more convinced he became that Loki had a means of piercing his disguise, but his tracking abilities were limited. A vigilant target who remained wary of strangers, animals, birds, and insects while being impossible to carry out any direct divination would successfully evade him.

Regardless of how Loki told him apart, this was the best explanation when carrying out the before-and-after comparison.

With this in mind, Lumian had a new idea.

Lumian's lips curled slightly as he cast his gaze toward the dark night sky.

Fifteen minutes later, Fitz, the bankrupt merchant, was brought into the café by Sarkota

Lumian signaled for Sarkota to step aside momentarily and addressed Fitz, "I've already recovered the money. How much do you think you should receive?"

As he spoke, Lumian emptied the banknotes, gold coins, and valuable accessories onto the table, his eyes briefly scanning over them.

"About 130,000 verl d'or in total."

Fitz blurted out, "60,000, no, 50,000. No, just give me 30,000 verl d'or."

With a smile, Lumian separated a few bundles of neatly bound banknotes and tossed them to Fitz.

“As we agreed, the interest belongs to me, and I’ll take 50% of the principal. Here’s 50,000 verl d’or.”

Fitz accepted the money with gratitude, expressing his heartfelt thanks.

While he didn’t receive the full amount, 50,000 verl d’or was a substantial sum that would enable him to start anew with hope in his heart.

50% of the principal along with interest was a fair arrangement!

Lumian was equally pleased. Through the operation facilitated by the Angel of Time by Mr. Fool’s side, he had effortlessly gained 50,000 verl d’or in banknotes and 30,000 gold coins.

After all, he had worked so hard to gather gold, but in the end, he only accumulated 75,000 gold.

Deep in thought, he contemplated the idea of purchasing sacrificial offerings from the corresponding domain as a token of gratitude to Mr. Fool and the Angel of Time.

After waiting for over half an hour, Lumian ascended to the bedroom on the second floor. He discarded his satchel and employed Lie to alter his appearance once more, assuming the likeness of a male Aurore with black hair and brown eyes.

He changed into a shirt, vest, trousers, and leather boots, stowed away Lie, and transferred the Flog boxing gloves into his briefcase. He carefully surveyed the scene beyond the window.

Once he confirmed that no humans, rats, or birds were in the vicinity, Lumian pushed open the window and gracefully leaped out, seemingly unaware that Loki might possess the ability to see through his disguise.

Chapter 386 - 386 Caution

386 Caution

In the dark and deserted back alley,

Finally, he arrived at Rue des Blouses Blanches and entered the seemingly “abandoned” safe house, whose lease had not yet expired.

Following a process, he pulled the heavy curtains shut and meticulously inspected every corner of the room.

Compared to before, he not only eradicated the bedbugs and routed the rats but he also left no room for tiny, rice-grain-sized flying insects. He demanded absolute cleanliness.

With that done, Lumian seated himself at the table. He smoothed out a sheet of paper and began to write.

“Honorable Madame Hela,

“When I took part in the April Fool’s team discussion masquerading as my sister, Muggle, I couldn’t help but notice the peculiar reactions of Hisoka, Mad Lady, Bard, and Ultraman upon Muggle’s unexpected return after her prolonged absence. I suspect ‘I Know Someone’ was the psychiatrist Muggle sought in her final moments.

“Simultaneously, they were collaborating with Loki in a ruse, hoping to entice members from other teams to embark on a subterranean quest for the remains of the Ancient Sun God.

“I believe Loki is the de facto leader of April Fool’s. If there’s anything awry with the others, it undoubtedly concerns him as well. Consequently, I acquired a copy of the Ancient Sun God’s information from him and enlisted divination services to examine the mechanical typewriter responsible for producing the text. It happened at the

Alone Bar on Rue Ancienne in Trier Quartier de l'Observatoire.

"Following some field investigation, it became apparent that this locale serves as the stronghold for Bureau 8. However, Loki appears to have set his sights on me. I was assaulted in the evening and narrowly escaped becoming his marionette. My escape, though, exposed my true identity to him.

"As I write this letter, I find myself in the safe house I had previously prepared. Nevertheless, I can't be certain whether I have eluded Loki's pursuit.

"I strongly suspect there's something amiss with him. If left unchecked, he could pose a grave threat to the Research Society in the days ahead.

"I hope to receive your assistance."

Lumian felt no shame in laying out his intentions plainly.

His plan was to make himself the bait that would draw Loki out of hiding, while Hela, with her ability to harness Concealment, would lurk in the shadows, ready to deliver the decisive blow to the leader of April Fool's.

Perhaps only Hela, with her superior Sequence and mastery of Concealment, had a chance of evading detection and discovering the true body of their bizarre and unkillable adversary.

After folding the letter, Lumian swiftly arranged the altar and summoned the pure silver skull adorned with pale-white flames in its eye sockets.

…

Franca stealthily made her way back to Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. She used her persuasive abilities to convince Jenna to temporarily vacate the premises for a couple of days.

Only after Jenna repeatedly confirmed that she would be of no assistance did she reluctantly give up her facade of bravery, departing amidst a string of curses.

As she applied makeup, she couldn't help but curse fate's mother.

Such skills were fundamental for an apprentice actress.

With a simple disguise in place, Franca seamlessly shifted between invisibility and concealment within the shadows, weaving her way through the market district.

She made a concerted effort to thwart any attempts at divination and employed anti-tracking techniques learned from Lumian.

Finally, she returned to Rue des Blouses Blanches and entered Building 6.

This was the safe house she had prepared for herself, conveniently overlooking her original residence.

Phew… Franca, having completed all the procedures, heaved a sigh of relief and lay down in the Loen-style recliner.

Simultaneously, she muttered to herself, I've only known Ciel for less than three months. Why does it feel like I've experienced more in this time than in the past year…

Is this guy some sort of jinx reincarnate?

…

In the secure confines of the safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches, Lumian patiently waited for nearly fifteen minutes. Then, from the abrupt darkness, the pure silver skull's head emerged, clutching a simple folded letter in its skeletal teeth.

"Thank you," Lumian replied habitually, accepting the letter.

If Hela was unwilling to engage with a suspected member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian had no choice but to abandon his current plan and swiftly locate Franca. He would guide her through spirit world traversal to distant locales like the hill district, Quartier éraste, and other suburbs before returning.

He felt that it was the only way to evade Loki's pursuit or lock-on.

Moving openly was out of the question unless he shifted to an entirely different area.

Lumian unfolded the paper and discovered that Hela's response was succinct: "Got it."

A wry smile curled at the corners of Lumian's mouth as he conjured crimson flames from his hand, igniting the reply.

Without delay, he restored the table's surface to its ordinary state and reverted to his original appearance, aided by the Lie earring.

Next, Lumian extinguished the carbide lamp and reclined on the bed, closing his eyes and feigning slumber.

As minutes slipped away, night settled in, and Rue des Blouses Blanches descended into stillness.

The crimson moonlight filtered through heavy curtains, casting a subdued, eerie glow within the room.

After an indeterminate span of time, a small, grayish-black figure emerged from a concealed crevice in the corner—a nondescript rat.

Soundlessly and stealthily, the rat approached the table, ascending its surface. It moved about with deliberate intent, as if surveying its territory for any signs of intrusion.

After a brief inspection, it halted its actions and retreated into the shadowy corners untouched by the dim moonlight. Its body now faced the bed.

The rat fixated its gaze upon Lumian with an unnervingly human-like intensity.

Nearly ten minutes passed, and faint, nearly imperceptible footsteps echoed from the corridor outside the apartment.

Tap, tap, tap. The footsteps drew nearer.

Abruptly, the footsteps vanished as if they had never been or had come to a standstill at some unseen juncture.

The rat retreated from the shadowy realm untouched by the crimson moonlight, traversing the table and vanishing through the same crevice it had emerged from.

With swiftness, it disappeared, leaving the room in an even deeper silence, broken only by the faint sound of Lumian's slow, rhythmic breathing.

Lumian didn't open his eyes. His body was very relaxed, as if he had truly fallen asleep.

…

6 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in an apartment.

Franca reclined in the recliner, swaying back and forth with the chair.

Troubled, she pondered what to do next. With such a bizarre and terrifying foe lurking in the shadows, the constant sense of being watched had left her restless, and she couldn't find solace whether sitting or standing.

I need to resolve this quickly. One can be a thief for a thousand days, but how can you guard against a thief for a thousand days? One misstep, and it's all over…

Why don't I abandon the mission and relocate? Or I can go all out and ask Madam Judgment for help to apprehend Loki under the pretext that the mission will likely fail. It's feasible, but I'll shoulder a debt that I won't be able to repay until I become a demigod. Even if Ciel takes half of it, it'll be a heavy burden…

We can also ask Madam Hela to convene an emergency gathering and accuse Loki and the others of causing Muggle's death on the spot. We can request that we find reliable members to interrogate each other and see which side is lying. Uh, we can't be entirely sure if there's really something wrong with Loki and the others, but it's certain that I colluded with an outsider and lured in a spy…

The more Franca thought about it, the more frustrated she became. She used proverbs from her homeland and didn't deliberately change

it.

Suddenly, an overwhelming sense of danger gripped her, and simultaneously, an eerie chill crawled up her spine.

Her body stiffened, and a figure reflected in her lake-like eyes.

Clad in a short black formal suit typical of clerks, with neatly combed brown hair, a face bearing Southern Continent heritage, and dull green eyes…

Wraith! The word flashed through her mind as she recognized the nature of the impending attack.

Franca's thoughts became hazy, and her right hand instinctively rose, as if resisting an unseen force.

She channeled the spirituality within her Soul Body, preparing to unleash the black flames of a Demoness.

This ability targeted a Spirit Body and was capable of incinerating Wraiths. Demonesses possessed a heightened resistance to such flames compared to other pathways, and they could even use injuries to escape or severely harm their adversaries.

At that moment, Franca heard a magnetic voice.

"It's futile. Surrender."

The sound pierced Franca's mind like sharp arrows, interrupting her attempt to condense the black flames.

As soon as the voice faded away, her mind seemed to be shrouded in a thick fog, and a thick frosted glass appeared in front of her.

The voice continued, "I didn't use my full strength in the evening to test the waters. The person impersonating Muggle with a high-level existence sealed in him must possess some special abilities. If I hadn't done my best to gather information, I might have been the one to die.

"After the probe, things got even more interesting. I went to his place just now and felt that it wasn't safe enough. Therefore, I planned to

turn you into my marionette and launch a surprise attack.

“Heh heh, do you think you can escape my grasp? There’s something special about us. As long as we’re within a kilometer of each other, I can use the power of a great existence to sense your location.

“I’ve long yearned for a Demoness to be my marionette. It’ll definitely taste good…”

Franca’s Spirit Body was repeatedly affected by the sound, interrupting her efforts to activate Mirror Substitution and condense black flames in advance. Her thoughts became increasingly sluggish, and her joints felt as if they were filled with glue.

Can… Loki… sense… my location?

What’s… so special… Why… can he…

Before Franca could piece together any answers or formulate a complete response, the magnetic voice, now with a sinister smile, continued, “I can’t waste any more time. I must accelerate to avoid unforeseen complications.”

At this point, the voice turned respectful and recited in Franca’s unusually familiar language, “The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings;

“The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…”This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Chapter 387 - 387 Vile

387 Vile

In the room with the thick curtains, Lumian suddenly felt the Mirror Substitution inside his clothes turn abnormally cold. Even through the linen shirt, he couldn't help but shiver.

Beneath the faint crimson moonlight, the mirror lost its luster, its surface resembling ice.

Lumian knew that Franca was in danger. Without hesitation, he activated the mystical connection between the substitute and its true form, emitting a dim light from the black mark on his right shoulder.

In an instant, Lumian vanished from the bed, reappearing in the living room at 6 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian saw the surroundings engulfed in an eerie grayness, a fog obscuring the crimson moonlight. Franca lay in a recliner, her body contorting as if she fought for survival.

Her lake-colored eyes were filled with a turbulent mix of emotions: anger, fear, anxiety, and worry. A vague figure seemed to encircle her. Her head tried to move, but her movements were restrained by invisible threads.

Suddenly, the sound of nails scraping on a blackboard assaulted their senses, incomprehensible words piercing their Spirit Bodies. Their consciousness soared upward until they reached a dark void shimmering with countless stars.

In the highest reaches of this void, mysterious symbols swirled, their forms beyond description.

They coalesced into a dynamic, otherworldly door that defied the

intrusion of even the moon's crimson light.

Lumian and Franca's spirits were drawn inexorably toward the door. As they approached, a faint voice emanated from within—a voice that seemed to hold the secrets of the entire universe, as well as the madness, self-destruction, and darkness lurking within every heart.

With each step toward the dynamic door, the maddening ramblings grew more intense, causing their heads to throb in agony. Yet an overpowering, primal urge compelled them to enter, to merge with the formless entity behind the door, and to partake in a clandestine pact that promised essential, primordial, extraordinary, and potent knowledge.

Amidst the sea of incomprehensible symbols, the door stood slightly ajar, allowing invisible entities to pass through.

With a resounding hum, Lumian and Franca's minds were plunged into a state of blankness, as if struck by a relentless force.

The chaotic ravings they had heard coalesced into grotesque, shadowy entities that corroded their very Soul Bodies and physical bodies.

Franca's eyes widened, and her flaxen-colored hair fluttered in the windless air, vaguely thickening.

Blood seeped from the corners of her eyes, nostrils, ears, mouth, and pores, as if a demon was trying to separate her flesh from her skin.

Franca's thoughts were in a state of intense disorder, as if a human had been thrown into a factory blender.

Seizing the moment, the Wraith that had been attached to Franca detached itself from the Demoness of Pleasure.

This Wraith, dressed in a sleek black suit, its eyes flickering with a sinister green hue, let out a piercing shriek.

A cacophonous shattering sound, both illusory and real, filled the room as Franca's body vanished from the recliner and reappeared in the bedroom.

Beneath the shattered mirror's reflection on the recliner, Lumian, though still affected by the ravings and shrieks, fared better than Franca.

Despite the excruciating headache, scattered thoughts, and ruptured capillaries in various places, he retained some semblance of instinctual reaction and basic cognition. His face contorted grotesquely amidst the blood, but he held on.

In the next moment, the Wraith disappeared from the recliner and manifested within Lumian's blue eyes.

His mind instantly fogged, and his body grew frigid, as if his very blood had turned to ice.

Still capable of thought, Lumian promptly utilized his spirit world traversal ability to escape the room, teleporting several hundred meters away.

He understood that a Marionettist couldn't naturally transform into a Wraith, and the Wraith that possessed him was likely a marionette. With their distinctive combat styles, it was improbable for a Marionettist to engage directly. Therefore, once the marionette was beyond the Marionettist's range, it would lose control and become useless.

When the time came, Lumian would "teleport" back and attempt to take Franca away.

While this would leave him essentially incapacitated, it would also disable Loki's marionette. The adversary would then need to decide whether to launch a direct assault or retreat cautiously, as he couldn't predict how many teleportations Lumian's spirituality could endure—a capability unusual for a Pyromaniac. Loki's assessment might not be entirely accurate in this regard!

Just as Lumian was on the verge of activating his spirit world traversal mark, he heard a magnetic voice: "Give up."

The words pierced Lumian's Spirit Body, disrupting his intentions.

Subsequently, his thoughts grew sluggish, and his body stiffened.

The magnetic voice chuckled softly.

“I don’t know what kind of trap you’ve set in your room, but it likely involves Hela, doesn’t it? After all, without her cooperation, you couldn’t have masqueraded as Muggle and infiltrated the Research Society, could you? Lumian Lee, Aurore Lee’s brother, I’ve seen your wanted poster.”

“In Trier, the easiest Beyonder to come into contact with is from the Hunter pathway. That’s why there’s a saying:

“‘Never fight a Hunter on his turf.’

“No one knows what sort of strange traps Hunters have laid in their ‘turf.’

“I didn’t want to take that risk, nor did I plan to face Hela directly. Although I’m not overly concerned about her unless she’s found a way to become a demigod, why would I engage her on a Hunter’s ‘turf’? My choice was to stage a surprise attack on Hidden Blade, drawing you out and away from your turf to fight on a ground of my choosing.

“After this afternoon’s reconnaissance, I confirmed that both of you possess an item capable of monitoring each other’s condition or a mysticism connection—likely the exchange of Mirror Substitution. Heh heh, ever wonder what my other marionette was doing during that time?

“In truth, I have no intention of killing Hidden Blade or turning her into a marionette. A living Demoness serves my purposes better. I can use this encounter to make her suffer and despair. When she advances to Sequence 4 using that, I’ll have a demigod marionette…”

The voice carried no provocation, yet each word ignited a burning rage within Lumian.

These words continued to disrupt Lumian’s mind and Spirit Body, interfering with his abilities. With the dual constraints of Wraith possession and Marionettist, Lumian resembled a statue, unable to speak or move. He stood frozen, awaiting the inexorable verdict of

fate.

A thin gray fog enveloped the room, sealing off all sound from the outside world.

The magnetic voice chuckled again, its taunting words continuing.

“It really shouldn’t have been so complicated, but you see, you have a high-ranking individual sealed within you. To ensure my own safety, the only option is to turn you into a marionette. I have no desire to face a high-ranking being after your demise. Who knows if he’ll thank me or finish me along the way?

“Indeed, when you showed up at the gathering and joined our April Fool’s team, I sensed that something was amiss. I suspected that Muggle had used a seal to escape the fragmentation of her soul. Little did I know, she was truly deceased. You are her brother…

“Haha, I still remember, in the latter part of last year, every time she attended a gathering, she sought out I Know Someone to treat her psychological issues and the hidden dangers arising from the improper use of the Soul Summoning Spell. And I Know Someone would divulge her pain, struggles, vulnerabilities, and transformations to all of us each time.

“It’s quite vile, completely against a doctor’s principles, but it’s fun and interesting. It gave us a sense of accomplishment and made us all laugh.”

Upon hearing this, Lumian’s mind buzzed.

He had been mildly annoyed by Loki’s earlier critiques, but now, as Loki recounted Aurore’s experiences, his anger reached a boiling point.

Aurore had been genuinely unwell, seeking treatment from a doctor. However, not only did this doctor patronize her, but he also derived amusement from her suffering. He repeatedly violated her privacy, sharing her struggles and illnesses with others, leading them to mock her behind her back.

What made it all the more despicable was that this group of

individuals had sold Aurore the Soul Summoning Spell.

Dammit!

Every single one… of them… deserves death! This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

They deserve… the most tragic way… of death!

Though Lumian's mind remained ensnared in stasis, his anger finally erupted. It surged through his spirit and coursed into his flesh.

He couldn't control it, not under the constant interference.

Crimson flames erupted from Lumian's body, and small red tendrils protruded from his eyes, radiating a malevolent blood-red hue.

It was a precursor to losing control. If this continued, he would truly lose control.

But Lumian felt no fear. Instead, he cooperated.

Even if I… lose control and turn into a monster… or a lunatic… I will… drag you… all of you… into the abyss!

Relying on his body's "instinctive reaction," crimson flames spread in all directions, incinerating the Wraith, igniting furniture, and causing a fire.

Unfortunately, this fiery onslaught proved ineffective against the Wraith-form marionette and Loki, who remained concealed somewhere beyond reach of the flames.

Its sole purpose, for those brief two seconds, was to disrupt the magnetic voice.

"It's useless. I know you mainly aim to use the flames to signal for help from the outside world rather than attacking me directly. But I've previously deceived Hidden Blade. Despite my claims of accelerating the progress, I actually harnessed the power of the gray fog to create a unique environment that isolates information here.

“While you can indeed break through the residual fog barrier if you go all out since I can’t ask for too much power, I can’t allow that.”

As Loki finished speaking, a frenzied, terrifying, violent, and exaggerated aura exploded from Lumian’s body. It shredded the thin fog and shot skyward.

Chapter 388 - 388 An Unquiet Night

388 An Unquiet Night

As the frenzied and violent aura surged out of the thin gray fog, 6 Rue des Blouses Blanches trembled slightly, as if in shock.

On a bed in a quiet room diagonally below Franca's apartment, a man whose eyes had been tightly shut, seemingly asleep, suddenly snapped awake. He gazed up warily and fearfully at the source of the terrifying aura.

At the same time, beneath église Saint-Robert, within the market district's Inquisition's office,

Angoulême de Fran?ois, who was on night duty, leaped to his feet and prepared to rush to the area where mystical items were sealed. He hoped to enhance his ability to handle accidents and disasters in a short period.

In other rooms, Imre, Valentine, and the others also sensed the violent aura that seemed to shake all of Trier. Some trembled, while others turned pale.

This was even more terrifying than the Tree of Shadow disaster.

However, they didn't stand still. Some dashed out of the room to rendezvous with Angoulême, while others raised their arms and hastily prayed to the Sun before sprinting toward the église Saint-Robert above.

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Gardner Martin, who had been stroking his full-body armor, furrowed

his brow and cast a puzzled glance toward the southeastern region.

He felt something calling to him, causing his blood to boil.

Deep underground in Trier, Olson, the starved bear-like man who had been lugging a small brown suitcase, suddenly perked up his ears to listen for any nearby movements.

The distant sounds of killings and shouts faintly reached him.

The Supervisor of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's eyes flashed with ferocity and madness. He extended his right hand and pressed it against his neck.

An indiscernible thread emerged, emitting fiery blood.

In the island district at the center of the Srenzo River, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Saint Viève cathedral was already shrouded in darkness. Only the nearby bell tower remained lit, but at that moment, the slumbering cathedral suddenly bathed in brilliant sunlight.

Sunlight flooded the onion-like domes, illuminating every stained glass window.

To the north of Trier, in the heart of the cathedral district, towering iron-black chimneys loomed above the God of Steam and Machinery's patriarchal cathedral.

Rumbling sounds echoed as the massive steam engine installed within the cathedral roared to life. Vast amounts of pale-white fog billowed forth from the forest-like chimneys, enshrouding the night sky.

In Quartier éraste, a small town very close to the Sacred Heart Cloister, a golden retriever and the lady beside it turned and gazed into the distance of Trier's metropolis.

Within Red Swan Castle, Count Poufer, already lying on his bed, opened his eyes.

He sensed the entire ancient castle become extremely oppressive, and

nightmarish roars and screams echoed from deep underground.

Hidden in a room diagonally below Franca's apartment, Loki had just reacted to the violent and terrifying aura. Before he could summon back the Wraith that had possessed Lumian and use it to escape through the spirit world with him out of caution, the surrounding darkness instantly intensified, swallowing the crimson moonlight and bringing an extreme calmness to the area.

Lumian's thoughts returned to normal. He channeled his anger, pouring all his pent-up emotions into the crimson flames.

"Go to hell!" Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

With a low growl, he took a left step forward, his eyes protruding with red vessels while twisting his waist and swinging his right fist with all his might.

With a muffled explosion, the flames on Lumian's body coalesced on the surface of his fist, naturally condensing into a blazing white fireball.

The blazing white fireball shot from Lumian's right fist, following a predetermined path, and crashed into the wall beside the apartment.

The voice he had just heard emanated from behind the wall!

Boom!

A large hole tore through the wall, revealing a man standing in the corridor.

He had brown hair, brown eyes, and a gaunt face. He was the marionette Loki had employed that evening.

He was the one who had been speaking!

Before Lumian could realize that he hadn't found the real Loki, darkness surged over him like a tidal wave, engulfing him.

Having already vented his anger and flames, Lumian's heart quickly

calmed. He subconsciously closed his eyes and slowly sank to the ground.

His contorted face began to relax, and his body and soul found peace.

He no longer showed any signs of losing control.

Dressed in a black widow-like dress and a veiled bonnet, Hela emerged from the darkness.

Being the closest to the apartment while searching for traces of the battle between Loki and Lumian, she was undoubtedly the first to arrive.

Without hesitation, she made Lumian, Franca, Loki, and the two marionettes vanish.

Her figure faded, and the dense darkness rapidly dissipated.

Apart from the collapsed wall, no evidence remained at the scene.

Two seconds later, the apartment was suddenly bathed in sunlight.

…

In an uninhabited mine beneath Trier.

They were all in a deep slumber, except for Hela. Her pale face remained conscious as she stood to the side.

The vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society no longer had the dry, withered hair she'd had before. It had transformed into smooth strands, now bearing the color of the night.

She pulled out a flask filled with liquor and downed a third of its contents before fixing her gaze on Lumian.

Hela's forehead began to crack silently, emitting an eerie, ancient glow that manifested into an indescribable, ancient bronze door.

The door swayed and creaked, revealing a narrow gap. Beyond it lay endless darkness, filled with countless dense, indescribable eyes

seemingly lurking within.

Under the influence of this deathly aura, the Wraith attached to Lumian flew out without resistance.

In an instant, it landed on the ground, and Hela raised her right hand, pressing it against its forehead. The ancient bronze door vanished, and the dim light receded into the crack.

Hela shifted her attention to the still-slumbering Loki.

The leader of the April Fool's had an ordinary face, blending into the crowd like any other resident of Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Hela stared at him for a brief moment before her eyes lost focus.

In Loki's dream.

Hela appeared, clad in a black widow-like attire, in front of an ancient castle shrouded in a thin gray fog.

The castle's massive doors stood wide open, eerily silent like the entrance to a cemetery.

Hela glanced up at the pitch-black castle with its numerous spires and thin form before stepping through the door. She passed through the dimly lit atrium, and proceeded into the hall, where peculiar chandeliers with unknown light sources hung.

Numerous guests filled the hall, their expressions frozen like wax statues, unmoving.

Surrounded by dozens or even hundreds of wax statues was a gray platform with three stone steps. In the middle of the platform was an ancient dark-red chair.

A man in his late twenties occupied the seat.

He wore a silk top hat and a black tailcoat, with dark-gray eyes and short, brown hair. Under his high nose bridge, the subtle curl of his mouth hid a non-obvious smile.

Pressing down on the armrests on both sides, the man relaxed and leaned back in his chair.

“Who are you?” His voice echoed through the ancient castle, as if questioning Hela.

Hela walked past the crowd suspected to be wax statues and arrived in front of the man.

Her cold voice remained impassive as she inquired, “Loki, don’t you recognize me?”

Loki’s grin intensified.

“Hela, you’ve come after all…”

Seizing the opportunity presented by his dream state, Hela confronted him directly.

“Why did you harm a member of the Research Society?”

Loki’s gaze shifted upwards, and he let out a laugh.

“The only purpose those fools serve is to amuse us.

“You must know that the apocalypse is imminent, just a few years away. They’re all destined to die, sooner or later. It’s better for them to sacrifice themselves now to provide us with entertainment.”

Hela fell silent, and a chilling silence enveloped the dream, the air growing colder. Decaying, pale-white hands extended from the stone floor and surrounding walls.

After a few moments, Hela spoke again.

“Why did you harm Muggle?”

Loki’s laughter ceased abruptly, replaced by a smirk as he looked at Hela.

“Because…”

His expression shifted suddenly, and Hela sensed imminent danger

within the dream.

“Because the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…”

Loki’s voice faded rapidly, and the entire dream began to crumble under Hela’s will. The ancient castle disintegrated into fragments, vanishing into an eerie, yet pure darkness.

Back in the real world, deep within the uninhabited mine beneath Trier, Hela opened her eyes. Countless tiny creatures wriggled beneath her pale-white skin.

In an instant, her form shifted and reassembled, no longer exhibiting the eerie abnormalities she had displayed earlier.

Loki’s body had disintegrated into a pool of flesh and blood, with grotesque maggots crawling in and out of it. Hela observed silently, but no Beyonder characteristics emerged from the remains.

…

Within the pitch-black castle enveloped in a thin fog, a dark-red coffin lay in a sinister chamber.

Suddenly, a pale-white hand emerged from the coffin, gripping its wooden edge.

Chapter 389 - 389 Suspected God

389 Suspected God

In the uninhabited quarry cave beneath Trier.

Hela observed as the transparent and distorted maggots perished, yet she didn't detect any Beyonder characteristics emerging.

She turned her attention to Lumian and Franca, who were sound asleep. Satisfied that they had regained control thanks to the night and their dreams, and their breathing had steadied, she ended her forced slumber.

Two seconds later, Lumian's eyes shot open, and he leaped up with the agility of a leopard.

In an instant, he summoned three crimson flames that illuminated the cavern.

As he kept a vigilant watch over his surroundings, Franca, still recovering from severe mental injuries, rubbed her head and slowly got to her feet, fear in her eyes.

Then, she spotted Hela in her distinctive black widow-like dress and the familiar bonnet with a veil. She blurted out, "Madame Hela, what brings you here?"

Instant regret washed over her. She had inadvertently revealed her affiliation with the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

If she hadn't spoken, she could have pretended to be nothing more than a friend of Ciel—that she wasn't Hidden Blade.

“Hidden Blade?” Hela inquired.

Franca let out a dry laugh.

“Yes, how did you recognize me?”

“You’re the only Demoness in the Research Society,” Hela replied calmly.

Franca felt even more embarrassed and replied ridiculously, “I recognized you based on your attire and demeanor. You never showed your face at the gatherings.”

As the two acknowledged each other, Lumian’s wariness visibly eased. With Madame Hela’s presence, he felt his safety was assured.

Then, he noticed the two marionettes lying lifeless on the ground, surrounded by a pool of flesh infested with translucent maggots.

“Is that Loki?” Lumian pointed at the grotesque, horrifying mass.

Hela cast her gaze over.

“Yes.”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before asking, “Is he dead?”

Hela nodded slightly and said, “He succumbed to his own loss of control, but it’s not a complete demise.”

“Huh?” Franca asked in confusion.

Look at how badly minced he is. Maggots are crawling out, but he’s not completely dead?

She had already figured out why Madame Hela had appeared. Ciel, that scoundrel, must have used her as bait again and written a letter to Madame Hela to clean up the mess!

Hela looked at Lumian and said coldly, “High-level Demonesses aren’t the only ones capable of resurrection; high-level Seers can do it too. Loki likely worships an evil god in this domain. Combined with

his uniqueness, he can abandon his body upon death and revive in a pre-prepared location with his characteristics intact.

“Unfortunately, I didn’t foresee this. If I had prayed for true Concealment in advance, he wouldn’t have been able to revive, and he’d leave behind his Beyonder traits.”

The woman calmly recounted her oversights, offering no excuses and showing no frustration.

Lumian’s eyes remained fixed on the grotesque mass of flesh infested with dead maggots, a slow smile spreading across his face.

The corners of his mouth curled upward as he remarked, “Not bad at all. If he were to meet his end like this, I’d be disappointed. How can I not be the one to kill him with my own hands?”

As Lumian spoke, a burning desire for High-Sequence Beyonder powers ignited within him.

Loki was undeniably formidable. Even when he and Franca had joined forces, Loki had come dangerously close to turning Lumian into a marionette. Yet, Hela, suspected to have advanced to Sequence 4, had effortlessly dispatched him in less than ten seconds.

Lumian understood that unleashing the Blood Emperor aura would undoubtedly draw the attention of official Beyonders from the market district, possibly prompting them to seek assistance from the Churches’ saints. Therefore, after Hela had sought him out, she had to subdue Loki and relocate him within ten seconds. Otherwise, the chance of being intercepted by Trier’s saints and angels was exceedingly high.

This was what a demigod was like!

Lumian eagerly looked forward to summarizing more Pyromaniac acting principles and digesting the potion over the next two to three months. His goal was to attempt an advancement to Conspirer. He recollected his plans for revenge against Loki and the others, the eradication of heretics, and his insatiable thirst for mystical, high-end powers.

Seeing Lumian's lack of regret or disappointment, replaced instead by an unwavering fighting spirit, Hela subtly nodded in approval.

Lumian's gaze remained fixed on Loki's corpse.

"Which evil god does he worship?"

Franca's heart skipped a beat at this question. She turned to Hela and asked, "Could it be…"

The Demoness of Pleasure paused briefly before switching to a complicated language that Lumian couldn't understand.

"The Immortal Lord…"

Hela abruptly cut her off.

"Have you forgotten that I don't understand that language either?"

"Uh…" Franca couldn't help but slap her forehead.

My pig brain!

Hela continued, "Speak in ancient Feysac or Intisian. Also, remember, pause after each line and tell me something else."

Franca quickly acknowledged her instructions, organized her thoughts, and began speaking in ancient Feysac.

"The Immortal Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…"

Hela interrupted her once again and engaged in a brief discussion about Loki's assault.

Franca continued, "The Sky Lord of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…"

Lumian, paying close attention, began to grasp the purpose of Madame Hela's request.

It was a precaution to prevent Franca from reciting the evil god's full honorific name and potentially attracting unwanted attention.

“The Exalted Thearch of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…” Franca repeated the third line and massaged her temples. “When I heard Loki recite it, it felt like I had been transported to another world. Everything was shrouded in fog, and I couldn’t discern anything clearly. My thoughts slowed to a crawl. I vaguely recall that there should be another phrase.”

Hela chimed in with her own addition in ancient Feysac, “The Celestial Worthy. Of Heaven and Earth. For Blessings.”

This time, she even paused the simple line twice.

Lumian couldn’t help but express his confusion. “This name has a rather odd style.”

It differed significantly from the honorific names of deities like Mr. Fool, the Eternal Blazing Sun, and others he was familiar with. The format and words gave off the impression of belonging to a distinct civilization.

Franca furrowed her brow in thought.

“Now that you mention it, I recall something.”

Lumian inquired, “What is it?”

Franca was about to speak but then abruptly closed her mouth.

She looked at Hela with a sheepish smile.

“Do you mind if I assisted Ciel in infiltrating the Research Society to investigate the April Fool’s team?”

“He had my approval,” Hela replied calmly.

Franca maintained her “submissive” smile.

“Then, would you mind if I had shared the secret of our transmigration with Ciel?”

Hela fell silent for a few moments before responding, “Does it matter if I mind now? Should I Conceal both of you?”

Franca suddenly realized that this situation might not be entirely negative and hastily explained, “You see, the April Fool’s team is under suspicion for Muggle’s death, and there’s no way around revealing our secret when investigating them. That’s why I told Ciel about it. Besides, Ciel has genuinely helped us find clues related to transmigration and the possibility of returning to our world!”

She wore an expression as if she had already made up for her mistake.

“What clues?” Hela blurted out for the first time.

Franca exhaled and said, “This is somewhat complex. Let me start by recalling what those honorific names reminded me of.

“We’ve been communicating, trying to find commonalities and similarities in what each of us did before transmigration to uncover the reason. Some received mysterious phones, others entered abandoned ancient temples in the mountains, and some were studying folklore culture. But I can’t pinpoint what I did that led to it. It’s not that I can’t remember, but I’ve done so much.

“As you all know, I enjoy novelty. I buy new phones, play new games, try out new restaurants, and even create clothing and cosplay at major conventions. I engaged in a multitude of activities before transmigrating, making it difficult to determine which one triggered the transmigration.

“However, when I heard the honorific name Loki recited, I recalled that on that particular night, I had played a new video game called ‘Terror Attack.’ In the game, there was a hidden monster that had faith in something called the ‘Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth.’”

Though Lumian didn’t comprehend the concept of a “video game,” he grasped the essence of Franca’s explanation.

Her transmigration in this world appeared to be connected to the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, whom Loki worshiped!

Hela, her light-blond hair flowing naturally over her shoulders,

listened attentively and contemplated for a moment before speaking, “I don’t have similar recollections. As I mentioned earlier, before transmigrating, I delved into non-mainstream mythological books. There was a deity skilled in deception and pranks who bore a striking resemblance to Loki…”

Franca’s eyes gleamed with insight as she ventured a hypothesis. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

“Could Loki have transmigrated by reciting the four lines of the honorific name? So, upon his arrival in this world, he recollected his actions from that time and attempted to recreate them, forging a connection with that evil god?

“Yes, he spoke vaguely when discussing such matters. The members of the April Fool’s team shared a similar experience…

“Could it be that we were all brought here by the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings? Or did He summon us to this world?

“He’s highly suspicious!”

Hela contemplated this for a moment and nodded slightly.

“At our next gathering, we can revisit this topic and communicate with others with a clearer focus.”

Franca was taken aback.

“Will the members of the April Fool’s team still attend?”

“The problematic ones probably won’t,” Hela replied calmly. “Even if we hastily arrange a gathering now, we’d have to notify them individually. This period of time is sufficient for Loki to revive and alert his associates.”

Lumian raised his eyebrows.

“Why does everyone need to be notified individually? Just invite the April Fool’s team to an emergency meeting. They won’t know if others will attend. It won’t take long to inform a dozen of them.”

Chapter 390 - 390 Hidden Danger

390 Hidden Danger nove(l)bi(n.)com

Hela glanced at Lumian and fell silent for two seconds before saying, “Alright, I’ll get ready now.

Ten minutes, combined with the discussion they just had, was enough time for Loki to revive and alert his accomplices.

Lumian’s expression remained unchanged as he nodded gently. “We have to give it a try.”

“That’s right. Capture as many as we can. With an incisive point, it’ll be much easier to find the others,” Franca agreed with Lumian.

She suspected that Loki and his crew were responsible for the deaths of some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Without wasting any more time, the surroundings around Hela suddenly darkened, resisting the light of the three flames.

Her figure vanished without a trace.

This marked the beginning of preparations for the emergency gathering.

Lumian’s eyes flickered as he gazed at the decaying flesh teeming with dead maggots, lost in his own thoughts.

Franca carefully examined her body and realized that there were no substantial or obvious injuries. The pain she had previously endured was a result of the impact on her mind. As her Spirit Body was soothed and treated, only faint cracks remained.

Franca let out a long sigh of relief and said, “Loki is truly cunning and powerful. Fortunately, you thought to seek Madam Hela’s help. Otherwise, we might have become his marionettes by now.”

Lumian wholeheartedly agreed.

If he hadn’t considered borrowing Hela’s power and guessed that Loki could detect a certain trait in him, leading to the decision to bait him out tonight, perhaps the outcome wouldn’t have been in their favor.

When they were unprepared, Loki had approached them and attacked with full force. Neither he nor Franca could retaliate.

He could still use the Blood Emperor’s aura, which was relatively easy to activate and didn’t require complicated procedures, to attract all official Beyonders. Then, he could exploit the time difference to escape using “teleportation.” However, it would condemn Franca to be controlled.

Of course, without the baiting operation, Lumian might have chosen to leave with Franca by traversing the spirit world and slipping out of Loki’s sight before returning stealthily.

“You don’t have to worry about becoming a marionette. Loki wants to groom you into a Sequence 4 Demoness,” Lumian casually reassured Franca.

Franca was taken aback.

“He told me he’s been yearning for a Demoness marionette for a long time…”

Lumian calmly pointed out that Franca had been deceived. “He lied to you. He even said that the four-line honorific name meant to accelerate the progress was, in fact, a trap for me that could isolate most of the struggling commotions.”

Franca muttered to herself, “The honorific name he recited must be real. Him being able to use the traits we share and the power of that Celestial Worthy to directly locate me should be real too. As for the exact range, given the style he displayed, there’s a high chance that it’s nonsense. It can’t be believed.

Franca suddenly turned to look at Lumian.

“Loki should have recognized that you were fake during the gathering! You don’t have the aura or mark of the Celestial Worthy on you!”

“Yes.” Lumian’s mood sank.

“I’ll have to share this detail with Madam Hela later and see if anyone can come up with a way to eliminate the Celestial Worthy aura on them. Otherwise, they’ll be hunted down by Loki and the others in the future,” Franca said as she looked at the Wraith that had a dark-green light seeping out and merging with a certain part of the corpse. “What should we do with this Beyonder characteristic?”

This was a Sequence 5 Beyonder characteristic!

She had her own thoughts about this spoil of war, but she didn’t know Lumian’s attitude.

“Madam Hela killed Loki herself, so the spoils of war must belong to her,” Lumian said nonchalantly.

He then pointed at the corpse of the other marionette.

“Why hasn’t he manifested any Beyonder characteristics?”

“That’s right. He can’t be resurrected too, can he?” Franca muttered. “Could it be that he’s a bestowed who doesn’t have Beyonder characteristics?”

Her plan was to give Madame Hela the Wraith Beyonder characteristic.

Lumian nodded slowly.

“In the evening, I thought he was a marionette of the Sun pathway. Later, when I was under his control, every word he spoke sounded like crazy ravings. It could affect my mind and Spirit Body, which was different from the Sun pathway’s style. Yes, he should be a bestowed of an evil god, made into a marionette by Loki.”

“I’ll ask Madam Hela later.” Just as Franca finished speaking, Hela’s figure in a black widow-like dress outlined itself in the empty mine.

She said to Lumian and Franca, “In five minutes, we’ll recite the incantation and enter the Nation of the Evernight’s palace.”

“Alright.” Lumian took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

Franca immediately informed Hela about the possible common trait among the members of the Research Society. Finally, she asked, “Is there a way to confirm and eliminate it? A Marionettist like Loki lurks in the shadows and can find us at any moment. It’s truly terrifying.”

Hela pondered for a moment and replied, “Firstly, advance to Sequence 4 and become a demigod. Only then can you barely suppress the aura left behind by Celestial Worthy. Secondly, search for mystical items with hidden and secret-keeping effects.

“I can only think of these two solutions at the moment. I’ll see if anyone else has a better idea at the next gathering.”

At that moment, Lumian looked at Hela and asked anxiously, “Madame, did you find out anything from Loki?”

Hela took out a flask and downed another third.

Her pale-white face flushed as she said coldly, “When I asked Loki why he wanted to harm the other members, he said it was for fun and to create pranks to satisfy his emotions and mind. However, when I asked him why he wanted to harm Muggle, his answer was Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…”

Selling the Soul Summoning Spell to Aurore and guiding her to use it on herself seemed to be the will of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.

“Why does He want this done… Aurore is only a Sequence 7. She’s just a nobody…” Lumian lowered his head and muttered in pain.

Hela replied coldly, “Probably because the original body of Muggle and her family are problematic.”

Lumian fell silent for a moment before saying, “Could Loki be lying? A person full of lies like him might not be telling the truth.”

“In the dreamscape I created, he can’t lie unless he gains the ability to maintain lucidity in advance, but that’s impossible.” Hela denied Lumian’s guess.

Dreamscape… Franca glanced at Hela and felt that this didn’t match her impression of her Sequence pathway.

Lumian fell silent once again.

Aurore’s transmigration was suspected to have been brought about by the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. After her resurrection, she had been targeted by the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings because Roche Louise Sanson and her family were believers in Inevitability. This made Aurore’s subsequent encounter seem like a predetermined tragedy.

Seeing this, Franca changed the subject and pointed at the two marionettes’ corpses.

“Madame Hela, that Beyonder characteristic is the spoil of war you deserve. What we want to know is why this marionette didn’t produce any Beyonder characteristics?”

Hela didn’t refuse. As she watched the Wraith Beyonder characteristic emerge, she inquired about Franca and Lumian’s feelings when they were controlled.

After a brief exchange, she pondered and said, “This should be a bestowed who believes in an evil god. The corresponding Sequence 7 is an Orator, and Sequence 6 is a Singer. These two Sequences can transmit different mystical powers with their voices, matching your descriptions.

“In addition, Beyonders of this pathway often perform secret deed rituals at Sequence 9 and obtain mysteries and knowledge through a formless door. Different people hear and experience different things, and the subsequent abilities they obtain will be different. Being able to use singing to create a sun’s blinding effect should be one of these

manifestations."

"Which evil god?" Franca blurted out.

Hela shook her head.

"I don't know the exact honorific name either. It's dangerous for us to know anyway.

"I've encountered His believers. They sometimes refer to this evil god as the First Philosophy or Arcane Controller."

Without waiting for Franca to ask further, Hela nodded slightly and said, "We should head to the gathering."

Lumian and Franca recited the incantation simultaneously.

"A Beyonder from ancient times, Ruler of the Nation of the Evernight, noble Mother of the Sky, I beseech your permission to enter your kingdom."

As the surrounding darkness and slumber dissipated, Lumian and Franca arrived at the ancient and dilapidated palace again.

There was no one here yet. It was empty and silent.

Franca felt that something was amiss. After thinking for more than ten seconds, she realized something.

"We haven't disguised ourselves!"

Just as she finished speaking, she saw Lumian shrouded in a hazy dream-like fog, obscuring his exact form and appearance.

Lumian then used the Niese Face to transform himself into a hooded Muggle clad in a Warlock's black robe.

With Madame Hela's help, Franca breathed a sigh of relief and waited patiently for the April Fool's team to arrive.

As time ticked by, two figures suddenly outlined inside the silent palace.

Chapter 391 - 391 Idiots

391 Idiots

The figures entering the ancient palace were Black Earth and Bax. Black Earth sported a furry hat and a thick leather mask, while Bax, on the other hand, had opted for just shorts and a brass mask.

Upon spotting Hela, they acknowledged her with a slight nod as a greeting.

Their eyes then roved over Franca, who hadn't tagged her code name, and Muggle, enveloped in a dreamy mist.

"Who's this?" Black Earth, clad like a Hunter from the mountains, pointed at Franca, a note of confusion in his voice.

"Hidden Blade. I rushed and forgot to tag myself," Franca replied.

Black Earth and Bax promptly dropped their suspicions and relaxed.

In a situation like this emergency gathering, it was perfectly normal for Hidden Blade to slip up.

This was her style!

Soon after, other members of the April Fool's team arrived one by one, but Lumian didn't see the five most suspicious targets— I Know Someone, Hisoka, Bard, Mad Lady, and Ultraman.

His expression darkened gradually, sensing that Loki had been resurrected and the problematic members had been alerted.

The dozen or so individuals gathered here were potential pawns. If Loki and his gang went too far and were discovered by other members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, they could be used as scapegoats for the investigation.

There was nothing to find fault with them, thus ensuring the six true believers in the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings remained concealed.

At that moment, Black Earth and the rest started to realize that something was amiss.

Why were there so few attendees at the emergency gathering?

The agreed time had already passed, and typically, at least half of the society should have shown up by now.

“Hela, what’s going on?” Bax, wearing nothing but a mask and shorts, asked in a deep voice.

Lumian sneered, looking at them as if they were a bunch of fools.

If Loki and his crew were evil, then these people were simply fools. They believed they were clever and had uncovered the truth, thinking they were indulging in pre-apocalypse pleasures. In reality, they were just being used as pawns and shields.

Lumian was willing to bet that Loki, I Know Someone, and the other core members of the April Fool’s team would mock these fools during their private gatherings.

Hela’s tone remained as cold as ice as she began, “I summoned you to this gathering because Loki betrayed us.”

Black Earth, Bax, and the others were taken aback. They glanced around, but Loki was nowhere to be seen.

Hela continued, “He believes in an evil god and led I Know Someone and the others to harm numerous Research Society members.”

“Such accusations require evidence,” Bax instinctively retorted.

With the Lie earring on, Lumian spoke in Aurore’s voice, “I’m the evidence!

“You must have seen me buy the Soul Summoning Spell. This caused a mental problem and nearly caused me to lose control. Fortunately, I

found someone to help me in time and sealed my split personality.

“Before this, I’ve been seeking treatment from I Know Someone, but instead of improving, my condition only worsened.

“I approached them to reason with them, but they ended up planning to murder me!”

Black Earth fell silent for a moment before saying, “I remember that you bought it from Mad Lady. They lied to you because transmigration should be a matter between two parties, not a one-sided reason. Otherwise, why did you transmigrate to this world and happen to possess such people? The original bodies must have done something to establish the connection between the two worlds. Therefore, before figuring out what caused you to transmigrate, finding the remnant soul of the original body and asking might gain something unexpected.

“Muggle, weren’t you homesick back then? How could you believe such a reason?”

As they heard this, some of the April Fool’s team members present couldn’t help but show teasing and mocking expressions in their eyes.

Muggle had fallen for a trick that could only fool children!

None of them had been fooled by Mad Lady. Even if she claimed to have tried and achieved certain results, it couldn’t be considered a clue.

Mad Lady… Lumian repeated the code name inwardly.

A chuckle escaped him as he continued, “I was indeed blinded by the desire to return home, but you weren’t any better.

“Take a look. Are Loki, Mad Lady, and Bard here?

“They know what they’re doing, and they understand that if they’re exposed, they have to leave the Research Society immediately. But you, fools, and idiots, don’t know anything and are still cooperating with them!

“Even pigs and dogs are smarter than you!”

The absence of Loki and the others was like Muggle’s mocking arrow, piercing the hearts and minds of Black Earth and the other April Fool’s team members.

Some of them erupted in anger, feeling humiliated and wanting to retort. Others swayed in despair and confusion, while some felt as if countless insects were gnawing at their hearts. The pain was palpable.

Witnessing this, Franca entered Instigation mode and delivered a decisive blow.

“Don’t you understand? You’re discarded pawns, abandoned targets, mere agents who have lost their usefulness!

“You’ve never been core members of April Fool’s. You’ve never earned Loki’s trust. They only mock you behind your backs!

“Now that Loki and the others have been exposed, they can hunt down the Research Society members without fear. Who do you think will be the easiest for them to locate and target?

“The only thing you can do is recall the details of your dealings with Loki and the others, including the real-life pranks you executed, so that we can eliminate these traitors as soon as possible.

“Remember, leniency comes with honesty, resistance comes with severity.”

Black Earth, Bax, and the others followed Hidden Blade’s logic and realized the grim possibility.

They exchanged glances, their hearts clearly wavering. The few who had witnessed Loki and the others’ capabilities couldn’t help but tremble slightly.

Finally, Franca dropped a bombshell.

“Don’t think you can escape the hunt just because you can relocate. Let me tell you, Muggle’s experience indicates that Loki and the

others seem to have a way to track Research Society members within a certain range through some mystical connection.

“I’ll share the specific method with everyone at the next official gathering.”

Black Earth gritted his teeth and said, “There are too many details. I don’t think I can recall them all in just a few hours.”

The other April Fool’s team members nodded in agreement.

Hela thought for a moment and replied, “Go back, write down all the details, and send them to me.

“Remember, pack your belongings and stay at a motel or hotel at least five kilometers away.”

Bax and the others let out sighs of relief and agreed.

Shortly after, Lumian noticed their eyes closing, as if they had fallen asleep while standing.

He and Franca exchanged thoughtful glances and then realized that Madame Hela’s eyes had lost focus before closing as well.

After a moment, Hela opened her eyes and said to Lumian and Franca, “There are no hidden Loki helpers or believers in the Celestial Worthy.”

This is a precaution in case Loki had risked leaving an accomplice to gather intelligence… Franca came to a realization.

In the next instant, Black Earth, Bax, and the others awakened simultaneously, reciting the incantation discreetly as they left the ancient and decaying palace.

Lumian dispelled the Niese Face, took off the Lie earring, and turned to Hela.

“Every time we use the incantation at a gathering, we should be tainted by the Sealed Artifacts’ Concealment aura, right?

“Can we use this to track down Mad Lady and the others?”

Hela shook her head.

“They no longer have the corresponding auras.”

Clearly, she had tried it before.

Lumian remained silent, exhaling slowly and silently.

The trio left the Nation of the Evernight and returned to the uninhabited mine beneath Trier.

Hela put away the Wraith Beyonder characteristic and spoke to Lumian and Franca.

“If we can’t uncover Loki and truly eliminate him, you can stay in Trier’s market district for another three months at most. When that time comes, regardless of any unfinished business, you’ll have to consider relocating.”

“Why three months?” Franca inquired, her confusion apparent. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Staying even another week seemed perilous.

Hela provided a simple explanation.

“While Loki has been resurrected with his Beyonder characteristics, he has lost all his marionettes. A Marionettist won’t rashly appear and attack others without a marionette, unless they are excessively confident and perceive you as weak. And you’ve already demonstrated significant strength.

“For a Marionettist without a marionette, acquiring a suitable and powerful marionette requires planning, luck, and frequent replacements. You should have a window of three to six months.”

“Understood,” Franca replied, deciding to inform Madam Judgment that if no progress was made within two months, she would request permission to abandon the Iron and Blood Cross Order mission and relocate.

Lumian nodded in agreement.

He contemplated whether he could digest the Pyromaniac potion within three months and gather the Conspirer potion formula and main ingredients.

At that moment, Hela pointed at Loki's mushy flesh, twisted maggots, and said, "The dead worms are excellent spiritual ingredients that can be used for many things. However, they also come with hidden issues. They have been corrupted to a certain extent, posing unknown dangers to you."

Franca recalled her terrifying experience of almost becoming a marionette and shook her head, indicating she didn't want them.

Lumian gazed at the countless maggots and the mushy flesh for a moment before suddenly summoning the crimson fireball floating on his shoulder. He directed it towards Loki's remains.

Instead of exploding, the fireball ignited fiercely, casting a crimson glow.

As he watched the maggots and flesh burn, Lumian felt as though he had digested the Pyromaniac potion once more.

This came from his experience of being controlled by Loki and using the near-loss of control to ignite his own body, triggering the resonance of the Blood Emperor's aura.

This led Lumian to formulate his own acting principle for Pyromaniac: Pyromaniacs aren't arsonists. Only by daring to set themselves ablaze can they set others ablaze!

Chapter 392 - 392 Switching Pathways

392 Switching Pathways

The digestion of the Pyromaniac potion progressed much faster than Lumian had expected. This quick reaction was likely due to the activation of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's aura without proper protection, akin to setting a blaze in Trier. The flames burned even the Saint Viève Cathedral and the patriarchal cathedral of the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

"Can we now discuss the clues about transmigration?"

Franca tersely acknowledged her words and gathered her thoughts.
Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

"Ciel had previously attempted a unique summoning ritual, which inadvertently brought forth a shadow suspected to be from my homeland, the one I share with Muggle. He even formed a contract with this entity.

"After discovering this, I had Ciel summon the shadow again to communicate with it.

"The shadow's language is remarkably similar to that of my homeland. When asked about its origin, it said, 'The Blood Son of Heaven disrupted the netherworld, and the Underworld Daoist sacrificed himself to enter the river.'"

Franca translated the last sentence into Intisian.

Hela listened attentively and then turned her gaze to Lumian.

"Could this be the apparition of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor?

“Underworld Daoist was the one who dragged Him back?”

“That’s our hypothesis,” Lumian replied succinctly, indicating that Franca was also aware of the Samaritan Women’s Spring. There was no need for excessive secrecy.

“Underworld Daoist…” Hela murmured the term softly.

Franca continued to recount her and Lumian’s theories, suspecting that the illusionary river behind the spring might connect to the original world of her and the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members.

Hela remained silent, her dark eyes gleaming with a subtle brilliance, as though concealing a galaxy.

“That covers most of it. Once we’ve dealt with the traitors in the Research Society, I’ll share this information with everyone,” Franca said after a brief pause. She also reminded Hela, “Apart from April Fool’s, Loki’s allies might be lurking in other teams. They tend to participate in activities without playing pranks and only reveal themselves during crucial moments.”

Hela nodded slightly and replied, “I’ll discuss how to handle this with Gandalf and the others.”

The woman then turned her gaze to Lumian.

“If there’s nothing else, I’ll take you back to the surface.”

Lumian withdrew his gaze from the flames and let out a deep breath.

“I’ll take care of this.”

Rumble. Accompanied by a muted explosion and a slight tremor in the ground, the earth, carrying flesh, blood, and maggots, suddenly sank into the mire and rocks.

This way, any remaining corruption on Loki’s corpse wouldn’t be exposed to cave adventurers who might pass by later.

She assisted in carrying the corpses of the two marionettes over,

contemplating whether to collect the Wraith's teeth and nails.

These were excellent spiritual ingredients that could be used to forge Beyonder weapons.

If the Wraith had lost control and transformed into a monster, Franca wouldn't feel any psychological burden dealing with his corpse. However, he still retained his human form.

Considering that she didn't lack offensive weapons or poison for coating them, Franca simply harvested the powder from the translucent Wraith and absorbed its residual spirituality.

After removing the clothes bestowed by the evil god and checking for any clues, Franca tossed the two corpses into the blazing pit.

Once she had completed this task, she turned to Hela and asked with curiosity,

"Madame Hela, have you advanced to Sequence 4 and become a demigod?"

Otherwise, how could she have subdued Loki so effortlessly?

"Yes," Hela confirmed with a nod.

Franca pondered for a moment and probed further, "You used to follow the Corpse Collector pathway, but this time, you displayed the power of the Evernight pathway. Did you use a mystical item?"

Was it similar to using a Sealed Artifact to enable everyone to enter the Nation of the Evernight in Concealment and participate in the gathering?

The Corpse Collector pathway was also known as the Death pathway.

Hela's voice was icy as she replied, "I've switched to Sequence 4 Nightwatcher of the Evernight pathway."

"Why?" Franca was intrigued by Hela's choice.

While she had once contemplated switching to the neighboring

Hunter pathway when advancing to Sequence 4, it was mainly to restore her body to its male form. Under usual circumstances, sticking to a single pathway until the end was generally the better choice. After all, the acting acquired in the earlier Sequences were deeply ingrained in that pathway, making it easier and safer to become a Sequence 4 Beyonder of the same pathway.

Of course, if one couldn't find the Sequence 4 potion formula and main ingredient for their pathway, they might consider switching to a neighboring pathway. It wouldn't necessarily lead to half-madness, and they could gain a mix of unique abilities.

Franca had never seen any indication from Hela of wanting to switch pathways. When they discussed and exchanged information at the Research Society, Hela primarily focused on topics related to the Corpse Collector domain. Most of the materials and items gathered and sold were concentrated in this pathway.

Could it be that the Sequence 4 potion formula, main ingredients, or corresponding rituals of the Corpse Collector pathway proved impractical? Franca speculated, drawing on her extensive knowledge of mysticism.

Hela's pale face softened.

She gazed into the darkness beyond the abandoned mine, her voice taking on a contemplative tone.

"If I continued along the Death pathway, the deity I believe in would eventually transform me into a crucial vessel for specific moments."

At this point, Hela wore a rare smile and spoke with a distant look in her eyes.

Franca was initially perplexed but began to grasp Madame Hela's reasoning for switching pathways.

Hela gave her a brief look and added, "If I can advance to Sequence 3, I should either revert to the Death pathway or switch to the Warrior pathway.

"The upper ranks of the Evernight pathway are facing a severe

resource shortage."

"Wow," Franca couldn't help but envision Hela wielding various Sequence abilities from the Evernight, Corpse Collector, and Warrior pathways. She found it both impressive and formidable.

She, too, felt a sense of excitement about the possibility of acquiring the abilities of a Demoness and a Hunter in the future.

Meanwhile, Lumian incinerated Loki's mutated remains and filled the pit.

Hela promptly obscured the area in darkness.

…

When Lumian and Franca regained consciousness, they found themselves outside the abandoned mine near the entrance to Underground Trier on Rue Anarchie.

In the distance, they could hear faint movements coming from Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"Phew, this is the most dangerous situation I've encountered since becoming a Beyonder," Franca said, exhaling deeply and speaking with emotion. "If Loki hadn't used me as bait to lure you here, there's a high chance I would have become a marionette."

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and remained silent.

He took a step forward and began to walk down the street.

Franca followed him and asked curiously, "Did Loki say anything when he tried to disrupt your mind with his trash talk? Although many of his words may be lies, they might contain valuable information."

For example, the suspicion that every member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society possessed the lingering aura of the Celestial Worthy.

Lumian remained silent for a few moments before responding.

“He recounted how they harmed Aurore, how they repeatedly disclosed her mental state and psychiatric treatment process, and how they shamelessly mocked her…”

His explanation was concise, but the simplicity of his words couldn’t mask the anger that rose in him again.

“Huh?” Franca was initially surprised but quickly grasped the gravity of the situation. “That Psychiatrist, I Know Someone?”

Lumian nodded slowly.

Franca contemplated the situation carefully, her anger growing with each passing thought.

“Dammit! How can they be so evil? I fully support you in tearing them apart, dismembering them, skinning them, and stuffing them with grass!” After several seconds of contemplation, she unleashed a curse.

Lumian remained silent, seemingly weighing the feasibility of such actions.

Franca glanced at him and hesitantly suggested, “When you faced the other April Fools’ team members earlier, you held back and didn’t kill them directly…”

Lumian chuckled.

“Why should I kill those idiots? It’s more agonizing, humiliating, and regretful for these individuals who believe they’re clever when they realize how Loki and the others manipulated them. It brings me greater satisfaction than killing them.

“In the future, whenever anyone mentions Loki, it will be akin to insulting their intelligence to their faces, and they won’t be able to escape it.”

Franca breathed a sigh of relief.

She said to Lumian, “Rue des Blouses Blanches seems quite lively. I plan to stay at Jenna’s tonight. Heh heh.

“Yes, I’ll be informing my Major Arcana card holder briefly about this matter. I’ll convey that if Loki isn’t completely eliminated within two months, I would like to request a transfer out of the market district. You, too, can apply to take charge of the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s branch elsewhere.”

“I’ll also write to my Major Arcana card holder,” Lumian assured her, indicating that he wouldn’t underestimate the potential harm Loki could cause.

Lumian had always maintained a clear distinction between personal matters and official matters. Whether dealing with the padre or investigating Loki, he had never considered seeking Madam Magician’s assistance. However, this time, his use of the Blood Emperor’s aura had caused quite a commotion, and it would be necessary to report it later.

Seeing that Lumian remained rational, Franca felt at ease. She waved farewell and stealthily made her way toward Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

Lumian averted his gaze and entered Auberge du Coq Doré, walking along the still-warm street.

He had no desire to encounter the official Beyonders who might be searching for clues on Rue des Blouses Blanches at this late hour.

As he pushed open the door to Room 207, Lumian spotted a figure inside.

It was Madam Magician, dressed in an orange waist-length dress and holding a wide-brimmed hat adorned with flowers.

“Were you waiting for me?” Lumian inquired almost instinctively.

Magician smiled.

“What else would I be doing?”

“How did you know I would come back here?” Lumian closed the door.

Magician smiled and said, “This is a revelation of fate.

“Now, tell me, why did you unleash the Blood Emperor’s aura?”

Chapter 393 - 393 Information About Celestial Worthy

393 Information About Celestial Worthy

Lumian was taken aback.

“Did it cause a huge commotion?” This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

He knew that once the Blood Emperor’s aura was activated, it would undoubtedly attract the attention of nearby official Beyonders and powerful figures. It would be akin to setting Saint Viève Cathedral on fire. The commotion wouldn’t be small, but he never expected this to catch the attention of Madam Magician, who didn’t seem to be in Trier, for her to rush over.

He had intended to write a letter and report this matter.

Madam Magician nodded seriously.

“Very. It even led some people to believe that the door to Fourth Epoch Trier had opened.”

The commotion is even greater than I had imagined. As expected of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor… Lumian wasn’t vexed or surprised; instead, he calmly sat on the edge of the bed.

It had already happened, so there was no point in feeling vexed or surprised. Moreover, even if he had to do it again, he would still do it.

Lumian began recounting how he had posed as his sister to infiltrate the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and determine if there was anything amiss with the person who had sold her the Soul

Summoning Spell. He continued until Loki lost control and died, but no Beyonder characteristics emerged. It was suspected that there was a way for him to revive. There was also the honorific name of an evil god that Hela and the Two of Cups had pieced together.

Magician didn't interrupt, but the smile on her face had vanished at some point in time.

"Do I need to recite the honorific name's four lines intermittently, or can I just say them?" Lumian finally asked.

Madam Magician's voice was calm as she replied, "Just say it. It won't be a problem as long as you don't use ancient Hermes, Jotun, and other unprotected Beyonder languages."

Lumian subconsciously surveyed the room and realized that it had grown dimmer. Although the crimson moonlight could penetrate the glass window, it seemed to be obstructed by an invisible, soundproof, and deep curtain.

He then repeated Franca's translated honorific name.

With that said, he saw Madam Magician fall silent, as if she had transformed into a statue.

"What's wrong with that?" Lumian probed.

Magician pondered for a moment and looked at him.

"You're saying that you relied on the brink of losing control from your anger to trigger the resonance of the Blood Emperor's aura and create a commotion that can break through the three layers of the thin fog's concealment?"

"That's right," Lumian replied, still feeling a lingering fear as he recalled the situation. "Normally, once my emotions exceed the limit, I would recall the cues left behind by Madam Susie. However, even the corresponding memories became intermittent and vague, preventing the cues from having the desired effect. In fact, if I hadn't held out hope when I was first controlled and instead tried to activate the Blood Emperor's aura immediately, Loki probably wouldn't have been able to truly stop me. When the control deepened, it wouldn't

have worked. I could only rely on such passive reactions…”

Madam Magician wore a thoughtful expression and didn’t respond.

“Is there a problem with this part of the situation?” Lumian asked bluntly.

Magician nodded slightly and said, “There’s nothing wrong with this detail. It’s very reasonable. It’s a normal development of the situation back then. The problem is that you just obtained the Blood Emperor’s aura not long ago, so it came in handy.”

Lumian was taken aback for a few seconds before blurting out, “Could Amon have foreseen my encounter tonight by stuffing the Earth Blood ore into my pocket? Is His purpose to help me?”

Help that nearly got me killed?

“This might be just one of the goals, and it’s not His,” Madam Magician said with a soft sigh. “It’s the goal of the one who’s roughly equivalent to His father.”

Lumian was taken aback once more.

“The one the Aurora Order believes in? The one who inherited half of the Ancient Sun God’s inheritance?”

For some reason, Mr. K’s maniacal laughter echoed in his mind.

Piousness is the only way out!

Madam Magician muttered to herself, “Previously, I thought I wanted to involve you more deeply in matters related to the Sauron family, the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and the Fourth Epoch Trier. Now, it seems that I’ll have to include disrupting that entity’s plan…”

Seeing that Lumian still didn’t understand why it involved the deity believed in by the Aurora Order, Magician explained, “Do you remember when you thought accepting another Major Arcana card holder’s commission was a normal and reasonable matter? You didn’t need to tell me?”

“I remember,” Lumian replied, not seeing any problem with that. “It’s true that I made a mistake, but it has nothing to do with that person. It’s a manifestation of my true thoughts.”

Madam Magician chuckled.

“Coincidentally, I didn’t meet Miss Justice during that time, so there was an information gap.”

Lumian’s eyes flickered as he caught a whiff of a conspiracy.

Madam Magician continued, “The combination of two coincidences might not be coincidental. Think about the complete honorific name of that entity.”

“I can’t recall,” Lumian admitted. “Madam Justice made a psychological cue. I can only recall it if I pray for Mr. Fool’s angelic protection.”

“There’s no rush. When you can recall, you’ll naturally understand the source of the problem,” Magician warned him simply. “You have to be vigilant once you encounter too many coincidences.”

Lumian nodded solemnly.

Madam Magician consoled him,”There’s no need to be too nervous, let alone reject contact with Mr. K. This time, with that entity’s arrangements so obvious, He’s telling us that He knows, that He is watching and listening.

“This also means that He holds no ill intentions for the time being. Otherwise, not only would you be finished, but I would also be in danger.”

Lumian was burdened with numerous issues. He couldn’t afford to fret at such a high level. It was pointless to fret. After all, he relied on the Tarot Club the most.

He then inquired, “Madam, which evil god does Loki and company believe in?”

Only by clarifying the evil god’s domain and characteristics could he

better guard against and deal with His believers in the future.

Magician fell silent for several seconds, so silent that even a Beyonder as bold as Lumian couldn't help but feel his heart race.

Eventually, she let out a sigh and remarked, "Actually, I have mentioned that evil god to you."

"Huh?" Lumian had no impression of such a thing.

Madam Magician fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "I've told you before, Mr. Fool is facing off against an ancient deity. This outcome holds the power to shape our destinies and determine whether our world can survive the impending apocalypse.

"That ancient deity is known as the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings."

"It's actually Mr. Fool's enemy…" Lumian hadn't anticipated such a revelation.

Me branded by Mr. Fool… Aurore, possibly brought to this world by the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings… Loki and his associates, who are devout followers of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, sold the Soul Summoning Spell to Aurore, triggering a series of catastrophic events… Mr. Fool is in direct opposition to the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings…

A torrent of information flooded Lumian's mind, leaving him feeling like he was on the verge of unraveling a truth that was still missing crucial details.

Madam Magician pondered for a moment before continuing.

"I've also mentioned that if you address Mr. Fool using anything other than his three-lined honorific name or attempt to invoke him without following the proper ritual, I can't guarantee that he will be the one who responds. It might even lead to perilous encounters.

"Now, I can offer you a clear answer. Under those circumstances, the response you receive could very well be from the Celestial Worthy of

Heaven and Earth for Blessings."

Praying to Mr. Fool in an incorrect manner might gain a response from the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings… Lumian was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information. His head felt like it was about to burst.

Then, a crucial detail caught his attention.

The title "The King of Yellow and Black" in Mr. Fool's honorific name bore a striking resemblance to Franca's translation of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings!

With this revelation, a chilling sensation washed over Lumian.

He hesitated for a few seconds before deciding to inquire, "What's the connection between Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings?"

Madam Magician offered a wry smile in response.

"What I know isn't that detailed or precise. For example, after the one the Aurora Order believes in inherited half of the Ancient Sun God's inheritance, the Ancient Sun God was resurrected in some way."

Lumian grasped the general idea and let out a relieved sigh.

"It seems to mirror Aurore's association with Roche Louise Sanson."

This facilitated his understanding.

Madam Magician seemed taken aback.

Almost instinctively, she reached out as if attempting to retrieve a drink from thin air, but she restrained herself in the end.

Lumian recounted the entire incident, a hint of pain and deep confusion in his voice.

"What could this Celestial Worthy be planning? Aurore was just a Sequence 7. Even if Roche Louise Sanson and her family are devout

followers of Inevitability, they wouldn't be able to do anything of significance…"

Madam Magician sighed once more.

"Perhaps He intends to hasten the arrival of the apocalypse and allow the evil gods beyond the barrier to invade more easily.

"In that case, in order to protect this world and us, its inhabitants, Mr. Fool might consider abandoning the confrontation and permitting the Celestial Worthy's return intact."

Lumian listened in a daze, a sudden thought racing through his mind.

What would happen if Mr. Fool indeed chose to stop resisting the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings?

Magician didn't delve further into the topic.

"I can't share more information at this moment. In short, pursuing Loki and his associates is both your personal vendetta and a shared mission of our Tarot Club. If you're confident, take action on your own. If not, feel free to seek assistance from other Major Arcana card holders at any time to eliminate the minions of the Celestial Worthy to the best of your ability."

With that, the woman stood up, and the room suddenly transformed into a celestial spectacle, filled with twinkling stars.

It felt as if Lumian had been transported into the vast and dazzling cosmos.

The stars revolved continuously, as if conveying a message. Madam Magician observed them for a moment before remarking, "It's true that divination doesn't reveal Loki's whereabouts or identity after his resurrection, and the others lack sufficient information.

"Once Hela has organized the relevant data, provide me with a copy."

Chapter 394 - 394 Eye of the Storm

394 Eye of the Storm

Lumian was also waiting with anticipation for the abandoned April Fool's team members to recall useful details. He nodded and replied, "Got it."

Madam Magician fixed her gaze on him for a few moments, lost in thought.

"In the future, if I assign you a mission that seems clearly problematic, you have the option to either reject it or discuss it face-to-face with me while discreetly reaching out to other Major Arcana card holders."

"Why?" Lumian was a little confused.

By doing so, isn't Madam Magician implying that something might happen to her?

Magician chuckled self-deprecatingly.

"Because I'm a high-risk individual, susceptible to the influence of the Celestial Worthy.

"The Celestial Worthy holds the highest position in the Seer, Marauder, and Apprentice pathways. The higher the corresponding Beyonder Sequence, the more susceptible one is to His influence. Everyone carries an Oldest One within them, you see. And as a high-level Beyonder of the Apprentice pathway and a believer in The Fool, it's natural for me to occasionally be led astray, fooled, or deceived by the Celestial Worthy.

“Of course, Mr. Fool himself also stands at the pinnacle of these three pathways, which is why he opposes the Celestial Worthy. So, you need not worry about me. Most of the time, I’m under Mr. Fool’s influence. There won’t be anything wrong with my condition, but occasional anomalies might occur.”

It’s akin to praying without a ritual or invoking a name beyond those three lines; all of that can draw the Celestial Worthy’s attention and invite His response, potentially planting hidden dangers… High-ranking individuals in the Seer, Marauder, and Apprentice pathways are closer to the Celestial Worthy and Mr. Fool. Even if one follows all the usual procedures, there’s still a chance that something might go wrong… Lumian grasped Madam Magician’s instructions before realizing that her words were revealing mysticism information that defied common sense.

Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings could simultaneously hold the pinnacle of three pathways!

Normally, reaching Sequence 0 in a pathway marked one as a true god. So what title did the individual at the peak of three pathways bear? A great existence?

For the first time, Lumian began to comprehend that Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings might surpass even true gods like the Eternal Blazing Sun.

Similarly, Amon’s father, the Ancient Sun God, must belong to this echelon. After all, half of His inheritance had given rise to the one the Aurora Order believed in.

Soon, Lumian remembered Madam Magician’s distinct descriptions of different deities.

Merely knowing of Their existence and invoking Their honorific names could corrupt certain deities, causing Them to undergo mutations or face peril.

Some deities could be mentioned in general terms, as long as one refrained from uttering Their honorific names beyond the three lines of Beyonder language, thus avoiding attracting Their attention.

This likely represents the division among deities… Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings occupy three neighboring and interchangeable pathways. Is this a hidden requirement for mastering a composite pathway? Lumian dared not probe further, fearing that knowing too much might lead to unintended consequences.

As for Madam Magician belonging to the Apprentice pathway, he had anticipated it. Aurore's grimoires had mentioned that Sequence 9 Apprentices in this pathway excelled at opening doors. Sequence 7s were known as Astrologers, aligning with Madam Magician's usual behavior and her occasional references to "astrology," "divination," and "fate."

"Understood," Lumian replied. He went on to explain his plan: if he failed to eliminate Loki within two months, he intended to use the Iron and Blood Cross Order's internal processes to relocate from the market district, as well as the problem about concealing the sealed mark on his body. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Magician was very understanding.

"No problem. Although you can also write to me and use yourself as bait, Loki might have the patience to wait a few more months, and I can't always be with you.

"As for the issue of the seal, if you don't actively activate it, only Beyonders of the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways who believe in the Celestial Worthy can sense it directly. This is different from the uncontrollable aura of the Celestial Worthy.

"If you need something quickly, seek angelic protection from Mr. Fool or write to me. I'll craft a charm that can safeguard secrets.

"That's the best way to manage the Celestial Worthy's aura on the Two of Cups for now. Fortunately, evil gods like the Mother Tree of Desire no longer pay special attention to people like them."

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief and inquired, "Can I share the information you just mentioned about the Celestial Worthy with the Two of Cups?"

Magician declined his request, explaining, “Her Major Arcana card holder will give her a simplified explanation, but it won’t be as clear as what I just said. She doesn’t know enough either. If you reveal everything I shared with you, it could put her in danger.”

Lumian didn’t press further and watched as Madam Magician used starlight to create a dreamy door. She stepped through it and disappeared.

The room’s soundproof glass receded to its original state, and the crimson moonlight poured through the window, casting a glow on the table with the carbide lamp.

Lumian settled by the bed, his mind racing, and he couldn’t help but recall Loki’s description of his exploits against Aurore.

Taking a deep breath, he decided on his next course of action: digesting the Pyromaniac potion!

…

Quartier du Jardin Botanique, Rue Pasteur.

As dawn broke, Franca and Jenna made their way back to the market district along this street.

For the time being, Franca hadn’t figured out how to broach the subject of the dangerous situation from last night with Jenna. She used the excuse that Jenna’s brother was at home and might overhear them, so she decided to delay the conversation until tonight.

When they returned to Avenue du Marché, Jenna waved goodbye and headed towards Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

However, before she could enter the modified brick-red three-story building, she noticed graffiti in a corner, almost resembling the work of a child.

It served as a sign that the Purifiers were calling for an urgent meeting, complete with time and location details.

Jenna naturally averted her gaze and entered Théatre de l’Ancienne

Cage à Pigeons.

After about fifteen minutes, in her role as the boss's lover, she left through the back door without any hindrance and arrived at a secluded alley near église Saint-Robert.

Before long, Valentine and Imre appeared.

The former didn't waste time with pleasantries and got straight to the point, asking, "Have you received any news about the terrifying aura from last night?"

Jenna was perplexed.

"What terrifying aura?"

"You didn't sense it?" Imre, who had some Southern Continent heritage, inquired with a furrowed brow. "You didn't experience any nightmares?"

Jenna shook her head.

"I wasn't in the market district last night. I went home to visit my brother."

"Is that so…" Imre examined Jenna's expression and concluded that she was telling the truth.

She genuinely had no knowledge of the terrifying aura.

The two Purifiers briefly recounted the sudden appearance of a terrifying and violent aura on Rue des Blouses Blanches the previous night, urging Jenna to be more vigilant towards anyone displaying unusual behavior lately.

Jenna agreed and asked with curiosity, "Was that aura very noticeable? Why were you able to sense it even from the cathedral?"

"It's hard to describe," Imre admitted. "If you ever have the chance to experience it, you'll understand." He himself couldn't fully grasp the extent of the influence of the terrifying aura.

After bidding farewell to the two Purifiers and returning to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Jenna's thoughts turned to Franca, who had acted strangely last night.

She had cryptically mentioned danger and advised Jenna to go home for a while. Eventually, she had come to share her bed late at night, explaining that something had occurred on Rue des Blouses Blanches and that she couldn't return…

That terrifying aura had appeared on Rue des Blouses Blanches… Jenna nodded, piecing things together.

Meanwhile, Franca finished her coffee and returned to her apartment on Rue des Blouses Blanches, which had returned to its usual state.

However, upon opening the door to Apartment 601, she noticed that the invisible "spider silk" she had concealed in the crack had fallen.

This could only mean one thing—someone had entered!

In the next instant, she spotted someone sitting in her recliner.

It was Gardner Martin, a man with distinct facial features, brownish-red eyes, and a genial demeanor. A few gray strands of hair adorned his temples.

Startled, Franca exclaimed, "Why are you here?"

She was relieved that she hadn't returned with Lumian.

Gardner Martin asked, bemused, "What's your take on the aura from last night?"

"What aura?" Franca was perplexed.

Gardner Martin, dressed in a formal suit without a bow tie, examined Franca closely and explained, "A terrifying aura reeking of blood and rust."

"When did this happen?" Franca recalled and shook her head. "I was at Jenna's house last night. I wasn't in the market district."

Gardner Martin nodded slowly and smiled.

“No wonder you didn’t sense it.”

Apart from Ciel, Madame Hela, and me dealing with Loki, did anything else happen last night? Franca walked to the coffee table in confusion, picked up her cup, and took a sip of water.

“What happened?”

Gardner Martin stood up and approached the window, looking down at Rue des Blouses Blanches.

“Late last night, a violent and terrifying aura emerged from Building 6 on this street. It lasted nearly ten seconds.”

Building 6… Building 6? Franca nearly choked on her own saliva.

Isn’t that the safe house I had rented through a Loen merchant who had already left Trier?

Isn’t that where I fought Loki last night?

Could Madame Hela or Loki have caused the commotion?

Or was it Ciel?

Franca quickly regained her composure before Gardner Martin turned around.

She felt as though she had missed many crucial details due to her fainting.

…

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

Lumian, who had just returned from his morning exercises, had just changed into fresh clothes and was making his way to the first-floor hall when he encountered Anthony Reid, who had been deeply engrossed in his investigation regarding General Philip’s widow and child.

The Psychiatrist glanced at Lumian and inquired, “What happened in the market district last night? I’ve had numerous individuals attempting to buy information related to it from me.”

Lumian chuckled.

“Perhaps a strange aura erupted from Rue des Blouses Blanches.”

Chapter 395 - 395 Progress on the Other Side

395 Progress on the Other Side

Anthony Reid, the middle-aged psychiatrist, observed Lumian's smile and mused, "Your performance suggests that this matter is personal to you."

Anthony Reid continued, "Your smile and actions betrayed a sense of smugness.

"And your reaction tells me this matter is deeply intertwined with you."

Could it be discerned even without mind reading? It wasn't until that moment that Lumian realized his seemingly ordinary expressions and actions might conceal hidden information in the eyes of a Psychiatrist.

Anthony Reid calmly advised, "I'm telling you directly how I've interpreted your cues. In the future, when you find yourself facing a Psychiatrist and wish to deceive them, it's best to prepare your emotions in advance and mentally rehearse your narrative as if it were genuine.

"If you'd rather not discuss the strange aura on Rue des Blouses Blanches, that's perfectly fine. I don't have the energy to gather information and trade it for money."

Lumian contemplated Anthony's words and nodded gently. He then inquired, "How's your investigation into General Philip going? Do you require our assistance?"

Anthony Reid glanced around, confirming there were no passersby in

the hall at this late hour, and Madame Fels was at a considerable distance. He whispered, “General Philip’s widow, child, and his closest friends during his lifetime don’t seem to be a concern. They are leading normal lives.

“However, I’ve discovered that General Philip’s widow donates a substantial sum to a charitable organization called Dreamseekers every quarter. The total donation amounts to nearly half of their apparent family assets.”

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, “Quite generous. What can you tell me about the Dreamseekers charity?”

Anthony Reid replied, “That’s the subject of my next investigation. At present, I only know that their mission is to assist talented young individuals who have come to Trier to pursue their dreams but have encountered temporary hardships. They are not affiliated with the two Churches or established by government entities. It’s a private charity primarily funded by donations from high society.”

Lumian smiled and issued a warning with a hint of mockery, “Be cautious when delving into the Dreamseekers. Of course, if you happen to be reckless, it won’t matter. At the very least, I’m already aware that if you were to suddenly vanish or meet an untimely demise, the source of the trouble likely stems from that charitable organization.”

Anthony Reid stroked his light-yellow hair.

“Don’t worry, I’m timid and value my life. I duck for cover at the sound of gunfire. If I ever sense danger, I won’t be too proud to seek your assistance. Besides, this is what you promised me.”

Without waiting for a reply, he continued, “Guillaume Bénet’s wife has been residing at 20 Rue des Terraces in the library district and hasn’t attempted to relocate.

“I’ve bribed some ordinary folks around her. Recently, they’ve informed me that a mysterious man occasionally visits her late at night, raising suspicions of an affair.”

Condiment Beauty Paulina… Her decision to stay put on Rue des Terraces likely means she feels more secure now. Combined with the neighborhood rumors, there's a strong likelihood that she has reestablished contact with Bouvard Pont-Péro of the Sinners organization… Lumian smiled once more.

"Instruct your informants to compile a summary of the mysterious man's visitation patterns. This way, we can catch them in the act more precisely."

It was imperative to apprehend the Sinners' liaison, Bouvard Pont-Péro!

Only then could Lumian hope to trace the Sinners organization and locate Roche Louise Sanson's family.

Initially, he had hoped to start his investigation with the Sanson family name, possibly targeting Jacques Sanson, who had once run for parliament in the market district. However, he soon realized that Sanson was a common surname in Intis, and Jacques Sanson's family connections appeared straightforward. There were no apparent issues on the surface, and there were no reports of disappearances involving his sister, daughter, or other relatives.

He couldn't shake the feeling that there were still mysteries surrounding Loki and the others who had targeted Aurore. It was impossible that the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings had directly sent a revelation instructing Loki and the others to guide Muggle into using the Soul Summoning Spell on herself, right?

Moreover, Aurore had never participated in the April Fool's team's real-life gatherings. How then could Loki determine that her original body was a follower of an evil god?

Lumian contemplated two possibilities. Either Aurore had long been tormented by Roche Louise Sanson's lingering will and sought help from I Know Someone, inadvertently revealing her secret and drawing their attention, or one of the core members of the April Fool's team had a close connection to the Sinners organization and stumbled upon the matters related to Roche Louise Sanson.

Anthony Reid nodded in approval as he observed Lumian's patience in waiting for the mysterious man who had visited Guillaume Bénet's wife to provide more clues.

…

Avenue du Marché, Salle de Bal Brise.

Just as Lumian reached the staircase, he spotted Sarkota waiting there.

"The Boss is upstairs," Sarkota whispered.

He had been a part of Baron Brignais' operation for a long time, but he had no inkling about the true identity of the elusive Boss of the Savoie Mob. By the time Ciel had taken over Salle de Bal Brise, the Boss had made two visits!

What's the Boss doing here? Lumian's mind raced as he quickly recalled the events of the past two days. A rough idea began to form.

Ascending the staircase to the second floor, he spotted Gardner Martin, impeccably dressed in formal attire, sans bow tie, leisurely savoring his coffee.

Gardner Martin put down his cup and asked with a smile, "Where did you go?"

Lumian responded with candor.

"I had a chat with Anthony Reid, the information broker. I assigned him a mission: keeping tabs on the widow of Guillaume Bénet, the enemy I just dispatched, and observing her associates. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"I suspect that Guillaume Bénet might be backed by a secret organization that worships an evil deity."

Gardner Martin chuckled and remarked, "You're not leaving any room for mercy, are you? You're even more ruthless than I thought. Yes, we can enlist the authorities' assistance to deal with these secret organizations of evil gods."

Without allowing Lumian a chance to reply, he inquired further, “Did you sense that menacing and terrifying presence last night?”

Lumian nodded honestly.

“I felt it.”

I was present at the scene…

Recalling the sensation coursing through his veins when he resonated with the Blood Emperor’s aura, he added,

“Back then, my blood seemed to be on fire.

“I wanted to investigate the origin of that aura, but the official Beyonders were quicker and sealed off Rue des Blouses Blanches.”

“When the official Beyonders are less vigilant, pay a visit to 6 Rue des Blouses Blanches and do some digging. You might stumble upon something.”

“Alright,” Lumian agreed readily.

A return to the crime scene promised its own brand of intrigue.

…

Late at night, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601, Franca’s room.

Sitting beside the typewriter and radio transceiver, the Demoness of Pleasure perused the information before turning to Jenna, who sat by her bedside.

“The gist of the matter is that Ciel has stumbled upon a new enemy. This guy is a Sequence 5 Marionettist of the Seer pathway, a member of Bureau 8. He’s sinister and powerful. Not only did he detect our surveillance, but he also traced us back and launched an ambush…”

Franca skipped over the part about the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society and recounted the entire incident.

In this narrative, Hela's identity had been that of a formidable Beyonder hired through a mysticism gathering.

Franca spread her hands and said, "I was out cold and unaware of the terrifying and violent aura that permeated the scene. When I came to, we were all underground. The Marionettist, who went by the code name Loki, was already dead. Ciel was incinerating his body, and that woman was watching."

Jenna was astounded by the capabilities and performance of a Marionettist. She tensed, feeling the summer night grow colder.

Seeing Jenna's reaction, Franca seized the moment to add, "But there's something even more chilling!"

She proceeded to recount everything she knew, sending shivers down Jenna's spine. Jenna involuntarily took a few steps closer to Franca.

"Dammit, what else have you guys been up to that I don't know about?" Jenna mustered her courage, spewing out a few choice expletives.

"It's not us, it's Ciel!" Franca was about to delve into the horror when a message crackled through the radio transceiver.

The intricate analyzer automatically translated it, spitting out a piece of paper through a connected mechanical typewriter.

Franca picked it up and saw it was from 007.

"Hidden Blade, do you have any information about the terrifying aura in the market district last night?"

Franca typed out her response,

"I don't reside in the market district. Why would I know anything about it?"

007 quickly replied, "Most of the information you provide and the favors you ask from me are related to or within the vicinity of the market district. If you haven't set foot there in the past six months, I'll eat my own hat!"

Franca chuckled dryly and responded, under Jenna's watchful gaze. "I do have some knowledge about this incident.

"But I can't spill the beans right now. You'll get the scoop at our next gathering."

…

As Franca conversed with 007, Lumian was resting in Room 207 of the Auberge du Coq Doré.

For the moment, he refrained from finding any acting possibilities. Despite having received treatment from Madame Hela and no longer teetering on the brink of losing control, as well as the auto-recovery at 6 a.m., there were lingering mental issues that required time and rest to slowly mend. Additionally, he needed to wait for Madame Hela to extract "confessions" from the April Fool's team members.

Just before midnight, the pure silver skull emerged from the shadows, its teeth gripping a thick stack of papers.

Chapter 396 - 396 Pure Evil

396 Pure Evil

Lumian expressed his gratitude and took the stack of papers. He lit the carbide lamp and quickly skimmed through the “confessions.”

After nearly an hour of reading, Lumian had a rough understanding of the overall situation.

“There aren’t many April Fool’s members, and they don’t meet often or play pranks frequently. They mainly operate in three areas: Trier, the coastal province of Gaia in the Feynapotter Kingdom, and the West Balam region of the Southern Continent.

“The core members involved in the gatherings in Trier are Loki, I Know Someone, and Mad Lady.

“In the Gaia Province, during the sea prayer rituals at Port Santa, the April Fool’s team members who pulled pranks were Bard, Ultraman, and Mad Lady. Bard and Ultraman incited local college students to march in Torres, the capital of Gaia Province…

“In the pranks that took place in the Southern Continent’s West Balam, the core members involved were Hisoka and Mad Lady.

“At a private gathering in Trier, Loki jokingly mentioned that he had inherited an ancient castle.

“At another Trier gathering, I Know Someone suddenly felt inspired and wanted to hypnotize certain psychiatrists to make them ‘conceive’ a solution to treat certain mental illnesses by destroying the frontal lobe…”

Madam Susie’s accusation of malicious treatment that would forever “calm” patients turns out to be a prank by I Know Someone… That’s

true. Only someone from another world could skip previous speculations and come up with such an idea…

His sole purpose was to see if the psychiatrists of this world were as foolish, bigoted, and despicable as to create an absurd tragedy that would leave a mark on medical history… The dozens or hundreds of patients who had completely lost their "souls" would never expect their tragic encounter to stem from an inhumane prank…

Loki and I Know Someone are worse than I imagined… Lumian couldn't help but shake his head as he read the last page of the "confessions."

He believed that he had already witnessed the worst side of humanity during his tramp days. People had committed heinous acts for food, to escape trouble, to vent their emotions—they had murdered other tramps, sold companions to the mines while they were asleep, abducted children from the streets, bullied the weak, and humiliated them in various ways. Some had formed gangs and chased away other tramps every day, turning a blind eye to their suffering.

But now, Lumian realized that these evils were clearly inferior to those of Loki, I Know Someone, and the other core members of April Fool's. They were on a whole other level.

"Even demons from the Abyss would have to address them as godfathers when they see them. Compared to them, the padre can be considered a saint," Lumian muttered, setting fire to these people repeatedly in his mind.

He exhaled and extracted useful information from these "confessions" and Madame Hela's markings.

At least eight members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society are suspected to have perished as a direct or indirect result of pranks by the April Fool's team…

I Know Someone, like Loki, participates in every private gathering in Trier, but he has never been to Feynapotter's Gaia Province or West Balam. This suggests he likely resides in Trier as well…

Similarly, Bard and Ultraman are suspected to be in Feynapotter's Gaia Province. Hisoka is located in the Southern Continent's West Balam… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Mad Lady participates in private gatherings everywhere, and these gatherings occur within a month after an agreement is made. This implies that Mad Lady has a teleportation-like ability or item…

The joke about Loki inheriting the ancient castle aligns with his dream. Perhaps I can start with investigating the appearance of the ancient castle to find Loki's whereabouts…

Bard loves to collect Emperor Roselle's diary pages and mock him in various ways. Could he have written Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles?

Based on this information, Lumian finalized his next course of investigation.

Firstly, he wanted to find the ancient castle from Loki's dream. Secondly, he aimed to delve into the medical profession, seeking clues about I Know Someone. Thirdly, he planned to wait for the next gathering to confirm whether the author of Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles was among the current Research Society members before pursuing the original author.

As for the others, he would consider them after dealing with these matters and gaining something more valuable.

Lumian summoned the Rabbit of Knowledge and had it copy the information before sending it to Madam Magician.

…

"What's this?" Jenna looked at the pure silver skull emerging from the darkness, a little afraid to meet the pale-white flames in its eye sockets.

Franca smiled awkwardly and said, "This is the messenger of that formidable lady. She helped us organize the accomplices' statements."

Franca snatched the thick piece of paper from the skull's mouth, not wanting Jenna to see the firsthand information.

Revealing it would expose the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society!

Jenna looked at the pure silver skull disappearing into the darkness and asked in confusion and curiosity, "What's a messenger?"

"It's like a postman in the world of mysticism. It's a postman for private use," Franca explained simply.

Jenna shifted her gaze to Franca.

"Do you have one?"

Franca fell silent.

"This can only be obtained by a specific pathway at a specific Sequence or with their help."

"Oh, you don't…" Jenna deciphered Franca's words.

Intrigued, she asked, "At which Sequence in the Demoness pathway does one need to reach before they can have a messenger?"

Franca fell silent again.

"Not even at Sequence 4 that I know of."

With that, she muttered under her breath, "You can switch to the Hunter pathway with your provocative abilities."

Jenna chuckled and thought for a moment.

"The last time I helped Ciel read about spirit world creatures, I seemed to have noticed a description of a few spirit world creatures that said they were 'suitable as messengers.' Can we summon them and sign a messenger contract?"

"No, uh, it's not impossible." Franca suddenly realized that she could use Mr. Fool's power to summon creatures from the spirit world and

ask Him to be a witness to the contract, just like Ciel's contract ability.

After a moment, Franca nodded slowly.

"I've come up with an idea. We'll try it later."

She then said to Jenna, "I'll sort out these statements. Don't stay up too late. You still have to go to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons tomorrow morning."

Jenna didn't inquire further and left Franca's bedroom.

Franca let out a sigh of relief and took a telegram that had just been received.

It also came from 007.

"Hidden Blade, when are you moving out of the market district?

"Ever since you arrived here, all kinds of troubles have been happening one after another. I'm about to become a real 007. I suspect you're the walking source of disaster!"

"Pfft!" Franca spat and muttered to herself, "Is the problem me? It's Ciel!"

Ever since Lumian arrived in the market district, her life hadn't been as leisurely as before.

The incident with Loki had just subsided, and the small cracks on her skin had yet to fully heal. She had to go to Trocadéro tomorrow afternoon to interact with the participants of the Red House Café's female orgy and the woman suspected to be a member of the Demoness Sect.

…

Around 9 a.m., Lumian, having completed his morning exercise and breakfast, found himself with a rare moment of leisure.

On the Iron and Blood Cross Order's side, he awaited Poufer Sauron's

next summoning. Concerning the Sinners organization, he patiently gathered information without alerting the occasional mysterious visitor. Anthony Reid would handle matters related to Hugues Artois, but his assistance wasn't needed yet. It proved challenging to discreetly tail Franca during the Bliss Society investigations as she needed to make contact with the Demoness Sect. Lumian had leads on Loki's ancient castle and I Know Someone, but lacked a clear breakthrough.

After careful consideration, Lumian decided that acting as a Pyromaniac was the best course of action. However, the market district was in a delicate state, closely monitored by numerous high-ranking individuals. Finding a safe opportunity was crucial.

Should I take the opportunity to report to Mr. K and inquire if he has a suitable mission for me to act as a Pyromaniac… Lost in thought, he walked past the Salle de Gristmill on Rue Anarchie's other side.

The establishment was under Lumian's ownership, currently overseen by the bounty hunter Lugano Toscano and Louis of the Savoie Mob.

After a brief moment of reflection, Lumian decided to enter the Salle de Gristmill.

The dance hall was closed at that time, and every waiter greeted Lumian respectfully but kept their distance.

Lumian quickly spotted Lugano Toscano, the well-built bounty hunter with sharp features, thick eyebrows, and large eyes. He was dressed in a simple formal suit and a black top hat.

Holding a magazine, he smiled at Lumian. "Boss, what brings you here?"

Lumian didn't respond immediately. His attention was drawn to the magazine in Lugano's hand. "What magazine are you reading?"

"Basics of Medicine," Lugano replied, displaying the book.

Basics of Medicine… Lumian's eyebrows twitched. "Why are you reading such books?"

He could understand if it was the First Aid Manual.

Lugano smiled and explained, “My next Sequence is Doctor. Although the potion will directly grant me corresponding Beyonder powers, having more medical knowledge will enhance my abilities. Plus, I aim to pose as a genuine doctor to earn some extra income.”

Stumbling on the acting method coincidentally… Doctor… Lumian’s heart stirred as he asked, “Have you ever heard of frontal lobe removal surgery?”

Chapter 397 - 397 Execution Ground

397 Execution Ground

“You’ve heard about this surgery too?”

After a moment of thought, he forced a smile.

“As expected of you. You’re knowledgeable and have a wide range of interests. You even know about such cutting-edge surgeries.”

“Seems like you know a lot,” Lumian brushed off Lugano’s ingratiation.

Lugano nodded quickly.

“I’ve read in several magazines that doctors believe the essence of such surgery is to destroy the patient’s brain, and it’s irreversible. In other words, while it appears to cure the patient’s madness, it leaves him with lower intelligence and eternally calm, devoid of emotional fluctuations.

“They believe that if we don’t use this surgery, there’s still a chance of recovery from the madness through other methods, but once they become stupid, there’s no hope of recovery.”

Intis still has many doctors with high academic standards who dare to speak the truth. Their professional ethics aren’t bad either… Lumian nodded inwardly.

After confirming that Lugano had a certain understanding of the medical world, he casually asked,

“Any strange medical cases recently?”

Lugano pondered for a moment and slowly shook his head.

“Nothing out of the ordinary.”

Just as Lumian was about to change the subject, Lugano added, “If you insist on something strange, there’s a folklore that’s been trending on a small scale recently.”

“Medical-related folklore?” Lumian discerned the underlying meaning in Lugano’s words.

Lugano, with his brown hair and eyes, replied with a smile, “Sort of.

“It’s probably because a group of Trier citizens believe that the blood shed by a death row inmate carries the last vestiges of life’s resilience. If you eat some bread dipped in it, it can treat various illnesses. This infuriated many medical columnists, who called it a retro, bloody, and foolish act. In comparison, going to the cathedral to seek protection might be more effective.”

“Why haven’t I heard of such folklore?” Lumian found the Trier citizens’ actions indescribable. They weren’t just foolish.

Lugano chuckled.

“Boss, that’s normal. I’ve never heard of it before either. It’s a folklore that only appeared in the past two to three months. Perhaps it’s brought about by some foreigners. More and more people are believing it.”

Shortly before noon, having filled his stomach, he turned onto Rue des Blouses Blanches and entered Apartment 3.

He knocked on Apartment 601’s door and tossed the Lie earring to Franca, whose flaxen-colored hair was tied up in a simple ponytail.

This companion had to interact with the Demoness Sect in the afternoon again. She had to revert to her previous appearance.

“What took you so long?” Franca precisely caught the silver earring. “Didn’t you receive the information from Madame Hela? I’ve been waiting for you to come and discuss it.”

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian's lips.

"Why are you even more anxious than me?"

After closing the door, he sat on the sofa and recounted the key information and corresponding guesses he had extracted from the information. Franca chimed in from time to time, offering her opinions.

Towards the end, Lumian recounted the bounty hunter Lugano Toscano's description of Trier's medical world and the strange folklore.

Franca's expression turned odd.

"Is there a problem?" Lumian wasn't alarmed but delighted.

Franca confirmed succinctly, "The rumor that eating bread stained with the blood of death row inmates can treat illnesses is very similar to ancient folklore back home, but that was many years ago. Ever since education was made universal, such folklore has basically disappeared.

"In the original folklore, steamed buns dyed red by the blood of death row inmates could treat severe lung ailments, provided they were eaten while they were still hot."

Lumian raised his right eyebrow.

He had found the strange folklore giving him an indescribable feeling.

It felt like a prank!

This was the style of April Fool's!

"I Know Someone came up with it?" Lumian suddenly felt a surge of excitement.

A Psychiatrist capable of hypnosis could make such folklore appear and spread without anyone knowing!

Franca nodded solemnly.

“I Know Someone is also from your sister’s and my homeland. Otherwise, your sister wouldn’t have trusted him and sought treatment for her psychological problems.

“His code name and the language he knows bear witness to this. Besides him and Black Earth, the other members of April Fool’s might not be aware of that ancient folklore.”

“Loki doesn’t know either?” Lumian asked in surprise.

“I’m not sure.” Franca frowned. “I’m not familiar with him, and he has never revealed his identity as a fellow countryman. If he hadn’t recited the four-lined honorific name in the language of your sister and me, I wouldn’t have known that he knew it. I always thought that their team’s Emperor Roselle diary entries were translated by I Know Someone and Black Earth.”

“If it’s really a folklore prank created by I Know Someone, I’ll go to the execution ground in the prison district and watch.”

The prison district, also known as Quartier du Red Hat, officially numbered 4, was one of the oldest urban districts. It boasted Intis’s most renowned prison, Saint-Maar Prison, hence the district’s name.

Near Saint-Maar Prison stood one of Trier’s busiest execution grounds —Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

“Be careful. Psychiatrists are more cautious than Marionettists,” Franca warned.

Although I Know Someone wasn’t a Beyonder of the Seer, Marauder, or Apprentice pathways and couldn’t discover the seal on Lumian’s body even if he believed in the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, Lumian still felt that he couldn’t be careless. He got back the Lie earring and briefly changed his appearance. He was worried that the resurrected Loki had already communicated with I Know Someone about his and Franca’s real appearance. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Franca took back the Lie earring and asked curiously, “What was up

with that terrifying aura from that day?"

Lumian chuckled.

"We'll need to start with Madame Hela and me searching for the Samaritan Women's Spring."

"…" Franca was taken aback for a moment before cursing. "Dammit! How many details did you leave out?"

"It depends on when it comes up." Lumian briefly mentioned how the Blood Emperor's aura had corroded his flesh.

Franca had already forgotten her anger. She carefully observed Lumian's raised right palm and finally noticed the indistinct marks that seemed to have been squeezed beyond recognition.

"Wow, you actually have the aura of a true god on you. Although it's just an empty shell, it's still the aura of a true god. Furthermore, it's a true god of the same pathway." Franca sighed enviously, wishing she could have one for herself.

She then looked at Lumian's bandaged left hand.

"What's on this one?"

"Nothing. It's just to attract attention," Lumian replied with a smile.

Franca was stunned for two seconds.

"You're so sinister! If you advance to a Conspirer, your digestion speed will definitely be very fast!"

"I hope the outcome is as good as your blessings," Lumian replied without modesty.

…

In the afternoon, Lumian took a public carriage to the north bank of the Srenzo River and arrived at the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground in the prison district.

One of Trier's citizens' hobbies was watching the execution of criminals. Although it wasn't the weekend, there were still many people gathered here. There were even many vendors setting up stalls or traversing among them, hawking food and drinks.

Among them, there was no shortage of gorgeously dressed street girls seeking business, as well as a group of authors who had deliberately come to take a stroll.

If not for the name "Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground" written at the intersection and the gallows and beheading platform standing in the distance, Lumian would have suspected that he had come to the wrong place and entered a nearby market. It was bustling and noisy.

Stepping on the muddy ground, Lumian concealed himself in the crowd and circled the execution ground as if he were strolling through a market.

He didn't spot anyone suspicious, but he saw a dozen or so men and women with bread in their hands crowding in front. Their clothes were old, and some of them could be considered crude.

After a while, the crowd suddenly stirred, squeezing to the sides of the road leading to the execution ground to welcome the procession from Saint-Maar Prison.

Lumian didn't join in the bustle, but he heard cheers, whistles, and women shouting, "I'm willing to marry you."

The latter wasn't a proposal, but a jest about past folklore. In the classical era before Emperor Roselle, if a death row inmate received a proposal while walking from prison to the execution ground and he agreed, he would receive a change in sentence and survive. However, not all death row inmates would accept it. Some valued looks very much, while others had dignity. They all chose death to uphold their ideals.

The two most renowned cases involved a handsome death row inmate who rejected the proposal of a woman, believing her appearance to be a nightmare. On the other hand, a beautiful girl,

faced with an executioner's courtship, gave up the opportunity to save herself, believing it was an insult to love and marriage.

Lumian squeezed into the front row of onlookers and saw two death row inmates standing at the firing point.

They were relatively young, no more than 30 years old. They wore standard prison uniforms—red short shirts, yellow pants, and green hats. Their feet dragged iron balls, and their hands were tied behind their backs with iron chains.

One of the men had black hair and blue eyes, while the other had brown hair and brown eyes. They were good-looking, but their gazes were filled with hatred.

Upon seeing the execution gunmen reach their designated positions and raise their rifles, the two death row inmates shouted, "Long live freedom!"

"Return to glory!"

After shouting, the two of them glared at each other angrily and collapsed amidst the gunshots, blood gushing out.

The people holding the bread were excited, but they were stopped by the soldiers in front of them and couldn't rush to the firing point.

Once the condition of the two death row inmates was confirmed, the soldiers left in formation. The bread-wielding citizens charged towards the blood-stained soil.

Lumian didn't look at them. Instead, he observed his surroundings to see who was enjoying this absurd comedy.

Chapter 398 - 398 Human Blood Bread

398 Human Blood Bread Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Some of the citizens of Trier were curious and began asking around for the reason behind the commotion, while others watched with excitement. Lumian couldn't discern who was genuinely enjoying the prank's results and who was simply caught up in the fun.

This was a part of Trier's folklore. Lumian believed that even a formidable, higher-Sequence psychiatrist like Madam Susie wouldn't be able to pinpoint the source of the commotion, identify the prankster, or distinguish the intentional misguidance from the innocent bystanders.

Although Lumian had anticipated this, he couldn't help but let out a sigh.

"You Trierians…"

No wonder the April Fool's team held their private gatherings here. It was like a homecoming.

Lumian abandoned his observations and casually singled out a middle-aged man who was using rye bread to soak up the blood left behind by the death row inmates. He waited until the man made a dash for an exit of the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground before quietly following behind.

In a secluded alley devoid of barricades, Lumian took a few steps forward, blocking the path of the middle-aged man in a tattered linen shirt.

Raising his bandaged left palm, Lumian inquired, as if he were a

mobster giving a condescending glance to an ordinary citizen.

“What have you got there?”

The gaunt middle-aged man with short black hair replied timidly, “It’s bread stained with the blood of death row inmates.”

“And what’s the purpose of this?” Lumian adopted the tone of a curious monster with a touch of intrigue.

The middle-aged man’s fear was palpable.

“I-It can treat illnesses.”

“Who told you it could treat illnesses?” This was Lumian’s main question.

The middle-aged man answered in a daze, “I heard it from Guillaume, who lives across the street. He said that his coworker’s child got better after eating this kind of human blood bread.”

The child of a coworker’s neighbor… Lumian regarded it as nothing more than a rumor. Tracing its origin would be challenging.

He studied the middle-aged man clutching the blood-stained bread and asked with contemplation, “Is someone in your family sick too?”

“Yes.” The middle-aged man instantly looked downtrodden and filled with despair.

He glanced at the blood-stained bread in his hand, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

Lumian remained silent for a moment before responding, “What did the doctor say?”

The middle-aged man lowered his head slightly, his gaze fixed on the blood bread.

“He said there’s no cure, and I don’t have the money to…”

Lumian didn’t press further. He turned silently, allowing the middle-

aged man to pass through the barricade with his blood-soaked bread and continue down the secluded alley.

He moved slowly, retracing his steps back to the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground, and noticed that the “market” was still in full swing. Many citizens had taken advantage of the situation to have picnics, sing, and dance, turning it into an impromptu gathering.

Lumian took cover behind the trees on the edge of the square, sitting in the shadows, and continued to silently observe the people coming and going.

As time passed, the bustling “market” in the execution ground gradually quieted down. The sun had dipped below the horizon, casting the surroundings into darkness.

Lumian remained hidden, keeping an eye on the departing citizens and vendors. However, he didn’t identify any suspicious individuals.

With the arrival of the dark night, the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground was deserted, bathed in the eerie light of the crimson moon. Lumian slowly rose to his feet, preparing to depart.

Suddenly, he caught sight of a dark figure leaping over the side fence and swiftly infiltrating the execution ground.

Lumian froze and pressed further into the shadows of the tree.

The slender figure, adorned with a top hat, made his way to the area where the death row inmates had met their end. He knelt down, reached out, and collected the soil stained with their blood.

Could this person also believe in the healing properties of death row inmates’ blood? His actions and agility suggest he might be a Beyonder… Lumian silently watched the mysterious figure.

Before long, the tall, thin figure in the top hat straightened up, holding a mound of blood-soaked soil.

Rather than immediately leaving the Rois execution grounds, he ventured deeper, heading towards the gallows.

Under the crimson moonlight, the figure buried the blood-stained soil beneath the gallows. He seemed to scrutinize the plants growing there, as if searching for something.

…

In Trocadéro Town, inside the Red House Café with its vibrant mushroom-like roof,

Franca, sporting black hair, brown eyes, and hunting attire, placed her dinner order: beef seasoned with coarse salt, red wine, fries, Feysac omelet, quail bisque with a few slices of ham.

Earlier that afternoon, she had engaged in a lively conversation with a group of ladies and could sense the longing and desire in their eyes.

Simultaneously, she felt someone secretly observing her, prompting her to stay until nightfall.

As Franca neared the end of her dinner, a woman descended from the second floor.

It was the Demoness who had tailed Franca previously. Today, her long orange-red hair cascaded down her back, and she wore a white man's shirt, brown dungarees, and dark brown boots that accentuated her perfect figure. Her appearance was exquisite and clean, with an aura that was both pure and slightly wild.

Without hesitation, the woman, presumably a member of the Demoness Sect, walked straight toward Franca, pulled out a chair, and sat opposite her.

Franca deliberately assessed the Demoness's appearance and figure with a masculine gaze. She smiled and watched as the woman sat down, waiting for her to speak.

"Why are you here again?" the orange-red-haired Demoness inquired, studying Franca closely.

Franca smiled and replied, "Trocadéro Wine is my favorite wine. The scenery and atmosphere here are quite appealing."

Noticing the Demoness's disbelief, Franca added with a sly smile, "Besides, I've heard…"

She lowered her voice and insinuated, "There are female orgies here."

The eyes of the Demoness with long orange-red hair flickered.

"Who told you that?"

Franca looked at the Demoness's face and said provocatively, "Once, I encountered a nymphomaniac who tried to ambush me, but I handled him. He claimed to be a peripheral member of an organization called the Bliss Society. The core members of this organization are lesbians, and they are trying to connect with participants in the female orgies at the Red House Café, looking to recruit new members."

Franca wasn't sure if the Demoness Sect had any ties to the Bliss Society. After all, it wasn't inconceivable for organizations worshiping evil gods to form alliances to some extent, similar to how Hugues Artois had numerous heretics under his influence. Therefore, she "confessed" this information to gauge the reaction of the person sitting across from her.

As she spoke, she prepared herself for any potential surprise attacks.

The Demoness with long orange-red hair's expression shifted slightly, becoming more serious.

The hostility and wariness in her eyes diminished, but there was a clear sense of repulsion.

Oh, does she view the participants of these female gatherings as her lovers and is unwilling to let me, possibly once a man, near them? Franca couldn't help but mimic Lumian's tone inwardly and playfully tease.

She was reasonably certain that the other party had never heard of the Bliss Society, but she had detected some signs.

The Demoness sitting across from Franca fell into deep thought, appearing to consider a potential issue.

After more than ten seconds, she unconsciously brushed back her long orange-red hair and asked cautiously, “Are you here to investigate the Bliss Society, or are you interested in joining the orgy?”

Franca’s laugh drew astonished looks from the surrounding customers, who were clearly taken aback by her stunning expression.

“Both,” Franca replied, meeting the orange-red eyes of the Demoness. “But if I had to choose, I’d prefer attending the orgy. How can people like us resist such a tempting party? Wouldn’t you agree?”

In this way, Franca subtly indicated that she had deduced that the other person was also a Demoness and likely a former male Assassin.

She also hinted at her own history as a man to deter any sudden attacks.

The Demoness, now dressed as a man, seemed to resist this notion but remained silent, clearly captivated by Franca’s presence and aura.

Leaning forward, Franca asked in a more masculine tone, “What should I call you?”

The Demoness hesitated briefly before responding somberly, “I’m Browns Sauron. And you?”

Sauron… Another member of the Sauron family? Franca suddenly recalled that Lumian’s recent mission under the Iron and Blood Cross Order involved interactions with members of the Sauron family.

She didn’t conceal her true name and smiled. “Franca Roland.”

Browns Sauron let out a silent sigh and continued, “Our party places great importance on the privacy and safety of all members. We can’t allow problematic individuals to join. If you’re truly interested, you’ll need to undergo an audit.”

Franca didn’t mind at all. She toyed with the buttons on her shirt and inquired with a grin,

“So, where should we start this audit?”

…

Prison district, Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

Under the crimson moonlight, the tall, slender figure in the top hat carefully unearthed a few handfuls of weeds from the ground beneath the gallows.

The roots of these weeds emitted an eerie, blood-red glow, appearing especially otherworldly in the moon's dim light.

This tall, thin figure had a prominent nose bridge, fair skin, and impeccably groomed medium-length black hair. His eyes were a striking shade of red, and he possessed a certain androgynous allure.

Clad in a white shirt, a vibrant red bow tie, and a sleek black suit, he gazed with fascination at the peculiar weeds in his hand. He was on the verge of rising to leave the execution grounds.

However, at that very moment, a curious male voice broke the silence.

"What are you digging?"

The lanky figure, who had been crouched beneath the gallows, looked up in astonishment. To his surprise, he realized that, at some unnoticeable point in time, a figure had materialized before him, peering down with a penetrating gaze.

This new arrival had blond hair and eyes as blue as serene lakes. He wore a simple white shirt and a black vest, giving him a youthful and refreshing appearance.

How did he manage to approach me without detection? I didn't pick up on any scent or movement! The lanky figure's heart raced with alarm and trepidation.

Chapter 399 - 399 Mandrake

399 Mandrake

The lanky figure, though startled, sprang into action.

Rather than reaching out with his right hand, which was gripping the strange weeds, he extended his nails, etched with mystical symbols and patterns, appearing hard and razor-sharp.

Darkness surrounding Lumian seemed to awaken, converging into pitch-black chains that aimed to ensnare him in place.

Lumian's gaze remained resolute as he observed the rapidly approaching figure. He emitted a soft harrumph.

Two beams of brilliant white light shot forth from his nostrils, striking the target before he could evade in time.

The tall, slender figure suddenly crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

The illusory chains, formed from darkness, disintegrated into nothingness.

Lumian, donning a different visage, grinned and shook his head. "You actually opted for an attack rather than fleeing."

Utilizing spirit world traversal, he teleported to close the distance with his target discreetly, preventing him from sensing the impending danger. When they were within mere meters of each other, escape or counterattack became impossible. At worst, both parties would sustain injuries. Hence, Lumian still had time for a "greeting." If the other party cooperated and answered civilly, there might be no need for a confrontation.

It was akin to a phrase frequently espoused by the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society:

Encouraging compliance through good morals!

Lumian carefully observed for a few moments and confirmed that the tall, thin figure had indeed fainted.

He bent down to examine the peculiar blood-red rooted weeds. Apart from their extraordinary spiritual properties, they seemed rather ordinary.

After some contemplation, Lumian hoisted the unconscious figure and shook him vigorously.

As the target began to stir, Lumian released his grip and stepped back.

Based on the previous skirmish, Lumian suspected that the other party was a Mid-Sequence Beyonder from the Apothecary pathway, specifically Sequence 7, known as Vampire. This meant that any human who consumed the corresponding potion to advance would eventually undergo a transformation into another species.

Aurore possessed substantial knowledge about Vampires' characteristics and abilities, as the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society included two individuals known as Sanguines, one of whom bore the code name "Headmaster."

Hence, Lumian deduced the target's identity based on his swift reflexes, formidable nails, and the dark shackles-like spells he wielded.

Since he wasn't a Psychiatrist and didn't possess any similar items, they weren't truly enemies. The best course of action was to engage in a friendly and cooperative conversation. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

As soon as the lanky figure regained consciousness, he sprang to his feet and scanned his surroundings with a wary gaze. His eyes fell upon a blond youth standing by the gallows, dressed in a crisp outfit and wearing a friendly smile.

The other party had clearly demonstrated the ability to subdue him effortlessly, with the power to end his life or sell him at any moment. However, instead of harm, he had chosen to awaken him!

The lanky figure recalled the other party's sudden appearance and the peculiar white beams. He couldn't help but feel that even if the barons or even viscounts from his family were to confront him, the outcome wouldn't be so swift and one-sided.

Coupled with his ignorance of the two white beams' nature and the corresponding pathway, he suspected that the individual before him had surpassed his expectations in terms of Sequence.

"What do you want?" the lanky figure inquired in a deep voice.

Lumian remained composed, ready to employ the Spell of Harrumph if necessary.

"Are you a Vampire?"

"Sanguine," the lanky figure emphasized.

Lumian cast his eyes skyward at the crimson moon and inquired with a smile, "Which family?"

Though he possessed no knowledge of the numerous Vampire families or the renowned last names, it didn't prevent him from assuming the role of an ancient being, wise and well-traveled.

Sensing the fear in the lanky figure's demeanor, Lumian seized the opportunity to play this role, drawing inspiration from figures like the ancient monster Amon, who had lived for eons.

"I hail from the Bruch family," the tall, slender figure declared with pride. "My name is La Nou Bruch."

What kind of family is this? I've never heard of them… Lumian nodded slightly and said, "Ah, the Bruch family."

He glanced at the strange weed in La Nou's hand. "What is this?"

"It's Mandrake," La Nou responded truthfully, believing that such a

potent Beyonder wouldn't have much interest in a plant primarily used for spiritual purposes.

You mustn't merely answer my questions one by one. Be proactive and provide context and your reasons for being here. How can I maintain my image like this? Lumian chided him internally as he thought rapidly.

"Did you come specifically to retrieve it because this herb holds unique significance for you?"

La Nou hesitated for a moment before succumbing to his fear.

"Yes, the lotion made from it can help me withstand the spirituality surge during the full moon."

Spirituality surge… Lumian recalled some details from Aurore's grimoires: The Headmaster of the Academy team had sought a solution to the spirituality surge during the full moon within the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, but had found none.

According to Sanguine accounts, after the awakening of the Ancestor of the ancient species a few years ago and Her reclamation of authority from the Evernight Goddess, all Sanguines had become unstable during the full moon.

This wasn't the madness that afflicted the Mutants, but a form of sublimation. Nevertheless, the sudden surge in spirituality, akin to a rising tide, placed a substantial burden on the Vampires' bodies. Some experienced hallucinations or unnecessary danger due to their heightened spiritual perception during this period.

Lumian regarded La Nou with interest and asked, "Mandrake can suppress the spirituality surge during the full moon?"

"The few Sanguines I've encountered seem to be unaware of this."

The entire Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society was unaware!

"I believe I may be the first to have made this discovery. Mandrake is a plant that thrives beneath the corpses of hanged individuals. It appears to draw power from some sort of earthbound divine

influence."

Spiritual plants associated with the earth domain? Lumian inquired thoughtfully, "How did you stumble upon this revelation?"

Observing that such a formidable Beyonder was ignorant of the origins and applications of Mandrake, La Nou's smile broadened.

"At first, there were rumors circulating about the plants that grew beneath the bodies of the hanged being able to treat various ailments. Given that every Sanguine is an Apothecary, I couldn't entirely dismiss these rumors. So, I decided to give it a shot. I crafted a Mandrake lotion and found that it remarkably suppressed spirituality fluctuations."

Rumor… Rumors once again… Lumian suppressed his frown.

"Do you happen to know where these rumors originated?"

"I'm afraid not," La Nou replied with a shake of his head. "In Trier, rumors abound. For example, in recent months, I was concerned that the reckless harvesting of Mandrake by uninformed citizens might disrupt its growth. However, new rumors have surfaced, with people now chasing after blood-soaked soil from death row inmates."

"It's indeed a challenge to trace the origins of rumors in Trier," Lumian remarked, a touch of resignation in his voice.

"Why did you bring soil stained with the blood of a death row inmate to the gallows?"

La Nou proudly displayed his findings.

"I've discovered that Mandrake flourishes beneath the bodies of hanged individuals. While it's most effective, hanging people isn't a common occurrence. However, by using the blood of other death row inmates to nourish it, Mandrake can still grow. Although it's not as potent, it gets the job done."

Lumian nodded thoughtfully, considering another aspect of the issue.

"Who initially gave the Mandrake its name? Wasn't it merely a rumor

in the beginning?"

When it came to topics within his apparent "profession," La Nou spoke confidently.

"This plant has borne its name for quite some time, though no one had discovered its medicinal value until now. It was primarily utilized as a spiritual ingredient and as a component in certain spells…"

At this juncture, La Nou suddenly fell into a momentary stupor.

"Why haven't my ancestors, the illustrious Apothecaries, attempted to concoct lotions with Mandrake? They aren't confined to traditional knowledge; they explore ingredients based on principles and develop new lotions…"

"Perhaps they did try, but there was no spiritual surge in those times?"

Could it be that Mandrake possessed some mystical power triggered by the spirituality surge accompanying the full moon? Lumian, not being an Apothecary or a Mysticologist, couldn't arrive at a conclusive answer. All he could do was speculate based on La Nou's musings.

He changed the subject.

"Why did you refrain from reporting the Mandrake's utility to your elders? It could hold great significance for the entire Sanguine community."

La Nou stammered, "There are still some issues with the lotions I've crafted. I'm uncertain if the toxicity of Mandrake can be entirely neutralized. I plan to verify this before informing the higher-ups. Only then can I have a clear chance at ascending to the rank of baron."

"What issues have you encountered?" Lumian queried, part-curious and partly assisting the Headmaster of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

La Nou adjusted his long, black hair and expressed his concerns with a mix of confusion and apprehension.

“Whenever I consume the various Mandrake-based lotions, it’s akin to ingesting poisonous mushrooms. I witness an abundance of flowers blooming on the ground, with countless tiny figures dancing amidst them. I find myself covered in mushrooms.

“The illusions vary somewhat each time, but recurring elements persist.”

Could it be that your preemptive entry into the illusion mitigates the adverse effects of your spirituality surge state? Is that why you believe Mandrake can suppress this phenomenon? Lumian silently pondered.

Without further ado, he activated his spirit world traversal ability and vanished from La Nou’s view.

A Sequence 5 Traveler or an item of similar nature? La Nou heaved a sigh of relief, hazarding a rough guess as to why the other party could appear beside him before he could react.

Coupled with the strange white beams, such a figure was undoubtedly formidable below the demigod level.

Chapter 400 - 400 Transferring Burdens

400 Transferring Burdens

The street lamps outside the window had already lit up. Franca gazed at Browns Sauron and spoke, “I’ve already mentioned my name. I reside in the market district and hold a significant position within the Savoie Mob. That’s all I can reveal. You’re free to investigate me as you wish. In any case, I have two objectives. Firstly, I intend to probe into the Bliss Society and eliminate any hidden threats. Secondly, I plan to take the opportunity to gain insight into the female gathering.”

Her strategy for the day involved connecting with people genuinely—a tactic she had devised with Lumian. If the Demoness at the Red House Café approached her, she would “confess” her intentions and assess if the other party had any ties to the Bliss Society.

Franca had even discussed specific details with Anthony Reid, a Psychiatrist, to prevent herself from reacting excessively. If that happened, it could do more harm than good.

According to Anthony Reid’s suggestion, she was “candid,” but not completely forthcoming. Revealing that she was once a man, had transformed into a Demoness of Pleasure, and was infiltrating the Savoie Mob to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order and eventually return to her original gender would not only fail to gain trust but also raise suspicions of ulterior motives due to her excessive honesty.

Thus, she only disclosed her identity and primary motives on the surface, leaving the rest hidden in the details, allowing the other party to uncover and investigate on their own.

Information gathered through effort was much more credible than

mere words!

Browns Sauron fixed his gaze on Franca's eyes and remarked, "With the strength you've demonstrated, why limit yourself to being a mob leader?"

"For something of great importance, I believe you would have done the same," Franca replied cryptically, hinting that she had also discerned the other party's path, approximate Sequence, and original circumstances.

With that, she raised her hand to touch the silver-white earring fastened to her right earlobe and added with a grin, "I forgot to mention that this isn't my true appearance. My disguise is quite effective. Otherwise, why did you lose track of me the last time?"

Browns glanced at the silver earring, nodding in comprehension.

Instead of delving deeper into Franca's identity, the conversation shifted toward the topic of the Bliss Society.

Franca could discern that the Demoness placed significant importance on the Red House Café's female orgies and was cautious about any organizations or individuals with hidden agendas.

Are you telling me that you genuinely form romantic connections with some of the participants in these orgies and have developed feelings for them? If this continues, you're bound to encounter trouble sooner or later. It's perfectly natural to have emotions, but seeking them in such gatherings is a sign of a narrow perspective… Can't you completely separate the spiritual from the physical? When there's too much spiritual connection, the desire for physical intimacy grows. Conversely, with too much physical intimacy, it's inevitable for souls to draw closer… As an observer, Franca offered her critique of Browns Sauron's situation, drawing from the knowledge and experiences of two lifetimes that had led to her philosophical reflections.

This insight allowed her to grasp her first principle as a Demoness of Pleasure to some extent.

She didn't withhold any information. On the one hand, she suspected that the Demoness Sect had fostered such an "innocent" and emotionally driven Demoness because they had their sights set on the Sauron family. On the other hand, she recounted the general activities and abilities of the Bliss Society.

Upon hearing the name "Sex Addict" and its corresponding behavior, Browns Sauron's expression grew serious and cautious.

Franca knew when to conclude the conversation. She finished her after-dinner liqueur, rose gracefully, put on her blue bonnet, and departed from the Red House Café.

As she entered the rental carriage and returned to the market district, her mind raced, analyzing potential vulnerabilities.

I need to persuade Jenna to move out. But having her stay in my apartment might reveal my true gender. I must remind her not to display her Assassin and Instigator abilities for the time being…

The issue with Ciel is that if Browns Sauron and Poufer Sauron frequently interact, they might discover that the affluent merchant's generous scion is, in reality, the leader of the market district's mob, exposing the Iron and Blood Cross Order's hidden agenda. Yes, Browns is affiliated with the Demoness Sect and doesn't share the same interests as the Sauron family. There is a significant likelihood that she would conceal this fact and exploit it…

"…" nove(l)bi(n.)com

Rue du Rossignol, market district.

Lumian "teleported" back to his safe house.

While waiting for Franca to return Lie to him and allow him to revert to his original appearance, he contemplated the rumors circulating about the human blood bread.

It would have been manageable if I had discovered it from the outset, but now it's already widely believed. Hundreds or perhaps thousands of people have bought into it. Tracing it back to the source will be extremely challenging. Moreover, even if I locate the origin, the

person responsible may be filled with false information and unable to identify their source… Finding a skilled Psychiatrist who can hypnotize people is quite a task…

The Mandrake rumor La Nou Bruch had heard appears suspicious…

After careful consideration, Lumian decided not to dwell on it. He would report it to Madam Magician and explore the possibility of hiring someone like Madam Susie or even a high-ranking Psychiatrist such as Madam Justice to investigate the source of the rumors.

They were experts in similar operations and possessed all the abilities of “I Know Someone,” and even more!

The matter concerning the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings was a shared mission of the Tarot Club.

Likewise, Lumian intended to burden the Major Arcana card holders with the other clue. Given his abilities, it was practically impossible for him to investigate it further.

He believed that since Loki was operating within Bureau 8, there was a chance he had either subtly influenced some of his colleagues or been discovered by them. All these were potential leads.

However, based on his experiences dealing with a Marionettist, Lumian recalled the events at the Alone Bar and the puppet show in the basement. It wasn’t as murky as he had initially thought. It exuded an aura of malevolence, obscurity, and terror, and he could distinctly perceive the tangible danger concealed within the various details.

He suspected that most of the spectators at the marionette theater were, in fact, marionettes themselves, fitting the bar’s name: Alone!

It seemed that there was only one living person amidst the marionettes!

Of course, this was somewhat exaggerated. It was evident that a few Bureau 8 members were working as bartenders and waitstaff at the Alone Bar, including Loki and Leah.

Nevertheless, Beyonders capable of manipulating an entire theater filled with marionettes were far more powerful than Loki. They likely exceeded Sequence 5 and might even be demigods of the Seer pathway.

Regardless of Lumian's confidence, he didn't believe he could uncover any clues in a bar protected by a demigod. He didn't dare to attempt it.

Only the Major Arcana card holders of the Tarot Club could conduct a thorough investigation in that direction!

Without hesitation, Lumian unfolded a letter and began reporting his findings to Madam Magician.

As the "doll" messenger was summoned, it cast a glance at Lumian and remarked, "Do you enjoy dressing up?"

Is that because I'm wearing a new face? Lumian smiled and replied, "It's a necessity in certain situations. Disguises help ensure that one remains unrecognized when carrying out certain tasks."

The messenger nodded slowly.

"No wonder you can't tell I'm different every day."

Lumian gazed at the light-golden attire of the "doll" messenger, unsure whether to offer a truthful response or a white lie.

Observing Lumian's silence, the messenger snatched the letter and stated sharply, "My hair is smoother, my skin is more elastic, and my dress is new…"

With those words, the messenger's voice gradually faded away as it dissolved into the candlelight.

Lumian let out a sigh and muttered to himself, Perhaps the more familiar I become with someone, the less I notice their subtle changes…

It was akin to Franca, who appeared so relaxed around him that she didn't feel the need to rack her brains on many things.

If one had to rack their brains and be on edge when interacting with others, their mental state would inevitably deteriorate over time.

Seeing that it was time, Lumian left Rue du Rossignol and arrived at Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. He knocked on the door, and Jenna opened it, looking surprised.

“Who might you be?”

Lumian scoffed. “Can’t you still not tell from my gait?”

“Dammit, your aura, which makes others want to beat you up, will make your disguise useless!” Jenna knew that Lumian possessed a mystical item capable of altering his appearance.

Once Lumian entered the living room, he glanced around.

“Where’s Franca?”

“She hasn’t returned from her visit to the Red House Café,” Jenna replied, already aware that Franca had intentions of engaging with a member of the Demoness Sect. She had also heard her companion mention the secret organization’s animosity towards female Assassins.

Lumian stroked Franca’s Mirror Substitution in his arms and settled into an armchair when he saw that nothing was amiss.

This was Jenna’s usual spot.

Jenna rolled her eyes at him and perched on the armrest of a nearby chair. She asked thoughtfully,

“Why do you have so many enemies? How many of them are there?”

Lumian had briefly recounted the Cordu disaster but had omitted much of his past. He replied simply, “The Soul Summoning Spell that caused my sister’s problem was acquired from an organization called April Fool’s. They intentionally sold it to my sister. My current objective is to locate their key members and execute them one by one.”

Jenna pursed her lips, refraining from delving into the specifics to

avoid upsetting Lumian.

“How can I assist?” she inquired earnestly.

Lumian pondered for a moment and replied, “Your dedication to becoming a Witch is the greatest assistance you can provide me.”

Not only were the core members of April Fool’s formidable, but they also had no boundaries. Jenna could only participate in the pursuit of these individuals after becoming a Witch and gaining the ability to create a Mirror Substitution of herself.

Internally seething with anger, Jenna refrained from voicing her frustration. She quietly observed Lumian for a few seconds and remarked, “I sense that you’re more exhausted than before…”

Lumian subconsciously smiled.

“But I’m also more motivated.”

“But isn’t this too intense? Franca mentioned that a constantly tense string is prone to snapping. The best approach is to alternate between tension and relaxation,” Jenna expressed her concern.

Lumian gave a self-deprecating smile.

“But they won’t allow me to relax. They’re determined to kill me themselves.”

Noticing Jenna’s confusion, he added with a cold expression, “They haven’t reported me to the authorities despite knowing that I’m a wanted criminal. It’s clear they want me to remain in the market district until they finalize their plan and make all the necessary preparations.”

Chapter 401 - 401 Dreamwalker

401 Dreamwalker

From Loki losing control and collapsing without being completely dead, Lumian had been vigilant about being reported by the core members of the April Fool's team and staying prepared for potential surprise attacks from official Beyonders. After all, Loki knew that he was Lumian Lee, a leader of the Savoie Mob, overseeing Salle de Bal Brise. He even knew that Lumian carried the aura of the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor.

This convinced Lumian that the April Fool's team still had their sights set on him. They were reluctant to hand their target over to the authorities or force him out of the market district where they could no longer keep an eye on him.

It had to be known that a marionette sealed with an angel was undoubtedly an item that could cause Loki's strength to undergo a significant transformation. Missing out on Lumian meant he could almost never meet another one.

Furthermore, the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings might have a use for Termiboros.

The core members of the April Fool's team were quite direct about this matter. They didn't bother concealing their mockery and malice. They believed Lumian could see through it and expected him to be provoked, eventually choosing to wait in the market district.

When to make their move was entirely up to them. They wouldn't recklessly attack while Lumian had assistance.

Jenna sensed the anger and hostility lurking beneath Lumian's composed demeanor and calm words. She didn't attempt to persuade him further and simply mumbled, "I hope these villains get what's

coming to them."

Lumian's emotions had been on an upheaval, causing the lingering effects of his near-loss of control to resurface.

Taking a deep breath, he raised his right hand and massaged his temples to ease the pounding in his head.

"What's wrong?" Jenna asked, her concern evident.

Lumian replied succinctly, "The mental trauma from the battle with Loki will take a week or two to fully heal."

Jenna's eyes darted as she offered, "Do you want me to give you a head massage? Franca taught me. I'm quite skilled at it.

"Don't be shy. We're friends, after all!"

Her last statement trailed off playfully, an attempt to divert Lumian's attention and alleviate his emotional state with a teasing tone.

Lumian scoffed.

"Why do you keep saying that from time to time? 'Franca mentioned this, Franca taught me that.'"

"Don't you often…" Jenna started but abruptly stopped herself.

Initially, she had intended to say, "Don't you often say, 'My sister said that, my sister taught me that.'"

Lumian fell silent, and Jenna did the same. After a few seconds, seeing that Lumian didn't object, Jenna left the chair armrest and moved behind him. She reached out and began massaging his temples and both sides of his head.

Lumian's body tensed up.

Lumian scoffed. "As a Hunter, I would instinctively throw anyone who dared to touch my head or bestow them with a massive fireball. It took a lot of effort not to roast you."

“Did the Provoker potion completely alter your language and speech patterns?”

Lumian responded bluntly, “Yo, why the fancy words?”

As the two of them bantered, Lumian’s body gradually relaxed. After a few minutes, he leaned back on the sofa and half-closed his eyes.

While enjoying Jenna’s massage and relieving his headache, he naturally brought up the “pranks” of Loki, I Know Someone, and the other core members of the April Fool’s team. Jenna’s anger flared, and she subconsciously tightened her grip.

“Take it easy,” Lumian said with a hint of physical discomfort.

An Assassin possessed considerable strength.

Jenna eased her grip, still fuming.

“I’ve never encountered such scoundrels or vile individuals in all my performances. They deserve every bit of suffering!

“Dammit, why am I not a Witch yet?”

Lumian’s eyes remained closed as he asked, “How’s the digestion with the Instigator potion? Have you grasped the principles of acting?”

Jenna’s attention shifted. As she continued to knead, she reflected, “There are currently two key points. First, Instigation is a means, not an end. Second, the essence of Instigation lies in understanding the core of the matter and the conditions of the people involved, not in the use of abilities. Additionally, I’ve come to a realization. Instigation will inevitably bring about consequences; it just depends on whom you want to face those consequences.”

“Not bad,” Lumian commended, a rare occurrence.

Standing behind him, Jenna lifted her chin modestly and said, “I find opportunities to practice every day, especially among theater actors and apprentices at places like Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, where conflicts are abundant. Instigating someone forces me to

consider who I want to benefit and who will be taught a lesson or suffer losses. It made me realize that instigation is merely a tool."

Lumian's demeanor noticeably softened as he let his thoughts wander. He casually inquired, "Where do you think I might find an opportunity to act as a Pyromaniac?"

Jenna's hands continued their soothing motion as she thought and replied, "Trier is a place of relatively basic order. You can only act on smaller matters; you can't create a major spectacle there…

"But there might be an opportunity during the pursuit of those villains. When you mentioned it earlier, I wanted to set them ablaze!"

Lumian suddenly had an idea, though it wasn't entirely clear. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

At that moment, footsteps echoed from the stairs, growing progressively louder.

Jenna released her grip on Lumian's head and approached the door with a smile.

"Franca is back."

…

In the bustling streets of Trier, the night might lack tranquility, but the citizens living in those areas still found their way into slumber.

Suddenly, a golden retriever carrying a small backpack made an appearance in the dream.

The golden retriever sat at the dream's edge, guiding the hazy scenes to reveal hidden memories deep in the dreamer's subconscious.

It was the excitement of pushing through the crowd and rushing towards the death row inmate's corpse with bread in hand. It was the hesitation that came after believing that human blood bread could cure illnesses. It was the mixture of joy and skepticism that had accompanied their first hearing of this rumor…

The golden retriever caught sight of the figure who had initially informed the dreamer about the blood bread rumors. It turned out to be a neighbor who lived next door.

And so, the golden retriever traversed dream after dream, activating the corresponding subconscious memories to search for the source of the blood bread rumors.

After hundreds of dreams, the golden retriever noticed two dreams with clear contradictions.

One belonged to a father who believed that he had obtained the secret of human blood bread from a Warlock he happened to meet, using it to cure his daughter's illness. The other dream belonged to his child, who had suddenly fallen ill and then just as suddenly recovered, as if the human blood bread was a miraculous elixir.

The golden retriever guided the father to manifest the Warlock in his dream.

It was very ordinary and unremarkable.

Scenes in the dream flickered rapidly, and the image of the Warlock began to change, memories flowing back.

When their initial encounter was revealed, the golden retriever saw a Warlock with a completely different face from before!

Then, the face rapidly shifted, eventually settling into the image the dreamer normally associated with the Warlock.

The golden retriever had her own interpretation of this.

The Warlock's Hypnosis could only be fully effective in a face-to-face encounter, allowing the dreamer to retain their first impression of him. Only then would they be affected by the hypnosis and have the image in their memory altered.

There was no need to repeat the process of awakening the subconscious within the dream. The original image of the Warlock naturally surfaced in the golden retriever's mind.

He had short brown hair, parted in a 3-7 split, flaxen-colored eyes, and a thin, freckled face. He wore gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose…

Exiting the dream, the golden retriever turned her attention to Madam Magician, who had suddenly appeared beside her. In a human voice, she declared, “I’ve obtained a result.”

Dressed in a blouse and a long brown dress, Madam Magician sighed and eagerly said, “Give me the information, and I’ll confirm it.”

The golden retriever remained silent, her eyes darkening.

After a few seconds, Madam Magician took a few steps forward, causing starlight to manifest around her.

It resembled a reflection of the vast cosmos on the ground.

The resplendent and condensed stars spun rapidly, providing a revelation.

Once Madam Magician finished interpreting, she pulled open an illusory door hidden in the darkness and disappeared.

In just over ten seconds, she reappeared and said to the golden retriever, “There’s no target on the street the astromancy results point to.”

“Were we misled?” the golden retriever inquired in a female voice once more.

Madam Magician nodded and smirked. “But this also proves that what you’ve seen is the actual target.”

As she finished speaking, Madam Justice, clad in a white dress with green trimmings, swiftly materialized.

“Where did you go?” Magician asked in puzzlement.

Madam Justice replied in a gentle voice, “To plant a cue in the dreams of those seeking human blood bread. I’ve informed them that The Fool Pharmaceutical Company will conduct a volunteer

consultation in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative this weekend, offering free treatment and medicine."

"When do you plan to hold the volunteer consultation?" Magician asked out of curiosity.

Madam Justice smiled.

"Tomorrow. I'll sponsor it."

…

At 6 a.m., Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian naturally woke up from his dream and got ready for the day.

Before he could decide on breakfast, he noticed the "doll" messenger appearing and delivering a letter.

Puzzled, Lumian unfolded the letter and saw a portrait.

Beside the portrait was Madam Magician's handwriting: "This should be what I Know Someone looks like. We'll mobilize all the card holders in Trier to search for him, including you."

Chapter 402 - 402 Good Luck

402 Good Luck

Lumian examined the portrait in his hand and let out a chuckle.

He hadn't anticipated that the Major Arcana card holders would swiftly uncover the source of the rumors and unveil I Know Someone's true identity.

It made sense. Rumors had started circulating two to three months ago, and Lumian hadn't yet arrived in Trier or infiltrated the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Loki and I Know Someone hadn't met with any genuine threats. They were naturally audacious when it came to pulling pranks. No matter how cautious they were, leaving traces behind was inevitable.

While it might be challenging for other Beyonders to detect these traces, Madam Justice was a high-ranking Beyonder of the Spectator pathway, also known as the Psychiatrist pathway. She possessed a profound understanding of I Know Someone's various abilities and was his match in every aspect.

Even if this Major Arcana card holder herself didn't execute the operation, her partner, Susie, was more than capable of completing the mission. Lumian knew that this lady was at least a Sequence 5 of the Psychiatrist pathway, just one step away from becoming a demigod.

Gazing at the portrait of I Know Someone, with gold-rimmed glasses, a freckled face, and a thin visage, Lumian caressed the paper and muttered to himself, "Wherever you go, you leave your mark… One day, those unable to control their sinister desires will be exposed."

Taking the portrait, he knocked on Room 305 before Anthony Reid, who frequently came and went from Auberge du Coq Doré.

“Keep an eye on this individual for me. He’s most likely a doctor or a medical researcher.” Lumian presented the portrait to Anthony Reid, who was disguised as a clerk.

Then, he briefly recounted I Know Someone’s performance at the gathering and a few of his typical pranks. He asked earnestly, “Where could someone like him be hiding?”

Anthony Reid sighed and replied, “I’m a Psychiatrist, not a Seer.

“You mentioned that he often exhibited extensive medical knowledge at gatherings?”

Receiving Lumian’s affirmation, Anthony Reid pondered for a moment and continued,

“In a gathering filled with pranks, the various details displayed by a Beyonder of the Spectator pathway are what he wants you to remember. They don’t necessarily reflect his true identity and could even be misleading.

“I suspect that I Know Someone isn’t actually a doctor, but he possesses a deep understanding of medicine and has accumulated extensive knowledge.”

Not a doctor… Madam Magician’s letter had also mentioned not restricting the search to doctors… But this way, millions of people in Trier could be suspects… Lumian felt both relieved and frustrated.

Anthony Reid added, “A person with antisocial tendencies and enough intelligence might have a fondness for flirting with danger. He enjoys playing with others like a clown. Perhaps it won’t be long before he pulls another prank, mocking all those who pursue him.”

The only condition being that he remains unaware of the many demigods observing this matter… Lumian watched as Anthony Reid hastily departed and then turned toward Rue des Blouses Blanches.

He had initially intended to locate Lugano Toscano, a quasi-doctor, and inquire if he recognized the person in the portrait. However, it was still too early for that. Salle de Gristmill had not yet opened, and he had no information about where Lugano resided.

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca had already risen early, having also received a letter from her Major Arcana card holder, and was discussing the potential course of their investigation with Jenna.

Franca cautioned Lumian, saying, “We can’t involve too many information brokers in the search. I Know Someone might notice it beforehand and change his appearance or leave Trier.”

Lumian nodded slowly and responded, “It’s nearly impossible to locate someone like this in Trier on our own…

“Don’t forget we still have Anthony.” Franca winked at Lumian, implying that they had all the card holders in Trier on their side.

“Yes, and I’m here to help too,” Jenna chimed in.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and decided to proceed with his original plan to begin with doctors.

…

In the afternoon, Jenna arrived at Avenue du Marché and patiently waited by the public carriage stop sign.

Today, she had donned a beige dress and a light brown straw hat, which shielded her from the sun and was adorned with a few cloth flowers. Her brownish-yellow hair was neatly tied into a bun at the back, with the rest cascading naturally.

Without any makeup, her face remained fresh, and her blue eyes held a sweeter charm despite the absence of black eyeliner.

Jenna boarded a public carriage and headed towards Quartier 7, Quartier des Thermes. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Situated on the west side of Quartier de l’Observatoire, this district boasted a pleasant environment and was home to many affluent individuals. The now-bankrupt owner of the Goodville Chemical Factory had once lived here, as had the H?tel du Cygne Blanc, where Charlie had worked as an apprentice attendant.

Quartier des Thermes, also known as the Museum District, featured numerous renowned museums. Adjacent to one of the hot springs lay Delta Asylum, Trier's largest and most formal asylum.

Jenna was visiting Showy Diva, the underground singer who had once taken care of her. Showy Diva had been the victim of rape by Margot of the Poison Spur Mob and had subsequently left the market district to reside in an asylum.

After Lumian eliminated Margot, Jenna had intentionally approached Showy Diva to share the good news. Since then, she had been regularly visiting her.

Initially, Jenna had limited funds and was preoccupied with repaying her debts, so she couldn't do much for her friend. However, when Lumian hunted the padre, Jenna earned a substantial sum of 5,000 verl d'or. Coupled with two compensations and various other sources of income, she still had over 7,500 verl d'or left after repaying all her debts, except the one to Franca.

With less pressure from Franca to repay the debt, Jenna could now afford to allocate a portion of her money to send the former Showy Diva to Delta Asylum, where the facilities, environment, doctors, and nurses were clearly superior.

She visited her friend regularly, partly to pay the fees and partly to demonstrate to the doctors and nurses that this patient had family and friends looking out for her. Anyone who dared to mistreat her would have someone to answer to.

Jenna disembarked from the public carriage, adjusted her brown straw hat, and proceeded along a bustling street.

After a few steps, she noticed a seven- or eight-year-old boy standing alone by the roadside.

The boy had a chubby face and was dressed in the attire of a young gentleman. His neatly combed light-yellow hair complemented his appearance.

Seeing the confusion in the boy's eyes, Jenna approached, crouched

down, and asked gently,

“Are you lost? Do you need me to take you to the police station or bring a police officer here?”

The boy sported a mercury bow tie on his white shirt. He sighed and replied, “I’m not lost. It’s just that a lady who likes to drink asked me for a favor. I didn’t know how to help, and it seemed a bit dangerous where she went, so I decided to wait here.”

Over there… Jenna followed the boy’s outstretched finger and realized he was referring to either Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, the market district, or Quartier du Jardin Botanique.

“Why did you choose to wait here to help?” Jenna couldn’t quite fathom the child’s reasoning.

The chubby boy let out another sigh and said, “I don’t know why. My instincts just told me to do it.”

At this point, the boy looked up at Jenna with a pitiful expression.

“Could you buy me some ice-cream? The weather in Trier is unbearably hot!”

“Where’s the lady who likes to drink and asked for your help?” Jenna inquired, her curiosity mixed with caution.

The boy scanned the area and replied, “After I said I wanted to wait here, she went off by herself to find a place to drink.”

Isn’t this too irresponsible? What if the child goes missing? Jenna couldn’t help but frown.

The boy eagerly asked again, “You can buy ice-cream from this café. That way, I can have ice-cream and wait inside without worrying about getting lost.”

Jenna, now financially stable, hesitated for a moment before agreeing, “What flavor would you like?”

“Vanilla!” the boy quickly exclaimed with enthusiasm.

Jenna then spent 1 verl d’or to purchase a cup of vanilla ice-cream for the boy from a nearby café.

Seated by the window, the boy received the ice-cream with pure delight on his face.

“Thank you. You’ll be lucky!”

Jenna paid little attention to his gratitude. Instead, she observed as the boy joyfully savored the ice-cream and then quickly left. She found patrolling constables and informed them of a missing child in the café ahead.

Once she saw that the two constables had entered the café, Jenna breathed a sigh of relief and continued on her way with determined steps.

Before long, she arrived at the Delta Asylum.

The asylum was situated near a hot spring, and behind a wall, there stood a three-story building with a grayish-blue exterior and an annex. The surroundings were adorned with lush lawns bathed in the golden sunlight, along with various mobility aids. It was an excellent environment.

Jenna successfully met with her friend.

The former Showy Diva, like other female patients, had short hair that reached her ears. Her face appeared ordinary, and her eyes held a serene expression. She seemed no different from an ordinary person.

When Jenna conversed with her, it was easy to forget that she was afflicted by mental illness. However, Jenna knew all too well that provoking her could lead to an immediate and frenzied outburst, endangering both herself and others.

After chatting for nearly half an hour, Jenna left the designated meeting room, ready to depart.

As she walked along the outer corridor, she gazed out of the window absentmindedly.

On a green lawn, around 20 to 30 mental patients strolled leisurely, each lost in their own thoughts. They leaned against trees, soaked in the sun, or gathered in small groups, engaging in quiet conversations.

They appeared just like ordinary people.

Jenna scanned the surroundings casually, preparing to shift her attention elsewhere.

At that moment, she spotted a figure dressed in a blue-and-white striped hospital gown.

The figure stood tall at over 1.75 meters. His short brown hair was parted in a 3-7 fashion. Gold-rimmed glasses mostly concealed his flaxen-colored eyes, and his face appeared notably thin, adorned with freckles. In that moment, he paced back and forth on the green lawn, seemingly lost in deep contemplation, as if pondering some philosophical question.

Jenna’s pupils dilated.

Th-this is I Know Someone!

Chapter 403 - 403 Drawing From Experience

403 Drawing From Experience

Jenna's instincts screamed at her to turn around, her fear that the psychiatric patient, suspected to be I Know Someone, might catch her staring.

She kept her composure, exiting the grayish-blue building one step at a time, stepping into the sunlight that poured through the window. Jenna donned a light brown straw hat adorned with cloth flowers.

As she finally left Delta Asylum, returning to the same street where she had first encountered the mysterious boy, Jenna let out a sigh of relief.

Her expression remained unchanged as she boarded the public carriage bound for the bustling market district.

…

In the evening, at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Lumian, who had been summoned by Jenna, listened to her findings intently.

Lumian couldn't conceal his surprise and suspicion.

"Is this for real? Are you sure you didn't see it wrong?"

Wasn't this just too much of a coincidence?

Jenna had only laid eyes on the portrait of "I Know Someone" that morning, and in the afternoon, she had tracked down the target at Delta Asylum—a place she had visited just twice. Lumian, Franca,

and the Major Arcana and Minor Arcana card holders in Trier had turned up nothing!

The sheer coincidence here made Lumian's instincts tingle with hints of conspiracy and arrangements, robbing him of any tangible joy.

"That's right. Isn't this too darn coincidental…" Franca's demeanor had been skeptical even before Lumian's arrival.

She muttered, "Though it's a classic move for an antisocial, intelligent fellow to hide in an asylum and rub shoulders with the doctors, should he really be unlucky enough to cross paths with a visitor who's seen his wanted poster? There can't be more than 50 people in Trier who've laid eyes on that wanted poster!"

This tally included Anthony Reid and the inquiries made by the other card holders today.

"Why didn't I know of such a classic scenario…" Jenna mumbled. "But I did stumble upon him. I'm not mistaken. Maybe I've just been lucky lately?"

At this point, she noticed the disbelief etched on Lumian and Franca's faces.

Lumian, a man well-versed in the power of coincidence, pondered and asked, "Recall this morning and see if any other coincidences stand out, or if anything unusual occurred."

Seated in an armchair, Jenna delved deep into her thoughts.

After nearly fifteen minutes, she cussed, "It's business as usual! Uh, there is one thing I've never encountered before…"

"There shouldn't be anything unusual about that, right?"

Lumian honed in on another detail.

"Did he say he was brought here by a lady who loves drinking?"

"Yes," Jenna replied to the two questions with a single word.

Lumian immediately grew suspicious.

Apart from a few dancers, he only knew of two ladies who were quite fond of alcohol. The rest were just casual social drinkers.

One was Madame Hela, and the other was Madam Magician.

The former always carried multiple flasks of liquor with her, while the latter reveled in tasting various alcoholic beverages, and she could even summon a glass of wine from thin air and savor it.

Since the hunt for I Know Someone was a shared mission of the Tarot Club, and Madame Hela hadn't been informed about it, Lumian cautiously deduced that the boy had been brought to Trier by Madam Magician.

Combined with Franca's question about Jenna's "receiving good luck," Lumian believed that the boy possessed extraordinary abilities that could bestow good fortune upon others. Jenna, having experienced this stroke of luck, was naturally fortunate enough to cross paths with "I Know Someone."

As Lumian and Franca fell silent for what felt like minutes, Jenna's unease deepened.

"Is there really a problem with this situation?"

Lumian gazed thoughtfully at his companion and responded, "It's possible that your luck has taken a favorable turn today, starting with your act of buying ice-cream for that young boy."

Such exchanges of giving and receiving were not uncommon in the realm of Inevitability. For example, the enhancement of luck often required the recipient to willingly accept the medium and derive some benefit from it. Moreover, there had to be a subjective desire on their part to complete the luck-enhancing ritual.

Therefore, Lumian had a reasonable suspicion that the boy might be a Beyonder of the Monster Pathway, also known as the Fate Pathway. Through a subtle transaction involving ice-cream and the bestowal of good luck, he had orchestrated Jenna's encounter with I Know Someone.

The phrases like “I didn’t know how to help, so I decided to wait here” or “Buy me ice-cream, and you’ll have good luck” had all the mysterious signs of the Fate domain!

“That’s right…” Franca had clearly considered this possibility.

Jenna immediately understood.

“Are you suggesting that this boy might be an exceptionally powerful Beyonder? That he granted me an abundance of good luck?

“But apart from encountering I Know Someone, I haven’t felt anything extraordinary. I haven’t stumbled upon any money or come across free items.”

Franca sighed, explaining, “Meeting I Know Someone probably consumed all the good luck you were given.”

Lumian abruptly stood up.

“I need to verify this.”

He made his way into Franca’s bedroom and closed the door behind him.

Franca speculated and replied, “He’s going to write a letter.”

“To Madame Hela?” Jenna knew that the woman had a messenger.

Franca couldn’t give a clear answer. “Another lady.”

In her bedroom, Lumian, who had tidied up the altar, promptly received a response from Madam Magician.

“So, that’s how we found I Know Someone. Even as an Astrologer, I find this matter charlatanic.

“There’s no need to doubt that it was indeed a helper we hired. We expended a considerable number of favors and a substantial amount of ice-cream.

“Since there’s a result, take action. I’ll keep an eye on you and help

guard against any unforeseen incidents."

As expected… Lumian grinned.

From Madam Magician's words, he deduced that the boy wasn't a member of the Tarot Club. Hence, he wouldn't participate in shared missions without receiving some form of compensation, which in this case involved favors and ice-cream.

What the hell is up with ice-cream? Can such a powerful Beyonder be moved by ice-cream? Lumian found it absurd and amusing. However, he recalled Baron Brignais's godson, a rather peculiar individual who could be swayed by delectable treats.

This led him to wonder if Beyonders in a boy's form had similar "weaknesses."

Lumian pushed open the door and returned to the living room.

Nervously, Jenna stood up and inquired, "Did you confirm it?"

"He's a helper with the specific task of bestowing good luck, and your encounter with him was orchestrated by fate. By treating him to ice-cream, you'd chosen the correct path of destiny," Lumian responded, using the manner of a charlatan.

As a Beyonder with dominion over the Inevitability domain, he held a certain sway over fate.

"Phew…" Jenna let out a sigh of relief, her worries about falling into a trap dissipating. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Seeing Franca rise from her seat, Lumian produced the silver Lie earring with a smirk.

"Let's head to the asylum now. I can't wait."

"Very well," Franca replied, her inner thoughts sighing.

Ever since Ciel's arrival, she had been embroiled in constant battles.

It had been just a few days since Loki's attack!

…

In a four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage en route to Quartier des Thermes, Lumian gazed out of the window at the black street lamp poles and furrowed his brow.

He muttered to himself in confusion, “Did Jenna truly spot I Know Someone?”

Franca and Jenna turned their attention to him, simultaneously recalling a similar situation:

From their hunt for the padre, Guillaume Bénet, they had encountered two substitutes in succession, and the actual Guillaume Bénet had turned out to be a large dog lounging by the side!

Franca lowered her voice and inquired, “Do you suspect it might be a substitute?”

Drawing lessons from past experiences and expanding their awareness was crucial. After witnessing the padre’s clever deception, failing to consider such possibilities would signify their inadequacy in the Hunter and Demoness pathways.

Lumian pondered for a moment and whispered, “With his issue coming to light and the potential pursuit he might face, wouldn’t I Know Someone be concerned that the ‘pranks’ of the past few months could become a lingering threat?

“If I were in his shoes and couldn’t erase the corresponding traces, I’d leave Trier swiftly and return after some time. Yet, he hasn’t done that.

“This suggests that he either possesses ample confidence that we won’t locate him, or he has something of significance to accomplish in Trier. In that case, remaining in the shadows while presenting a substitute in plain sight would be a clever choice.”

Jenna, puzzled, asked, “Could it be that he also wields Lie or the Substitution Spell you mentioned?”

Lumian chuckled.

“He may not have Lie, but the evil god he believes in governs the Seer domain and ranks as one of the most potent Faceless. With mastery of the corresponding ritualistic magic, he can beseech this deity to alter the appearance of a specific target.”

It was akin to how members of the Tarot Club could summon creatures from the spirit realm in the name of Mr. Fool.

Using Faceless-related ritualistic magic to create a substitute while secretly monitoring in person… But why didn’t he just change his appearance? Why resort to creating a substitute? It would make him virtually untraceable! Franca thought of a dangerous possibility.

Lumian nodded.

“If the individual in Delta Asylum is indeed a substitute, it implies that he serves as a trap and is intentionally using it to lure us in. I Know Someone will undoubtedly pay close attention to the eventual outcome.

“Consequently, either the extreme peril concealed within the substitute will not only ensnare the pursuer but also cause a significant disturbance, or the two individuals are intimately connected in some mystical manner.

“Don’t be concerned about the first scenario. With a formidable lady guarding against mishaps, the ensuing possibilities will depend on you, Franca…”

If the person in the asylum turned out to be I Know Someone, the situation would be relatively straightforward.

…

Late at night, in a room on the third floor of Delta Asylum’s eastern wing.

A pair of gold-rimmed glasses sat on the bedside table, reflecting the moonlight filtering into the room. The patient in the bed was fast asleep.

Suddenly, a shadowy figure opened the substantial door adorned

with iron bars and quietly entered.

With a polite grip, the intruder gently shut the door, rendering the room impervious to external sounds.

The entire interior space seemed to be sealed.

Chapter 404 - 404 Patient

404 Patient

Lumian harnessed the power of the Decency brooch, distorting the door and sealing the entire room.

The patient's eyes remained tightly shut, lost in a deep slumber. His facial features, hairstyle, and hair color undeniably matched those of I Know Someone.

As Lumian observed this slumbering figure, who had no realization of his intrusion, he began to suspect that this might be a substitute.

As suggested by Madam Magician's letter, I Know Someone was at least a Sequence 6 Hypnotist of the Psychiatrist pathway, with a slight chance of being a Sequence 5 Dreamwalker. On either pathway, these individuals were skilled observers, unlikely to sleep soundly in the presence of an intruder.

The conundrum now lay in discerning the trap with such a substitution.

Beneath the faint moonlight filtering through the curtains, the patient on the bed suddenly snapped open his eyes.

In those flaxen-colored eyes, Lumian's image was instantly mirrored.

Simultaneously, Lumian once more glimpsed the dark void, the countless twinkling stars, and the mysterious symbol that had come to life, forming an invisible door.

A voice resonated within his heart and ears, seemingly emanating from the depths of the void and the source of his consciousness.

"Pass through it. Pass through this formless door, and you will gain a

transformative experience in your life and boundless knowledge…"

"Everyone possesses godhood and can hear the voice of this world's origin. To hear it clearly, you must open this invisible door and step inside…"

Lumian's head throbbed as he "witnessed" the gradual opening of the formless door. Each word from the voice transformed into a living, peculiar entity within his heart.

Once more, the voice echoed, its tone tinged with perplexity and confusion. It muttered to itself, "Where is the end of the world? What did the universe resemble at its inception…

"Which deity brought all of this into existence, and who created Him…

"What lies beyond the confines of the universe? How do other worlds differ…

"What sets human nature apart from godhood? Does true self-awareness equate to human nature or godhood…

"Where lies the demarcation between madness and reason? Is madness the ultimate destination for every living being…"

Lumian's head throbbed with agony as he absorbed these questions, a fusion of mystical contemplation and the pursuit of answers to profound philosophical queries. It was the first time in a long while that he felt the sensation of a steel drill boring into his skull, stirring his delicate brain.

Moreover, these questions triggered bizarre alterations in his spirituality and his surroundings.

Madness surged forth, as if probing the boundaries of sanity. The enveloping darkness seemed to take on human nature, visibly writhing. The bed before him and the floor beneath his feet gradually etched out bizarre patterns. Even though Lumian couldn't see them, his body was suddenly consumed by an intense itch, as if yearning to shed his outermost layer of skin…

“Is there something that surpasses all limitations and conceptual thinking…” the voice persisted in questioning the void.

Lumian found himself powerless to resist or halt this transformation. All he could do was witness it helplessly as an overwhelming terror descended, his head throbbing. This chapter is updat𝒆d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

The colossal dendrite appeared as if it had sprung forth from a divine realm, and each silver-white “branch” emitted a crackling sound.

Rumble!

As the silver lightning struck the patient on the bed, Lumian was assaulted by a deafening thunderclap that reverberated through his eardrums and resonated within his soul.

The strange creature that had animated those thought-provoking questions convulsed his body, significantly easing the throbbing pain in his head, leaving behind only a disorienting sensation caused by the deafening roar.

A terrifying cascade of lightning surged across the patient on the bed, sending waves of agony and paralysis coursing through Lumian’s skin, even though he stood a few steps away.

In the midst of this electric frenzy, a holy chant echoed faintly, as if proclaiming, “I came, I saw, I recorded.” The ward darkened, as if it had been thrust into a mysterious realm, isolated from the outside world by some insurmountable force.

Lumian exhaled and shifted his gaze back to the bed. There, he beheld the patient’s entire form transformed into a pitch-black, charcoal-like substance, emitting an eerie burnt odor.

The body, still clad in tattered hospital gown, bedsheets, and blanket, began to dissipate, morphing into a dark silhouette.

On the surface of this shadowy figure, cracks materialized, each adorned with mystical symbols and patterns. These formations resembled eyes or myriad mouths that incessantly opened and closed.

Before Lumian could fully fathom this transformation, his vision was flooded with pure, radiant, golden sunlight.

Once more, the ethereal, holy voice resonated in his ears.

When his vision settled back into normalcy, only a faint black mark remained on the scorched surface of the bed, twisting in an uncanny, serpent-like manner.

It's indeed a trap… Lumian mused, his lack of surprise evident.

He also deduced that both the patient and one of Loki's marionettes were recipients of the same evil god's boon based on the starry void and the formless door formed by wandering symbols. The substitute for I Know Someone clearly occupied a higher Sequence.

Had Loki and I Know Someone once targeted a secret organization that worshiped an evil deity?

This is the will of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth? What did He seek to achieve?

Did this all somehow tie into I Know Someone's decision to remain in Trier?

Is this substitute merely a taunting jest aimed at those who pursue them?

I know you're on the hunt for me, and I'm aware of the clues you may uncover. Yet, I'm intentionally granting you a glimmer of hope?

Thoughts raced through Lumian's mind like lightning as he attempted to analyze the current situation from I Know Someone's perspective and extract clues about the fugitive's whereabouts.

Given the level of danger posed by the patient, Lumian deduced that both I Know Someone and Loki would have struggled to capture him alive and recruit him into their team.

With Loki possessing a marionette with a similar pathway, it seemed clear that the patient hadn't actively and consciously cooperated with them.

Leveraging his professional skills as a Psychiatrist, I Know Someone had likely skillfully guided the patient, fostering a sense of trust and camaraderie. Eventually, he reached a point where he could "convince" the patient, enabling him to perform a ritual and request a change in appearance.

Glancing at the iron-barred window, Lumian noticed that the deep darkness had receded. Crimson moonlight filtered through the relatively thin glass and bathed the ward in its glow.

Conversely, the darkness that had once been typical at Delta Asylum's periphery had intensified. The void seemed distorted, as if encased in a spherical barrier.

Madam Magician hadn't employed any additional abilities after dealing with the dangerous patient. She had merely concealed the entire asylum and its surrounding lawn.

It appeared as though she was implying that Lumian needed to handle this situation independently. She only assisted by preventing any disturbances from alerting Trier's official Beyonders.

Lumian breathed a sigh of relief. Starting from his search for Loki, he quickly filtered through the matters related to April Fool's.

Slowly, a conjecture formed, weaving together the pieces of the puzzle into a cohesive "narrative."

I Know Someone had once been connected to Delta Asylum, whether as a doctor, nurse, or patient. One day, he had stumbled upon a peculiar patient who incessantly posed profound philosophical questions.

Guided by the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, I Know Someone had initiated interactions with the patient. During this process, he had likely sensed the presence of an evil god's bestowed lurking around the patient. Consequently, with the assistance of Loki, they had driven away these problematic figures and gained control over the strange patient. Loki had even managed to gain a marionette.

Upon Loki's resurrection, I Know Someone, who had been alerted, had leveraged the patient's trust in him to perform ritualistic magic and beseech the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, resulting in his transformation into a substitute and a walking trap.

As for I Know Someone himself, he must have successfully altered his appearance; his whereabouts now unknown.

Amidst Lumian's frustration, he suddenly thought of something.

Jenna had indeed encountered the substitute for I Know Someone, thanks to good luck.

However, encountering a substitute, one designed as a trap, hardly constituted good luck.

This was unlucky!

That was unless they could somehow use the substitute to trace back to I Know Someone or if Jenna had encountered both the substitute and the real I Know Someone but failed to recognize or directly see him!

Both scenarios pointed toward a high probability that the elusive I Know Someone was still lurking within the asylum!

Even if the trap ultimately failed, pursuers would likely conclude that I Know Someone had long since relocated to a new hiding place.

Beneath an oil lamp lay the darkest and most easily overlooked spot!

With this revelation, Lumian acted swiftly. He spun around, heaved open the heavy door, and sprinted into the asylum's corridor.

With a resounding crash, he burst through a window at the stairwell's corner, landing on the lawn encircled by the main building and its adjoining structures.

Simultaneously, he employed the Niese Face to transform into the patient he had encountered earlier.

In a commanding voice, Lumian bellowed his questions to the cosmos

from the lawn:

“Where is the end of the world? What did the universe resemble at its inception…

“Which deity brought all of this into existence, and who created Him…”

His voice resonated throughout the asylum, reaching into every room.

A few seconds later, Franca’s voice echoed in Lumian’s ears.

“There’s an abnormality in the doctor’s duty room and the nurse’s workstation on the first floor, as well as in the first ward on the third floor near the west wing.”

Upon hearing his companion’s report, Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle.

He pressed his hands against the void before him, instantly igniting crimson flames.

The flames spread swiftly, illuminating the invisible spiderwebs that enshrouded the entire building.

These intricate layers of spiderwebs extended into every room, diligently monitoring the movements of all its inhabitants.

This complex setup had consumed nearly half of Franca’s spirituality and required a significant amount of time to prepare and maintain.

The crimson flames transformed into three blazing serpents, each colossal in size, which slithered through the spiderwebs toward the doctor’s duty room and nurse’s workstation on the first floor, as well as the ward on the third floor.

Chapter 405 - 405 No Reservations

405 No Reservations

The blazing serpents reflected in the eyes of the doctor on duty, the three night nurses, and the patient who had woken up. Fear appeared on their faces, and they turned around in various panicked movements. As they fled in the opposite direction of the flames, they shouted, “Fire! Fire!”

As their voices echoed, the flaming serpents burned the invisible threads of spider silk, accompanied by a scorching wind formed by the clash of cold and heat. It pursued them relentlessly, blocking the exit from the room and forcing them into a corner.

The five of them acted normally. They darted around, searching for a safe escape, wrapping themselves in blankets, and attempting to force their way through the wall of flames. They also rushed to another window, with the intention of jumping down.

It seemed Lumian had misjudged the situation. Any abnormal movements didn’t necessarily mean I Know Someone. If this continued, he risked incinerating five innocent people.

However, the three crimson flaming serpents showed no hesitation. They continued to pursue the doctor on duty, the night nurses, and the mental patient, emanating an icy, ruthless madness that showed no regard for human life.

As the blazing serpents closed in on their targets, a few of them began to show signs of despair. The patient on the third-floor ward suddenly halted and turned around.

Grayish-white, stone-like scales sprouted on his once ordinary face,

covering his skin that was not concealed by the blue-and-white-striped hospital gown.

In an instant, he transformed into a horrifying, lizard-like figure. The grayish-white scales resisted the scorching flames and aided him in breaking through the barrier of the crimson serpent.

Sensing this transformation through the flames, Lumian's lips curled into an eerie grin.

According to the information provided in Madam Magician's letter, Beyonders of the Spectator pathway at Sequence 6 Hypnotist would gain an ability known as Dragon Scales. This ability allowed them to manifest grayish-white scales on their skin, greatly reducing and resisting damage.

This ability was closely tied to the Spectator pathway's Mythical Creature form, as every high-ranking Spectator ultimately transformed into a dragon—a mind dragon!

The appearance of Dragon Scales confirmed that the patient in the west wing on the third floor was at least a Sequence 6 Beyonder of the Spectator pathway. Combined with the trap and his unusual movements, the patient's identity became evident—I Know Someone!

Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder and used his ability to traverse the spirit world, instantly appearing in the ward.

During this hunt, he refrained from wearing the Lie earring or carrying the Flog boxing gloves. This was because his adversary was a formidable Psychiatrist, and any openings in his emotions or desires could be easily exploited.

As Lumian's figure vanished from the lawn, the crimson fire serpents, which had expanded from consuming flammable materials in the doctor's duty room and nurse's workstation, abruptly dissipated. They transformed into glimmering specks of light that disappeared before the faces of the despairing and terrified onlookers.

Apart from the charred remnants of various items, there was little evidence of the inferno they had narrowly escaped.

On the third floor of Delta Asylum, Lumian emerged from a room adjacent to the west wing. His gaze locked onto the patient, whose body was covered in grayish-white scales, and whose eyes emitted a faint golden hue.

He didn't exchange pleasantries or make inquiries. Instead, he opened his mouth and let out a sharp exclamation: "Ha!"

An imperceptible yellow beam shot forth from Lumian's mouth, aimed at the suspected I Know Someone.

However, at a distance of two to three meters, the pale-yellow aura beam by the Spell of Harrumph brushed past the Beyonder and struck the iron-barred glass window behind him.

This was one of a Hypnotist's Beyonder abilities. It could forcefully hypnotize an enemy in battle, causing them to act irrationally or make incorrect judgments. However, such actions couldn't directly harm the hypnotized person, and the effect would wear off quickly as they regained their senses.

Seizing the opportunity, I Know Someone's light-gold eyes widened, reflecting Lumian's male Aurore form.

Lumian's head jerked backward, as if caught in a whirlwind.

His emotions swirled with a mixture of joy and hatred. Crimson flames surged beneath his skin, and his eyes glinted with a sinister madness.

Frenzy!

This was a Psychiatrist's Beyonder ability designed to trigger intense emotions and destabilize the target's mental state, causing them to enter a Frenzied state and suffer severe mental damage. If the target had existing psychological issues or strong emotions, they might even lose control when subjected to Frenzy.

Before undergoing psychiatric treatment from Madam Susie and Madam Justice, encountering I Know Someone in this state could send Lumian spiraling into madness, turning him into a monstrous figure.

At that moment, magma-like blood dripped from his nose. His mind was in disarray, and he instinctively took deep breaths, temporarily losing the ability to execute his planned moves.

I Know Someone refrained from launching another attack on Lumian at that moment. Firstly, causing the other party to lose control or perish would lead to the immediate release of the high-level creature sealed within his body, a sight that could drive even a Beyonder below the demigod level to mental and physical collapse. Secondly, since Muggle's brother was present, it was likely that Hidden Blade wasn't far away. The invisible spider silk that had been ignited was likely her handiwork.

In this dire situation, I Know Someone's first instinct was to swiftly exit the battlefield, escape Delta Asylum, and find a place to conceal himself once more.

In an instant, he retrieved a broken arrow from the pocket of his blue-and-white-striped hospital gown.

The broken arrow looked ancient, with an obsidian-like arrowhead at its tip, adorned with mysterious patterns.

With a squelching sound, I Know Someone thrust the obsidian arrow into his own chest.

The item sprang to life, greedily absorbing the crimson blood that flowed forth.

I Know Someone immediately sprinted toward the tightly sealed door, leaving behind an afterimage.

Despite the grayish-white Dragon Scales covering his face, he exuded an uncanny charm, as if he had transformed into a dashing young dragon.

This was the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty. By piercing it into his chest and feeding it his blood, it temporarily transformed I Know Someone into a Vampire. This granted him extraordinary speed, accelerated regeneration, and a few spell-like abilities.

Bang!

As I Know Someone pushed open the heavy, solid door of the asylum ward, he failed to dart into the corridor. He collided with an ice barrier that had formed at some point. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Amidst the sounds of cracking and shattering, the ice wall crumbled, but it also caused I Know Someone to lose his balance and tumble to the ground.

Most of the shattered ice failed to penetrate his Dragon Scales. Only a handful managed to breach his defenses, leaving traces of blood in their wake.

Thanks to the Vampire's rapid regenerative abilities, the minor injuries swiftly began to heal.

I Know Someone saw no need to rise to his feet. As his light-gold eyes flickered, invisible waves radiated from him, enveloping the surroundings.

Awe!

This was a Psychiatrist's Awe, also referred to as Dragon Might or Mass Chaos. It had the power to instantly induce panic in a single target or all living beings within its range, plunging them into chaos.

Relying on Dragon Might to maintain control of the situation, I Know Someone agilely leaped up, intending to put some distance between himself and Franca as he sprinted down the corridor.

He refrained from attacking her at this moment because he understood that Demonesses possessed abilities like Mirror Substitution and Staff Substitution. Trying to kill her or cripple her combat abilities with a single strike would only delay his escape.

As he vaulted out of the shattered ice, I Know Someone caught a glimpse of the ward, now empty.

Lumian Lee appeared to have recovered from the effects of Frenzy and used teleportation to evade Awe's influence in the nick of time!

Just as this realization crossed I Know Someone's mind, he saw the

male version of Aurore—Lumian—materialize in front of him.

Without hesitation, I Know Someone's golden eyes focused on Lumian, preparing to cast Awe once more.

In the next moment, Lumian's figure vanished again.

He had employed Spirit World Traversal twice in quick succession!

Almost simultaneously, I Know Someone's pupils dilated, and a shiver ran down his spine. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end.

This time, Lumian's destination was behind him.

It was akin to Blink!

Lumian's figure instantly materialized behind I Know Someone, witnessing a dense black fog emanating from the latter's body, an attempt to evade to the side of the corridor.

Too slow! Lumian harrumphed, sending two white beams of light shooting from his nostrils to encompass the area ahead.

I Know Someone couldn't evade and was struck by the white beams as he was thrown to the ground, tumbling twice.

Lumian breathed heavily, feeling drained as his head throbbed with pain.

Three consecutive "teleportations" and two rounds of using the Spell of Harrumph and other abilities had completely sapped his energy.

If it hadn't been for the substantial amount of Pyromaniac potion he had digested compared to when he hunted the padre, sustaining this level of expenditure would have been extremely challenging.

Franca, who had recovered from Awe, approached and shook her head in disapproval.

"No need for all that. It's not like you don't have assistance."

Why go all out when help was available?

Even if the Major Arcana card holders hadn't been lurking in the shadows, and even if I Know Someone had managed to escape the asylum, wouldn't he have left behind some blood that could be used for a curse?

Lumian didn't respond, making his way over to the unconscious form of I Know Someone.

Chapter 406 - 406 Inevitability-like Ending

406 Inevitability-like Ending

Staring at the unconscious enemy in the corridor, Lumian refrained from an immediate attack. He squatted down in silence.

He retrieved a bottle of sedative obtained from the Bliss Society's Rentas, unscrewed the cap, and brought it to the patient's nose.

Franca glanced over and advised, "Remove the broken arrow from his chest first. Otherwise, I think his body can handle most of the sedative's effects."

The grayish-white stone-like scales on the Beyonder suspected to be I Know Someone slowly dissipated due to the unconsciousness in spirituality brought about by the Spell of Harrumph.

Lumian nodded and used the hand holding the bottle cap to carefully remove the obsidian arrow.

Franca breathed a sigh of relief and continued, "The question now is how do we confirm if this guy is the real I Know Someone.

"A powerful Hypnotist can manipulate a Beyonder of the same pathway and Sequence, altering their self-awareness and making them believe they are 'I Know Someone.' They can substitute the real deal to appear in all sorts of occasions, completing different pranks and fight any adversaries.

"F*ck, why does it seem more troublesome than dealing with a Marionettist!?"

What Franca meant was that the enemy in front of her might also be

a victim, someone whose perceptions had been altered to make them believe they were “I Know Someone.”

This possibility couldn’t be ruled out, so she wasn’t capable of steeling herself to kill him before channeling his spirit.

Furthermore, Lumian’s remaining truth serum wouldn’t work in this case. The hypnotized person would only tell what they believed to be true.

Lumian screwed the cap back onto the sedative bottle and thought for a moment before suggesting, “Let’s set up a ritual and seek confirmation from Mr. Fool. Since Loki can use Celestial Worthy’s help to locate members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society within a certain range, we can employ a similar method to activate the special aura on I Know Someone. If it’s there, he’s real. If not, he’s fake.”

“What if he’s a member of the Research Society who was captured by Loki and I Know Someone? In the past, several people went missing without their deaths being confirmed, including some Psychiatrists.” Franca began to suspect the source of I Know Someone’s Beyonder characteristics that allowed him to advance to Sequence 7.

Research Society members they had hunted?

Lumian pondered for a moment and replied, “In that case, let Jenna in. She might still have some lingering good luck in this aspect. If she doesn’t encounter anyone else, it proves that the unconscious one is I Know Someone.

“You’re responsible for protecting Jenna…”

Before Lumian could finish, Madam Magician’s voice echoed in his ears, “There’s no need to go through so much trouble.”

Crouching in front of the unconscious person, Lumian sensed the space around him come alive, contracting inward and swallowing the Beyonder suspected to be I Know Someone.

“Wow,” Franca exclaimed, and Lumian slowly stood up.

The two of them waited patiently. In just 20 to 30 seconds, the Beyonder in the blue-and-white-striped hospital gown was ejected from the void.

Immediately after, they heard Madam Magician's response: "It's 'I Know Someone.'"

…

Beneath the crimson moon in the sky, the Delta Asylum loomed, its darkness even denser and curved into an eerie arc compared to the surrounding night.

On the rooftop of the three-story grayish-blue building, the shadowy Magician turned to her companion and said, "Apart from the lunatic, there are no hidden dangers or traps.

"Did I overreact and overestimate the situation?"

Justice, resembling a dream, replied calmly, "There's nothing wrong with your choice. It's never wrong no matter how much importance you attach to matters related to that Celestial Worthy.

"Only by paying enough attention each time can we avoid being suddenly deceived and falling into a true trap."

Magician nodded slightly, closed the notebook in her hand, and cast her gaze towards the third-floor corridor which wasn't in her line of sight.

…

Upon hearing Madam Magician's conclusion, Lumian let out a chuckle.

He put away the remaining half of the sedative and turned to Franca, saying, "We can let Jenna in now."

Franca nodded and disappeared into the shadows along the corridor.

Lumian looked down at the seemingly ordinary I Know Someone, his eyes deep and a sly smile on his lips.

The effects of the Spell of Harrumph should have worn off long ago, but the Bliss Society's sedative was still doing its job.

Considering I Know Someone's physique, this sedative wouldn't last much longer. However, Lumian was prepared for this moment.

At that very instant, the Delta Asylum was in chaos due to the fire and shouting. Particularly on the first floor, the commotion was intense. The duty doctor and a few burly guards patrolled the area to ensure that no tinder remnants remained.

Meanwhile, Jenna and Franca skillfully navigated through the shadows and ascended to the third floor.

Lumian took a sheepskin from Guillaume Bénet, the padre, and spread it on the ground.

He carefully wrapped I Know Someone in it.

After a brief contemplation, Lumian raised the obsidian arrow in his hand and plunged it into I Know Someone's left eye.

The excruciating pain jolted I Know Someone awake, and his left eye turned bloodshot.

Almost simultaneously, he heard a sinister chuckle.

"Sheep!"

Amidst the echoing Hermes words, I Know Someone, cocooned in the ritual sheepskin, was instantly engulfed by dark light, rendering him powerless.

When the dark light finally subsided, he had transformed into a grayish-white sheep.

Lumian withdrew the obsidian arrow from the crushed eyeball and swiftly plunged it into I Know Someone's right eye.

A blood-curdling scream echoed through the room as Lumian pulled out the arrow. He pressed down on the struggling "sheep" with one hand and stroked its head with the other, a sinister smile playing on

his lips.

“Now, we can finally have a good chat.”

While Lumian engaged in this whispering conversation, he tossed the obsidian arrow to Jenna.

Next, Lumian produced an ordinary bottle of wound medicine and meticulously applied it to I Know Someone’s blood-colored eye socket. He wrapped the other party’s eyes in layers of white bandages he had prepared.

Only then did I Know Someone, who had awakened from his coma and was enduring intense pain, regained some composure. He attempted to use his abilities, but to no avail.

Franca and Jenna watched Lumian intently as he continued to tend to the transformed sheep, I Know Someone, feeling a mix of curiosity and unease. Initially, Jenna had wanted to assist Lumian in extracting information or exacting revenge, but now, she felt that this scenario was enough.

She shifted her attention to the obsidian broken arrow in her hand but noticed no negative effects. She wondered if it was one of the mystical items Franca had mentioned before.

As Lumian retrieved a brownish-yellow twine he had prepared in advance and began to wrap it around the sheep’s neck, the duty doctor, alerted by the sheep’s bleating, arrived on the third floor with several burly guards.

Franca and Jenna swiftly concealed themselves in the shadows, while Lumian, disguised as Aurore, calmly turned and led the sheep to the end of the corridor.

Crimson flames erupted from Lumian’s body, which had regained some of its spirituality, and blazed fiercely in the corridor.

The duty doctor and the guards dared not approach, witnessing a figure walking through the flames, heading to the end of the annex corridor.

The figure was also guiding a sheep. It resisted, unwilling to leave, but the rope around its neck forced it to move forward.

After being dragged on the ground for a while, the sheep, its neck tightening and its breathing becoming labored, finally stood up and followed.

By the time the flames in the corridor abruptly extinguished, sparing any damage to the adjacent rooms, the doctor on duty and the guards had lost all trace of the man and the sheep.

Am I hallucinating… The situation was so odd and unbelievable that these individuals shared the same thoughts.

Meanwhile, the charred corridor stood as evidence that a fire had indeed occurred, miraculously without harming anyone.

Leaving a guard to report the incident to the nearest police headquarters, the duty doctor returned to his office on the first floor in a bewildered state.

As he sank into his chair, he couldn't help but wonder, Could it be that the infernal being associated with fire has emerged from the abyss? Is its signature to lead a sheep? Is this the embodiment of flames?

His thoughts grew more fantastical with each passing moment, and he couldn't shake the feeling that he should have gone straight to the cathedral to consult the bishops and padres rather than involve the police.

Knock, knock, knock!

He heard a knock on the door.

The doctor on duty jolted in his chair. He straightened up and responded with a deep voice, "Come in, please."

As the door creaked open, the doctor's eyes froze.

It was the blond devil, accompanied by the sheep with its eyes wrapped in white bandages, and its grayish-white face stained with

blood.

“I need to trouble you with something,” Lumian said calmly as he led I Know Someone into the doctor’s office. “My sheep exhibits severe anti-human tendencies and extreme violence. I want to treat its mental illness.”

How… Before he could formulate a response, the handsome blond devil inquired, “Do you know how to perform a lobotomy?”

“Yes, a little,” the doctor on duty replied subconsciously. “But it’s a sheep…”

Could the brain structure be the same?

As he contemplated this, he watched the sheep struggle frantically in its bindings, unable to escape.

Lumian chuckled.

“It doesn’t matter. We can give it a try. It’s just a sheep. If it dies, so be it. We can still roast it.”

With that, he dragged the unruly sheep toward a nearby treatment table, using his hands and feet to pin it down.

If the patient had been human, the doctor, lacking experience and prohibited from performing a lobotomy, would never have dared to attempt it. However, because it was a sheep, he had no reservations.

In an effort to avoid antagonizing the arsonist devil and cooperate while awaiting the arrival of the police, the doctor on duty cautiously approached the treatment table. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

He said hesitantly, “I need an ice pick.”

His intention was to create an excuse to go to the ice warehouse and distance himself from the arsonist devil. However, just as he finished speaking, a hand emerged from the shadows, offering him a sharp icicle.

W-what's going on… In his shock, the doctor vaguely heard the words, "No need to thank me."

Numbly, he accepted the thin icicle and unwrapped the white bandage covering the sheep's head.

The sheep's struggle intensified.

Assessing the damage to its eye sockets, the doctor on duty inserted the thin, sharp icicle through the crack and carefully manipulated it, stirring its brain's frontal lobe.

After a few moments of struggle, the grayish-white sheep abruptly fell silent.

Chapter 407 - 407 Reward for Good Luck

407 Reward for Good Luck

After the surgery, the blind sheep stepped off the treatment table, calm and docile, no longer resisting. The duty doctor felt like he was in a dream.

The doctor watched in a daze as the arsonist devil guided the blind sheep—now cured of its mental illness—out of the room and disappeared into the crimson moonlit night.

Wherever they went, crimson flames ignited the white bandages and barely visible fur.

In the blazing flames, black fire flowed like a river, “cleansing” away the remaining icicles, footprints, and any other traces.

The doctor felt no immediate danger and watched in a daze, as if enjoying a spectacular fireworks show.

After an unknown amount of time, all the flames subsided. The guard who had been dispatched returned to the Delta Asylum with a group of black-uniformed police officers.

“Why did it take you so long?” the doctor blurted out instinctively.

The leading officer cursed angrily, “Son of a bitch, we were ambushed in the shadows on the way here. Someone was shooting at us from the darkness!”

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

After securing I Know Someone to one of the dining table's sturdy legs, Lumian paid the sheep no mind. He lay on the sofa in the living room and pretended to be asleep.

His appearance had been altered back by Lie, and the Decency brooch had long been taken off.

Franca glanced at the sheep, which stood silently and didn't attempt to escape with the dining table, and asked, "Aren't we going to interrogate him now?"

She avoided looking at Lumian because he had become so irritating that she felt like punching him. Even the sheep, now a pacifist, was eager to do the same.

Lumian's voice remained calm as he replied, "I'll question him once I've regained my spirituality."

That makes sense. It's safer this way. After all, I Know Someone is now a sheep with his frontal lobe removed. He can't use his abilities or put up resistance… Franca, dressed in an Assassin suit, averted her gaze and headed to her bedroom to avoid losing control of her hands, black flames, frost, or spider silk.

She wasn't worried that any accidents might occur prior to the interrogation, leading to I Know Someone's bizarre death or him turning into a monster due to losing control. Madam Magician and the Major Arcana card holder had already confirmed I Know Someone's identity. They must have seized the opportunity to obtain the most important information.

Jenna, holding the broken obsidian arrow, approached the divan with a warped expression.

"Your trophy."

She offered the obsidian arrow to Lumian, who hadn't yet closed his eyes.

Lumian didn't take it and calmly said, "This is your reward for your good luck.

Why does he sound like a circus fortune-teller… Jenna didn't refuse. After mumbling to herself, she quickly turned around and entered Franca's bedroom.

It had to be said that after her companion advanced to Demoness of Pleasure, even as a woman, she would blush and feel her ears heat up when she saw her change her clothes.

After changing into comfortable home clothes, Franca used Magic Mirror Divination to get a rough understanding of the name, abilities, and negative effects of the obsidian arrow.

"Name: Arrow of the Bloodthirsty.

"Ability: Plunge it into the chest where the heart and let it absorb blood. The user will gain potent self-healing and regeneration abilities, along with exceptional physical attributes. Whether it's speed, agility, the ability to communicate with animals, vision, smell, or hearing, they will all be greatly enhanced. Their charisma will also receive a significant boost.

"In addition, the user will gain Dark domain spell-like abilities such as Abyss Shackles, Claw of Corrosion, and Wings of Darkness.

"Negative effects:

"While in use, you will despise sunlight and crave blood.

"Your blood will be continuously drained by the item until you succumb to excessive blood loss. You must constantly monitor your condition and remove the broken arrow in time.

"The more you use it, the more likely it is to cause subtle changes in your body. If these accumulate beyond a limit, it might even lead to bodily collapse. Note: Try not to use it for more than three minutes at a time. It's best to use it with intervals of more than three days. This way, your body will have a chance to recover and prevent any mutations.

"Avoid using it during a full moon. While it can enhance your condition, it can also easily lead to illusions and danger."

“Not a bad mystical item,” Franca praised sincerely as she handed the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty back to Jenna. “Carrying it doesn’t have any negative effects. Such a mystical item could fetch over 40,000 verl d’or at various mysticism gatherings.”

Holding the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Jenna pondered and said, “If I give it to you, will that settle the debt I owe you?”

She believed she owed Franca 30,000 verl d’or.

Franca chuckled.

“Don’t worry. This Arrow of the Bloodthirsty can significantly boost your strength, providing you with true self-preservation abilities. You can sell it later once your Sequence has advanced to the point where it’s no longer useful.

“Take your time paying back the money you owe me. There’s no rush.”

Jenna fell silent for a few moments before nodding in agreement.

…

Lumian slept until 6 a.m., feeling refreshed but still with a slight throbbing in his head.

As he sat up and looked around, he noticed that the sheep I Know Someone had transformed into was standing quietly by the dining table, its empty eye sockets filled with dried blood.

Lumian chuckled.

He led the sheep into the living room and poured the remaining truth serum into its mouth.

With that task completed, Lumian recited an incantation in Hermes.

“His Grace.”

A dark light flashed, and the grayish-white sheepskin split open, revealing I Know Someone’s body in a blue-and-white-striped

hospital gown.

Lumian guided him to a chair and had him sit down. Staring into his empty blood-red eye sockets, he smiled and sighed.

“As I mentioned yesterday, we can finally have a good chat.”

The calm I Know Someone remained silent.

Lumian retreated to the sofa and sat down. He patiently waited for the truth serum to take effect before asking, “What’s your name, what was your original occupation, and why were you in the Delta Asylum?” This chapter is updat𝒆d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

He began with the simplest questions, using the truth serum to guide the other’s instinctive responses.

I Know Someone’s voice was unremarkable, yet strangely compelling.

“My name is Pierre Theuriau. I was originally one of the deputy editors of Basic Medicine.

“I once mentioned that I know someone who ended up in an asylum due to negligence and overconfidence. Well, that someone was me. I was obsessed with manipulating the minds of others and didn’t pay enough attention to my own issues. One day, I just lost my mind.

“When I finally regained consciousness, I found myself in the Delta Asylum. Fortunately, I was only mentally unstable and didn’t completely lose control. I still had some sense of self-preservation and didn’t unleash my Beyonder powers recklessly. If I had, they would have sent me to the Inquisition.”

The person you mentioned is indeed yourself… After discovering that “I Know Someone” was hiding in the asylum, Lumian gained a new understanding of what he had said back then.

He pressed further, “Now that you’ve regained your consciousness and the ability to think, why do you choose to remain in the Delta Asylum?”

I Know Someone didn’t show any mockery or amusement. He

answered calmly, “I find the asylum fascinating. The thought patterns, mental states, and mental constructs of the patients here are significantly different from those of ordinary people. They deserve observation, research, and analysis.

“Moreover, some of them have gone mad due to illness, while others have become mentally unstable due to other factors. The latter group includes individuals who have come into contact with the mysterious and abnormal.”

“Including the one that posed as you?” Lumian asked, seeking confirmation.

I Know Someone nodded slowly.

“Yes, he’s quite special. I’ve been observing him for a long time. He’s like a philosopher, constantly posing unusual questions. Patients close to him, nurses who care for him, and even doctors who treat him have gradually shifted toward his mental state. There were also guardians with hidden supernatural abilities lurking around him.

“We dealt with the guardians and worked to gain his trust. Everything went smoothly. We learned that they are part of an organization called the Entry Persons and practice a secretive ritual known as Midoro’s Worship. It allows one’s Astral Projection to ascend to various heavenly domains and witness extraordinary phenomena. They can touch the fringes of immortality and gain knowledge and corresponding abilities, enabling them to undergo a fundamental transformation behind the formless door.”

Entry Persons… Formless door… Lumian memorized the information and continued asking,

“After Loki’s resurrection and his given warning, why didn’t you immediately flee Trier?”

I Know Someone’s response lacked any emotion as he said, “How lame would that be? We’d have to eliminate a few pursuers before making our escape.”

So that’s the reason… Lumian thought there must be something

significant that had kept I Know Someone in Trier.

“Then why didn’t you go into hiding somewhere else?”

I Know Someone replied calmly,”I want to witness the despair and suffering of those chasing me.”

Using my life for amusement… Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Do you not realize the strength of the Tarot Club?”

I Know Someone pondered for a moment and then said, “The secret organization that uses tarot cards as their code names? What do they have to do with you?”

Upon hearing this, Lumian burst into laughter as he bent over, his amusement clearly exaggerated.

Chapter 408 - 408 Motive

408 Motive

Amidst exaggerated laughter, the doors of the two bedrooms creaked open.

Franca and Jenna appeared at the door, casting puzzled glances at Lumian.

“What’s so funny?” Franca muttered as she approached.

How could he interrogate a criminal to get a reaction akin to watching a comedy performance?

Lumian stopped laughing and remarked, “Ignorance can lead to many dangers, as can arrogance. And having ignorance and arrogance makes it almost irredeemable.”

Observing this, Jenna retreated to the bedroom and closed the door.

She knew there were certain matters between Ciel and Franca that were best left unknown to her.

“Why? Is this guy really ignorant and arrogant?” Franca used her right hand to quickly tidy her disheveled hair after waking up.

She settled into the recliner and fixed her gaze on I Know Someone, who remained composed and emotionless.

Lumian recounted how I Know Someone found it pointless to simply escape and insisted on seeking some amusement. He also mentioned his ignorance regarding the pursuer’s connection to the Tarot Club.

Franca was left speechless.

She couldn’t decide if this core member of April Fool’s was highly

professional and committed to his principles or simply arrogant and ignorant.

After a few moments, Franca glanced back at the guest bedroom door.

“Jenna is getting more involved in our affairs. Sooner or later, she would uncover our true faiths and the secret organization supporting us…”

Lumian said nonchalantly,”It’s simple. Mr. Fool is an officially recognized orthodox god. In a few days, take Jenna to Lavigny Docks and reveal who we truly worship and whose blessings we receive. Ask her if she wants to secretly convert to Mr. Fool. If she declines, that’s okay too.”

“Okay.” Franca nodded solemnly.

Lumian refocused his attention on I Know Someone, who remained remarkably composed, and he redirected the conversation.

“Why were the lot of you targeting Aurore, Muggle?”

I Know Someone seemed to be discussing something unrelated to himself.

“Because many members of the Research Society were praising her, we decided to embarrass her.”

“What kind of logic is that?” Franca blurted out. “You want to tease people when they are praised?”

I Know Someone nodded gently.

“Breaking the idealized image in the minds of many people is part of the spirit of pranks. Their reactions bring us immense satisfaction.”

Franca’s face flushed with anger. She wanted to unleash a tirade but restrained herself due to her lacking vocabulary.

She took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

“So, do you even remember what happiness and joy are? Do you still experience these emotions?” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Lumian let out a long sigh and asked,”And then?”

I Know Someone wore a nostalgic expression.

“Capitalizing on Muggle’s visit to our team to trade, I occasionally offered her helpful advice. She began to trust me more, even sharing her concerns with me as a psychiatrist seeking solutions.

“During that time, I played the role of a credible source, all while collecting enough information and planning a massive prank. Eventually, I discovered that the body Muggle inhabited following her transmigration belonged to a girl who believed in a evil deity of Inevitability. Furthermore, she realized that her family, including her father, mother, brothers, and sister, displayed odd behaviors. There were numerous unsettling details upon closer examination, enough to induce fear in anyone who delved too deep. So, she found an opportunity to escape from home.

“This situation bore a striking resemblance to a family I knew, with a female member who had mysteriously vanished.

“After careful comparisons, Loki, the family, and I confirmed that Muggle was indeed their missing relative. Then, one day, Loki provided the family’s modified Soul Summoning Spell and instructed me to find a way to sell it to Muggle for her use.

“Drawing on my understanding of Muggle’s psychological and emotional state, I meticulously crafted a persuasive argument. Leveraging her longing to return home and her habit of searching for clues, I convinced Mad Lady to sell the Soul Summoning Spell to her.

“As expected, she began to suffer from schizophrenia. In a sense, Roche Louise Sanson came back to life.

“In each subsequent treatment session, I made her appear better on the surface, but her condition deteriorated with each passing session. At times, I even guided Roche’s personality to emerge and engage with her. It was quite intriguing.”

Lumian listened in silence, refraining from interrupting I Know Someone's account with anger. Franca, on the other hand, was seething with anger, repeatedly sipping water to calm herself.

Why are these people so detestable!

They didn't regard others as real people at all!

After I Know Someone had finished speaking, Lumian inquired further.

"The Soul Summoning Spell comes from Roche Louise Sanson's family?"

"That's correct." I Know Someone's condition was akin to a windless lake. "They combined the knowledge obtained from a boon and a Warlock's Soul Summoning Spell, giving rise to the Soul Summoning Spell that Muggle purchased. I'm not sure what makes it special; I'm not a scholar of witchcraft."

Knowledge from a boon… Lumian quickly reviewed his knowledge of Dancer, Alms Monk, and Contractee within the Inevitability pathway, but he found nothing that could be connected to the Soul Summoning Spell.

He suspected that it might be a knowledge linked to a higher Sequence of the Inevitability pathway or perhaps a unique boon bestowed by the evil god known as Inevitability.

After a few moments of contemplation, Lumian asked slowly, "Does Roche Louise Sanson's family know about Muggle's existence and her condition? Are they aware of her true identity and her current location?"

I Know Someone nodded.

"I informed them of the first part, and Roche herself disclosed the rest. Later, they managed to establish contact with Muggle, bypassing both me and Loki."

The Sinners is involved in spreading the Inevitability faith in Cordu and providing various resources… That's correct. The padre could

have joined them immediately after leaving Cordu and become their so-called archbishop. This indirectly confirms it… Lumian's emotions remained subdued, but his mind was sharp.

He subconsciously clenched his fists and focused on I Know Someone.

"What are the names of the members of Roche Louise Sanson's family? Where are they currently residing? Are they affiliated with a secret organization or a cult?"

I Know Someone shook his head.

"After I moved into the asylum, I lost contact with them. During this period, I attempted to locate them but discovered that they had already relocated. It seemed they were no longer using their original identities, as if they were trying to hide from something.

"Roche's father's name is Voisin, her mother's name is Constace, her elder brother's name is Bliss, her elder sister's name is Annette, and her younger brother's name is Atur. They are all part of a branch of the Sanson family. However, I do not know their current names.

"Voisin was once a struggling merchant on the brink of bankruptcy, but he later joined a secret organization known as the Sinners. Miraculously, he escaped his financial woes and regained his success. He had numerous businesses, with the most notable being the Voisin Café, that doubled up as a hotel, restaurant, and various functions. It was frequented by high society, but before they relocated, these businesses were sold."

Lumian proceeded to gather more information about the Sinners and sought details about the appearance, mannerisms, and habits of each family member.

With the newly acquired information in hand, Lumian spoke thoughtfully, "Do you know what role the Sinners' demigod or Beyonder at a higher Sequence played in the Cordu disaster?"

I Know Someone replied,"Not long before I moved into the asylum, Voisin informed me that they were taken by surprise. This occurred much earlier than the agreed-upon time, so none of them had arrived

at the scene.

“It appears that some individuals were overly eager to obtain the boons. The ensuing mishap resulting from their failure also caused them to lose many leads. Otherwise, they would have discovered you much earlier.”

The Sufferer lurking in the shadows of Cordu and around me isn’t the demigod of the Sinners, so who is interfering with my fate with Termiboros? Lumian frowned and asked, “Did Roche not inform the Sinners, her parents, or her siblings about the early ritual?”

“No,” I Know Someone replied succinctly. “They believe she wished to reduce the number of individuals receiving the boons and concentrate the power.”

Lumian fell into a contemplative silence, sensing that something was amiss.

Could the lizard-like elf be involved?

It had prevented Aurore from seeking Madame Hela’s help and Roche Louise Sanson from contacting the Sinners?

Lumian attempted to inquire further about this matter but did not receive additional information.

Wary of the truth serum’s effects wearing off, he decided to change the subject.

“What does the deity you believe in want you to do in Trier?”

I Know Someone’s vacant eyes remained fixed on the sofa as he responded, “He occasionally grants us revelations for us to decipher independently.

“If we interpret them correctly and complete the corresponding task, we receive something unexpected.

“Apart from these revelations, He rarely communicates with us directly. We can only pray to Him through a ritual, and this can be done no more than once a week.”

The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings and Mr. Fool's state are very similar… Lumian was tempted to inquire about the revelations granted by the Celestial Worthy but decided it might be too risky to discuss.

After a brief moment of consideration and deliberation, he decided to approach it from another angle and indirectly inquire.

"Did you start the rumors about human blood bread?"

"Yes," I Know Someone admitted without hesitation.

Lumian continued, "What about the rumor that Mandrake can treat illnesses?"

I Know Someone calmly replied, "I was the one behind that as well.

"It was a revelation from the Celestial Worthy. It was then that I realized I could influence events this way. After some time, rumors of human blood bread began to spread."

The Mandrake rumor is a revelation from the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings? Will there be any hidden dangers in using it to suppress the spirituality surge? Lumian contemplated the idea of warning the naive Vampire, La Nou Bruch.

He circled around and inquired about other revelations about the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. He didn't obtain much useful information, so he could only move on to the last topic.

"Tell me about Mad Lady, Ultraman, Hisoka, Loki, and Bard."

Chapter 409 - 409 Fire Execution

409 Fire Execution

I Know Someone said calmly, “Mad Lady is probably a Traveler. I have no idea where she lives…

“Loki is a Sequence 5 Marionettist of the Seer pathway, but I suspect he wields more power from Celestial Worthy than us. He can access resources unknown to us. He even owns a mysterious ancient castle, Dylan, hidden somewhere…

“Bard is a Sequence 6 Prometheus of the Marauder pathway. Of course, I’m unsure of his current situation. We haven’t seen each other in reality for a long time… He did write Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles and published it under someone else’s name…

“I’m not familiar with Hisoka. He hasn’t attended any real-life gatherings in the Northern Continent. In my opinion, he’s very dangerous, second only to Loki. He’s similar to Mad Lady…

“If I hadn’t gone crazy for a while, I would be a Sequence 5 by now…”

Castle Dylan… Lumian recalled Madame Hela’s description of Loki’s dream and suspected that the mysterious ancient castle hidden somewhere was where Loki had been resurrected.

He hadn’t expected Bard to be a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway. He believed that the nickname originated from the Ocean Songster of the Sailor pathway or the Midnight Poet of the Evernight pathway, but on second thought, it made sense. In rural stories, bards often moonlighted as thieves.

This also confirmed the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings's influence on the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways. Half of the six core members belonged to these three pathways.

After I Know Someone finished speaking, Franca asked with concern, "Who else in the Research Society is involved with this?"

I Know Someone couldn't resist keeping it a secret. He replied calmly, "I know Pettigrew is one…"

"Pettigrew?" Franca blurted out in surprise. "I thought he was making fun of his height with that nickname, but it turns out he's mocking his identity?"

I Know Someone nodded gently.

"Before finding the organization and joining the Research Society, he already knew Loki. As you all know, Loki can use the Celestial Worthy's power to sense transmigrators within a certain range, and Pettigrew is also in the Trier Greater Region.

"He first became Loki's subordinate before joining the Research Society. He was assigned to another team. He actually nicknamed himself Pettigrew because he wanted to play a prank and reveal the truth. He mocked and fooled all the Research Society members who lacked insight, but in reality, I knew he was hesitating, feeling guilty, and struggling. He hoped to use this method to warn the other Research Society members that there was something wrong with him.

"My plan was to find an opportunity to tell him that Muggle, who never discriminated against his height and was gentle and amiable to him, was harmed by us. He could be considered an indirect helper. When the time comes, his devastation and pained expression would have been very interesting."

"Dammit!" Franca cursed.

Although I Know Someone had been lobotomized and he had become very calm, his tone no longer mocking, his straightforward thoughts were still filled with vileness, making Franca unable to control her

emotions.

“What else?” Lumian asked on her behalf.

I Know Someone recited five more aliases in a row before concluding, “These are the few I know. As for the ones Loki and the others secretly developed or didn’t tell me, I’m not sure.”

“There’s quite a few…” Franca was filled with hatred and frustration.

Franca exhaled and muttered, “Your sister’s adaptation of famous quotes is ridiculous…”

“Did you spread news of the impending apocalypse because you believed in the Celestial Worthy and rushed to pursue joy, allowing you to commit all sorts of evil deeds without feeling guilty? Or did you become desperate and believe in the Celestial Worthy because you were certain that the apocalypse was about to arrive and humans couldn’t resist?”

I Know Someone replied,”Both. Some tried to replicate their pre-transmigration actions and immediately gained the Celestial Worthy’s attention, while others faced catastrophes and learned about the apocalypse. They only believed in the Celestial Worthy after their mental breakdown.”

At this point, I Know Someone’s empty eye sockets turned to Franca, who had just asked the question.

“Later, the Celestial Worthy even gave us some revelations, allowing us to guess a portion of the truth, including…”

For some inexplicable reason, Lumian suddenly felt a strong sense of danger and interrupted I Know Someone’s statement.

“You don’t have to continue!”

I Know Someone immediately closed his mouth.

“Why can’t he say it?” Franca eagerly awaited the answer, but there was no response.

Lumian recalled concepts like the “barrier” related to the apocalypse and said seriously, “It’s not suitable for you to know the truth about the apocalypse yet. That knowledge might cause you to lose control or be fatally corrupted on the spot. You can inquire about it when you become a demigod.”

“Alright.” Franca glanced at Lumian and muttered, “Why do you act like you know the truth…”

Why can he do it, but I can’t?

“I only know a little,” Lumian replied candidly. “And that knowledge brought me danger. It’s all thanks to Mr. Fool’s seal.”

As the effects of the truth serum wore off, I Know Someone returned to his usual unchanging calm. Even his willingness to answer questions had vanished.

Franca gazed at the lobotomized Psychiatrist for a few seconds before sighing.

“Sometimes, we’re still too naive. We might even think of ourselves as the protagonist.”

Lumian knew that “we” referred to the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Franca averted her gaze and turned to Lumian.

“While the sheep was undergoing the operation, I searched both I Know Someone’s and his substitute’s wards. I found some papers at the latter’s place. I didn’t read the content carefully, but it felt a little esoteric.”

As she spoke, she rose and returned to her room, retrieving a thin stack of papers.

Lumian flipped through them and frowned.

“Midoro’s Worship…” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“What’s this?” Franca hadn’t heard the first half of the interrogation.

Lumian explained briefly and concluded, “This should be a spell that allows one to traverse the Formless Door and closely align with an evil god, gaining knowledge and experience. Even ordinary people should be able to learn it after receiving proper guidance.”

Lumian put away the secret deed spell, Midoro’s Worship. Although he didn’t know how to use it, nor did he need to, he could still grasp the corresponding knowledge. This would help him deal with the heretics who relied on Midoro’s Worship to obtain knowledge and strength.

He then said to Franca, “Relay this information to Madame Hela. I’ll handle I Know Someone.”

“Alright.” Franca nodded gently and watched as Lumian put on the Lie earring and walked to the armchair. He grabbed the calm man’s shoulder and instantly vanished.

…

Prison district, Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

It was not yet 7 a.m., and there was no one here. It was wet, as if isolated from the world.

Lumian emerged from the void with I Know Someone and tied the April Fool’s core member to the stake.

Then, he retreated a long distance, crouched down, and pressed his hands to the ground.

Two crimson tongues of fire swiftly darted towards I Know Someone’s body along the weed-covered ground.

They grew larger and larger until they transformed into a giant serpent, engulfing I Know Someone completely.

Lumian stood up and used his feet to maintain the flow of flames. He silently watched as the calm Psychiatrist revealed grayish-white Dragon Scales under the stress.

His body subconsciously struggled, but it wasn’t as intense. His

various Beyonder powers scattered in all directions, but they failed to affect Lumian who stood beyond their range.

Lumian condensed a dangerous flaming spear and hurled it, piercing and burning a hole around I Know Someone's chest and abdomen.

The crimson flames that hadn't incinerated the Dragon Scales elsewhere surged into I Know Someone's body.

As Lumian watched the April Fool's core member truly begin to burn, his body instinctively emitting pained cries, his thoughts raced. He quickly recalled the battle last night and today's interrogation.

He had learned a lot from this, but he couldn't quite grasp the acting principle.

Flames aren't just lethal; they can also be used as deterrence, intimidation, and a signal…

It is necessary for Pyromaniacs to combine their flames with traps…

…

As the raging flames engulfed I Know Someone, Lumian felt as if a fire was burning in his heart.

It was anger, satisfaction, and catharsis.

At that moment, Lumian's Pyromaniac potion digested a little more, just as it had after the battle the previous night.

After an unknown period of time, in the uninhabited execution ground, I Know Someone ceased his struggles and lost his breath. His body was charred as it cracked apart.

Chapter 410 - 410 A Leisure Week

410 A Leisure Week

In the drizzling execution ground, Lumian watched as the crimson flames gradually dwindled before his eyes. He observed as translucent, colorless mucus seeped out of the corpse. It surrounded the charred and cracked I Know Someone, attempting to burrow into his head through the empty eye sockets and fuse with some organ.

Rumble!

I Know Someone's head exploded from the inside out, splattering grayish-white colloids everywhere.

The transparent, colorless mucus had lost its binding substance, leaving it only able to condense independently, eventually forming a sticky colloid.

This colloid landed beneath the stake. From a distance, it resembled an unfixed mirror, capable of reflecting everything around it.

Lumian strode over and retrieved the colorless colloid, which was likely a Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic. He did this amidst the scorching air and the flames that flowed around him.

As he gazed upon it, he noticed minuscule transparent bubbles deep within the colloid. They caught and refracted sunlight from various angles, displaying an array of colors.

After storing away the Beyonder characteristic, Lumian turned on his heel and departed from the stake.

Behind him, the lingering flames continued their relentless assault,

devouring the charred corpse.

As the light flickered, Lumian's figure vanished from the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

Lumian, who had reverted to his original form with the Lie earring, rubbed his temples and turned to Franca.

"It's already taken care of. It's fitting for someone like him to meet his end at the stake."

"Unfortunately, he's a believer in the Celestial Worthy. Even if he doesn't take action, he remains a hidden threat—a potential time bomb. Otherwise, I would have spared him, albeit with his frontal lobe removed and his sight forever gone."

Franca breathed a sigh of relief. "That's reassuring."

In truth, she felt a twinge of regret. If not for the insanity that had gripped I Know Someone in the past and his faith in the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, who was suspected of triggering their transmigration, she might have attempted to channel his spirit and inquire about the potion formula for the Spectator pathway, from Sequence 9 down to Sequence 6 or even Sequence 5. However, after thorough contemplation, she decided to forsake this perilous scheme.

Lumian's gaze shifted to the open door of the guest bedroom.

"Where's Jenna?"

"She's gone to the Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons," Franca taunted Lumian. "She's much more diligent than you in digesting the potion."

Lumian replied thoughtfully, "After venting the flames within me to battle and carry out the execution, my Pyromaniac potion has significantly digested. At this rate, if I can distill a new acting

principle, it should be fully digested within two months."

"No problem," Franca replied without hesitation. "The Beyonder characteristics of these followers of the evil god have eluded the grasp of high-ranking individuals. I wouldn't dare to possess them myself. There's no need to think about repaying me. Dealing with I Know Someone is also a mandate from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society."

"Where are you off to?" Lumian asked casually.

Franca responded with a hint of annoyance, "I've been caught up in all sorts of messes you've stirred up lately, and I haven't had a moment to pleasure myself. Now that it's finally settled, it's only fair that I take a break, right? I suggest you behave yourself for the next few days!"

Lumian couldn't help but smile as the Demoness of Pleasure slipped on her boots, swung the door open, and left.

Once the door slammed shut, Lumian, who had originally planned to return to Auberge du Coq Doré to write to Madam Magician, grabbed a pen and paper from the nearby table. He meticulously jotted down all the information I Know Someone had given him. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

He then neatly folded the paper and placed I Know Someone's Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic on top of it.

Summoning the "doll" messenger, Lumian patiently waited.

Before long, the "doll" messenger returned, carrying the translucent colloid and a square piece of folded paper.

Madam Magician's reply read:

"This is a shared mission of the Tarot Club. There's no need for a reward. Keep it for yourself. I've already removed the corruption that could be removed.

"We'll mobilize various resources to search for the whereabouts of the remaining five April Fool's members, but we currently lack a

solid lead. The pranks mentioned in the information have been ongoing for too long."

Lumian finished reading in silence, allowing the crimson flames to consume the paper in his hand.

He longed to teleport directly to Feynapotter's Gaia Province and the Southern Continent's West Balam to personally hunt down the suspicious April Fool's team members, such as Bard. However, he knew it was futile. Without sufficient information or clues, it was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

He couldn't rely on the ice-cream-eating boy's luck every time, could he?

All I can do now is wait for the Tarot Club to uncover useful leads… The only person I can track down at the moment is the publisher of the underground book, Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles. If only they had met with the real author, Bard… Lumian felt a mixture of disappointment and relief.

He planned to take his time with the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic. While he searched for a suitable Artisan, he waited for Anthony Reid to investigate General Philip's widow.

If the Psychiatrist gained something and succeeded in curing his psychological issues, Lumian wouldn't mind selling him the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristics and splitting the proceeds with Franca.

If Lumian found a suitable Artisan before that, he would designate the mystical item he crafted as a common resource, allowing Franca, Jenna, and the others to use it as they saw fit.

After tucking away the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic in a concealed pocket, Lumian exhaled and leaned back in his dining chair.

Only then did he hear the growl of his stomach and realize his hunger.

Since waking up at 6 a.m., he had been engrossed in the interrogation, execution, and letter writing, completely forgetting

about breakfast.

Honestly, leaving me alone here; it's as if I live here… Lumian mumbled to himself as he got up and ventured into the apartment's kitchen to see what ingredients were available.

Scanning the area, he spotted a few potatoes.

Following the process, he ignited the stove, heated a pan, added oil, sautéed, and tossed in the shredded potatoes. He seasoned the dish accordingly.

Once it was ready, Lumian toasted two slices of bread and poured a glass of milk.

Sitting down at the dining table, he sandwiched the crispy shredded potatoes between the slices of toast and savored them, occasionally taking a sip of milk.

Outside the window, the drizzle had cleared, and the sun beamed brightly.

…

During the following week, Lumian made the most of his time. He patiently awaited the recovery of his mental damage from the past two battles, taking the opportunity to act as a Pyromaniac and gradually digest the potion.

In the midst of this process, he also managed to report to Mr. K about his recent activities and the discovery of the evil god organization.

Members of the Savoie Mob in Salle de Bal Brise were surprised. Their boss had unexpectedly appeared for five to six consecutive days and had stayed for extended periods each time. Compared to their previous experiences of him being unavailable, it was as if he had found a double.

Charlie was equally astounded. Ciel frequented the basement bar every night to drink, tease, and taunt people, making him the prime target of this unusual dedication.

Just as Franca was about to revisit Trocadéro's Red House café and discreetly remind Browns Sauron not to forget auditing her, Hela's pure silver skull sent out a notice of a special gathering to Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches and Lumian's abandoned safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

It had been a while since Lumian had visited the safe house. If Franca hadn't inquired about the letter upon receiving it, he might not have been aware of it.

Many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society operated in a similar fashion. They had designated locations for receiving and sending letters but did not actually reside there. They only visited periodically to avoid detection by Hela,

finding comfort in these small details.

Lumian arrived at the abandoned safe house on Rue des Blouses Blanches and carefully unfolded the letter. Its contents read:

"Muggle:

"There's a special gathering scheduled for 10 tonight. We need to discuss something of utmost importance that concerns everyone's safety."

…

At night, just three minutes shy of ten o'clock, Lumian recited the incantation imbued with Concealment powers within the confines of the safe house on Rue du Rossignol.

Gradually, he felt himself sinking into a profound slumber, the sensation akin to his body being erased by an enormous eraser.

After an indeterminate period, he suddenly regained consciousness and found himself standing amidst an ancient palace enveloped in the misty shroud of a town.

Over a hundred members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had already assembled, their figures still taking shape.

Navigating through what resembled a grand masquerade ball venue, Lumian, now transformed into Aurore using Lie, wore a Warlock's black robe and half-mask as he approached the Academy team.

He scanned the area but didn't spot the member known as Pettigrew.

Standing beside a slender man with a brownish-yellow manila document bag obscuring his head was Professor, adorned in a black butterfly mask, a bow tie shirt, and a long dark coat.

It was her husband, Associate Professor.

Professor regarded Lumian with curiosity and inquired, "Do you know what's happening? Why did they convene this special gathering?"

Lumian, taking on the persona of "Muggle" Aurore, smirked and let out a sigh.

"Because we have traitors among us."

"Traitors…" Professor and the other members of the Academy team echoed the term.

At that moment, the half-giant president, Gandalf, attired in a simple robe and hood, and the vice president, Hela, who appeared as a black widow with her face concealed by a veil, made their way to the massive stone throne situated deep within the ancient palace.

Chapter 411 - 411 Review Committee

411 Review Committee

The notice had already made it clear that this was no ordinary gathering. Most members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society didn't split into groups to chat. Instead, they took their customary positions and fixed their eyes on the massive mottled stone chair.

"We've got a bunch of traitors among us!"

A bunch of traitors… Even though Professor and the others from the Academy had received Lumian's hint, they hadn't expected the issue to be this severe.

It wasn't just one traitor; it was a whole bunch!

The ancient palace, though dilapidated, exploded with commotion. Some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were skeptical, while others became instantly wary, suspicious of everyone around. Some thought there might be a problem, but they didn't think it was as bad as Gandalf made it out to be.

As they whispered amongst themselves, Hela, her face shrouded in black, spoke with an icy tone, "First, let's have one of the victims share her experience."

Her voice wasn't loud, but it cut through the silence of the night, reaching every member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

She then turned her gaze toward the area where the Academy team was positioned.

Understanding Hela's intent, Lumian confidently ascended the steps and stood next to the massive, ancient mottled stone chair.

He channeled Aurore's emotional reaction if she were to discover the truth about her death and spoke with a deep, resonant voice, "On April 1st, I acquired a spell known as the Soul Summoning Spell from Mad Lady of the April Fool's team…"

Without any need for amplification, Lumian's imitation of Aurore's voice harnessed the Concealed power that saturated the Nation of the Evernight, ensuring that everyone present could hear without any leaks.

It was evident that Hela had lent her assistance. Lumian, not being a true Warlock, couldn't employ supplementary spells himself. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Upon hearing this revelation, most members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society shifted their attention to the palace's crevice housing the April Fool's team. They noticed the conspicuous absence of Mad Lady and a significant number of her team members.

They could now infer which group the traitors were affiliated with. Those who had been pranked by the April Fool's team couldn't help but feel a sense of vindication.

Lumian continued with his account. He didn't immediately divulge Loki and I Know Someone's "confessions." Instead, he reconstructed Aurore's emotions.

The trust in I Know Someone, the yearning for home, the obsession with clues, the fascination with Mad Lady's claims, the fear and unease upon discovering a soul fragment fused with her memories after using the Soul Summoning Spell and the subsequent split into a separate personality, the desperate search for treatment from I Know Someone, the helplessness and horror from her repeated improvements before repeated deterioration…

Lumian's agitation grew as he spoke. At times, he even choked back a sob.

Part of this stemmed from his frustration. He had failed to notice Aurore's abnormal emotions and state earlier. His relaxed demeanor around those close to him had caused him to overlook subtle changes. By the time he had realized the gravity of the situation, it had already spiraled out of control.

Simultaneously, as he recounted and simulated Aurore, her fragmented soul seemed to stir and hover near the edge of the seal, exerting an influence on his own psyche.

As he neared the end of his narrative, Lumian took a deep breath.

"I came perilously close to death because of it. Fortunately, I received assistance at the eleventh hour and managed to seal my split personality. That's why I was absent from the gatherings for almost half a year.

Hela took charge of the conversation.

As Hela noticed the growing fear and concern among the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, she recounted Loki's mockery of Muggle and I Know Someone's intricate schemes.

This revelation stoked the flames of fury within most of the Research Society's members, and they began to grasp the reasons behind Muggle and Hela's actions.

Hela surveyed the assembled crowd and continued, "Muggle wasn't the sole victim of their malevolence. Many members who had previously met untimely ends or disappeared were also targeted.

"Now, let's invite a few witnesses up."

With that, several witnesses, including Black Earth and other April Fool's team members, took the stage one by one to share what they knew. Their accounts sent shivers down the spines of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members, leaving them with a lingering fear.

It became abundantly clear that if Muggle hadn't survived and exposed their true colors, countless more individuals could have fallen prey to their schemes!

After the witnesses had concluded their accounts, President Gandalf presented the evidence, including diaries and items. Finally, he addressed the assembly, “According to I Know Someone’s confession, we’ve managed to eliminate Loki’s accomplices who were embedded in other teams. Among them, Pettigrew took his own life, overwhelmed by guilt. He was a good person but lacked determination and courage. If he had reached out to Hela and me earlier and hinted at the situation more effectively, many unfortunate events might have been averted. He wouldn’t have had to carry this heavy burden.”

As sighs rippled through the audience, Gandalf’s resonant voice grew stronger.

“Everyone, we’ve only dealt with those accomplices known to I Know Someone. It’s entirely possible that there are still spies embedded in various teams, loyal only to Loki. I propose the formation of a Review Committee consisting of Hela, myself, and three other trusted companions who have already undergone mutual reviews. Our mission will be to assess the remaining members and root out any hidden threats. We’ll take decisive action against Loki and his allies.”

Members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society hesitated, concerned that this move would expose their secrets and realities to the Review Committee.

If any ambitious individuals were part of this committee, they could potentially exploit the information to manipulate and control members, posing a more significant threat than Loki’s gang.

Gandalf remained observant, waiting for their deliberations before adding, “Do not be overly concerned. Our review process won’t delve into your personal secrets or true identities. The primary goal is for the Review Committee to draft a stringent contract that ensures Research Society members won’t harm each other. Everyone will sign it, and the contract will be notarized by Apollo. We don’t care which deity you believe in, your real-world profession, or your hidden secrets. As long as you pose no threat and don’t become hidden time bombs, you will be fine. This limitation will be clearly outlined in the contract.”

Apollo, one of the five vice presidents, was known by a different nickname before. However, one day, he had unexpectedly approached the massive stone chair and announced his new moniker.

He had already successfully passed Gandalf and Hela's scrutiny.

In comparison to a comprehensive body-to-soul review, signing a binding contract to ensure each other's safety seemed far more acceptable to the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

After a show of hands, the Review Committee was officially established with nearly unanimous support.

The committee comprised five members: President Gandalf, Vice President Hela, Vice President Apollo, Hidden Blade from the Sanctuary team, and Headmaster from the Academy team.

Hela had initially suggested that Muggle join the Review Committee, but Lumian felt that, given that he wasn't truly Muggle, it wouldn't be appropriate for him to hold such a position. Thus, he rejected Hela's proposal.

As the vote passed, Lumian overheard Hidden Blade Franca mutter, "Humans are still the same. If you want to open a window, there will always be plenty of objections. But if you propose to tear down the roof, they'll happily agree to let you open the window."

Upon noticing Muggle's gaze, Hidden Blade Franca added, "I didn't say that."

Subsequently, the members split into groups to discuss the terms of the contract. Their aim was to ensure that it contained no extraneous content and that it could effectively expose traitors and harmful actions without any loopholes.

As Lumian descended the steps, he noticed Hidden Blade Franca engaged in conversation with a tall individual wearing a lion headgear.

"Muggle, you're in the market district too?"

“007, why do you say that?” Franca asked with deliberate curiosity.

That 007 who’s affiliated with an official faction in Trier… Lumian nodded and smirked.

“Just because you’re active in the market district doesn’t necessarily mean you live there.”

“That’s true,” 007 replied, then turned to Hidden Blade with a hint of jest in his voice, “You’ve already told me about that terrifying aura that night, and today you mentioned Loki and the others’ betrayal. It would have been strange if I couldn’t connect the dots and figure out that it was Madame Hela, you, and Muggle dealing with Loki and I Know Someone in the market district. Besides, I heard about a Marionettist going missing from Bureau 8 during that time, and it matched the abilities Loki displayed.”

At this point, 007 looked at Hidden Blade and Muggle in puzzlement.

“None of you are Beyonders of the Hunter pathway.”

The higher-ups suspected that the terrifying aura had been emitted by a high-level Beyonder of the Hunter pathway.

“Can we create that terrifying aura ourselves? It must be exogenous!” Franca was telling the truth, but she was deliberately misleading him into thinking about charms, Sealed Artifacts, and so on.

As 007 nodded slowly in contemplation, Lumian focused on him and inquired, “What’s the official stance of Bureau 8 regarding the missing Marionettist? Why do they believe he disappeared?”

Chapter 412 - 412 Purge

412 Purge New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Wearing a lion headgear, 007 took a moment to think before speaking.

“I’ve only heard rumors that the Marionettist disappeared with some classified information.”

“That’s not true,” Franca replied, dropping the act. 007 had already figured out that the truth of that night involved the two of them teaming up with Hela to deal with Loki.

Loki didn’t possess any such information!

007 didn’t argue with her and continued discussing the rumors.

“And the classified information seems to be tied to a treasure left behind by a secret organization.”

Left-behind treasure… Lumian and Franca both remembered the Castle Dylan mentioned by I Know Someone.

The location of this mysterious castle remained unknown, and Loki’s dreams featured a towering and ominous ancient castle.

007 continued, “There are also members of Bureau 8 who suspect that the terrifying aura from that night is connected to the missing Marionettist. An intelligence supervisor named Antoine has been repeatedly asking for more details.”

Antoine… He believes Loki’s disappearance wasn’t random, and something must have happened to him? Lumian made a mental note of the name.

After recounting the rumors, 007 glanced at Muggle and said half-

jokingly, “It’s best if you avoid the market district. Hidden Blade has stirred up trouble there. It’s very dangerous.”

“Who said that? Security has clearly improved!” Franca responded confidently.

Ever since she and Lumian had taken down the leaders of the Poison Spur Mob, the Savoie Mob had taken control of the entire market district. The frequency of mob fights, shootings, and killings had decreased significantly, and security had improved.

007 sighed and remarked, “That’s only on the surface. There are more incidents involving supernatural powers than before.”

“Sigh, I wonder when I’ll get a long vacation.”

Lumian, in the role of Muggle, conversed with 007 for a while before returning to the Academy team.

Professor, wearing a black butterfly mask, approached him and let out a soft sigh.

“I was worried that something had happened to you due to the Hidden Sage’s whispers, and you needed some time to recover. Who would have thought that Loki’s gang was behind it?”

After cursing Loki and his gang, she turned to Muggle for confirmation.

“Have you noticed that the Hidden Sage’s whispers have taken on a disturbing change in recent months?”

Aurore’s grimoires didn’t contain any records of this… Lumian thought for a moment and replied with a hint of bitterness, “Nothing much. As you know, I was affected by the Soul Summoning Spell in the first few months of this year. My mental state was unstable, and recently, I’ve sealed a part of my personality. The issues with my body haven’t been fully resolved. I had already digested the Warlock potion and was planning to gather ingredients for advancement, but I haven’t dared to do so now.”

The professor understood and cautioned, “You should be careful.

Until your mental problems are completely resolved, and you return to your normal state, don't consider consuming the potion."

Her voice lowered as she continued, "I've noticed that the Hidden Sage's whispers have been revealing more living knowledge lately. It's the kind of knowledge that actively seeks out individuals and insists on entering their minds. This makes it even more dangerous for Beyonders of the Mystery Pryer pathway like us."

More knowledge actively pursuing individuals… Has the Hidden Sage's nature changed? Lumian had heard his sister Aurore mention the Knowledge Pursuer, so he didn't appear confused or bewildered.

He nodded solemnly and said, "I'll be cautious."

Professor didn't press further and continued discussing the specifics of the contract with Associate Professor and the other Academy team members. "Muggle" Lumian also took part in the conversation.

It took more than half an hour for the teams to gather their members' opinions, document them, and submit them to the Review Committee.

After careful consolidation, adoption, and rejection by Gandalf, Hela, and others, along with collective discussions involving all members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, the terms of the contract were painstakingly finalized.

It wasn't clear if everyone tacitly agreed to enter the Nation of the Evernight, but the gathering included transmigrators. There was no requirement for members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society to be of the same kind or come from the same world. Hela was aware of this but chose not to bring it up. This allowed Lumian to fully meet the conditions and willingly comply with the contract's restrictions. He wouldn't secretly investigate the backgrounds of the Research Society members and wouldn't intentionally harm one another.

However, there were certain exceptions. The contract granted the Review Committee the right to investigate suspected members, but they couldn't pass judgment or make decisions unilaterally. They had

to convene a special gathering and inform all members of the situation. Every member would then vote on guilt and suggest a rough range of punishment.

Loki and the others, who were currently being pursued, were no longer protected. Anyone had the authority to apprehend them.

After the contract was approved, Hidden Blade Franca, who stood beside Lumian, let out a sigh of relief and genuinely commented, “Once everyone signs the contract, the Research Society will truly become a secret organization.

“It was too lax before. Many matters relied on everyone’s self-awareness.”

Lumian, showing only the lower half of Aurore’s face, smiled and replied, “After all, you all didn’t come together for anything significant before. You lacked a strict hierarchy. It’s only natural that you had the freedom to do as you pleased.”

A loosely organized group could only mature gradually after weathering various challenges.

As Vice President Apollo drafted an extensive mystical contract, the various teams resumed their daily discussions.

This time, the primary focus of each team was on Loki and his companions’ actions and potential accomplices.

Gandalf, Headmaster, Hela, Hidden Blade, and others moved from team to team, observing each member’s reactions closely.

Suddenly, the Research Society member disguised as a horse, began reciting the incantation to leave the Nation of the Evernight before the Review Committee could patrol his area.

“A Beyonder from ancient times, the ruler of the Nation of the Evernight, the noble Mother of Heaven…”

The voice echoed through the ancient palace, but before the figure could finish the incantation, his eyes closed, and he fell asleep.

The surrounding members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were momentarily shocked before realizing the situation.

They cursed, “Traitor!”

This individual had been one of Loki’s hidden accomplices.

With the mole incapacitated, the Review Committee resumed their patrol.

Fifteen minutes later, the contract, as large as two dining tables, was produced, bearing the signature of a Notary.

Exhausted, Vice President Apollo drank a potion provided by Gandalf to alleviate his mental fatigue.

In the following period, members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society ascended the steps one by one. Under the watchful eyes of the Review Committee, they read the contract and signed it using the nicknames they had been using for years.

During this process, the fog outside the ancient palace grew denser, as if preventing any external interference.

Once all the members had signed, three more traitors were exposed.

One of them transformed into a torch of light after signing, while another attempted to abduct his companion next to him, only to fall into a deep slumber. Seeing this, the third traitor chose to confess.

After a vote, the one who confessed was handled by a Hypnotist to erase relevant memories. He was expelled from the Research Society, while the remaining three turned into Beyonder characteristics.

Hela concluded, “Gandalf and I will investigate the family situations of these members. If they are ordinary people and there are no issues, I suggest auctioning off the Beyonder characteristics for money and providing compensation.”

This compensation wasn’t a reward for their wrongdoings but rather a way to assist the relatives of the members who had taken over the bodies and could no longer provide support.

Many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had transmigrated to this world five to six years ago. Some had wives and children. Upon hearing this proposal, they were moved and felt it wouldn't be fair to implicate their families.

Lumian had no objections. He still considered himself an outsider in this situation.

In the remaining time, Lumian visited various teams, following Hidden Blade Franca's guidance, and identified two Artisans capable of crafting mystical items.

He didn't rush to interact with the Artisans and entrust them with the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristic from I Know Someone. Instead, he planned to wait for Anthony Reid.

The assistance a Hypnotist could provide far exceeded that of a corresponding mystical item. After all, most mystical items couldn't speak or offer advice and guidance.

Due to Loki's incident and the exposure of hidden traitors, many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society lost their enthusiasm and chose to depart without lingering, causing the number of people in the ancient palace to dwindle.

The Professor and Associate Professor couple, who had initially intended to organize an Academy team gathering in Trier, temporarily abandoned the idea.

…

At noon the following day, Lumian casually arrived at Salle de Bal Brise with a Rouen meatloaf in hand.

Upon entering the café on the second floor, he spotted "Rat" Christo.

The short smuggling leader, sporting a pair of rat-like whiskers, greeted him with a smile.

Lumian raised his eyebrows and asked with a smile, "Got into trouble?"

Simultaneously, he thought to himself, This guy is a Sequence 8 Beast Tamer. Beyond that is Sequence 7 Vampire. With his current appearance, I wonder how the potion will increase his charm and height?

Christo chuckled and said, “There’s something I want to ask you. I can’t make up my mind.”

Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down.

“And what’s the matter?”

Christo, resembling a large rat, glanced around and said, “The Trier Cave Association invited me to join them. Why do you think they’re interested in recruiting me?”

The Trier Cave Association was a group of individuals passionate about exploring and studying caves. Over time, it expanded its scope to include mining and drew in mine owners as well.

In Trier, the region with the most caves was underground.

Chapter 413 - 413 Cave Association

413 Cave Association

Upon hearing the name Trier Cave Association and their invitation to "Rat" Christo, Lumian didn't feel puzzled initially. Instead, he recalled the secret map of Underground Trier he had once seen from Gardner Martin.

Now, Lumian suspected that it might have been leaked from the Trier Cave Association.

This seemingly civilian organization had a large number of cave researchers. Some of them were employees of the municipal department or expert consultants. They had ample opportunities to come into contact with confidential exploration and construction information. There was no lack of people who had participated in the municipal modification decades ago. They were hands-on witnesses who had bored through various tunnels and reinforced all the quarry caves.

They had a deep understanding of Underground Trier.

Lumian looked at "Rat" Christo and asked thoughtfully, "Do you really not understand why they invited you to join the association?"

"Rat" Christo smiled sheepishly and said, "I have a guess, but I'm not sure.

"Ciel, don't tell me they've discovered I'm a smuggler leader?"

As a merchant who had long exploited Underground Trier's concealed nature to smuggle alcohol, weapons, and ammunition, Christo's knowledge of different tunnels, remote mines, underground

tombs, and hidden chambers rivaled that of most members of the Cave Association. He even possessed secret routes that remained unknown to others.

Moreover, his nickname was “Rat,” and he was a true Beast Tamer. With the help of his animal friends, his “tentacles” could extend to many areas that humans couldn’t reach.

Christo suspected that the Cave Association had taken a liking to him because of these traits.

That was why he felt uneasy. Whether it was his status as a Beast Tamer in the Beyonder domain or his nature as a big-time smuggler, they were enough to send him to trial. His options would probably range from hanging, a firing squad, incineration, beheading, to becoming a low-level experimentalist.

Lumian chuckled.

“I don’t believe that adventurers who join the Cave Association haven’t been involved in smuggling and don’t have Beyonders among them.”

“That’s right,” “Rat” Christo exhaled and said, “The Cave Association wants some business from me?”

Lumian glanced at him and said, “That’s why you should consult the Boss about this, not me.”

Christo lowered his voice and smiled ingratiatingly. “I’m just worried that the Boss will take the opportunity to assign me some dangerous mission.”

Based on Gardner Martin’s previous missions and the confidential map, this “Rat” keenly sensed the Boss’s extraordinary interest in Underground Trier.

He felt that if he joined the Trier Cave Association, Gardner Martin might arrange for him to contact some members of the association and attempt to steal confidential information or participate in research and risky expeditions.

And that often meant danger.

He had consulted Lumian not only because he felt that his colleague was powerful, knowledgeable, and quick-witted but also because he wanted to find someone to shirk his responsibility in advance.

He had already made up his mind to join the Trier Cave Association and keep it a secret from Gardner Martin, the boss of the Savoie Mob.

Previously, he had fawned over Lumian, displaying a certain degree of submission. His words were filled with praise for Lumian because he valued his colleague's rapid advancement in Sequence, his strength, and his intelligence. If he befriended him, he might be able to save his life from a dangerous mission given by Gardner Martin at a critical moment.

Gardner Martin definitely couldn't know about this, but if he accidentally discovered the matter, Christo could naturally blame it on Ciel:

I, 'Rat,' am a boorish and uncultured individual. I spend my days dealing with animals, laborers, and the dark underground. I have limited knowledge and ain't very bright. I often seek guidance from Ciel when I encounter matters, and he told me that I could join the Cave Association. He said it was a very normal and personal matter.

Lumian looked at Christo with a faint smile, his dark-blue eyes and grayish-black hair, and didn't respond to his inquiry. Instead, he asked, "You've been a Beast Tamer for a long time, right? Do you know what the next Sequence is?"

Judging by Rat's care and concern for his animal companions, even if he didn't know the acting method, the Beast Tamer potion should have mostly been digested.

"I don't know. The Boss didn't tell me," Christo's eyes darted around.

Lumian chuckled and said, "As far as I know, the next Sequence of Beast Tamer is a qualitative change. It will bring you an all-around improvement, including a longer lifespan and a body with better recovery traits."

Without waiting for Christo to press further, Lumian changed the subject.

“Therefore, you must work hard to complete the mission given by the Boss and strive to obtain the corresponding rewards as soon as possible.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” Christo hastily agreed.

Only then did Lumian steer the conversation back on track. He smiled and asked, “Do you wish to join the Trier Cave Association?”

Christo stammered, “I-I’m curious about their motives. Moreover, the person who came seems polite and keeps smiling, but I keep feeling that his actions are a threat to me. Yes, a threat!

“The one following him is even more expressionless. He looks at me as if I’m a dead man, a criminal awaiting trial!”

Curious… Lumian chuckled inwardly, grasping Rat’s inclination and thoughts.

“Angrily,” he said, “How dare they threaten a leader of our Savoie Mob? We must inform the Boss about this!”

“No, no need!” Christo panicked. “The Cave Association is a semi-official organization. We’re just mobsters. There’s no need to clash with them. This won’t do you, me, or Red Boots, who are members of the Savoie Mob in the market district, any good.”

Lumian clicked his tongue silently, planning to add fuel to the fire and force the truth out of “Rat.”

At that moment, Sarkota, who had been guarding the staircase at the bottom, walked up and said to Lumian, “Boss, two individuals calling themselves Trier Cave Association liaisons are here to pay you a visit.”

Visit me? Someone from the Trier Cave Association is visiting me? Lumian glanced at “Rat” Christo, who had his hands on the table in surprise and confusion. He leaned back in his chair and said to Sarkota, “Invite them up.”

The Trier Cave Association's two liaisons were young. They wore black formal attire and blue bow ties. One had brown hair, brown eyes, and a reserved smile. The other had black hair and brown eyes, expressionless and cold.

The friendly liaison glanced at "Rat" Christo and fixed his gaze on Lumian's face.

He smiled and asked, "Good afternoon. Are you Monsieur Ciel Dubois?"

"Yes." Lumian wanted to see what the Trier Cave Association was up to.

Lumian didn't hide his emotions and asked with amusement, "What do I have that caught your Cave Association's eye?"

I'm not a smuggler who frequents Underground Trier!

Could it be that you know that I entered the fourth level of the catacombs and obtained the Samaritan Women's Spring water?

Could it be that you still know that I'm a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and am aware of a series of hidden catacombs like the Albert Mines?

Joseph replied with a smile, "We have our reasons. If you're willing to join our association, you'll definitely know the specific reason."

Rayan, who was taller than Joseph, added coldly, "That's a good thing for you." nove(l)bi(n.)com

Lumian gazed at them for a few seconds before chuckling.

"I'm not interested in your association."

The expressionless Rayan narrowed his eyes.

"I hope you won't regret it."

Joseph smiled meaningfully and said, "You might not know the significance of our Cave Association in Trier.

“Unfortunately, you missed this opportunity.”

With that, the two of them turned around and prepared to walk towards the stairs leading to the ground floor.

As Lumian watched them leave, he raised his head slightly.

What is the Trier Cave Association up to? This matter is definitely not simple…

Perhaps this is an opportunity. If I offend the Cave Association, Gardner Martin probably won’t let me stay in the market district anymore…

My current mission in the Iron and Blood Cross Order is to investigate the Sauron family’s decline and explore the underground to find the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier. It has nothing to do with staying in the market district…

Once I leave the market district, I’ll be out of Loki’s sight. I can slip into the shadows and wait patiently…

I wonder if I can continue enjoying Salle de Bal Brise’s share of profits…

If anything goes awry, I’ll teleport away immediately…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly knocked on the coffee table in front of him.

Amidst the thumping sounds, he glanced at Joseph and Rayan’s figures and asked calmly, “Who gave you the permission to leave?”

Chapter 414 - 414 Reason

414 Reason

Joseph and Rayan came to a sudden halt, swiftly turning to face Lumian.

Lumian observed them in silence, offering no immediate explanation.

Joseph, maintaining his smug and condescending grin, inquired, “Monsieur Ciel, I’m not sure I comprehend your meaning.”

Lumian spoke with composure, “I granted you permission to visit me, not the freedom to depart.”

“This is my Salle de Bal Brise, not your home. You can’t come and go as you please.”

Though Lumian didn’t intentionally use Provocation, his demeanor, tone, and message radiated unmistakable disdain, as if he held no fear of their wrath.

Rayan, his expression unchanged, narrowed his eyes, turned away, and continued his stride toward the staircase, completely disregarding Lumian’s words.

Joseph, with brown hair and eyes to match, glanced at Lumian, then at Rayan. His gaze flickered, but he made no move to stop him.

Unfazed, Lumian calmly drew his revolver and discharged a round toward the staircase without hesitation.

With a bang, Rayan came to an abrupt standstill once again. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Slowly, he pivoted to face Lumian, exuding a palpable pressure from his eyes.

A subtle movement in Christo's pocket betrayed his discomfort and vigilance, sensing imminent danger.

Unperturbed, Lumian, holding the revolver, issued a sincere apology, "I'm sorry, I am carrying a concealed firearm."

As he spoke, he glanced back at Rayan and Joseph, a faint, fearless smile playing on his lips.

Joseph's feigned polite smile crumbled, replaced by a piercing gaze fixed on Lumian, as if assessing the mob leader's resolve, confidence, and strength.

Lumian contemplated uttering, "What are you staring at? If you want to fight, let's fight. If not, back down." to further infuriate the Trier Cave Association representatives, but considering the presence of "Rat" Christo, he abandoned the notion.

It would expose his true intention of provocation rather than investigating their true purpose, making it challenging to explain to Gardner Martin, the current or former Conspirer.

His unwavering gaze remained locked with Joseph and Rayan. With the revolver in his right hand, he deftly spun the cylinder.

After more than ten seconds that left "Rat" Christo visibly sweating, Joseph once again wore a polite smile and asked, "May we depart now, Monsieur Ciel?"

Oh, so you see through my true intentions of deliberately finding fault, hoping to get some action? Where's your arrogance and self-esteem? Lumian chuckled inwardly and said in an infuriating tone,

"Not just yet."

Rayan took an abrupt step forward, but Joseph restrained him.

The freckled, brown-haired, brown-eyed young man raised his chin slightly and locked eyes with Lumian.

"What must we do to gain your permission?"

Lumian's smile held a tinge of disappointment as he replied, "Answer my question, why did you invite Christo and me to join the Cave Association? I don't recall having a hobby of exploring and studying caves."

Joseph fell into a brief silence before explaining, "Our association's cave adventurers have encountered Christo several times underground and noticed his in-depth knowledge of Underground Trier. He appears to be well-acquainted with many hidden routes, which aligns with our cave association's criteria for invitations."

"Rat" Christo didn't voice any objections to this explanation. Although his primary activities involved smuggling underground, there were no completely hidden smuggling routes. They inevitably crossed paths with tunnels and mines known to cave adventurers and quarry police. During these encounters, it was inevitable that he would come across a few "passersby" or be covertly observed from a distance.

Lumian, all the while, idly stroked the revolver's muzzle without interrupting Joseph's narrative.

Joseph paused for a brief moment before elaborating, "There are two reasons for your invitation."

"The first reason is an Earth Blood ore specimen."

The Earth Blood ore specimen… Lumian hadn't anticipated this reason at all.

Without taking much time to consider, guided by his prankster instincts and recent advice from Anthony Reid, Lumian swiftly responded, "An Earth Blood ore specimen… Ah, I recall now. I acquired it from a lunatic named Flameng. Isn't it just a stone? It holds no value to me. I don't even know its whereabouts."

Lumian then added with a touch of nostalgia, "It appears to have been stolen. I left it in a rented apartment. Heh heh, individuals like us rarely have a place solely for rest and sleep. My apartment was laden with numerous traps. Who would have imagined a thief successfully infiltrating and accessing the cabinet? What's more, they

only took the Earth Blood ore and left everything else untouched. It puzzled me at the time, making me wonder if my recollection was flawed—the stone has long been lost, and no thief had broken in…"

Ciel Dubois's words were delivered with a sincere and detailed tone, and his demeanor conveyed an apparent lack of concern regarding the ore specimen. Now, it merely seemed like the loss of some insignificant item. Joseph and Rayan exchanged glances, their attitudes subtly shifting.

As Lumian finished his act, his mind raced, trying to decipher the rationale behind the Trier Cave Association's interest in the Earth Blood ore.

The Earth Blood's rock stratum has existed beneath Trier for centuries, if not millennia. The specific minerals concealed within it couldn't have surfaced recently, catching the attention of Flameng and other mineral researchers…

Official factions in Trier and certain secretive organizations probably know that a select few minerals within the Earth Blood rock stratum hold a connection to the death of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor. However, they haven't uncovered their practical significance, merely corrupting the minds of those who encountered them…

That night, I activated the brand on my right hand, causing numerous high-ranking individuals in Trier to sense it. Someone might have identified the aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor through various means, prompting an investigation into relevant items…

The whereabouts of the specific minerals within the Earth Blood rock stratum are a vital lead in their inquiry. Flameng's belongings were registered with the market district's police headquarters…

Given the Cave Association's connection to the authorities, they likely accepted the mission and sought me out, the one who had acquired Flameng's belongings…

But why didn't they just send someone from the police headquarters to inquire directly? The Purifier, Machinery Hivemind, and Bureau 8 members all possess corresponding police identities…

Of course, the authorities aren't unified. They are officially divided between the government and the two Churches, but in practice, each faction harbors internal divisions.

The Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Order Of Preachers clashes with the Brotherhood Minor and other ideological factions. The Church of the God of Steam and Machinery's cloister system opposes the cathedral system. Bureau 8 is even more of a mixed bag. Some members come from secret organizations recognized by the government, some are former nobles like Sauron, who retains some influence, and others had been groomed by Bureau 8 over the years…

The only thing holding them together is the fact that Bureau 8 members can't officially align with any political party, or it would become even more chaotic…

In such a fractured environment, it is possible that a group within a faction had identified the Earth Blood ore's unique trail of clues but doesn't want others to know. Hence, they bypassed the police station's public channels and conducted their investigation through the unofficial Cave Association…

Perhaps someone within the Cave Association has recognized this clue and possesses an in-depth knowledge of underground terrain and mineral specimens. They are likely among the most proficient professionals…

Is this why they hadn't directly requested my cooperation with the investigation and instead attempted to recruit me into the Cave Association?

Lumian swiftly reached this preliminary conclusion, eagerly awaiting Joseph to reveal the second reason.

Joseph said, "We believed you had an interest in underground minerals and were a kindred spirit."

"Did it really get stolen, or did you leave it somewhere else but have forgotten about it?"

"It must have been stolen," Lumian said truthfully. "I found some

traces of a break-in. Because of this, I became concerned about the gold I had saved, so I went to the bank to rent a safe deposit box for it."

Joseph nodded gently and said, "The second reason is that Kendall, an administrator of the catacombs, told us that among the individuals who brought Flameng's ashes there for burial, you seemed to possess a unique sensitivity to something abnormal that others couldn't perceive."

They connected the dots from the Earth Blood ore to the catacombs… Lumian was enlightened.

"I'm not sure what you mean by 'special.'"

Joseph didn't elaborate or push for further information. He simply looked at Lumian and asked, "Monsieur Ciel, may we leave now?"

Lumian regarded them for a few seconds before nodding slowly.

"Sure."

The situation had taken an unexpected turn, causing him to abandon his plan of provoking the two liaisons and antagonizing the Trier Cave Association further.

While he had undoubtedly irked Joseph and Rayan, they had also obtained the answers they were seeking, or at least a part of them. There might be minor repercussions in the future, but a major confrontation was unlikely.

After Joseph and Rayan disappeared down the stairs, Lumian sat in contemplation for several moments. He holstered his revolver, stood up, and addressed "Rat" Christo, "This situation is more complex than I anticipated. I need to report it to the Boss."

He considered a dangerous possibility.

If it turned out that the Sauron family was behind the investigation into the special Earth Blood ore through the Cave Association, and they discovered a connection between Ciel Dubois, a mob leader, and the supposed son of a wealthy businessman who exhibited peculiar

behavior in Poufer Sauron's King's Pie game, it could pose a significant problem.

Therefore, he needed to inform Gardner Martin immediately, be forthright with him, and eliminate any potential hidden threats while seeking useful advice.

With the Iron and Blood Cross Order as a secret organization backing this entire operation and his primary mission assigned by Gardner Martin, Lumian had no intention of handling the matter on his own.

"Rat" Christo hesitated for a moment before forcing a smile and responding, "Alright."

Chapter 415 - 415 The Sinner Complains First

415 The Sinner Complains First

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Lumian took the lead, briefly explaining the origins of the Earth Blood ore specimen.

“While I was staying at Auberge du Coq Doré, I crossed paths with a man named Flameng, a Lunatic who had a tragic encounter with the Montsouris ghost, leading to the bizarre deaths of his family.

“Occasionally, he regained lucidity. We drank together a few times. One day, he hanged himself. His belongings, including the Earth Blood ore specimen, ended up with the police. They said they were to hand them over to his surviving relatives, but they refused to accept them. Eventually, they asked me to retrieve them, which included the Earth Blood ore specimen.

“I knew that lunatic and had drinks with him. I didn’t throw away the mineral specimen and casually placed it in an iron cabinet of my safe house…”

Lumian spoke the truth, not a single word being false. He only concealed the fact that he had helped Flameng escape the Montsouris ghost and Termiboros’s reminder regarding the Earth Blood ore.

Gardner Martin, his brownish-red eyes reflecting wisdom and a touch of silver hair in his black hair, inquired, “Where is your safe house?”

Lumian replied honestly, “It’s in the leftmost room on the third floor of 19 Rue des Blouses Blanches.”

This wasn't on the same side as Apartment 6, which had emitted a terrifying aura, and there was a distance between them, so Lumian's answer was straightforward.

Gardner Martin smiled.

"No wonder you frequent Rue des Blouses Blanches so often. It's not just because of Jenna."

Boss, are you hinting at me not to visit Franca too often? Are you implying that you're aware of this situation? Lumian grumbled and continued.

He gave the same story he had told Joseph and Rayan from the Cave Association.

Finally, Lumian subtly probed, "Will this pose a problem for our Savoie Mob? There might be an official faction hidden behind the Cave Association."

He wanted to convey to Gardner Martin that his cover in front of Poufer Sauron might be at risk, trusting the boss's intelligence to grasp the implication.

Gardner Martin gave a slight nod and turned his attention to "Rat" Christo, saying, "If you want to join the Cave Association, you can, but ensure it doesn't interfere with our smuggling operations."

Christo nodded repeatedly.

"Understood, Boss."

Following Gardner Martin's instructions, he departed from the study, leaving Lumian alone.

Gardner Martin smiled and consoled the official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

It was a subtle message, urging Lumian to remain in the market district and continue overseeing Salle de Bal Brise, Auberge du Coq Doré, Salle de Gristmill, and other businesses.

Simultaneously, he sneered inwardly.

He keenly felt the irrationality of Gardner Martin's plan. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Transitioning control to another Beyonder to oversee Salle de Bal Brise and other operations, allowing Lumian to slip into the shadows, was a straightforward task for the boss of the Savoie Mob and the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. There were no downsides to this arrangement.

Even though he couldn't afford to mistreat Lumian, a subordinate on an important mission, he could compensate him by continuing to share the profits from Salle de Bal Brise and other businesses. He couldn't risk keeping an official member, who had already attracted suspicion, in his current location.

While Lumian's retreat into the shadows might make him appear even more suspicious, potentially putting the Savoie Mob in the crosshairs, Gardner Martin had encountered such challenges numerous times before. There had to be a solution.

Sensing the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's suspicion, Lumian aimed to use the Cave Association to keep testing him.

His account and explanations were entirely truthful. Normally, Gardner Martin would believe him, but the issue was that too many unusual events had occurred around him recently. As a former or current Conspirer, Gardner Martin would instinctively smell something fishy.

The detailed reasons were no longer enough to hide the overall abnormality.

With this thought in mind, Lumian's determination to kill surged.

He stared at Gardner Martin, positioned by the floor-to-ceiling windows, and estimated the distance between them to be about five meters.

At such a close range, if he were to suddenly employ the Spell of

Harrumph, and Gardner Martin hadn't reached Sequence 4 and achieved godhood, lacking a mystical item to defend against such abilities, he could quickly subdue the Savoie Mob boss and eliminate him.

The current situation resembled that of two ordinary individuals without Beyonder powers standing within a five-meter radius. One held a high social status and excelled in combat, while the other held a low status and lacked physical strength. However, they both concealed a revolver and possessed exceptional marksmanship.

Within five meters, regardless of an ordinary person's status or combat skills, they would succumb to a single shot!

Considering the missions for the Tarot Club and the Aurora Order, Lumian composed himself and inquired, "Commanding Officer, I wish to purchase the Conspirer potion formula from the Order."

He had gained valuable insights from his advancement to Pyromaniac. He didn't want to go through the nerve-wracking process of searching for each Conspirer potion ingredient after digesting the Pyromaniac potion. His goal was to gather Conspirer ingredients in advance while continuing to digest the remaining Pyromaniac potion, thereby maximizing his time efficiency.

Gardner Martin responded with surprise, "Do you have that much cash for that?

"The Conspirer potion formula can command prices ranging from 70,000 to 80,000 verl d'or at the most mysticism gatherings, if not more. It's unlike Pyromaniacs, who are constantly perishing as others advance. Conspirers understand the importance of self-preservation, and they've become more cautious about sharing their Sequence potion formulas."

In Trier, the most common potion formulas available ranged from Sequence 9 to Sequence 7 of the Hunter pathway.

Without waiting for Lumian's reply, Gardner Martin grinned and added, "If you can unearth even a portion of the Sauron family's decline secret, I'll reward you with the Conspirer potion formula. It

doesn't have to be the whole story, just a piece of the puzzle."

"If you're eager to advance and don't want to wait, as an official member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, you have the privilege of purchasing the Conspirer potion formula at a discounted price of 60,000 verl d'or."

Lumian agreed without hesitation, "No problem. I'll bring 60,000 verl d'or tomorrow."

His initial plan had been to inquire with Mr. K and Madam Magician if Gardner Martin declined his request.

"Do you really have 60,000 verl d'or?" Gardner Martin chuckled.

In total, he had received 50,000 verl d'or in banknotes and gold, worth 30,000 verl d'or. After repaying Franca's 25,000, he had 55,000 left. Combined with the original 1,000 gold, 1,000 banknotes, and 4,000 verl d'or, he had 61,000 verl d'or in liquid assets.

"Salle de Bal Unique…" Gardner Martin repeated, his expression growing more serious. "You really managed to retrieve the debt from Salle de Bal Unique?"

Evidently, the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order was familiar with Salle de Bal Unique.

Lumian nodded, his demeanor open and honest.

"Yes."

The members of the Savoie Mob at Salle de Bal Brise were more or less aware that he had helped Fitz collect his debt. Lumian couldn't keep Gardner Martin in the dark, so he decided to disclose it directly to confuse the situation and divert the Iron and Blood Cross Order's suspicions.

Furthermore, he could use this opportunity to put a little fear into Gardner Martin!

Gardner Martin scrutinized Lumian and subtly moved closer to the floor-to-ceiling windows.

After a few moments, he inquired with curiosity, “Have you never heard of the issues surrounding Salle de Bal Unique?”

“I have,” Lumian replied with a smile.

If he had a monocle, he might have playfully inserted it into his right eye socket at that moment, savoring Gardner Martin’s intriguing expressions and subconscious reactions.

After a pause, Lumian continued, “After accepting the commission, I conducted a thorough investigation of the dance hall and realized it wasn’t as simple as it seemed. It had a mysterious background and posed a significant danger, so I initially decided to abandon it. However, one day, while trailing an adversary, I noticed something unusual. One of the guards at Salle de Bal Unique’s entrance had inexplicably vanished. And upstairs, behind a window, their boss, Timmons, appeared to have lost his spirit.

“I saw this as an opportunity, so I made an attempt to enter and collect the debt. To my surprise, I succeeded!”

As Lumian spoke, he took a step forward and asked earnestly, “Commanding Officer, are there any hidden dangers I should be aware of?”

Gardner Martin discreetly took another step forward and smiled.

“Not at the moment. Keep an eye out for any future anomalies.”

Lumian seized the opportunity to express his bewilderment.

“Commanding Officer, something doesn’t quite add up. Why have there been so many events swirling around me lately? Some I initiated, while others just seemed to find their way to me. Am I truly a harbinger of trouble? Or has my recent fate been to rush around and handle things, leaving me constantly busy and weary?”

Gardner Martin regarded him with meaning and replied, “Perhaps, this is the destiny that every Hunter is bound to face.”

After Lumian departed, Gardner Martin shifted his gaze to the side.

A hidden door creaked open, and Supervisor Olson emerged, bearing a resemblance to a hungry bear.

“How is it?” Gardner Martin inquired.

Olson smirked and responded, “It’s natural for him to be discontent with your arrangements. His loyalty isn’t firmly established yet. He won’t be able to join your team for the time being.”

Gardner Martin shifted the conversation thoughtfully.

“The calamity on him is more conspicuous than any of us. Is it possible that he’s more compatible?”

Olson fell silent for a few moments before replying, “Let’s observe and wait.”

…

Meanwhile, as Lumian returned to the market district, Franca sat at Trocadéro’s Red House Café. Her gaze fell upon Browns Sauron, her long, flowing orange-red hair resembling a waterfall, as she asked, “When will you folks complete the audit?”

Browns Sauron didn’t provide a direct response. She studied Franca, who had black hair and brown eyes, for a moment before saying, “We’ve identified a suspected member of the Bliss Society.”

Chapter 416 - 416 Suspect

416 Suspect

You're quite efficient. After receiving the warning, you swiftly unearthed the problem and found the clues. Instead of confirming it yourself, you're now informing me directly, intending to leverage this issue for the final audit? No wonder you didn't respond when I inquired about the audit completion date… Franca's mind raced as she grasped Browns Sauron's true intentions, representing the Demoness Sect.

Admiring the Demoness's appearance and demeanor, she smiled and asked, "Is it just a suspicion?"

She was prompting the other party to provide more details.

Browns Sauron ran her fingers through her long orange-red hair and spoke with a somber expression, "After learning from you that the Bliss Society interacts with the participants in the orgies, I observed my friends and noticed two members who were behaving unusually.

"One of them fell in love with a man once again and entered into a romantic relationship. Consequently, she started declining participation in the female orgies. The other one encountered a new woman and succumbed to her advances, leading to feelings of guilt for betraying us."

Friends? Girlfriends! Franca couldn't help but criticize.

She smiled and inquired, "Who do you suspect are the members of the Bliss Society?"

"That woman," Browns Sauron's aura remained dark. "She took the initiative to ask about the orgies and reassured Adaina that there was no need to feel guilty. She claimed that everyone has the right to

control their bodies and freely indulge their desires without caring about others' opinions, societal judgments, moral restrictions, or religious constraints. She also stated that only deities and churches that genuinely embrace free will, physical freedom, and desire freedom are worth following."

Physical freedom, desire freedom… It's indeed the hallmark of the Mother Tree of Desire's believers… The core members of the Bliss Society truly excel as Actors. Their acting skills are remarkable. They can artfully package indulgence and debauchery, presenting desires as a manifestation of willpower, subtly diminishing the importance of rationality, clarity, and thoughtful reflection… Franca clicked her tongue and inwardly sighed.

For a Demoness of Pleasure, this approach proved highly effective. If the surrounding humans believed it, she could swiftly immerse them in intense and genuine pleasure, causing them to lose themselves in a sea of indulgence. Long-term consequences and effects were typically disregarded by most Demonesses, as they would have already digested the potion by then.

However, Franca could discern that Browns Sauron was possessive and didn't want her girlfriends to engage with humans outside of the orgies.

"That certainly resembles the Bliss Society," Franca objectively remarked.

Browns added with a gloomy expression, "As for the other one, the lover is primarily concerned with money, houses, banquets, vacations, and various luxury items. It's quite evident that he's a male courtesan. They understand women very well, are eloquent, and possess considerable capabilities."

"What do you plan to do?" Franca asked curiously.

She sensed that Browns Sauron wasn't the type to simply give up on one of her girlfriends, especially when the new lover seemed unreliable.

Browns Sauron hesitated for a few moments before saying, "I've

encountered him before, and I can tell he harbors an unusual desire for me. I intend to teach him a lesson, immersing him in pleasure without granting him true gratification. Once his body and mind are completely under my control, I'll discard him."

Wow… Did you learn this without a mentor? Do you even remember your original form? Franca raised an eyebrow, finding a rare target for mockery.

Browns glanced at her mockingly and retorted, "Based on what I've discovered and confirmed, you have two male lovers. One is mature, and the other is young. You seem to excel at enjoying yourself."

Her implication was clear: "What right do you have to mock me? I'm merely planning to offer that man some pleasure without engaging in actual intimacy. As for you, you've long abandoned your gender, ending up in the beds of different men!"

Half of my reputation has been tarnished by Ciel! Franca didn't lose her composure over the humiliation. She maintained a smile and said, "I view this as a unique experience.

"I've already become a woman. How can I not explore something entirely different from my previous existence? If you don't experiment now, you may never have the chance in the future. Don't you desire to return to your original form. Do you not know how?"

She subtly hinted at her knowledge of mysticism, paving the way for revealing her true motives for infiltrating the Savoie Mob in the future. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Browns was left momentarily speechless, unable to refute Franca Roland's twisted logic.

Franca continued, "Life is confined to just a few decades. Why confine yourself to such a limited scope? As long as you avoid indulgence and obsession and always remain true to yourself, you're merely experiencing the present moment. Why not venture into various realms and experiences?"

At this moment, Franca had an epiphany.

Pleasure wasn't just something to offer to others; it was also meant for oneself!

Is this my first principle of acting…? No wonder my digestion speed hasn't been slowing down recently; it's even considered fast… How can being coy be considered Pleasure? Franca thought with a sense of delight.

Browns fell silent for a few seconds before speaking, "Your mindset surpasses my expectations, but with this mindset, it will be very, very challenging for you to perform a ritual, advance to Affliction, or experience pain and inflict it."

"I'm currently focused on Pleasure. I'll deal with Affliction when the time comes," Franca replied casually.

The digestion process would take months, half a year, or even longer to complete. What was the point of worrying too much?

Browns glanced at Franca for a moment, feeling a mix of repulsion and envy.

It wasn't that she desired it, but the Demonesses she had encountered, whether at higher Sequences or those who had just consumed the Witch potion, lacked this calmness and radiance. Each of them carried their own distortions, conflicts, and pain, and some even teetered on the edge of madness.

Browns decided not to delve further into personal philosophy and steered the conversation back on track.

"Adaina encountered the suspected Bliss Society member at an art exhibition. She goes by the name Theresa and comes from a former noble family. She's now an art dealer.

"I've conducted some investigation. Her identity and name are real, but they don't belong to her. In other words, there is a real art dealer named Theresa. She's impersonating her and has altered her appearance to make herself more appealing.

"This aligns with the characteristics of an Actor, as you mentioned. When Adaina had intimate contact with her, she also experienced the

abilities of a Sex Addict.

“I attempted to tail her earlier, but I was too cautious and lost her trail.

“Adaina has a date with her tonight.”

Franca listened attentively and then asked thoughtfully, “Can we trust Adaina now?”

Browns’s expression contorted as she replied, “She can be trusted.”

Franca didn’t press further and reminded her deliberately, “Then, will she exhibit any unusual behavior during her date with Theresa tonight? She’s dealing with an Actor.”

“Perhaps. She needs a Psychiatrist or an even more powerful Beyonder of the Spectator pathway to plant a cue or hypnotize her. This will help her maintain her normal state and prevent Theresa from becoming suspicious.

“If you can’t find one in a hurry, I can introduce someone, but it will come at a cost.”

Browns’s expression softened as she nodded in agreement.

“You’re indeed more experienced than I am.”

Following her sigh, she smiled and asked, “Is that Psychiatrist also a man?”

Franca was taken aback.

“Yes.”

Hey, what kind of image do you have of me!

The two of them silently refrained from discussing which side would handle the subsequent questions after identifying the fake Theresa. It was as if they had already reached an unspoken agreement.

…

At 7 p.m., in Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra, just outside the Delan Music Hall, Franca and Lumian, both dressed in light-colored pants, walked toward the entrance while discreetly holding each other's arms.

They had used Lie to alter their appearances and heights, ensuring that they wouldn't be recognized by anyone they might know.

Their target for this operation was the woman entering the concert hall, about seven to eight meters away.

Among them, Adaina, a participant in the Red House female orgies, had long, light-yellow hair with thin, curly bangs. Her face was powdered, her eyes light blue, and her nose perky, making her quite attractive. As for the art dealer, Theresa, she had long, wavy brown hair and a simple style. When her flaxen-colored eyes scanned the surroundings, they sparkled with liveliness.

This woman, suspected to be a member of the Bliss Society, had somewhat stiff facial features. It lacked softness but still exuded a strange charm.

Inside the small concert hall, Lumian and Franca found their seats and then swiftly locked onto Theresa and Adaina's location, discreetly observing them from behind.

Franca watched with interest as Adaina and Theresa leaned against each other, feigning intimacy.

It was a pity that, despite her claim of loving women, Franca's limited experience mainly revolved around "teasing" Gardner Martin's other lovers. She had seldom been able to admire such scenes from a distance.

"Be careful," Lumian warned with a sigh.

Franca responded disapprovingly, "For a Trierien, this attitude is entirely normal. Look around you. Aren't others openly watching as well?"

Lumian snorted and didn't push the matter further.

Their immediate objective was observation, not tailing. It was crucial to assess the target's situation before taking any action.

Turning an ambush and surprise attack into an open confrontation would be a failure for any Hunter.

Lumian's primary goal was to gather information about Theresa's probable Sequence. If she happened to be a Sequence 7 Actor or a Sequence 6 Recipient, Lumian was confident in executing a successful surprise attack. However, if she turned out to be a Fallen Tree Spirit of a specific tree with a changed lifeform, the effectiveness of the Spell of Harrumph might be questionable.

Although Franca had suggested using Magic Mirror Divination to gather this intel, Lumian still wanted to witness it firsthand. The desires of a corresponding Sequence of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway couldn't be easily concealed!

Chapter 417 - 417 The Importance of Intel

417 The Importance of Intel

The concert began as scheduled, and Theresa and Aldina separated, completely immersed in the orchestra's performance.

Franca withdrew her gaze with regret and closed her eyes, savoring a symphony that evoked the image of moonlight glistening on a tranquil lake at night.

Lumian had received no formal education in this domain, so his knowledge of music was limited to three things. Firstly, Aurore's occasional humming and the melodies of shepherds' flutes. Secondly, songs from places like Ol' Tavern, Cordu Village Square, and Salle de Bal Brise, which were often laced with suggestive lyrics and rhythms. Lastly, the psalms from the Eternal Blazing Sun's Mass. However, now, he found himself deeply moved by the band's performance. His mood gradually settled, as if he could envision Cordu Village and the highland pasture nestled in the darkness.

It was a serene night, adorned with a canopy of stars.

Lumian wasn't entirely captivated by the music. From the corner of his eye, he scrutinized the lady impersonating Theresa, carefully observing her every move.

The imposter Theresa appeared highly emotional, her demeanor shifting from sorrowful during the lyrical passages to exuberant during the ensemble. She seemed to be completely attuned to the fluctuations in the music.

Lumian pondered whether she had an exceptional affinity for music or if she harbored a strong desire to perform and convey something

profound.

If it was the latter, Lumian could tentatively conclude that the imposter Theresa was likely a Sequence 7 Actor. Based on his understanding of the Mother Tree of Desire's boon pathways, Beyonders typically wouldn't be so profoundly affected by the desires associated with a Sequence after moving beyond it. However, there might still be a more pronounced influence compared to ordinary individuals.

As time passed, the orchestra played three symphonies, culminating in the conductor turning, bowing, and addressing the audience.

"The final movement is titled 'The Girl Under the Moon.' I'd like to invite the most beautiful lady here onto the stage, so that our entire orchestra can have the honor of taking a photograph with her as a beautiful memento."

Franca quickly lowered her head.

She had no desire to be chosen and become the center of attention.

This would embarrass her a little.

Nonetheless, she wasn't overly concerned. Having altered her appearance and height with Lie, she could only be considered ordinary and mildly charming. After all, the greatest challenge for a Demoness of Pleasure when tailing a target lay in their inherent beauty, charisma, and attention-grabbing aura. If she didn't become invisible or remain concealed in the shadows, she ran the risk of being discovered.

Such requests were not uncommon in Trier, and several women in the audience were eager to step forward.

To them, being chosen would symbolize a significant acknowledgment of their appearance and demeanor.

Lumian's gaze swept over the attendees, eventually settling on Aldina and the imposter Theresa.

The former seemed visibly excited, her anticipation clear in her

demeanor. On the other hand, the latter's body exhibited an abnormal tension, and she trembled slightly, a mix of excitement and nervousness evident in her demeanor.

Upon witnessing these reactions, Lumian couldn't help but smirk slightly, gaining a rough understanding of the fake Theresa's situation.

The desire for recognition was one of the fundamental desires of a Sequence 6 Recipient of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway!

The invitation to bring the most beautiful lady onto the stage for a photograph wasn't a mere coincidence—Lumian had sponsored it himself.

Ultimately, he had succeeded in convincing the conductor, not just because he had used Franca's 1,000 verl d'or, but also because Lumian had provided a compelling reason.

It was a romantic gesture intended for a certain lady, a gesture driven solely by affection, without any expectation of reciprocation or leaving a name.

Romantic gestures had a special place in the hearts of these Trier artists.

Through this event, Lumian sought to "detect" whether the fake Theresa harbored any exceptional desires.

A skilled Hunter couldn't simply wait for opportunities to arise; they had to know how to create them!

Of course, the precondition was having sufficient intel. Otherwise, planning with precision or avoiding easy detection would be impossible.

The conductor scanned the room and singled out the woman whom he believed to be the most beautiful.

He also assumed that she was the object of the young man's affection from earlier in the day.

Such extraordinary beauty was a rarity!

The woman, with her bright gray eyes and neatly tied black hair, gracefully approached the orchestra, while the fake Theresa slouched in her seat, unable to hide her disappointment, regret, and frustration.

“How should I address you?” the conductor inquired of the lady in the elegant black court dress beside him.

With a gentle and melodious voice, she replied, “Clarice.”

Franca gazed at Clarice with admiration, finding her exceptionally captivating, although she couldn’t quite pinpoint the reason why.

After the concert concluded, Lumian and Franca decided not to tail Adaina and the impostor Theresa. Instead, they headed straight to Room 502 in Apartment 25 on Rue Ménier in the square district.

This was a rented apartment that they had temporarily cleared out by paying. Across the way, in Room 401 of Building 23, was Adaina’s chosen rendezvous point for clandestine meetings.

Tonight, she would return to that very room with the fake Theresa.

With Lumian and Franca’s enhanced Beyonder vision, the distance between them and the target room wasn’t enough to obscure their view of the situation inside. Their primary objective now was to remain hidden and avoid detection by the fake Theresa while observing.

Before long, the window of Room 401 in Apartment 23 across the street illuminated. Several gas wall lamps cast a bright glow throughout the living room.

Immediately after, Lumian witnessed the passionate embrace between the fake Theresa and Adaina as they approached the glass window.

Their longing was palpable, but they also wanted to shield their intimate moment from prying eyes.

“Quite focused,” Lumian teased with a smile.

Franca didn’t reply, her breathing growing heavier.

“Be prepared,” Lumian whispered to Franca, making sure the fake Theresa’s attention was on her companion.

Her primary mission was to watch for any unexpected developments.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

A faint light shimmered beneath his clothing, and he vanished from the shadows of Building 25.

Across the street in the apartment, Adaina and the impostor Theresa wrestled with the curtains while they were stuck to one another, attempting to shield the glass window.

Lumian’s form materialized suddenly, two meters behind the fake Theresa, facing Adaina, whose eyes were clouded with desire and cheeks flushed.

Adaina’s eyes narrowed, and her pupils dilated. She couldn’t fathom how a tall, slender man with blond hair and blue eyes had appeared in her room out of nowhere.

For a moment, it felt like she was trapped in a surreal dream. The disjunction between her physical senses and her bewildered mind was stark.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian let out a heavy harrumph.

Two beams of white light shot from his nose, targeting the fake Theresa and affecting Adaina.

In unison, the two women closed their eyes and slumped into unconsciousness. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Lumian acted swiftly, catching the fake Theresa before she could fall to the ground. He then raised his right palm and delivered a firm strike behind her ear.

A mystical coma combined with a physical one!

With the fake Theresa safely incapacitated, Lumian gently placed her on the carpet, keeping a cautious distance from the unconscious Adaina.

He squatted beside the woman he suspected to be a Recipient and began searching her dress and handbag for canisters.

Having familiarized himself with the mystical drugs commonly used by the Bliss Society, Lumian located a canister of sedatives, unscrewed the cap, and brought it to the fake Theresa's nose, allowing her to inhale its contents for more than ten seconds.

Only then did Lumian exhale a sigh of relief. He stowed away the sedative, no longer concerned about the imposter Theresa waking up suddenly.

He stood up and made his way to the glass window, where the curtain was only partially closed. Lumian signaled to the fifth floor of the opposite building with his thumb and index finger forming a circle, while his other three fingers remained extended.

He was informing Franca that the operation had been successful. The target was under control, and she could join him now. Lumian might need to employ Magic Mirror Divination later.

After drawing the curtains shut, Lumian turned his attention to the unconscious fake Theresa and sighed inwardly.

Intel is crucial…

The same principle applied to the synergy of abilities.

Without a rough understanding of the names and characteristics of Sequence 9 to Sequence 5 within the Actor pathway, along with knowledge of their corresponding desires and states, Lumian wouldn't have taken such a calculated risk. He wouldn't have been able to resolve the situation in just a few seconds.

As for the Contractee's three abilities, if they weren't carefully chosen and harmonized, they could easily be defeated by a Sequence 9

Hunter, much like the mouth-orifice monster in Cordu's ruins. Even with Spirit World Traversal and the Spell of Harrumph, Lumian might stand a chance against some Sequence 5s, but it would be a formidable challenge to sustain such efforts.

…

As Lumian waited for Franca to join him in the adjacent apartment to Adaina's,

Browns Sauron remained hidden in the shadows, her keen senses tuned to the situation behind the wall as she gazed at the building opposite.

She could already discern the sounds of Adaina and the fake Theresa returning to the apartment, along with the rustle of curtains being drawn. These scenes seemed to play out vividly in her mind.

The situation tormented her. She felt a deep sense of injustice and pain, as though she had willingly sent her lover into the arms of her romantic rival.

Despite her understanding that this was a carefully planned trap and that her lover and her rival had been intimate on multiple occasions, she still felt an overwhelming sense of worry and anxiety. The sporadic noises only fueled her imagination with various scenarios.

Standing there made her uncomfortable, and leaning against the wall didn't alleviate her unease.

Observing Franca and her young lover's concealed apartment across the way, Browns Sauron couldn't help but mutter with frustration, "Why haven't they launched their attack yet?"

Chapter 418 - 418 Beatrice

418 Beatrice

Franca ended her concealment and quietly opened the door to Adaina's apartment. The first thing she saw was Lumian, a tall, slender man with blond hair and blue eyes. He was crouched beside the unconscious Adaina, vigorously wiping her face with a wet towel.

Franca lowered her voice and asked in confusion, "W-what are you doing?"

Shouldn't the target be the Bliss Society member posing as Theresa, the art dealer?

Lumian smirked and responded, "I've had a sudden thought.

"Actors can impersonate anyone. Once the imposter Theresa establishes an intimate relationship with Aldina, she can easily control this female companion and impersonate her to infiltrate the Red House Café's female orgies."

"Allowing Adaina, who everyone is familiar with, to convey the Bliss Society's philosophy and hidden evil god faith will definitely be more persuasive and trustworthy than a new member."

At this point, Lumian gazed toward the bedroom in a chilling tone and said, "Perhaps, the real Adaina is hidden in a corner here, in the form of a corpse."

Franca couldn't help but imagine such a grim scenario and took a deep breath.

She straightened her back and muttered to herself, "Not a bad story. I'll share it with Jenna later."

After her muttering, she silently closed the door and approached Lumian, refuting his suspicion.

“Browns Sauron is likely a Demoness of Pleasure. Surely, she can recognize the authenticity of her female companion? Furthermore, she interrogated Adaina and knows the approximate abilities of an Actor.”

Lumian, who had been “assisting” Adaina in removing her makeup, confirmed that despite her altered appearance, she was still the same person.

He chuckled and said, “Based on your description, I don’t fully trust Browns Sauron’s judgment. She clearly has less experience in the Beyonder domain than you. However, since she has the Demoness Sect backing her and confirmation has been made, the interrogation results are still credible.”

Lumian didn’t spare Adaina another glance. He gestured towards the fake Theresa, who had been hit with a triple dose of unconsciousness—the Harrumph Spell, a physical knockout, and a sedative from the Bliss Society. He turned to Franca and said, “Use Magic Mirror Divination to confirm if she’s a core member of the Bliss Society.”

While Lumian had already suspected the fake Theresa was a core member based on her performance at the concert, they hadn’t followed her closely the entire way. They had instead been waiting at their destination. What if she had sensed something amiss and had switched to a decoy during the journey?

Considering the fake Theresa possessed a unique concoction like the Bliss Society’s truth serum, she was undoubtedly connected to the Bliss Society. However, it remained uncertain if she was a core member.

This answer would guide Lumian’s subsequent actions.

…

Next door to Adaina’s apartment, Browns Sauron continued to monitor the commotion. She could hear faint and indistinct

conversations but couldn't detect much else.

Adaina and the fake Theresa plan to chat for a while and have some red wine? Though it isn't overly passionate, it holds a romantic ambiance… Browns Sauron glanced at the building opposite, mentally urging Franca and her lover to begin, hoping they wouldn't wait until the fake Theresa was completely engrossed in desire before launching a surprise attack.

…

In the living room of Adaina's apartment, Franca raised her right palm and rapidly created a crystalline icicle. With precision, she pierced the fake Theresa's hand, drawing a small amount of blood.

The fake Theresa instinctively pulled back her arm but hadn't broken through the three-layered coma.

Franca then smeared the blood on a mirror, intending to use it as a medium and sacrifice to ask an entity from the Underworld, hoping to obtain a unique identification of spirits.

Once all preparations were complete, Franca picked up the mirror and recited in Hermes,

"The shadow that lingers in the Underworld, the friendly creature that can be communicated with, the unique eye that never dies…"

The surface of the blood-stained mirror suddenly emitted a dark green hue, and a pale-white aqueous light rippled.

After reciting the incantation, Franca asked respectfully, "Is the owner of the blood Theresa, the art dealer?"

"No," came an indifferent voice from the mirror, as if enduring the corrosion of endless time.

Franca posed her second question.

"Is the owner of the blood a core member of Trier's Bliss Society?"

The indifferent voice gradually faded.

“Yes.”

Franca refrained from asking further questions, as the entity only answered two at a time.

She watched as the pale-white aqueous light rapidly receded, and the blood on the mirror’s surface strangely seeped in and disappeared.

Turning to Lumian, Franca reported, “She’s a core member of the Bliss Society.”

Lumian let out a soft sigh and said, “Unfortunately, I don’t know how to perform a lobotomy. Anthony Reid isn’t a Hypnotist yet, so we can only channel the spirit directly.”

Using the truth serum didn’t guarantee that the fake Theresa wouldn’t resist when she woke up. Given her faith and abilities, a fierce battle was inevitable when the time came, and there was a high chance that she would be killed. In that case, he decided to proceed now.

As Lumian spoke, he crouched down, his right palm ablaze with crimson flames.

The flames intertwined and swiftly converged, turning white.

Gently pressing his right palm against the fake Theresa’s body, the blazing white fireball vanished into thin air.

Rumble!

A muffled explosion erupted from within the fake Theresa’s body. She trembled a few times before life left her completely.

Franca had been busy preparing the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell during this entire process.

While she could forcibly channel the spirit while the fake Theresa was unconscious, it wasn’t a safe option. It could lead to unnecessary trouble for her mind and spirit, and the fact that the target believed in an evil god meant there was a risk of corruption if she wasn’t careful.

…

Next door to Adaina's apartment, hidden in the shadows, Browns Sauron sensed a subtle fluctuation.

Powers have been used. Has it begun? She wondered if the imposter Theresa had initiated the powers of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway to flirt or if Franca Roland and her lover had already infiltrated the target location and were preparing to attack.

Without hesitation, Browns Sauron, dressed in a black hunting suit, silently pushed open the window and crawled out through the shadows. She clung to the outer wall and slowly approached Adaina's apartment.

…

Franca completed the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell, and the dark and deep mirror aqueous light flickered, "reflecting" a beautiful yet pale-white face.

"What's your name?" Franca asked directly, using the simplest question to test the effect of the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell.

The fake Theresa's illusory voice replied, "I'm Beatrice Incourt."

"What's your true identity?" Franca continued to ask.

Beatrice Incourt's expression remained stoic as she replied, "I run a winery. It's from my deceased husband."

Franca then directed the question to the crucial point.

"Are you a core member of the Bliss Society?"

"Yes." Beatrice Incourt's nod was subtle.

Franca didn't delve into the Bliss Society's faith or any recent revelations. Although she wasn't as fearful of the evil god, the Mother Tree of Desire, as she was of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, to the point of not daring to channel spirits, she was aware of the risks involved. She knew what to ask and what not

to ask, what was safe, and what could lead to corruption.

After a brief pause, she inquired, “Do you know Lumian Lee or Ciel Dubois?”

Beatrice replied in a daze, “I don’t know.”

I don’t know… Lumian, who was listening, raised his eyebrows.

None of the core members of the Bliss Society know about Susanna Mattise’s ultimate plan?

Franca was equally surprised. She frowned and asked, “Why did Susanna Mattise go to the market district before her death?”

Beatrice Incourt replied calmly, “She wanted to awaken the great divine tree and allow its roots to enter Fourth Epoch Trier, allowing its crown to reach into the kingdom of the false gods.”

“Did she say what the awakening process was?” Franca pressed.

Beatrice Incourt’s voice grew colder, and her expression became more wooden.

“She didn’t say.”

They really don’t know that Susanna Mattise wanted to capture me and sacrifice me to the Mother Tree of Desire? Lumian’s thoughts raced, and he whispered a name to Franca: “Maipú Meyer.”

Franca understood and asked the spirit in the mirror, “Where is Maipú Meyer?”

Maipú Meyer was the former manager of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Susanna Mattise’s paramour, and her most trusted subordinate.

Beatrice replied in a voice increasingly resembling the dead, “I’m not sure. He’s a man, and we despise and keep a distance from him.”

Upon hearing this, Lumian was enlightened, roughly understanding the reason.

Regarding the Tree of Shadow, Susanna Mattise, who had become an evil spirit, was extremely extreme in her choices and actions. She didn't inform the other core members of the Bliss Society about the detailed situation or progress. Only her direct subordinates, Maipú Meyer and Charlotte Calvino, knew the complete plan.

After Susanna Mattise and Charlotte Calvino's deaths, Maipú Meyer, who had relied on the former to become a core member of the Bliss Society, was ostracized and suppressed. Consequently, he didn't divulge the relevant issues to anyone else.

This made sense. A secret organization centered around "desire" would undoubtedly experience a multitude of desires, both open and covert. Maipú Meyer was a visible anomaly among the core group that advocated women and loved women. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Franca pondered for a few seconds and changed her question, "What are Maipú Meyer's plans for the time being?"

Beatrice's face turned pale-white and green, and even her stiff expression vanished.

"A few weeks ago, Maipú Meyer mentioned that he wanted to sneak back to the market district to do something. I haven't seen him since."

Sneak back to the market district to do something? Lumian and Franca were alarmed by this revelation.

Chapter 419 - 419 New Priestess

419 New Priestess

Why did Maipú Meyer return to the market district?

Could it be that Maipú Meyer genuinely cared for Susanna Mattise and sought retribution?

But even then, exposing the true killer and concealed secrets to the other core members of the Bliss Society seemed like the most fitting way to exact revenge!

Without harnessing the collective might of the entire organization, he would inadvertently aid his adversary, Lumian, by relying solely on his own capabilities!

As Lumian observed Beatrice's pallid countenance and vacant gaze, he tried to think from Maipú Meyer's perspective and find a rationale for his actions.

Maipú Meyer, a Sequence 6 Recipient, harbors an insatiable hunger for recognition and a fervent desire to accomplish something noteworthy…

Despite facing rejection and isolation from the other core members of the Bliss Society, he does have a motive to make a substantial solo contribution and earn genuine recognition…

While revealing the existence of the Tree of Shadow to Beatrice and the others could be seen as a contribution, it doesn't measure up to rectifying his past mistakes independently to appease the Mother Tree of Desire to the fullest extent. The latter would truly earn him recognition…

This peculiar competition might be perplexing to ordinary folks, but

it isn't unusual for a Recipient to engage in it…

The question now is: What does Maipú Meyer hope to achieve in his quest for recognition?

Is it revenge against me? Although a direct confrontation holds little hope for him, he could pose a significant threat if he conceals himself in the shadows and suddenly influences me at a critical moment. After all, I lack a substitute ability, and my physical strength hasn't undergone a qualitative change compared to ordinary people. He could eliminate me with a revolver.

However, Maipú Meyer must have heard plenty about me from Susanna Mattise. There is a good chance he knows about the angel sealed within my body. Isn't he concerned that corruption might erupt after my demise, potentially dragging him down as well?

If he were to perish, how could he satisfy his yearning for recognition?

Or is it the mere notion of taking a formidable foe with him to the grave that would leave the other members of the Bliss Society awestruck and filled with genuine remorse and admiration? Is his ultimate aim to climax in tears and be propelled towards his demise by desire?

Otherwise, does he aspire to make a sacrifice akin to Susanna Mattise's? Yes, securing recognition from the Mother Tree of Desire is a higher-level and noble pursuit.

But the Tree of Shadow is severely damaged and won't recover for a long time. How can he even make such a sacrifice

Lumian struggled to decipher Maipú Meyer's plan or intentions, vaguely grasping his motives.

Nonetheless, Lumian couldn't suppress a surge of frustration and violence at the mere thought of a pair of icy eyes lurking among the pedestrians, nearby tenants, dance hall customers, and peddlers. It was as though someone close to him had been replaced by Maipú Meyer without anyone's awareness. He burned with anticipation to

unmask the Actor.

The detrimental effects of the contracts, items, and brands on him continued to destabilize his emotions.

Franca, on the other hand, didn't dwell on this. Although the Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell endured much longer than standard spirit channeling spells, it was not entirely boundless. There was still a time limit, one measured in minutes. She was unwilling to squander this precious time on analysis that could be postponed.

"Of all the members of the Bliss Society, who does Maipú Meyer have the closest relationship with?"

"He had the strongest bonds with the members in the market district, but they're either deceased or captured."

Genuinely ostracized… Franca's hopes dimmed, and she inquired further,

"Who in the Bliss Society is most likely to be privy to Maipú Meyer's whereabouts and plans?"

Beatrice responded lifelessly, "No one, not even the new high priestess."

Franca found herself at a dead end and changed her line of questioning.

"Who is this new high priestess?"

Beatrice's eyes were piercingly vacant as she replied, "It's Siber."

"What's her true identity?" Franca pressed.

Beatrice's eyes on the mirror's surface seemed far more translucent than before.

"I don't know. She joined us later. At that point, we had evolved beyond a simple lesbian organization. We started concealing our true identities.

“Siber might still be a theater actress.”

… This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

On the outer wall of Adaina’s apartment, Browns Sauron clung there in silence, resembling a colossal black spider.

Through the curtains, she could only discern two shadows not far away. The voices were even fainter and more distant than before, but she could vaguely identify them as female.

Adaina and the imposter Theresa are still conversing? That doesn’t add up. At this proximity, with an Assassin’s acute hearing, I should be able to clearly hear them even through the sealed glass window and thick drapes… What’s happening inside? Browns Sauron’s anxiety and curiosity swelled as she attempted to extend invisible spider silk through the gap in the window.

…

Franca’s Magic Mirror Spirit Channeling Spell had reached its limit, and she concluded it rationally. She watched as Beatrice Incourt’s image faded from the mirror’s surface.

She wasn’t overly disheartened because she already knew the crucial details about several core members of the Bliss Society and their weekly gatherings’ time, venue, and method.

But there is no need to personally track them. They are unaware of Ciel. Even if the Rose School of Thought locates them, they wouldn’t extract any valuable information… Franca cast a glance at Lumian, stowed away the mirror, and dispelled the wall of spirituality.

Amidst the howling wind, the two of them sensed a disturbance at the window and the presence of a figure that seemed human.

The wall of spirituality had isolated their movements, reducing interference but also affecting their perception and surveillance of the surroundings.

Franca’s form abruptly vanished, and Lumian sidestepped, evading the window’s direct line of sight.

They didn't rush to attack because they had a vague notion of who was outside.

Just as she was about to react, she spotted Franca Roland's current disguised countenance.

Their gazes locked, and silence hung in the air for over ten seconds.

Finally, Browns snapped out of her trance and inquired with concern, "Where's Adaina?"

"She's unconscious." Franca gestured towards the carpet near the window.

Browns scrutinized her female partner, then glanced at the motionless impostor Theresa, and queried once more, "Has it been dealt with?"

"It's resolved," Franca replied calmly.

The spirit channeling had already come to an end!

Browns's gaze darted between Franca and Lumian, her expression a mix of surprise and confusion. She inquired,

"When did you launch the attack?"

Before the curtains were fully drawn… Franca was about to respond, but she hesitated, realizing that revealing the timing of the attack might expose Ciel and her combat abilities. Instead, she quickly changed her response and smiled.

"Why don't you take a guess?"

Browns Sauron recollected the faint movements she had sensed but found no overt signs of a battle.

This left her even more astonished.

Could this wild Demoness and her young partner be truly that formidable?

Are their richer experiences and varied gains truly that advantageous?

Consumed by jealousy, Browns leaped into the room and shut the window.

She doesn't seem concerned about being attacked by us at all… Is she inexperienced, or does she have great confidence in the Demoness's various substitutes? Or is there something she's relying on? Lumian observed with indifference, making no move.

Franca maintained her smile and said, "We've gathered some intel, including information on the current high priestess of the Bliss Society and a few core members."

She began recounting the information she had acquired from Beatrice.

The more Browns listened, the more astonished she became.

They managed to gather so much intel?

This should have taken a significant amount of time!

When did they attack and how long did they take to finish the battle?

It couldn't be that the imposter Theresa was ambushed the moment she entered the room and approached the window, could they?

Based on her observations, this member of the Bliss Society appeared to be a Sequence 6 Recipient, on par with her and Franca Roland, even surpassing the suspected Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, Ciel Dubois!

Franca paid no heed to Browns's reaction and continued, "I'm pleased to inform you that our problem is simpler than we thought, and it's been resolved. Now, it's your problem. Heh heh, Beatrice isn't the only core member of the Bliss Society with an interest in the Red House Café."

She was subtly suggesting that the Demoness Sect should "take over" in eliminating the remaining members of the Bliss Society.

“Are you instigating me?” Browns asked sharply.

Franca replied with a smile, “No, just a reminder.”

While they continued their conversation, Lumian returned to Beatrice’s lifeless form, crouched down, and conducted a more thorough search.

This time, he discovered banknotes and gold coins amounting to 1,500 verl d’or, along with a neatly folded note.

Lumian unfolded the note and read the Intisian written on it: “Go to the hostel and retrieve the painting within three days.”

Hostel… What hostel? What painting is this referring to? This seems like a deal made by the authentic art dealer, Theresa, but somehow, the receipt ended up in the hands of the impostor? Where is the real Theresa now… We forgot to inquire about this… Lumian pondered the implications as he held the note.

He stood up, prepared to question Browns Sauron about the real Theresa’s situation. Although Browns recognized that Franca was trying to instigate her, she couldn’t deny that Franca had a point.

Browns looked down at Adaina, attempting to rouse her.

At that moment, all three of them halted simultaneously and directed their attention toward Beatrice Incourt’s lifeless body.

The light over there seemed to dim slightly, and the corpse underwent a subtle transformation.

Chapter 420 - 420 Beyonder Item

420 Beyonder Item

Beatrice Incourt may have already been lifeless, but something within her appeared to stir. Slowly, it seeped out, rising like invisible steam, as if it sought an escape into some distant darkness.

This caused the ambient light to dim, making the apartment's ceiling appear strangely ethereal. Lumian, Franca, and Browns all felt an uncanny sensation, as if they were under scrutiny.

It wasn't as if an actual gaze was directed at them; rather, it was as if they were the sole occupants of the entire building, with no obstructions to the crimson moonlight in the sky, which inevitably cast an eerie glow upon them.

Thump, thump. Lumian's heart raced.

The two Demonesses, skilled in divination, experienced an overwhelming sense of imminent danger.

With a sudden snap, a translucent boil of blood materialized on Beatrice Incourt's lifeless face, followed by a strange, tree-like wart with a brownish hue.

The wart burst open, oozing blood-colored pus, wet and sticky.

Wh— Lumian's pupils dilated, caught off guard by this turn of events.

Although he had taken the lives of more than a few members of the Bliss Society and had spent some time beside their corpses, he had never encountered anything like this. Death ended everything. How could a corpse cause an unsettling undercurrent to surge around it?

Even though Lumian didn't fully grasp the situation, he swiftly formulated a plan.

He glanced at the hazy, illusory ceiling and the faint movements within the walls. His intention was to step forward, seize Beatrice's lifeless body, and "teleport" to the Albert Mines, a place he had visited previously.

The deeper they ventured into the Fourth Epoch Trier's underground, the greater the peril. Various corruptive elements that led to a loss of control lurked there. Even with a corpse on the verge of mutation, it shouldn't pose a significant issue.

That place was inherently an amalgamation of problems!

Lumian planned to utilize Spirit World Traversal for a third time, returning to the surface and avoiding any danger by abandoning Beatrice's body.

While Lumian made his decision, Franca instinctively moved toward Beatrice's lifeless form, which now had a second tree-like wart.

Her right hand reached into the concealed pocket of her dress, aiming to retrieve the ancient mirror she had discovered underground.

This ancient mirror was connected to a strange and perilous mirror world. She could attempt to encase Beatrice's body within it, allowing one form of danger to counteract another!

This would buy them precious time for further deliberation. Ultimately, whether the departed believer of the Mother Tree of Desire triumphed or the enigmatic mirror world absorbed the corruption and "stilled" the mutation, it wouldn't directly impact Franca, the humans present, or the surrounding residents.

Compared to them, the inexperienced Browns Sauron's initial reaction was to incinerate the remnants of spirituality in the corpse with her black flames, freezing the emerging mutation. This was the most Demoness-like approach to disrupting the deteriorating situation.

At that very moment, Lumian and the others sensed a significant

dimming of the light around them, as if the crimson moon had vanished, leaving only a few dim wall lamps.

Instinctively, Lumian turned his gaze to the window and discovered that the glass had turned pitch-black, no longer offering a view outside. It had transformed from a “window” into a sealed barrier.

Simultaneously, the formless entity that had been slowly emanating from Beatrice’s body appeared lost, unable to find its path to the infinite darkness. It seemed to meander aimlessly, gradually receding.

Their mystical connection to an unknown entity dissipated. Lumian, Franca, and Browns suddenly lost the sense of being “watched” from afar and “illuminated” by unseen eyes.

Thud! Thud! Their heartbeats slowly returned to normal as they witnessed the tree-like wart on Beatrice’s body wither rapidly, and no more blood boils emerged.

The darkness surrounding the corpse gradually receded, and an imperceptible object began attaching itself to the diamond necklace adorning Beatrice’s corpse.

…

Beneath the crimson moonlight, the building at 23 Rue Ménier lay concealed in darkness. Every window remained void of light, with no signs of life to be found. It exuded an eerie stillness and a sense of foreboding, reminiscent of a haunted house.

Across the street, within an apartment room, an unusual and ornate mirror rested in a spotless hand.

The mirror was adorned with intricately designed black serpents that intertwined. Each “snake” featured a large crimson eye on its head, devoid of a mouth or fangs.

In that precise moment, the mirror’s surface remained crystal clear, revealing a well-lit scene.

Gas wall lamps emitted a warm, yellowish radiance from the windows on every floor of the building, where various domestic

scenes played out.

The elderly guard on the first floor smoked a cigarette butt he had collected and leaned against the lobby wall, savoring the tranquility of the night. On the second floor, a couple occupied the living room, one engrossed in a novel, the other unfolding a newspaper in front of them. Near an ajar window on the third floor, a half-naked man kept a cautious eye on the door, ready to make a hasty escape to the street at any moment…

Meanwhile, on the fourth floor, Lumian, Franca, and Browns found themselves perplexed. One contemplated using his abilities to discern an escape route from the "crime scene," while another delved into a concealed pocket with her right hand, seemingly searching for something. The third member appeared to have a premonition and distanced themselves from the other two.

Another spotless hand extended and lightly grazed the peculiar mirror, encircled by the one-eyed "snakes."

In an instant, the well-lit building disappeared from the mirror's surface, and the silent, gloomy apartment at 23 Rue Ménier began to illuminate one by one. Figures were reflected one after another, and distant sounds could be heard.

…

Lumian surveyed the room and realized that Adaina's apartment had returned to its usual state. The unsettling anomalies, like the impenetrable darkness and the strange glass windows, had all dissipated.

Beatrice Incourt's corpse had reverted to its original form, and the horrific transformation now felt like a mere nightmare.

Lumian, who had been ready to whisk Franca away at a moment's notice, relaxed somewhat and exchanged a look with Browns Sauron.

The Demoness Sect won't just send such an inexperienced member to investigate Franca…

Had one of the powerful Demonesses, who had been covertly

observing the situation, intervened to help resolve any potential anomalies?

This behavior doesn't seem characteristic of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder. A high-level Demoness, or a Sequence 5 Demoness of Affliction wielding a godhood item?

No wonder Browns had entered so openly, seemingly unconcerned about potential attacks from me and Franca.

I wonder if the hidden Demoness had seen my Spell of Harrumph…

Franca shared a similar thought. She diverted her attention from the window and regarded Browns Sauron.

She expressed her guess calmly but didn't inquire further. She looked down at Beatrice's corpse and asked with curiosity and confusion, "The necklace appears to have changed."

Lumian also noticed this transformation. The transparent diamond on the necklace seemed to reflect the light from the gas wall lamp in a captivating manner, causing his heart to race and his mouth to go dry.

Could it have become a Beyonder weapon similar to Fallen Mercury? Had the previous boons returned to their source because there were no abnormalities? Lumian formed a rough conjecture. He approached the corpse and knelt down cautiously.

As he reached out to touch the necklace, a multitude of desires surged uncontrollably, making him quickly retract his hand, shivering from the bloodlust.

With items like Flog and a host of contractual negative effects, he was no longer suitable for contact with the necklace, which had the power to awaken the deepest desires.

"You handle it," Lumian said, standing up and gesturing for Franca to take care of the necklace.

Franca accepted the task without hesitation and carefully removed the diamond necklace with anticipation.

Without further delay, the two of them bid farewell to Browns and made their way back to the market district.

…

Avenue du Marché. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Franca had successfully dealt with Beatrice and stood a chance of passing the Demonesses' audit. She had also acquired a Beyonder item that complemented the abilities of the Demoness of Pleasure. Her good mood was evident, and she almost hummed a tune to express her positive feelings.

She glanced at Lumian, who walked beside her in silence.

"What's on your mind?"

"I'm wondering where Maipú Meyer might be hiding…" Lumian replied, his tone serious. "Let's go underground now."

Franca was taken aback for a moment but quickly understood Lumian's thoughts.

"Do you think Maipú Meyer might return to the place where Susanna Mattise once conducted the sacrifice to the Tree of Shadow?"

"Perhaps." Lumian wasn't entirely certain, but he felt there might be some clues or traces left behind.

Franca, feeling confident in her gains from the spoils of war, didn't attempt to dissuade him. Together with Lumian, they entered Underground Trier from the Avenue du Marché entrance.

Using a fireball for illumination, they navigated a relatively familiar path, passing by the collapsed mine where Rentas, a member of the Bliss Society, had been buried and the location where Jenna had been drugged. They ventured deeper into the altar area, a place they had previously avoided.

The area was marked with scorching signs, devoid of any living creatures or the malevolent aura that once lingered. It was as if it had been exposed to intense sunlight for days, leaving behind only piles

of withered bones from various creatures.

The cave's collapses and crevices had been filled with soil and rocks. Lumian examined the area carefully and noticed fresh marks around the original altar.

These marks clearly didn't belong to the same person and came from different "visitors."

As Lumian examined the marks and the deep-rooted cave-ins, memories of the Tree of Shadow, the Samaritan Women's Spring, and the Iron and Blood Cross Order's conspiracy flooded his mind.

These seemingly disparate elements all pointed to one thing: They, directly or indirectly, pointed to the underground, to the hidden histories and perils lurking beneath Trier.

Chapter 421 - 421 Abnormal Silence

421 Abnormal Silence

Franca also noticed the footprints and traces. After carefully observing them for a while, she remarked, “At least four people have come together in the past two weeks…”

“Maipú Meyer has accomplices?”

Lumian gazed at the collapse that had been filled in and pondered for a moment before saying, “What’s more important isn’t whether they have accomplices, but what they’re doing here.

“If it’s truly Maipú Meyer and not a random team of cave explorers, he long knew that this place had been destroyed by the official Beyonders. There wouldn’t be anything valuable left behind. Why did he bring people here recently? To pay homage?” Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

“It’s not impossible,” Franca muttered. “What if he achieved something and received a new boon from the Mother Tree of Desire, becoming a Fallen Tree Spirit?

“It’s also known as Baby Cupid. There must be a distorted desire in affairs of the heart, just like Susanna Mattise did with Charlie. Therefore, Maipú Meyer coming specially to pay homage to his deceased love fits the characteristics of the pathway.”

“But there’s no need to bring three or four people to watch him perform, right?” Lumian surveyed his surroundings. “Perhaps he didn’t do it on purpose but just happened to pass by?”

Franca quickly caught Lumian’s drift.

“Are you suggesting that Maipú Meyer and his accomplices frequent the underground of the market district?”

Lumian offered a curt acknowledgment.

“I now believe that Maipú Meyer didn’t return to the market district to deal with me. He might eventually seek revenge, but that’s the outcome, not the process.”

“Is their target something underground in the market district?” Franca frowned. “But the Tree of Shadow is severely damaged. What’s so special about this place? It can’t be that the entrance to the Fourth Epoch Trier is beneath the market district…”

Franca stopped abruptly.

That wasn’t impossible!

Lumian quickly recalled the situation in the market district and various rumors he knew. Suddenly, he recalled something.

Madam Magician’s “doll” messenger had a strong aversion to Salle de Bal Brise, claiming that old bones were buried beneath the area.

This had to refer to a unique situation beneath the market district. Moreover, the building facing Salle de Bal Brise was suspected to be related to église Saint-Robert’s old cemetery.

Lumian promptly shared this insight with Franca before they continued following the traces out of the destroyed sacrificial mine.

“There’s really a problem… It’s not hard to figure out. Summon that messenger later and ask,” Franca remarked, bemoaning the poor fengshui in the market district. She followed Lumian, providing mysticism support for his pursuit.

The two of them journeyed deeper underground, but they eventually lost the trail of their target. The suspected members of Maipú Meyer’s group had traversed several well-known and long-used tunnels frequented by cave explorers, smuggling caravans, and mushroom-growing citizens. Their tracks had been effectively concealed by those who came later after more than ten days.

Lumian, with a crimson fireball above him, came to a halt and stared into the pitch-black mine ahead. He remained silent for an extended moment, his thoughts shrouded in mystery.

Franca was about to suggest leaving when Lumian suddenly spoke.

“Don’t you think the market district has been unusually quiet for the past month or so?”

“How do you mean quiet?” Franca retorted involuntarily.

007 certainly didn’t think so!

Lumian pondered his words and continued, “Let me put it another way. Apart from the Beyonder problem we caused, isn’t the market district oddly quiet regarding mysticism incidents?

“No, to be more precise, after the Tree of Shadow was severely damaged, the heretics have become extremely inactive!

“Right, no new factions have emerged to devour the remaining smaller mobs, or to engage in conflicts with the Savoie Mob. There have been no suspected sacrificial cases. Even among those that preach secretly, I only encountered a swindler from the Sick Church, and he was just an ordinary person…”

Since the Tree of Shadow incident, the only true heretics Lumian and Franca had encountered were Guillaume Bénet from the Sinners organization and Beatrice Incourt of the Bliss Society. However, they had followed a trail based on former clues which weren’t within the market district.

The Rose School of Thought’s Werewolf could barely be considered one, but that was an aftermath of the Tree of Shadow incident.

Browns Sauron of the Demoness Sect could only be considered half an element. This organization had a solid history and believed in the evil entity of this world, not alien evil gods.”

Franca was taken aback.

“Isn’t that normal? Secret organizations that believe in evil gods must

operate in secret. If they were encountered by someone like you every day, they would have been wiped out long ago!

“Look, we didn’t notice Maipú Meyer returning to the market district before.”

If it were anyone else, your explanation wouldn’t be a problem, but I have an alien evil god’s angel sealed within me. According to Madam Magician’s rubbish repulsion convergence theory, there must be an abnormal reason why I haven’t encountered a heretic causing trouble for so long… Termiboros has been excessively quiet recently… Lumian’s thoughts raced as he said to Franca, “Can you use dream divination on me to help me remember something?”

“No. Perhaps a powerful Seer can, but not me.” Franca shook her head. “What do you want to recall? You can seek Madame Hela’s help. She can definitely create a real dreamscape now.”

Lumian nodded slowly and responded, “I’d like to recall an address where suspected heretics reside. I plan to check it out and see if they’ve vanished, gone into hiding, or fallen silent. Yes, there’s no need to trouble Madame Hela for the time being. I know who to ask.”

This was him carefully making confirmation built upon bold assumptions.

Seeing Lumian return to the surface as he spoke, Franca hurriedly asked, “What address? Who are you asking?”

“We’ll talk later. Let’s head to Rue de Scotch Broom in Quartier de Noel first,” Lumian said without turning around.

Why does this address sound so familiar… Franca mused for a moment as she followed closely behind.

As she neared the surface, she finally remembered.

Madame Pualis’s address!

Madame Night from Cordu!

…

Quartier de No?l, Rue de Scotch Broom.

This suburban area was filled with villa-like buildings, each with a lawn facing the street and a garden at the back.

Lumian walked in the shadows where the street lamps couldn't reach, carefully inspecting the lawns and gardens of each building.

Franca did the same. Without knowing Madame Pualis's house number, they had to rely on the unusually vigorous and lively plants to make a judgment.

As they approached the end of the street, Lumian and Franca simultaneously noticed a garden filled with blooming flowers, resembling a lush forest of plants.

The grayish-white building housing the garden appeared unlit, slumbering in the darkness, in stark contrast to the surrounding residences filled with family life.

"It feels like no one has lived here for a long time…" Franca began to understand Lumian's concerns. "Has Madame Pualis, a member of the Nightstalkers, also moved out and hidden herself quietly?"

Lumian observed and listened for a while to confirm that the building was empty. He then took out a piece of wire, opened the door, and entered.

During this process, Franca used Magic Mirror Divination to confirm via mysticism means.

The living room was devoid of furnishings, the linen long gone. Dust had gathered on the table, indicating that no one had lived there in some time.

Lumian proceeded further into the house, and Franca followed him cautiously, not daring to near or touch anything.

Upon reaching the coffee table, Lumian bent down and picked up an abandoned newspaper. Although it was tattered from rat bites, there were still some remnants left.

Lumian examined the newspaper under the moonlight and whispered, “Early July… This means that Madame Pualis didn’t leave immediately after I got the address out from Louis Lund, nor did she depart immediately after the Tree of Shadow incident. She resided on Rue de Scotch Broom for a while and chose to abandon this place for unknown reasons.”

“Something is indeed amiss,” Franca noted with a grave expression.

They quickly searched the building and then boarded a rental carriage to their next destination.

Upon receiving an old newspaper advertising the Interstellar Bridge from Laurent, the former tenant of Auberge du Coq Doré and now deputy editor of Le Petit Trierien, Lumian and Franca arrived at 9 Rue Saint-Martin in Quartier 2.

The fifth floor was an office rented by a group of swindlers and suspected heretics. They aimed to raise funds for constructing an interstellar bridge to the crimson moon.

Under the dim starlight, the entire fifth floor lay shrouded in darkness.

Lumian cautiously reached out and pushed open the door to the apartment-like office.

Crimson moonlight filtered through the window, revealing scattered papers on the ground. Complex mechanical symbols and intricate bridge diagrams displayed concepts that appeared both imaginative and plausible.

Many of the drawers were open, devoid of any belongings, as if the swindlers had hastily retreated upon realizing the arrival of the police.

Based on the written information and various traces at the scene, Lumian and Franca concluded that this floor had been vacant for nearly two weeks.

“There’s definitely something unusual,” Franca remarked. “Why have the heretics from various organizations suddenly reduced their

activities, hidden themselves, and gone quiet?"

Lumian's expression grew solemn as he said in a deep voice, "This abnormality suggests that something significant might be in the works."

Without waiting for Franca's response, he instructed her, "Contact 007 and inquire about any information regarding the Sick Church. Also, find out what problems might be lurking in église Saint-Robert's old cemetery.

"I'll write a letter to Madam Magician and share our findings and speculations."

He planned to also ask the "doll" messenger about the meaning of the old bones.

"Alright," Franca responded promptly.

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian set up the ritual and summoned the "doll" messenger donning a light-gold dress.

As he handed the folded letter to her, he managed a smile and inquired, "What did you mean by the old bones underground?"

The "doll" messenger displayed a disgusted expression.

"Filthy, repulsive old bones from the Fourth Epoch!"

Chapter 422 - 422 Formula

422 Formula

Old bones from the Fourth Epoch… Lumian disregarded the doll messenger's emotional descriptions and focused on extracting the essential information.

But this didn't provide a deeper insight compared to what he already knew. After all, most of Trier's underground issues had their roots in the Fourth Epoch.

Lumian took a moment to ponder and inquired, "Where does it come from? How do the old bones look like?"

The messenger responded angrily, "I've never seen them before! Their aura alone is so repulsive, disgusting, and filthy!"

So, you're not entirely sure of the situation either… Lumian decided not to press the "doll" messenger further and observed as she vanished, carrying the neatly folded letter.

Only then, as Lumian awaited Madam Magician's response, did he have the opportunity to assess his gains from the night.

A vial of truth serum, a vial of Bliss Society sedatives, a vial of Mysticism Smelling Salts, and 1,500 verl d'or.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"So late? I thought you'd resolve it quickly." Jenna, clad in a light cotton dress, stood up and greeted Franca upon her return.

She believed that Franca and Ciel had a high chance of winning, even if they encountered a Fallen Tree Spirit!

Franca muttered, “We ran into an accident. Uh, just a moment.”

Franca looked at Jenna with a serious expression.

“What’s wrong?” Jenna sensed something was amiss.

Franca walked to her side and examined her pupils.

There were no signs of her wearing blue contact lenses!

“Phew…” Franca let out a sigh of relief and said, “In the future, we need to continuously verify if we’re Actors in disguise.”

Actors of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway couldn’t alter their bodies or fundamentally change their appearances like Faceless. They relied more on makeup items and various props.

Among these, the color of the eyes was the most challenging for Actors to mimic. They had to use external objects. They could prevent Actors from infiltrating their ranks by checking if anyone around them was wearing colored contact lenses.

Of course, this wasn’t foolproof. They could always find actors with the same eye color as the target to act.

In the current situation, Maipú Meyer’s eyes were dark brown, Jenna’s were blue, and Lumian’s were the same. Franca’s were a lighter shade, more akin to the blue of a serene lake. For the time being, they had no reason to worry about being impersonated by the former manager of Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. Maipú Meyer had distanced himself from the Bliss Society, and he couldn’t recruit a new Actor anytime soon.

The only person they needed to be concerned about was Anthony Reid, who also had a pair of dark brown eyes.

As an acting apprentice at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, Jenna was particularly attuned to the Bliss Society’s activities. She instantly became alert and scrutinized Franca’s eyes, fear in her voice as she asked, “Are they targeting the market district again?”

“It’s Maipú Meyer. He’s back in the market district. We don’t know

where he's hiding," Franca replied without reservation, recounting the entire incident.

Of the Bliss Society members, the only one Jenna was familiar with was Maipú Meyer. She had a deep-seated fear of him because he had once been her manager and could influence her future.

Unconsciously, she touched the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty concealed in her pocket and nodded solemnly, saying, "I'll be cautious."

Franca didn't offer any additional information. She glanced at the wall clock and retreated to her room. She activated the radio transceiver and prepared to contact 007.

Before long, she used the mechanical typewriter and analyzer to send a telegram.

"007, paging 007!"

Within 20 to 30 seconds, a telegram produced by a machine appeared.

"Hidden Blade, don't do this to me. I'm scared. What's going on now?"

"This could be a significant problem!" Franca honestly warned 007. "Bro, before I disclose the exact situation, help me gather some information. I need to confirm two things: First, if there have been any developments related to the Malady God faith in Quartier du Jardin Botanique, specifically on Rue Pasteur and Rue Evelyn. Second, what lies deep beneath the old cemetery of église Saint-Robert?"

After a brief pause, a new telegram arrived.

"I'm off-duty tonight, seriously! And now I have to go back to work overtime!

"Give me half an hour to an hour."

Franca replied: "No problem." As she conversed with other members of the telegram group, she retrieved the diamond necklace she had

acquired from Beatrice Incourt and used various methods to assess the Beyonder accessory's capabilities and adverse effects.

The diamond corresponds to a total of five desires: lust, appetite, lust, acting, and fulfillment…

It doesn't seem to have many uses. Usage of each desire shouldn't exceed two…

With it on, I seem to be better at acting and makeup…

I'll just keep it in my pocket. Without it coming into direct contact with my skin or flesh, there won't be any negative effects…

After wearing it, I'll become more excited than usual, and my various desires will significantly increase. If I encounter Beyonders with similar abilities, I'll be effectively restrained and even suffer a huge loss…

Among them, the most intense desire is the desire for recognition…

Yes, this thing can't be used against Beyonders of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway. Its weakness lies in their strengths…

What should I call it? The Seven Emotions and Six Desires Pendant? Uh, the style doesn't seem right. Forget it, I'll call it Beatrice's Necklace. It's simple, convenient, and clear!

007's response arrived faster than Franca had anticipated. In less than half an hour, he provided the relevant information.

"According to the heretic database shared by various official factions, the Malady God's envoy hasn't been located. He appears to have sensed danger in advance and hasn't resurfaced.

"The situation at église Saint-Robert's old cemetery is extremely classified. I can't investigate it for the time being."

Extremely classified? Franca inwardly hissed and relayed to 007 the eerie quietness from organizations devoted to evil gods.

…

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

Madam Magician's slow response arrived after an hour of waiting:

"After the death of a bestowed, the return of power to the source is deducible, but typically, you wouldn't be able to sense it.

"This time, it was due to your wearing the Flog boxing gloves. They are made from the Tree of Shadow and are closely related to the one that the Bliss Society believes in, the source of the boon powers. Therefore, when Beatrice's boon power returned and the connection was strengthened, that entity indirectly noticed you and the Two of Cups, which caused the corpse to exhibit an abnormality. This abnormality allowed the flow of the boon power to become visible.

"To retain the boon power and prevent it from returning, you require the corresponding ability or a unique environment. Sometimes, these two elements are one and the same. In simple terms, you need to advance to Sequence 4 and become a demigod or obtain something at this level. Only then can you have a chance of preserving the remaining boon's power and forming a Beyonder item. Of course, in specific underground environments, such as near the Samaritan Women's Spring, you can achieve this without a high Sequence."

Lumian now had a clear understanding of the anomaly of the night.

Unlike his previous killings of members of the Bliss Society, he now possessed the Flog boxing gloves, bringing about a different development.

The use of the Flog boxing gloves attracted the attention of hidden entities to begin with, and its connection to the Mother Tree of Desire through Beatrice's belief had influenced the return of boon power, causing the abnormality.

Understanding the situation and how to prevent it in the future, Lumian continued reading Madam Magician's reply.

"We have already noticed Trier's anomaly and are monitoring one of the leads. However, it is unclear when we will find any answers. What we can say for certain is that changes will occur, with a

timeframe ranging from as short as two months to as long as half a year.

“I cannot provide a definitive answer regarding what lies beneath Salle de Bal Brise as it is challenging for me to approach. All I can tell you is that it is certainly more than just the corruption left behind by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor.

“Don’t dwell too much on this matter. It is beyond your capabilities to handle. Your focus should be on accumulating strength and biding your time.”

Accumulate strength and bide my time… Lumian repeated these words to himself as he absorbed the advice.

The next morning, Lumian had a conversation with Franca and Jenna. Afterward, he gathered all his funds and went directly to 11 Rue des Fontaines in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

“Boss, here are 30,000 gold and 30,000 verl d’or banknotes,” Lumian said with a smile as he placed the heavy leather bag on Gardner Martin’s desk.

He still had 1,000 gold and nominal funds of 1,500 verl d’or.

Gardner Martin glanced at Lumian, unzipped the bag, and began counting the money. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

He didn’t inquire about Lumian’s remaining funds. With a smile, he retrieved a faux goatskin that appeared to have been prepared in advance.

“You need to promise two things. First, memorize this formula before burning the piece of paper. Second, you cannot resell the Conspirer potion formula without my or the Supervisor’s permission,” Gardner Martin stated these terms without requesting a notarized pledge, as if issuing an order.

Lumian agreed to these terms without hesitation, saying, “No problem.”

Gardner Martin nodded in satisfaction and handed over the faux

goatskin to Lumian.

Lumian took it and began reading:

“Conspirer potion formula:

“Main ingredient: Black Hunting Spider’s composite eye, Sphinx’s brain;

“Supplementary ingredients: One Black Hunting Spider’s poison gland, 80 milliliters of Sphinx blood, 10 grams of amber powder, and two white oak fruits.”

After reading and memorizing the formula, Lumian’s right hand trembled, allowing the crimson flames to engulf the faux goatskin.

…

Time passed in an eerie silence. Unbeknownst to them, the heat in Trier began to wane, and the temperature gradually dropped.

One mid-September day, Franca stood before the window of Apartment 601 and cursed Browns Sauron for what felt like the hundredth time.

She had already passed the Demoness Sect’s audit and informed Browns that she had joined the Savoie Mob to infiltrate the Iron and Blood Cross Order. However, she never anticipated there would be an assessment period. Only after this evaluation could she officially become a member of the Demoness Sect.

Her current liaison, Browns Sauron, used this as an excuse to prevent her from participating in the Red House Café’s female orgies. This left her with no option but to endure tormenting Gardner Martin and his lovers for the past month or so.

Franca turned her attention to Jenna, who appeared lost in thought, and couldn’t help but sigh at her companion’s fortune.

The Demoness Sect remained oblivious to Jenna’s true identity as a Beyonder of the Assassin pathway.

“What’s troubling you?” Franca inquired.

Jenna responded with a hint of distress, “My Instigator potion has completely digested.”

Franca exclaimed in pleasant surprise, “That’s a good thing!”

Jenna scratched her head and let out a sigh. “I haven’t even paid you back for the money I owe you, and now I have to consider the Witch potion formula and its ingredients. Dammit, why does it feel like the more I advance, the poorer I become?”

Chapter 423 - 423 Unexpected Encounter

423 Unexpected Encounter

Franca chuckled at Jenna's complaint and replied, "That's typical. As long as you master the acting method, progress comes quickly before reaching the mid Sequences. The pace at which you save money often falls short of the expenses for purchasing the potion formula and the necessary ingredients.

Jenna fell silent for a moment, then she swore, "You instigated me without using your abilities!"

"Haha, it's just the way things are. I'll share the Witch potion formula with you now. Let's start gathering," Franca said as she returned to the coffee table, spread out a piece of paper, and swiftly jotted down the instructions.

Jenna stood beside her, examining the Intisian words taking shape.

Meanwhile, Jenna silently tallied her debts.

Including the Purifier reward and the earnings from my underground singing, I've saved nearly 10,000 verl d'or.

According to Franca and Ciel, a Sequence 7 potion formula can go for between 30,000 and 40,000 verl d'or, depending on its rarity. At the very least, I owe Franca another 30,000 verl d'or, bringing the total to 60,000…

Even if I sell the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, I won't be able to make up for it. In the future, I'll have to purchase various ingredients for the Witch potion, costing me over 30,000 verl d'or… Dammit! It's no wonder why so many Beyonders at those mysticism gatherings seem

strapped for cash and penny-pinching!

The more Jenna calculated, the more her head throbbed.

If it weren't for the potion's tangible transformation and the clear, visible abilities it grants, she would have suspected she'd fallen into a scam. Why did her debts keep increasing as she worked harder?

In the past, her whole family had often felt hopeless when dealing with a debt of a few thousand verl d'or. But now, she owed Franca 60,000, and there was no end in sight.

Even with her cash and assets, she still fell short by 10,000 verl d'or.

Gritting her teeth, Jenna decided to put these worries aside for now and deal with them after advancing to Sequence 7 as a Witch.

Franca quickly finished writing down the Witch potion formula:

"Sequence 7: Witch;

"Main ingredient: Every drop of an Abyss Demonic Fish's blood and an Agate Peacock's egg;

"Supplementary ingredients: 80 ml of purified water, five drops of Jimsonweed juice, 3 scales of a Shadow Lizard, and 10 drops of Daffodil Juice."

She handed the paper with the formula to Jenna and added in thought, "Avoid gathering these materials at the mysticism gathering we attend. Acquire them from the gathering you discovered and joined, as well as from the Purifiers. Oh, ask Ciel for assistance too."

Franca was still in the Demoness Sect's assessment period and worried about potential spies from the secret organization in the mysticism gatherings. If participants gathered the ingredients for the Witch potion, it could raise suspicions.

In contrast, the Purifiers were a more secure source of these ingredients, given their history of dealing with Demonesses. They definitely had the corresponding characteristics in reserve.

“Alright.” Jenna rwas well aware of the Demoness Sect’s hostility toward wild Assassins like her.

Recognizing that the heretics were oddly quiet and them receiving confirmation from a Major Arcana card holder, Lumian and Franca had suggested that Jenna and her brother Julien relocate from Trier to another city in Intis for six months to monitor the situation.

Jenna had insisted on staying to spend time with her comrades and had promised to advance her Sequence quickly.

This was the primary reason she had accepted Franca’s gift without hesitation.

As for her brother Julien, Jenna genuinely wanted to keep him away from another mysticism disaster. She wanted him to live a safe and happy life, and she had been busy instigating him to leave Trier.

Jenna couldn’t help but smile. “I went to Port LeSeur last weekend.”

Port LeSeur, situated at the estuary of the Srenzo River, was one of Trier’s primary ports for shipping goods out to sea.

Franca was surprised and pleased for her friend.

“Did you manage to instigate that stubborn fellow?”

Without divulging the truth,Jenna shook her head and said, “No. I shifted my instigation efforts to a different target. I discovered that the shipyard where Julien works has a branch in Port LeSeur, so I used my Instigation ability to convince their supervisor to propose a six-month technical exchange program between the factories. I also paid to include Julien in the list.

“I only digested the potion after successfully instigating this. Dogsh*t, no matter what I told Julien, he refused to listen. He even reneged on his word the next day after the Instigation. As soon as his supervisor issued the order, he started packing!”

After venting her frustration about her brother, Jenna glanced at Franca and added with a sly grin,

“The skilled workers from Trier arrived in Port LeSeur last weekend. The return leg from LeSeur to Trier will be half a year later to avoid the potential disaster.

“Franca, why don’t we figure out a way to get more people to leave Trier and lay low for a while?”

“They won’t believe us even if we tell them,” Franca sighed. “Moreover, if more people leave, those evil god organizations might sense it and act prematurely. If the official Beyonders aren’t prepared, it could lead to more casualties.”

Unspoken was the fact that, combined with Madam Judgment’s words and Ciel’s intel, the surface Trier served to seal the underground Trier. Everyone in the city contributed their strength, and if too many left, the seal might weaken, putting the remaining citizens in danger.

Jenna fell silent for a moment, choosing not to dwell on the topic.

Her upbringing and six months of experience had taught her to accept the harsh reality. All she could do was save as many as she could within reasonable bounds.

After a pause of about ten seconds, Jenna said thoughtfully, “When I Instigated the supervisor to propose the exchange program, I noticed that many neighboring factories had similar arrangements. That’s why I had an example to raise and succeeded without much difficulty.

“Now that I think about it, could it be a covert effort by official Beyonders to reduce the population in the market district?”

“It’s certainly possible,” Franca considered for a moment before hesitating to add more.

What she wanted to say was that it might also be orchestrated by the Tarot Club or Church of The Fool. Madam Justice, a Major Arcana card in the Spectator domain, was well-suited for such matters.

Franca refrained from saying this because she hadn’t yet told Jenna about her and Ciel’s belief in Mr. Fool.

She had initially planned to “visit” The Fool’s cathedral at Lavigny Docks with Jenna, but she dared not do so once she came under the scrutiny of the Demoness Sect.

…

In a four-wheeled four-seater carriage, navigating through the forest and farmland, Lumian, dressed in a casual formal suit, looked out the window at the golden harvest, his mind drifting.

The past month had been his most leisurely period in the past six months, but he didn’t find this leisure enjoyable. He seized every opportunity to digest the Pyromaniac potion.

This included visits to the large morgue in the island district to help “cremate” corpses, “bury” abandoned large-sized trash, venturing underground to use flames to intimidate passing smuggling teams, successfully securing insurance compensation for small distressed merchants through fires, tracking down and incinerating a few wanted criminals, and igniting a desire among many to leave Trier and explore opportunities in neighboring cities…

This string of actions had brought Lumian to the brink of fully digesting the Pyromaniac potion. It might only take another half a month, a week, or perhaps even less.

Today, Lumian had received an invitation from Count Poufer to visit his Red Swan Castle as a guest.

Over the past month, the Sauron family had hosted five gatherings—one at the castle, one for hunting, two for casual chats at a café, and one for a masquerade ball in an abandoned house.

Lumian had participated in all of them, but nothing significant had occurred. The only notable exception was that Poufer Sauron hadn’t played King’s Pie again.

Where’s the probe Gardner Martin mentioned? Could it be a probe this time? The Cave Association hasn’t made another appearance. Do they believe me? He redirected his thoughts from the near-harvest farmland and contemplated the invitation for the day.

What intrigued him even more was Gardner Martin's promise to secretly monitor every gathering hosted by Count Poufer. So, where might Gardner be concealed at this moment?

Under the afternoon sun, the carriage arrived at its destination.

Lumian gazed up at the beige castle, tainted with the stains of ancient blood. Passing through the imposing door and the vast atrium, he reached the elegant living room on the first floor, adorned with a dark-red, plush carpet.

Poufer Sauron, dressed in a red velvet coat, was engaged in conversation at the entrance with another guest when Lumian arrived.

Lumian's gaze froze.

The guest standing beside Count Poufer was not someone he had expected to see.

Clad in hunting attire, with what appeared to be reddish-dyed hair, sharp brown eyebrows, and piercing eyes, it was Albus, another member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

As a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order under the command of Commanding Officer Gardner Martin, Lumian was well aware of their identities and objectives. However, Albus was enigmatic and seldom seen in the market district, only making appearances at gatherings for a free meal.

"Who is this?" Lumian didn't conceal his confusion.

Is he here to assist me in completing my mission?

Poufer Sauron introduced with a smile,"A new friend. He'll be joining us at our gatherings more frequently."

At this point, Poufer turned to Albus, whose expression appeared rather unlikable, maintaining his smile.

"His full name is: Albus Medici."

Chapter 424 - 424 Underground Maze

424 Underground Maze

Albus Medici… Lumian repeated the name to himself, glancing at the member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order who had suddenly appeared.

During Gardner Martin's gathering, Albus had never revealed his last name, and Gardner Martin had never introduced him. Now, he had actually given his full name to Poufer Sauron.

Is he trying to make it more realistic? Lumian's gaze swept across Albus's face, and he realized that when Count Poufer mentioned the surname Medici, he didn't hide his mockery at all, as if mocking the Sauron family member.

"Ciel Dubois," Lumian extended his right hand and politely introduced himself.

Albus casually shook his hand, a smile evident in his eyes.

He said, "I've heard your name before, a generous patron of art."

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order emphasized "generous."

"That's mainly thanks to my sponsor," Lumian said with a double entendre.

In the ears of the other guests, he was referring to his father—his wealthy family. As a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Albus caught the subtle message.

Poufer Sauron exchanged a few pleasantries with Lumian before escorting him to the sofa.

The gathering was intimate, with familiar faces all around, including Poufer's cousin, Elros, Novelist Anori, Painter Mullen, Critic Ernst Young, and Poet Iraeta.

After some casual conversation and nibbling on snacks accompanied by black tea, Count Poufer glanced around and suggested with a mischievous smile, "How about we embark on an adventure today?"

"Adventure?" Albus raised an eyebrow and couldn't resist a playful quip, "An adventure in the bedroom?"

His insinuation was clear. Red Swan Castle might be spacious, with room for a key family member and even hundreds of soldiers at its zenith, but it hardly seemed like a place fit for adventure. Were they supposed to reenact a Trier-like adventure under a bedroom's plush sheets?

The jest lightened the atmosphere, and Poufer Sauron cleared his throat before continuing,

"Perhaps you're unaware, but Red Swan Castle harbors an extensive underground area.

"In the era of its construction, its primary function was war. It had to boast a cavernous cellar and a tunnel for escape during dire situations, or it would be deemed inadequate.

"Throughout the centuries, my forebears expanded and modified the underground, turning it into a labyrinth resembling something out of a horror story. Even though I grew up in Red Swan Castle, my knowledge of that place is limited to the areas I frequently use.

"Our objective today is to venture deep into this subterranean maze and locate a Count's crown that one of my ancestors misplaced in one of its chambers. The crown is adorned with numerous rubies, making it easily distinguishable.

"The one who retrieves the Count's crown will be crowned today's king."

Deep into the underground maze… Scenes suddenly flashed through Lumian's mind. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The constant self-mutilating people in Red Swan Castle…

Screams of unknown origin…

A bronze coffin, surrounded by countless white candles…

A palm with dark-red, nearly-black blood vessels…

And a withered, black heart with a trickle of crimson seeping out…

These latter objects seemed to be concealed somewhere in the depths of the underground hall!

In an instant, Lumian comprehended the gravity of Poufer Sauron's proposal.

Poufer Sauron's probing was here!

Suppressing the urge to scan his surroundings and possibly catch a glimpse of Gardner Martin, who might be lurking, Lumian turned his attention to Albus Medici.

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order clicked his tongue and chuckled.

"Sounds intriguing. This is a game for the courageous!"

As if to quell any doubts or reluctance among the group, doing so meant: Those who decline to participate are merely cowards!

Count Poufer seized the opportunity to reassure them, "Worry not. If you lose your way and cannot find your path back, just pull the bell rope in your chamber. The servants will be dispatched to search for you and bring you back from below."

"No problem," Anori, the short and plump novelist, quipped with a mischievous glint in his eye. "I'm quite looking forward to something happening. After all, it will provide me with excellent material for my writing."

“Like Anori’s Last Day?” Lumian joked.

Having attended numerous gatherings hosted by the Black Cat art organization, Lumian was well aware of Novelist Anori and Poet Iraeta’s unique quirks. Anori had a taboo for never praising fellow authors, while Iraeta’s ire was only stirred by the current social realities in Intis.

Anori took a sip of his black tea and mumbled, “Those old fogeys from the Intis Faculty of Arts will absolutely love this theme.”

Seeing no objections, Count Poufer rose from his seat and addressed the assembled guests,

“Let’s divide into two groups and begin this adventure. We’ll set out individually along the way.

“One group will follow me, and the other will accompany Ciel. These individuals have all been kings in the past three months.

“Those willing to join Ciel, raise your hands.”

“Me!” Albus Medici was the first to raise his hand. Lumian had expected him to follow Poufer Sauron closely to complete the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s mission.

Count Poufer appeared unfazed, as if this was the anticipated course of events.

The second to raise her hand was Elros, the cousin of the host.

With her long auburn hair, soft features, and bright brown eyes, she smiled at Lumian and said, “I’ve always been Monsieur Ciel’s companion in the past. I see no reason to change that now.”

Lumian nodded and returned her smile.

He was aware that beneath her youthful appearance, Elros possessed a complexity that belied her innocence.

In one of his unsettling dreams, most participants in the King’s Pie game had descended into madness, inflicting self-harm or harm on

others. Only three individuals remained unaffected: Lumian himself, Poufer Sauron, and Miss Elros.

Lumian couldn't help but wonder about her true motivations for choosing to accompany him into the underground maze.

The third to raise his hand was the poet, Iraeta.

Holding his cherrywood pipe, he offered a straightforward reason, "He's my sponsor!"

The remaining guests, including Novelist Anori, Painter Mullen, and Critic Ernst Young, formed a team with Poufer Sauron.

They left the comfort of the living room and found themselves standing next to a fully-armored statue. Descending the nearby stairs, designed for two people to walk side by side, they ventured further into the depths of the castle.

The walls of the staircase were mottled and grayish-white, winding their way down into the bowels of the earth. The surroundings grew increasingly quiet as they descended.

After traversing about three floors, Lumian and his group reached the entrance of the underground maze.

The passageways were illuminated by numerous wall lamps, some connected to gas pipes, while others had a more classical design with candles burning brightly.

Lumian gazed up at the ceiling and noticed the aqueous-black stone bricks above, shrouded in darkness. Their cracks were distinct, and the surface exhibited signs of peeling.

"Let's choose this one," Poufer declared, taking a carbide lamp from the wall and leading his team down the leftmost passageway.

After setting up the carbide lamp, Lumian instinctively proceeded down the corridor ahead without hesitation.

He believed that in such an environment, methodical searching might cause them to overlook something significant. By relying on the

convergence of Beyonder characteristics and the concealed Blood Emperor aura, he believed he would stumble upon something of value.

“What’s your reason for choosing this path?” Albus Medici’s expression was always a little annoying.

Lumian responded with a hint of nonchalance, “I have faith in fate.”

“I like that reason,” Elros chimed in with a faint smile.

Poet Iraeta took a puff from his cherrywood pipe and added, “I believe in it too, but only if fate is inclined to favor me.”

The quartet ventured deeper into the corridor, encountering what appeared to be storage rooms along the way.

Soon, they arrived at a dimly lit hall with three doors, each bearing a single word in ancient Feysac: Hope, Death, and Madness.

Lumian had abandoned deep thinking by this point. Without hesitation, he walked towards the Door of Madness and gently pushed it open.

As the door swung ajar, darkness enveloped the room, and the light from the carbide lamp spilled in, revealing an eerie sight. Lifelike wax statues stood throughout the room, both men and women, adorned in either ordinary or exquisite attire, their expressions twisted in agony.

“Not bad,” Albus commented, disdainfully patting a wax statue’s face with his right hand.

Elros glanced at him.

“Didn’t your mother teach you manners?”

Albus chuckled.

“I don’t have a mother.”

Elros was momentarily taken aback, not quite sure how to respond to

that statement.

In the background, Poet Iraeta spoke with a touch of admiration, “In the past, when rumors circulated about me having an affair with a widow, I’d quietly spread gossip that I had kidnapped the Member of Parliament’s daughter and was suspected of murdering a merchant. I even found myself entangled in rumors involving human meat pies, and my neighbors mysteriously vanished.

“As long as I don’t care about my reputation and actively tarnish it, no one can perch on the moral high ground and point fingers at me.”

As expected of a poet… Lumian praised inwardly. Holding the carbide lamp, he led the way through the room filled with wax statues, their goal being the exit at the far end.

The wax figures, illuminated by the dim yellowish light of the gas wall lamps, appeared unnervingly lifelike. Their eyes seemed to follow Lumian and his companions, creating an unsettling and bizarre atmosphere.

Lumian couldn’t shake the memory of the previous wax statues that had come to life and attacked. He couldn’t help but feel that any of these figures could suddenly spring to life and lunge at them.

Breaking the indescribable silence, Albus Medici

spoke in a relaxed tone, addressing Elros, “You’re Poufer’s cousin. Your last name isn’t Sauron, is it?”

Elros candidly admitted, “You’re right.”

Albus casually inquired, “Which family do you belong to?”

Elros turned her head to look at Albus Medici and then at Lumian. She replied with a smile, “My full name is: Elros Einhorn.”

Chapter 425 - 425 The Living

425 The Living

Einhorn? Even though Lumian was a young man deprived of an education, he had received Aurore's rigorous education and knew that this last name represented the royal family of the Feysac Empire in the north.

It was worth noting that more than a thousand years had passed since the establishment of the Feysac Empire in the late Fourth Epoch. The Einhorn family had always held the throne, while the Sauron family had lost the Intis throne nearly two centuries ago. It was clear which family held the upper hand.

Albus Medici glanced at Elros in surprise and added a touch of provocation to his words, "You're an Einhorn? I couldn't tell."

Elros gazed straight ahead, returning to her obedient demeanor.

She spoke emotionlessly, "The Sauron family and the Einhorn family often formed marriage alliances. Even though the Sauron family has long left the Intis throne, this tradition endures. My mother just happened to marry a member of the Einhorn royal family."

Poet Iraeta asked with interest, "So your last name is Einhorn. Why did you come to Trier? You were living in Red Swan Castle when I first met Count Poufer."

"Six years ago, my father perished in the war between the Feysac Empire and the Loen Kingdom. My mother brought me back to Trier, where we stayed with my maternal grandfather, who also happened to be Poufer's grandfather," Elros explained with a soft sigh. "Two years ago, my maternal grandfather passed away. Last year, my mother succumbed to illness."

The frequency of death does seem remarkably high? Right, Aurore had mentioned that while the four powerful countries of the Northern Continent sometimes collaborated and at other times clashed, marriages between the royal family and nobles never ceased. Consequently, cousin marriages had become frequent… According to Franca, the Hunter pathway has mainly been in the hands of the Sauron and Einhorn families. Could a Hunter-Hunter marriage guarantee that future generations would be better suited for the Hunter pathway? Lumian held the carbide lamp and proceeded down the corridor toward the exit of the wax statue's room.

The wax statues on either side, bathed in the yellowish glow of the carbide lamp, seemed eerily lifelike.

As they ventured further down the corridor, it grew narrower, and the wax statues almost obstructed their path.

Lumian couldn't help but bump into them. Their bodies were cold, and their limbs felt stiff. They were indeed genuine wax statues.

Finally, the four of them reached the end of the room and opened the iron-black wooden door.

Just as Lumian was about to depart, a subconscious impulse made him glance back.

In the dimly lit room, the pained expressions on the wax statues' faces appeared haunting, as if their eyes were fixed on the exit.

Lumian was reminded of his earlier encounter with the wax statue in the river. He instinctively raised his wrist slightly and discreetly extended the middle finger toward the wax statue in the room.

"I really wish I could set this place on fire," Albus Medici lamented with a touch of regret.

Lumian was momentarily surprised, but he secretly concurred.

Good idea!

He had a suspicion that if he could incinerate these wax statues, the potion would be fully digested.

Elros Einhorn remarked calmly, “Red Swan Castle experiences an average of three fires a month.”

The passageway descended diagonally, leading them deeper underground.

The four of them continued down until the corridor leveled out once more.

The wall lamps were not lit. Whether gas or candles, they slumbered in the darkness.

With the yellowish glow of their four carbide lamps, Lumian discerned a room at a diagonal angle ahead, its wooden door slightly ajar. A faint, lingering odor of blood emanated from within.

He approached and pushed open the wooden door.

Light streamed into the room, and the scene within was cast upon the eyes of Lumian, Albus, and the rest of the group.

It was a small bedroom, but time had not been kind to it. The bed had crumbled, the wood decayed, and the table lay in ruins. A collection of assorted items lay scattered in the center of the room.

The walls bore vivid, deep gouges, as if they had been violently clawed at by someone until their fingers must have bled and rotted.

The blood, having seeped into the crevices, had oxidized over time, turning black. Its original appearance was lost, but a faint cloyed odor still lingered.

Then, a whistle reached Lumian’s ears.

Albus Medici expressed his emotions through this sound.

He moved past Lumian, entering the room, and ran his fingers along the deep scratches on the wall.

“I can only imagine the horrifying sounds that were produced,” the chubby-faced Elros commented, her focus on the matter somewhat off.

Lumian surmised that someone from Red Swan Castle had once descended into madness and been confined in this room. The marks on the wall were the haunting legacy of their torment.

After a cursory search that yielded no findings, they pressed on.

They opted for the right path at the three-way intersection, leading them to a room with its wooden door partially open.

Inside, the room was in shambles, marred by the presence of the blackened bloodstains. The walls appeared to be adorned with what could only be described as decaying flesh.

Albus Medici observed it and let out a disapproving click of his tongue.

“A guy exploded here. From the inside out. Blood and flesh splattered everywhere.”

Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly. The judgment aligned with his.

Could it have been the result of a Pyromaniac losing control and meeting their end?

Poet Iraeta, holding a carbide lamp in one hand, took a puff from his cherrywood pipe, struggling slightly, and offered his own perspective.

“I can’t quite fathom why such a tragedy unfolded, but there’s a certain poetic quality to it.”

Is an explosion a form of art? Lumian muttered as he entered the room and began his search.

The putrid blood and decaying flesh seemed to exude an aura that could influence one’s mental state.

After moving forward for over ten meters, the group discovered another room adjacent to the corridor, its wooden door partially open.

The room didn’t reek of blood, but Lumian felt as if sharp blades were pressed against his skin, causing his hair to stand on end.

Sharpness! Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

That was the word that naturally came to his mind.

As the light from the carbide lamp illuminated the room, Lumian, Elros, and the rest observed that the furniture had been reduced to tiny fragments. Beds and desks lay in finger-sized squares, partially collapsed.

“Remarkable swordsmanship,” Albus Medici remarked with a chuckle.

Lumian wasn’t too concerned with this matter. What troubled him was that this place was unlike the previous two rooms, which had signs of decaying blood and rotting flesh.

Where had the person who once occupied this room disappeared to? Lumian scrutinized the area intently before deciding to move on.

Shortly, they reached a descending stone staircase. The lower portion of the staircase was enveloped in darkness, seemingly endless.

On either side of the stairs were rooms with slightly open wooden doors. The interior of these rooms was pitch-black, as though it could swallow all light and motion.

Lumian instinctively chose the left side, pushed open the door, and extended the carbide lamp into the room.

Bathed in the direct yellow light, an intact bed, an undamaged table, and a chair all stood in perfect order.

Two gleaming, cold swords adorned the wall before them. On the table, a pile of colorful building blocks of various shapes and a row of iron soldiers, each as tall as a candle, were neatly arranged.

These iron soldiers were clad in blue coats with golden embroidery. They wielded spears that resembled tree branches or black rifles, a popular toy in Intis that had enjoyed popularity for a century or two.

Lumian walked over and placed the carbide lamp down. He picked up one of the iron soldiers and adeptly twisted the torsion spring on

its back.

With a series of creaking sounds, the iron soldier sprang to life, swaying forward while raising its spear.

Memories of owning a set of such iron soldiers during his youth, before his mother's illness and his pépé's financial troubles, flooded into Lumian's mind.

"There are no signs of damage here. It's as if it contains items from childhood to adulthood," Elros observed as she circled the room.

Albus Medici grinned and remarked, "I wonder where the owner of this room is now. Hopefully not mad enough to scratch the walls or self-destruct from the inside out."

As they conversed, Lumian extended his right palm, attempting to open the wooden desk drawer to see what it held.

Suddenly, an ethereal voice echoed around them.

"My grandfather went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…"

Lumian tensed, his body swiveling as he scanned the surroundings for the source of the voice.

Albus, Elros, and the others followed suit, clearly hearing the unsettling voice.

"My father went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…

"My brother went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…

"I… hear the summonings from the depths of the underground palace…"

Lumian, Albus, Elros, and Iraeta simultaneously directed their gazes at the wooden door across the corridor.

The spectral voice emanated from there.

With a snap, Iraeta, positioned in the corridor, pushed open the wooden door behind him. Ignorance often knew no fear.

The yellowish light immediately illuminated two figures and a pile of materials.

One of them was a flesh-toned puppet mounted on a metal frame, hairless with rudimentary facial features.

Surrounding it were molds, hair, clay, and pigments stored in containers.

A man clad in a grayish-black robe, his natural red hair flowing, was diligently painting the puppet with a fine brush.

Sensing the intrusion of light, the man slowly raised his head, revealing a weathered face adorned with thick hair and dark, iron-like eyes.

Upon spotting Lumian, Iraeta, and the rest, he spoke slowly, his voice ethereal as he inquired, “Are you here to make wax statues?”

Chapter 426 - 426 “Curse”

426 “Curse”

Iraeta unconsciously took a step back.

“No, there’s no need.”

He snapped out of his daze and focused on the man in the gray robe who was diligently painting the puppet in the dimly lit room. He asked with curiosity, “Are you the artisan of wax statues who serves Count Poufer?”

This Count had a peculiar hobby of crafting wax figures for his friends.

The man with the fiery red beard avoided direct eye contact and continued coloring the half-finished puppet in front of him.

Lumian, who had already returned to the corridor, turned his head and glanced at Albus Medici. Instead of speaking, he directed his question at the enigmatic man in the cluttered room, “What should we call you?” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian was certain that something was amiss with the wax statue artisan before him, but he couldn’t determine the extent of the problem. They had just noticed that no light escaped from this room, indicating that the man had been working on the puppet in complete darkness!

The man with deep, iron-black eyes and a fiery red beard looked up once more and spoke in a spectral tone, “My grandfather went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace, never to return…

“My father went mad and ventured into the depths of the

underground palace, never to return…"

"So, are you mad as well?" Albus Medici interrupted the man's ramblings.

The man hesitated for a moment before answering, "I… hear the summonings from the depths of the underground palace…"

At this point, his gaze swept across the faces of Lumian, Albus, and Elros. The corners of his mouth, obscured by his beard, curled up slightly, hinting at an elusive smile.

His vacant iron-black eyes grew more intense, and his voice carried a sense of urgency.

"The three of you, hurry to the depths of the underground palace…"

Iraeta muttered under his breath, "Why not me?"

Lumian's mind raced as he sought common ground with Albus and Elros.

As Poet Iraeta had pointed out, the "three of you" in the strange man's statement didn't include him. Given the peculiar atmosphere and circumstances, something was definitely awry.

I'm a Hunter, and Albus is a Hunter. Could Elros also be a Hunter? While Lumian contemplated this, Albus Medici seemed unfazed by the eerie words of the wax statue artisan. He flashed a cheeky smile and asked, "Do you want us to venture deep into the underground palace to rescue your grandfather, father, and brother, or would you prefer to send your regards?"

Quite aggressive… Logically speaking, he's at least a Pyromaniac, the kind whose potion has mostly been digested. There's no need to provoke everyone with every word… Could it be that he's intentionally misleading others to believe that he's only a Provoker? Lumian looked at Albus's well-defined side profile and muttered inwardly.

The man painting the puppet paid Albus no attention and continued his work.

“Sorry to bother you,” Lumian said, not giving Albus a chance to escalate the situation. He reached for the vermilion wooden door’s handle, gently closed it, and left the room behind.

Lumian decided not to explore the room with the iron-clad soldier, fearing it might trigger unwanted events.

In the darkness, Lumian descended the worn stone steps, carbide lamp in hand.

Amid the echoing footsteps, Elros Einhorn suddenly commented, “That man looked like a lion…”

Lumian recalled the wax statue artisan’s appearance. Indeed, with his long, dense red hair and beard, he did resemble a humanized lion.

Albus Medici gently swayed the carbide lamp in his hand and glanced at Elros.

“This is your maternal grandfather’s castle. You’ve lived here for nearly six years. Don’t act like a visitor like us who doesn’t know anything.”

“I genuinely don’t know who that person was,” Elros replied, shaking her head. “I rarely enter the underground palace. The farthest I’ve gone is the room filled with wax statues.”

In other words, during your limited explorations, you had chosen the same path as me. You had selected the Door of Madness among the three doors of Hope, Madness, and Death… Why didn’t you continue deeper? What were you worried about? Lumian deduced some information from Elros Einhorn’s succinct answer.

Albus scoffed.

“Have you heard of the legend of Sauron family members going mad and venturing into the depths of the underground palace, never to return?

“For example, my grandfather went mad and ventured into the depths of the underground palace…”

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order mimicked the man's speech with an uncanny accuracy.

Excellent, you've asked the question I wanted to ask… Despite Albus Medici's grating manner, he did serve a purpose.

He had no reservations and, with great acumen, asked questions that he couldn't.

With such a teammate around, Lumian could maintain a semblance of distance and conceal his true thoughts and attitude.

The worn stone steps seemed never-ending. As Elros descended carefully, she sighed and explained,

"I've always known about such legends.

"The master of Red Swan Castle and the Sauron family members who reside here, both men and women, gradually become violent and irritable, eventually going mad. It's possible for them to enter the depths of the underground palace after mutilating themselves and never return. These incidents occur sporadically, sometimes once every few years, or two or three times a year.

"Apart from the family members who yearn to restore their forebears' glory, Sauron has distanced himself from this ancient castle. He doesn't want to go mad.

"This has a certain effect, ensuring the Sauron family's continuation and heritage. However, that madness seems to be a curse, a curse rooted in the bloodline. Sauron, who resides elsewhere, will occasionally have people suddenly return and repeat the experiences of their forebears here."

Is this the surface explanation behind the Sauron family's decline? If the core members of the family go mad one by one and enter the depths of the underground palace without returning, the family will indeed decline bit by bit… Why did Elros tell us in detail about the matters that's privy to the Sauron family… She believes that we won't leave alive, so she's satisfying her desire to share? Lumian couldn't help but recall the nightmares he had experienced due to the

King's Pie game.

In the nightmares, Red Swan Castle was overrun by lunatics who mutilated themselves in gruesome ways, gouging out their own eyeballs and more.

It seemed that these lunatics might have included various individuals from the Sauron family who had gone mad over the course of more than two centuries.

But not all of them shared the Sauron bloodline. Lumian remembered how Novelist Anori and other participants in the King's Pie game had also gone insane and committed grotesque acts to themselves and others, despite lacking the Sauron family's lineage.

Albus Medici, in his irritating manner, wore a smirk as he asked Elros, "Did your maternal grandfather also go crazy and venture into the depths of the underground palace?"

Elros remained calm and replied, "No, he passed away due to chronic headaches. Not every owner of Red Swan Castle eventually goes mad."

Albus, undeterred, continued to press, "What are the common factors among those who don't go mad?"

Elros's face was illuminated by the carbide lamp's glow as she responded in her usual tone, "It's a family secret."

In essence, she was saying: "I'm not going to tell you."

This response left Lumian, who was leading the way, feeling a growing sense of frustration.

If Elros had simply cautioned them against prying into the Sauron family's affairs from the start, he wouldn't have reacted emotionally. But her willingness to share intriguing information, only to withhold the crucial details, felt like a deliberate provocation.

After a moment of silence, Albus Medici's smile returned, and he probed further, "What about your mother?"

Elros replied, “She passed away normally due to an illness.”

Albus chuckled and continued, “What about you? You also have the Sauron family’s bloodline. Will you suddenly go crazy?”

Elros turned her head and glanced at the impolite fellow, revealing an indescribable smile.

“In the long run, we’ll all go mad.”

Who do you mean by “we”? Lumian’s forehead twitched, sensing that Elros wasn’t just referring to the Sauron family.

A moment of silence followed, broken by Poet Iraeta’s heartfelt sigh.

“The fear of a family, the curse that has lasted for generations, and the forebears who have ventured into the dark underground. What an excellent theme for an essay. It’s very inspiring. If Anori were to find out, he would definitely produce a classic novel. Even I would have the urge to write a long poem.”

As they conversed, the four of them finally reached the end of the lengthy stone steps.

Before them stretched a vast hall with grayish-white stone pillars supporting the dark ceiling above.

The four carbide lamps illuminated the space, revealing several piles of bones partially exposed behind certain stone pillars.

“Plenty of the dead.” Albus Medici, undaunted, sighed with a smile and strolled toward one of the bone piles.

At that moment, Lumian picked up a rustling sound.

He swiftly raised his head and raised the carbide lamp.

In the dim yellow lighting, mottled ceiling, a colossal shadow moved with surprising speed, crawling across the uneven surface before vanishing into the shadows on the other side.

The shadow was a spider-like creature.

In comparison to its kind, it had only one pair of eyes, but each eye contained numerous tiny single eyes moving independently, radiating a cold and eerie light.

Countless long, thick bristles encircled a withered, blackened, fist-sized heart on its back.

Lumian's blood ran cold as a term leaped to the forefront of his mind: Black Hunting Spider!

This was one of the main ingredients of the Conspirer potion.

Over the past month, although Lumian hadn't yet acquired any ingredients related to Black Hunting Spiders and Sphinxes, he had amassed a general understanding of these two Beyonder creatures, including their appearance and abilities. Recently, he had contemplated "teleporting" to another location in his quest to locate these creatures.

However, the Black Hunting Spider he had just witnessed was even more unusual than the information he had gathered. It deviated significantly in several details, particularly the presence of a withered heart that eerily resembled that of a human.

Chapter 427 - 427 Hunters' Cooperation

427 Hunters' Cooperation

The suspected Black Hunting Spider flashed and disappeared into the shadows on the other side of the hall.

By the time Iraeta sensed the abnormality and looked up at the ceiling, the colossal black spider had vanished.

"What are you looking at?" the poet asked curiously, casually commenting, "There's no mural on the walls of the underground maze. This doesn't match the Sauron family's former glory."

In the Northern Continent, murals were essential when constructing grand buildings. All painters took pride in being invited to create these magnificent works of art, especially when it came to epic paintings on cathedral domes and walls. These paintings were not just a status symbol but also required months or even years to complete.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and smiled.

"I saw a venomous spider. No one has been here for a long time. It seems to have become a haven for dangerous creatures."

Without waiting for Iraeta's response, he suggested, "Albus, Elros, and I have impressive skills and extensive hunting experience. It's clear you lack sufficient training. Why don't you return to the surface ahead of time? Continuing forward could be perilous for you. You don't truly believe you can find the crown and become king, do you?"

Iraeta muttered, "No problem. You're my sponsor, after all.

“If it weren’t to accompany you guys and have some fun, I wouldn’t venture into this pitch-black underground. I’m past the age of adventuring and performing arts. Alright, I’ll head back to the surface now and wait for you in the living room. There’s La Fée Verte, black tea, refreshments, and tobacco. It’s much more comfortable than here.”

As the poet spoke, he turned and walked toward the stone steps at the hall’s exit.

Just as he took several steps, a blaze erupted from the shadow on his right, hurtling towards Iraeta like a crimson spear.

Behind Lumian, flames surged around Albus Medici, transforming him into a crimson spear that collided with the flaming spear attacking the poet. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order transformed into a crimson spear and flew out with a whoosh, colliding with the flaming spear that had attacked the poet.

With a resounding crash, the two flaming spears disintegrated, revealing Albus Medici and the colossal black spider with a withered heart.

The spider emitted a high-frequency squeak, raising its body and swinging its four thick-furred limbs, resembling scythes that flickered with a cold light, at Albus Medici.

At the same time, a nearly white-hot spear flew and struck the side of the black spider, incinerating its hard shell and piercing through it.

It was Elros Einhorn. She seemed prepared and quietly shifted her position, waiting for the colossal black spider to appear.

In the next moment, agile crimson Fire Ravens followed different trajectories, rushing into the wound created by the burning-white spear.

Rumble!

The fiery explosion within the colossal black spider’s body created a

chaotic storm of flames, tearing at its outer carapace and flesh.

He had started condensing the Fire Raven the moment Albus Medici confronted the assailant.

Under the relentless assault, the spider emitted a piercing screech that reverberated within its chitinous shell.

The shriveled, blackened heart behind it suddenly glowed dark red, creating blazing fireballs.

These fireballs formed a net, enveloping the colossal black spider, and shot toward Lumian, Albus, and Elros, leaving crimson trails in their wake.

In contrast, Iraeta, who had been stunned by the superhuman battle, was ignored and unharmed.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

As Lumian and the others dodged the incoming fireballs, one of them shot deep into the hall, dissipating quickly.

Hidden within the fireball, the colossal black spider seized the opportunity to break through Lumian and the others' encirclement and disappear once more.

The crimson flames around them continued to burn. Albus Medici glanced at the dark-red liquid dripping from the heavily injured black spider but didn't immediately pursue it. Instead, he smiled at Lumian and said,

"Nice baiting."

Lumian didn't deny it.

He had asked Poet Iraeta to return to the surface alone to lure out the colossal black spider as bait.

If the spider didn't take the bait, Iraeta would have left the underground palace without any danger. But if the spider planned to hunt an ordinary person alone, Lumian was ready to use Spirit World

Traversal and the Spell of Harrumph to protect the target. He aimed to eliminate the creature, suspected to be a potion ingredient, as quickly as possible.

With such an opportunity, he wasn't willing to hold back and hide his trump cards. He wanted to end the battle swiftly to prevent any mishaps.

Unexpectedly, Albus Medici's reaction was quicker than his. Therefore, Lumian stopped in time and switched to Fire Ravens. He intended to observe the black spider's combat style and uncover any secrets it might hold.

Now, Lumian was certain that the colossal black spider was more formidable than a Black Hunting Spider. If it were the latter, it would never have escaped the encirclement of three Hunters; it would have perished from the repeated explosions.

Although it was confirmed that the black spider wasn't equivalent to a Black Hunting Spider, it was undoubtedly from the Hunter pathway. With the corresponding Beyonder powers, the special parts on its body could certainly be used to brew potions.

Lumian turned to Elros and said straightforwardly, "That monster is different from a Black Hunting Spider. There's a human-like heart on its back. What's going on?"

Elros gazed at the dark-red blood dripping into the hall's shadows, pondering for a moment.

"I've never seen such a Beyonder creature before."

She paused for a moment before continuing, "All I know is that if the owner of Red Swan Castle and many core members of the Sauron family don't go mad and venture into the depths of the underground palace without returning, someone will extract their heart and send it somewhere in the underground palace."

Upon hearing this, Lumian suddenly recalled a scene he had dreamt of due to the lingering effects of the King's Pie game.

In a bronze coffin surrounded by countless white candles, a hand

with dark-red, almost black blood vessels extended, holding a shriveled, withered, black heart with some blood seeping out.

What the f*ck is the Sauron family up to? Lumian couldn't help but curse inwardly.

At that moment, Poet Iraeta finally snapped out of his daze. He looked at Lumian and the others in shock, fear, and excitement.

"Are all of you Beyonders capable of using Beyonder powers?"

"You know about Beyonders too?" Albus Medici wore an expression that suggested he wasn't worthy of knowing.

As Iraeta approached Lumian, he quickly explained, "Seven or eight years ago, I went to a battlefield to gather material and saw something. I knew that there were many people in our army who could use superpowers. They were called Beyonders."

"We do have superpowers, and they look quite similar," Lumian said with a smile, glancing around. "Do you want to follow us deeper or return to the surface yourself?"

Iraeta didn't hide his fear and muttered, "Of course, I'll follow you. Although it's very likely that I'll encounter the large spider again, it's better than walking alone in the darkness with unknown monsters lurking around.

"I don't want the last poem of my life to be 'Oh, foolish Iraeta.'"

Lumian pondered for a few seconds and calmly said, "If you wish to return to the surface, I can escort you to the entrance of the underground palace."

"Then I'll definitely choose to return!" Iraeta changed his mind without hesitation.

Lumian then turned to Albus and Elros and asked, "Do you want to join me, wait here, or venture deeper by yourselves?"

Albus Medici gave Lumian a deep look and sneered.

“I didn’t expect you to be such a moral person. You can escort this poet with a dubious reputation yourself.”

His implication was clear: “You must have ulterior motives for escorting someone out, considering your lack of morals.”

He didn’t specify if he intended to stay or venture in alone.

“I’m with Albus,” Elros, who stood by Albus, replied with a smile, holding the carbide lamp.

Lumian observed the dark-red blood droplets left by the black spider and proceeded to ascend the stone steps with Iraeta, using the carbide lamp for illumination.

In the pitch-black and silent underground, they returned to the corridor where the wax statue artisan and the iron soldiers were.

Poet Iraeta glanced back at the deep darkness below and said to his sponsor, “Those two shouldn’t be simple.”

“I know,” Lumian replied nonchalantly.

Holding the carbide lamp that emitted a yellowish glow, he advanced at a moderate pace.

Iraeta walked closely beside him and continued in his usual tone, “The war between the Loen Kingdom and the Feysac Empire ended over seven years ago. But Miss Elros mentioned that her father died in the war six years ago. If I recall correctly, it was likely due to dissatisfaction with the Feysac Empire’s losing treaty, leading to a rebellion. This was a civil war in the Feysac Empire. Why did Miss Elros mention the Loen Kingdom?

“Is her father a representative of the extreme faction or a member of the royal family who perished in the rebellion?”

A member of the royal family who rebelled? Is that why they fled to Trier? Lumian considered the information provided by the political enthusiast, Iraeta.

Iraeta glanced at his sponsor and continued, “Actually, before today,

I saw Albus Medici elsewhere.”

Lumian’s curiosity was piqued as he asked, “Where?”

Iraeta glanced around and lowered his voice.

“Sacred Heart Cloister.”

Chapter 428 - 428 Incineration

428 Incineration

Sacred Heart Cloister? The largest cloister in Trier's Eternal Blazing Sun Church? Why did Albus Medici go there? Could he be an undercover agent sent by the Purifier into the Iron and Blood Cross Order? Or did Gardner Martin instruct him to keep an eye on the Sacred Heart Cloister? Lumian's mind raced with questions and guesses.

As he advanced, clutching a carbide lamp, Iraeta hastily interjected with more information.

"I have a friend at the Sacred Heart Cloister. I often go there to drink with him."

Lumian, momentarily diverting his focus from Albus Medici, jested, "Can the cloister monks drink?"

The two moved through the shadowy passageway, guided solely by the yellowish glow of the carbide lamp.

Iraeta rambled, "Of course they can, but they can't partake in liquor or get inebriated. The wine brewed by the Sacred Heart Cloister is the finest I've ever tasted."

"Is your friend a monk?" Lumian walked at a moderate pace, his footsteps echoing through the seemingly endless passageway.

Iraeta appeared content conversing with Ciel and didn't hide anything.

"Yes, he's a member of the Brotherhood Minor and served as my nephew's baptism priest. Later, he could no longer tolerate the cathedral's clergy indulging in pleasures and chose to become a

monk. He joined the Sacred Heart Cloister and is currently overseeing the brewery."

A member of the Brotherhood Minor, champions of temperance and asceticism… Lumian deduced this and redirected their conversation.

"How often have you and your friend seen Albus Medici? What was the reason for his visit to the Sacred Heart Cloister?"

"Just once," Iraeta muttered. "I don't concern myself with such matters. There are no nuns there. When I saw him, he was walking through the corridor with a monk and entered the rear of the cloister."

It appears that Albus Medici had not entered covertly or with fear of discovery… Lumian deduced this from Iraeta's account.

Amidst Poet Iraeta's relentless search for topics, the two of them finally passed through the eerie wax statue room, leaving behind the hall with the enigmatic doors of Hope, Madness, and Death. They retraced their steps to the underground palace.

Iraeta let out a long sigh of relief and relaxed. He grumbled, "The underground palace is so dangerous, and there are creatures with supernatural abilities. Poufer truly led us into an adventure down here!

"Is he attempting to get us killed?"

You've all been corrupted by the King's Pie game many times. I wonder if you're truly alive… Lumian refrained from a direct response to Iraeta's grievances, opting for a playful smile as he remarked,

"It seems that the more frightened and tense you are, the more you like to talk."

"That's what makes me feel alive," Iraeta confessed. He extinguished the carbide lamp as they exited the underground palace via the spiral staircase.

Lumian turned back, retracing his steps to the Door of Madness.

He hadn't closed the door when he left. Even though he hadn't approached yet, the yellowish light from the carbide lamp made the wax statues appear faintly, as if they were waiting in the darkness.

Lumian stopped at the door, slowly bent down, and placed the carbide lamp on the ground in front of him.

Then, he straightened up and swept his gaze across the wax statues' faces, their expressions frozen in agony and shrouded in shadows.

Crimson Fire Ravens began to materialize around him, one after another.

Since Count Poufer had shown ill intent by leading them into the perilous depths of the underground palace—any ordinary person would already have died—there was no reason to show any courtesy to a member of the Sauron family, the owner of Red Swan Castle!

Lumian's plan was straightforward: to set the wax statues ablaze. This had several purposes. First, it might assist in digesting his potion. Second, it could preemptively eliminate potential threats, preventing the wax statues from coming to life and attacking at a critical moment. Lastly, it could create a chaotic situation that would disrupt Count Poufer's secret plan, sowing doubt and confusion for their further exploration.

Chaos often created opportunities.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! With a swift motion, he released a flurry of Crimson Fire Ravens that darted towards the wax statues.

After dispatching two batches of Fire Ravens, Lumian dropped to one knee, pressing his hands to the ground.

From his palms, fiery serpents slithered out, winding their way through the pile of wax statues and swiftly igniting them.

A cacophony of explosions followed as the wax statues' heads burst, and their lower extremities were engulfed in flames, creating a cage of crimson fire.

The flesh-white wax that composed their bodies melted rapidly,

turning into liquid droplets or softening and crumbling away, rendering them fragile under the dual onslaught of explosion and combustion.

Smack!

The “muscles” on one of the wax statues completely disintegrated, revealing a new face.

It was a human face!

It was a male human who had lost his eyes and died long ago, his face filled with pain!

Silently, more wax statues softened and crumbled.

Without exception, there was a human corpse inside every one of them.

Among the corpses encased in the wax statues were men and women, some with exposed flesh and skin, others with heads and bodies that appeared to have been crudely stitched together after death. Some had open stomachs, their intestines tangled and filled with white wax, creating a grotesque sight…

What all of them had in common was the haunting expression of pain etched across their faces, as if they had lived through unspeakable horrors or had been trapped in the darkest of nightmares.

As Lumian observed, the melted wax transformed into a viscous liquid that oozed from the faces of the deceased humans. It was as if these tortured souls were weeping tears of relief as they faced the purifying embrace of the flames.

Inside the statues are actually real people… Lumian, who had his fair share of horrifying scenes, couldn’t help but tense up, instinctively feeling repulsed and afraid.

He finally knew where the ordinary people from Red Swan Castle who had gone mad and mutilated themselves in his nightmares had gone.

Lumian rose to his feet, clutching the carbide lamp. Crimson flames erupted from his body, transforming into blazing meteors that streaked to every corner of the wax statue-filled chamber, turning it into an inferno.

The flesh-white wax began to burn fervently, feeding upon itself until there was no space left for the fire to consume.

Lumian's eyes reflected the crimson conflagration and the viscous wax tears on his pale face.

He didn't avert his gaze but watched intently.

At that moment, he gained a newfound understanding of his pyromaniac abilities. The once-vague third acting principle became clear.

The Pyromaniac wreaked havoc and caused utter catastrophe!

As for Pyromaniacs, they could willingly unleash disaster and destruction upon anyone.

Lumian fervently wished that the heretics and those who had gone "mad" and could only harm others would be engulfed by the flames!

Having amalgamated his various acts into this principle, Lumian had an uncommonly clear sense that his Pyromaniac potion had been entirely digested. He could even hear an imaginary shattering sound.

With a series of thuds, the lifeless bodies, stripped of their wax support, fell one by one to the ground. They piled up and burned even more fiercely.

All of a sudden, the wooden door creaked open from the exit opposite the wax statue's chamber.

The wax statue artisan, his thick beard and hair resembling a humanoid lion, stood before Lumian.

His iron-black eyes were tinged crimson by the flames that surged toward the ceiling. His voice sounded ethereal as he inquired, "Why… did you… set my wax statues ablaze?"

Lumian didn't answer; instead, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

Spirit World Traversal!

A spectral light flickered within his clothing, and his form swiftly materialized next to the wax statue artisan.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian parted his lips.

"Ha!"

A pale-yellow, gaseous light shot out of his mouth and struck the wax statue artisan's head.

The wax statue artisan, clad in a grayish-black robe, swayed visibly, as if momentarily losing his balance. He didn't lose consciousness completely; it was more like he had undergone a Psychic Piercing and was in a state of shock induced by the pain.

Lumian didn't rely solely on the Spell of Harrumph. He raised his prepared left palm and hurled a crimson fireball, tightly compressed in layers, into the wax statue artisan's mouth and nose with Fire Infusion.

The fireball, gradually turning white in color, whooshed into the target's mouth and nostrils, invading his brain.

Boom!

The blazing white fireball exploded from the inside out while Lumian watched as the wax statue artisan's head expanded rapidly before exploding.

Flaming flesh and blood spurted out. Lumian, already prepared, shielded his face with the carbide lamp in his right hand, leaving the back of his hand stained with blood.

With a thud, the wax statue artisan, with only a small half of his head remaining, swayed and collapsed to the ground.

Lumian, who had meticulously prepared a sequence of attacks, found

himself momentarily taken aback. He hadn't expected the situation to resolve so effortlessly.

He had foreseen that the enigmatic wax statue artisan might pose a formidable challenge, and he had readied himself to "teleport" instantly if things took a turn for the worse.

It was worth noting that the wax statue that had reanimated previously had been more formidable than the wax statue artisan himself. Merely being in its presence had weighed heavily on Lumian's body and mind, almost rendering him incapable of resistance.

Did he possess the unique ability to create these wax statues, but lacked inherent power? Or did he need to draw strength from the Sauron family's underground palace to bring these menacing wax figures to life? Perhaps my attack was too swift, leaving him no time to react. He perished on the spot before he could tap into any external strength? Lumian gazed down at the wax statue artisan and assessed the situation.

…

In the depths of the underground palace, within a hall adorned with white candles,

Poufer Sauron, seated in a corner, abruptly opened his eyes and fixed his gaze upon the bronze coffin situated in the center of the chamber.

Around the coffin, numerous candles strangely extinguished without warning.

Wh— Poufer rose to his feet, his expression slightly twisted in consternation.

… The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

At the exit of the wax statue chamber, Lumian witnessed a crimson radiance emanating from the wax statue artisan's body.

Initially, the luminescence surged towards the head, but only a small fragment of the wax statue artisan's head remained. Consequently, it

shifted to his chest, yet it couldn't dissipate.

Lumian felt a tinge of surprise. He tore open the grayish-black robe of the wax statue master, unveiling his chest.

There lay a sinister, pitch-black wound, and the space where his heart should have resided was hollow!

The heart is missing… Elros had mentioned that the Sauron family members' hearts had to be sent deep into the underground palace… Lumian vaguely grasped the reason behind the wax statue artisan's formidable yet fragile nature.

Ultimately, the crimson light coalesced into an ethereal entity with myriad gullies, resembling a shrunken blood-colored brain.

Unsure of its significance, Lumian stashed it away and made his exit.

The flames in the room continued to burn, but for some unknown reason, they failed to spread.

…

In the stone pillar hall where the confrontation with the black spider had transpired.

Albus and Elros observed as Lumian returned, carrying a carbide lamp that emitted a faint yellowish glow.

Almost simultaneously, they noticed the specks of blood on Lumian's body.

"Did you kill the poet?" Albus asked, amused.

Lumian shook his head and replied calmly, "I killed the one making the wax statues."

Chapter 429 - 429 Orders

429 Orders

Upon hearing Lumian's response, Albus's eyes widened slightly, and his eyebrows twitched.

She quickly smiled and scrutinized Lumian's face with a meaningful gaze.

At that moment, Albus returned to normal and gazed at Lumian. He clicked his tongue and said, "You're really ruthless. You even went back and killed the wax statue guy."

"I had no choice. He stopped me from burning the wax statues," Lumian said with a gentle smile.

Albus's eyebrows twitched again.

"Did you really burn them?"

"Of course," Lumian shared his findings sincerely. "The wax statues' surfaces melted and peeled away to reveal human corpses."

Albus wasn't surprised at all. He applauded and smiled mockingly. nove(l)bi(n.)com

"Well done! I must praise your courage."

It's as if he's saying that I'm ignorant and fearless… Lumian didn't believe that Albus was really praising him.

Elros maintained her smile and spoke as though a bystander, "The Sauron family isn't the only one in Red Swan Castle who's gone mad. The butler, guards, valets, and maids have also gone mad. Their deaths after mutilation are terrifying. It's not suitable for their families and the public to know. They can only report their

disappearance and compensate them a large sum of money."

Even so, they can still recruit new servants… Is it because the salary is high, or is the matter kept under wraps? Will they only choose foreigners who have just arrived in Trier and don't know anything? Lumian knew that ancient families like Sauron had servants who served them for generations, but their numbers were already limited.

"Shall we continue forward?" Elros inquired.

"Of course." Lumian still wanted to track down the severely injured black spider and extract the Beyonder characteristic it would produce to study the withered, black heart.

Albus Medici answered with his actions and walked deeper into the hall.

Under the yellowish glow of the carbide lamp, the darkness gradually receded, revealing the drops of dark-red blood flowing from the mutated giant spider.

As he advanced, he casually asked Elros, "Who's responsible for sending the extracted hearts into the depths of the underground palace?"

"Just because members of the Sauron family go mad and disappear into the depths of the underground palace doesn't mean that ordinary members of the Sauron family can't enter. In particular, the successor of Red Swan Castle often goes to certain rooms and halls in the underground maze. It begins the first time Poufer becomes king while playing King's Pie."

Influenced by the frenzied and violent spirit? Lumian recalled the invisible entity that had circled above his head after winning the King's Pie game while not daring to descend due to the Blood Emperor's aura.

Soon, the trio reached the end of the hall. Through an open wooden door, they followed a corridor with numerous reliefs of soldiers engraved on both sides and a few storage rooms.

The figure wore a light-colored formal suit and had curly black hair.

He had a slightly mean appearance and was clearly a participant in this gathering. He was Ernst Young, the critic assigned to Count Poufer's team.

Ernst Young held a carbide lamp that no longer emitted any light and smiled bitterly.

"We had already split up, and each believed we could find the Count's crown. But before I could search carefully, the carbide lamp suddenly went off. I had no choice but to return in the dark and search for a room with a bell rope."

"How unlucky." Albus sighed exaggeratedly for Ernst Young.

He had already reached the open door and stood beside Ernst Young.

Suddenly, crimson fireballs shot out from his free left hand, landing beside the critic and creating a blazing circle of flames.

"W-what are you doing?" Ernst Young asked in surprise.

Albus replied with a smile, "I'm here to help you illuminate the area. Isn't it very bright now?"

Ernst Young fell silent, crimson flames dancing on his face.

He's not surprised that Albus can create flames and possesses superpowers… Lumian had sensed that there was something amiss with Ernst Young when he saw him, like a troublemaker sent by Poufer Sauron. However, saying that something was amiss was an understatement; he was entirely abnormal.

Flames raged, and the temperature around Ernst Young soared.

Lumian glanced over and noticed a strange softening on the critic's face.

A viscous, wax-like liquid seeped out of Ernst Young's skin.

As Lumian's forehead throbbed, Albus extended his hands, leaned forward, and pushed open the wooden door.

Amidst the creaking sounds, the scene behind the door was tainted with a yellowish glow.

Coffins of varying sizes had been chiseled into the walls. Chains hung from the ceiling, and coffins of various colors dangled from them. The ground was filled with countless coffins, with only narrow gaps for people to pass through.

At that moment, Ernst Young raised his hands, his eyes empty, and tore at his face.

The half-waxed, half-real skin was torn off, revealing bloody flesh and dark-blue—nearly black—blood vessels.

A potent scent of blood and burning wax permeated the air, causing all the coffins in the hall to tremble simultaneously.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The coffin lids of various colors opened one after another, and black giant spiders with compound eyes, lush bristles, and withered hearts inlaid crawled out.

Rustling sounds filled the air as the giant black spiders covered almost every corner of the hall.

Aiming at Lumian and the others, they extended their mouths and quickly condensed a crimson fireball that was nearly white.

Numerous fireballs flew out, as if a volley had been fired from an artillery battery.

Whether it was Lumian, Albus, or Elros, they all lunged to the side of the corridor, avoiding the location facing the hall.

The entire corridor was engulfed in flames, ravaged by the shockwaves. The walls on both sides showed signs of collapse.

Lumian's target was an empty storage room to the side, successfully evading the violent bombardment.

Elros was the same. Only Albus used Ernst Young as a cover.

Amidst the incessant explosions, the critic, who had lost most of his

face, shattered into pieces. Flesh and blood splattered, and some parts of his body melted like candles.

The rustling sound resounded once more, and the innumerable black spiders seemed to surge out of the hall.

Lumian's scalp tingled as he listened. His first instinct was to quickly "teleport" away.

In the face of such mutated black spiders, he had no problem dealing with one or two. Two was a bit of a stretch, but three meant he had to consider retreating. And now, there were dozens of them!

Son of a sow! There are so many of you. What do you usually eat to survive? Just air? Lumian cursed inwardly as he activated the black mark on his right shoulder to use Spirit World Traversal.

Suddenly, he heard a nearly ethereal female voice.

The voice quickly became clearer. It belonged to Elros Einhorn.

Then, the girl's voice in Hermes reverberated.

"I command you, in the name of the Sauron family bloodline.

"Leave this area!"

The rustling stopped abruptly, and the entire area fell into an indescribable silence.

After a few seconds, the rapid crawling sounds of arthropods echoed again, but they spread in all directions.

Lumian ceased his attempts to use Spirit World Traversal and cast his gaze towards the corridor beyond.

The flames gradually extinguished, and no black spiders appeared.

Lumian left the side storage room in thought and saw that all the coffins in the hall ahead were open, but there was no sign of the giant black spiders.

Elros, dressed in a light-colored dress, stood in the corridor, her right hand clenched tightly, her left palm hanging low. Her aura seemed slightly different from before, as if the commander-in-chief of an army had arrived before her loyal soldiers, naturally displaying an alluring charm that made people submit to her.

Clap! Clap! Clap! Albus Medici stood up from behind the crumbled Ernst Young, clutching a lamp.

He smiled mockingly and said, “Aren’t you an Einhorn? Why are you using the Sauron family’s name?”

Elros cast a cold glance at the Iron and Blood Cross Order member, causing him to subconsciously shut his mouth.

“I have half of the Sauron bloodline.” Elros turned to Lumian and smiled again. “Do you want to continue?”

“Of course!” Albus Medici was the first to respond.

Lumian cracked his neck and smiled. “The game isn’t over yet.”

Although he had the urge to escape the underground maze, the more he wanted to succumb to his urges, the more he couldn’t show it.

His experience and Aurore’s teachings had taught him not to let others guess his true thoughts under such circumstances.

The aura around Elros that made people involuntary submissive gradually dissipated, and she returned to her obedient state.

Lumian and Albus entered the hall ahead side by side and saw that the wooden coffins of various colors were empty. The corpses that should have existed looked like they had been eaten by the giant black spiders.

Just as he was about to pass through the mass tomb, Lumian spotted a massive black spider sprawled in a corner. Its side was hideously torn, and dark-red blood continued to flow.

This was the Beyonder creature that had previously fought the three Hunters. Due to its severe injuries, it couldn’t leave the tomb

according to Elros's "orders." It could only stay where it was and "lick" its wounds.

Upon seeing Lumian and the others, the giant black spider half-raised its body and let out a threatening squeak.

Glancing at the shriveled heart on the black spider's back, Lumian casually smiled and said, "It's mine, and the rest of the spoils of war are yours. How does that sound?"

Albus Medici chuckled. "Is that all you eye? Only you care about such things."

Elros's lips curled into a faint smile. "I have no problem with that, but since it's your spoils of war, you can retrieve it yourself. I won't provide any assistance."

"I like that. You can occasionally say something nice," Albus praised Elros before casting his gaze at Lumian.

The two Hunters, a man and a woman, appeared to be waiting to "appreciate" Lumian's performance.

The colossal black spider had suffered severe injuries but had clearly not lost its ability to fight!

Chapter 430 - 430 “Reckless”

430 “Reckless”

Sensing Albus and Elros’s gazes, Lumian cautiously approached the injured black spider with the carbide lamp in hand.

As a Hunter, he had a clear grasp of his two teammates’ current mindsets.

It was akin to navigating a dark forest. Everyone assumed the role of the hunter, but the moment one revealed their vulnerability, they became the hunted, vulnerable to collective assault.

Albus and Elros desired insights into Lumian’s condition and capabilities.

They harbored doubts that Lumian could easily dispatch the wax statue artisan, believing he must have paid a significant price. Moreover, they aimed to decipher the precise Sequence of the previous winner of the King’s Pie game and the mystical items he carried.

Lumian had no qualms about eliminating the severely injured black spider, but he was reluctant to unveil his trump cards—Spirit World Traversal and the Spell of Harrumph—to Albus and Elros.

As he closed in on the black spider, his thoughts raced, pondering the most efficient strategy that would incur minimal cost and time, making the task as straightforward as possible.

Lumian’s gaze swept from the torn-open side of the black spider, which remained trapped in the hall like its kin, dark-red blood oozing out. With his left hand, he casually retrieved a silver earring from his pocket and fastened it to his left earlobe.

Lie!

Having fully digested the Pyromaniac potion, Lumian's emotions steadied. He could now covertly wield the Flog boxing gloves and employ Lie.

Crimson flaming ravens materialized around him.

Almost simultaneously, the colossal black spider reacted. The shriveled heart within it emitted a dark-red glow, conjuring a plethora of menacing fireballs, as if weaving a protective crimson net.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The Fire Ravens encircling Lumian shot out, each following a distinct trajectory towards their respective targets.

Over a hundred crimson fireballs erupted from the black spider's form, hurtling forward with menacing howls.

Rumble!

In an instant, some Fire Ravens were intercepted by the fireballs, while others detonated them, setting off a series of explosions around the black spider, causing flames to erupt one after another.

At that precise moment, a brilliant fireball streaked towards the hall's exit.

Lumian had been awaiting this opening. He raised his left hand and snapped his fingers.

With a resounding crash, the bright fireball lost its trajectory and plummeted to the ground.

Instead of detonating, flames billowed upward, revealing the black spider's figure.

Lumian charged forward, his left hand ablaze with crimson flames.

They coiled, layer upon layer, compressing until they almost turned white.

Upon reaching the black spider's side, which lay stunned from the impact, Lumian leaned in and swung his left arm, pressing the blazing white fireball against the grotesque laceration, allowing it to penetrate the creature's body.

Amid the frantic thrashing of its limbs, the black spider barely managed to turn around. Lumian had already capitalized on the moment to lean back and roll, increasing the distance between them.

His form materialized beside the crimson sea created by the Fire Ravens and the fireball, distancing himself from the creature's violent aura.

Boom!

The white-hot fireball detonated within the black spider's body. The incineration might not have been visually apparent, but the swift expansion of gas tore through the Beyonder creature entirely, ejecting its chitinous shell along with its flesh.

The colossal black spider emitted a spine-chilling screech as its eight hairy legs frantically recoiled.

Lumian wasted no time, preventing it from regaining its composure. He condensed a crimson spear that gleamed nearly white and hurled it toward the creature.

The flaming spear soared through the air, piercing the gaping wound and pinning the giant black spider to the ground.

The spear disintegrated, setting its insides ablaze. The black spider writhed a few times before falling silent.

Lumian didn't rush to approach his fallen foe. He turned to Albus and Elros. With a smile, he removed Lie and said, "It's settled."

As he spoke, he summoned dozens of crimson Fire Ravens and sent them swooping toward the seemingly lifeless black spider.

Boom!

The black spider leaped once more, self-destructing.

It had been pretending to be dead!

Unfortunately for it, Lumian had maintained his distance and didn't fall into the trap. He only sacrificed a dozen Fire Ravens.

The remaining crimson Fire Ravens swarmed the battered body of the black spider, restoring "peace" to it.

Upon witnessing this, Albus nodded slowly and grudgingly admitted, "Not bad."

Elros observed thoughtfully, offering no immediate response to Lumian's proclamation.

Lumian turned to the motionless black spider, waiting for an iron-black light to emerge from its body before he approached.

After assessing the black spider's condition, he decided to exploit its severely injured state. Potential weaknesses included a probable decrease in Flame Controlling ability and agility. Therefore, he activated Lie and harnessed its Flame Controlling attributes to match his own speed and agility.

The iron-black light didn't converge on the black spider's compound eye as Lumian had anticipated. Instead, it flowed into the shriveled, blackened heart embedded in its back like a stream.

Lumian halted beside his prey, puzzled by the unfolding scene. After the Beyonder characteristic seeped out, he decided to collect it before drawing any conclusions. He carefully removed the shriveled heart, black compound eyes, and poison glands from the mouth, stashing them in separate concealed bags and metal canisters.

"Don't tell me you're merely a Pyromaniac and haven't advanced to become a Conspirer?" Albus taunted.

You know perfectly well that I only recently became a Pyromaniac when I joined the Iron and Blood Cross Order… Lumian grumbled inwardly. He straightened up and offered a smile.

"That's correct. I'm still just a Pyromaniac."

“Pyromaniacs aren’t capable of taking down the wax statue artisan…” Elros mumbled softly.

Albus’s gaze briefly flickered towards Lumian’s pocket where Lie was concealed, but he said nothing more.

See, I’m speaking the truth. If you doubt me and suspect otherwise, there’s little I can do… Lumian chuckled, picked up the carbide lamp, and led the way to the exit of the hall.

After traversing another dark corridor, they arrived in a dimly lit room.

Within the yellowish light, iron-clad soldiers donned in blue coats adorned with golden threads came into view.

Unlike children’s toys, each one stood nearly two meters tall. The spears they held glinted with a frigid gleam and appeared exceptionally sharp.

“If they were to come to life, it’d be an entire army,” Albus remarked with a hint of significance.

Army, soldiers… Lumian suddenly recollected the desire for submission in the King’s Pie game. He remembered the wax statue’s actions when it attacked him and the evident hierarchy within the Iron and Blood Cross Order—Brigade Commander, Deputy Brigade Commander, Commanding Officer, NCO, and Soldier. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

In the midst of his musings, Lumian made an educated guess.

Could the higher ranks of the Hunter pathway involve the military, obedience, and regimentation?

The wax statues resemble soldiers awaiting commands, as do these iron automata. Could a high-Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway possess the ability to create specialized soldiers?

The underground palace of Red Swan Castle is indeed teeming with the essence of the Hunter pathway. It’s no wonder I encounter creatures from this pathway so frequently…

This meant that Lumian didn't have to search. He merely needed to engage in combat to secure the corresponding rewards.

What a perilous hunting ground, one that could potentially make me the prey, yet offers substantial gains! He sighed deeply.

Lumian observed as Albus Medici summoned layers of compressed white fireballs and casually sent them gliding across the room.

The fireballs didn't detonate; they hovered silently over the ground, resting on the shoulders and hats of the iron soldiers.

After the trio departed the room, Albus transferred the carbide lamp to his left hand, raised his right palm, and snapped his fingers, emulating Lumian.

Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!

In the room behind them, the white-hot fireballs ignited one after another, setting each other ablaze and causing the ground to quiver slightly.

Delayed Explosion!

One of Pyromaniac's abilities, Delayed Explosion!

Despite the fact that the iron soldiers in the room were constructed of metal, they either lost their limbs or internal components under the formidable shockwave. Some were even buried beneath stone bricks as a result of the collapsed wall.

Noticing Lumian's gaze, Albus wore a satisfied smile.

"To eliminate concealed threats, just like how you handled those wax statues."

"I thought you wouldn't dare," Lumian replied with a grin.

Upon witnessing Albus's actions, Lumian discerned his intentions. He was taken aback that Red Swan Castle's underground palace appeared to possess a form of self-defense mechanism. No matter how potent the explosions or flames, their effects were confined to a

single room, preventing spillover.

Indeed, without such protective measures, Red Swan Castle would have likely crumbled long ago, given the rampant monsters dwelling within… Lumian observed another descending corridor ahead.

At the corridor's terminus stood a pair of hefty iron doors, the dark surface marred by large splotches of red, as if someone had splattered blood on them.

Elros took a deep breath and moved ahead of Lumian and Albus.

She reached the door, carefully set down the carbide lamp, extended her hands, leaned forward, and exerted force.

Amidst a grating sound, the iron-black door slowly swung open.

Lumian's eyelids twitched when he beheld a vast expanse of candlelight.

The bronze coffin from his nightmare was starkly reflected in his vision.

At that moment, nearly a third of the white candles surrounding the coffin had been snuffed out, while a substantial portion still burned brightly.

In the flickering candlelight, the door creaked open. Lumian rapidly surveyed the area but found no other individuals present.

The three Hunters remained rooted by the door for over ten seconds.

Finally, Albus Medici turned his head and tauntingly asked, "Why aren't you guys going in?"

"Why did you stop too?" Elros Einhorn inquired instead of responding.

"We're waiting for you to take the lead," Lumian replied with a casual grin.

This hall was rife with danger and concealed profound secrets.

Naturally, he wanted others to scout the path first!

Lumian realized he wasn't alone in thinking this. Albus and Elros shared similar sentiments.

Albus withdrew his gaze and let out a soft chuckle.

"Since you're all cowards, I'll have to do it myself."

With that, he abruptly dropped to one knee and placed his hands on the ground.

Silently, two crimson fire serpents darted toward the bronze coffin.

Hey! Lumian's eyes narrowed. He hadn't anticipated Albus would act so recklessly.

Assaulting the most problematic element without conducting any investigation?

Elros's expression froze as she instinctively extended her right hand, as if attempting to halt Albus.

Chapter 431 - 431 Three Hunters, One Stage

431 Three Hunters, One Stage

Elros extended her right palm and unleashed a crimson fireball.

Amidst the rumbling, it engulfed the flaming serpents in its own explosion, halting their advance toward the bronze coffin.

Without further ado, Albus picked up the carbide lamp and rose to his feet.

He glanced at Elros and grinned.

“So you do know something?” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Albus then taunted Lumian,”You’re in the dark here.”

Dammit! If it weren’t for this inappropriate setting, I’d go head to head with you… Only now did Lumian realize that Albus’s recklessness had been a test and a trap.

“This is the Red Swan Castle of the Sauron family,” Elros replied, not directly addressing Albus but stating a simple fact.

She was implying that she had the Sauron family’s bloodline and had resided in Red Swan Castle for nearly six years. It was only natural for her to possess knowledge.

Albus shifted his gaze to the white candles, their flames nearly one-third extinguished, as if he hadn’t heard Elros. He asked straightforwardly, “What are you doing in the depths of this underground palace? If you don’t share, how can we cooperate and

assist you?”

Elros looked at the bronze coffin and unexpectedly turned to Lumian, “I wish to explore this forbidden area, known as the family’s secret ground. Only a few are allowed inside to discover if the curse in our blood is connected to this place.”

“You’re an Einhorn. Do you genuinely consider yourself a Sauron family member?” Albus Medici taunted the lady.

This was both a dig at Elros for concealing the complete truth and an effort to sow discord between her and the Sauron family, making her aware of her place. So, there’s no need to help the Sauron family conceal those secrets? Lumian discerned a double meaning in Albus’s words.

This made him suspect that the other party might already be a Conspirer. His unlikable demeanor might be a disguised trap.

Unfazed, Elros sighed and said, “I bear half of the Sauron family’s bloodline and am also a Hunter. I too will be haunted by that curse.”

At this point, she turned her gaze towards Albus Medici and inquired, “What brings you to the depths of the underground palace? Don’t tell me you’re truly here to indulge in my naive cousin’s childish games?”

Albus responded in a half-sigh, half-sincere tone, “It’s time for the Sauron family’s curse to come to an end.

“And to break this curse, we must first fathom the essence and origin of this curse.”

“Is that so?” Elros no longer displayed the same obedience and restraint.

Albus chuckled.

I’d be a fool to take your word for it… Nevertheless, a true Conspirer doesn’t just tell lies. They always reveal partial truths or even the whole truth. It’s just that they omit the crucial parts… What was the truth in Albus Medici’s response? Could it be that he genuinely wishes to help the Sauron family break the curse? If Elros were to say

so, I'd believe her. How can an outsider like him, with no ties to the Sauron family, possess such kindness… Could it be a byproduct of pursuing his true objective? Lumian listened silently, dissecting the responses of his two "companions."

Her abrupt change in demeanor and her command over the giant black spiders didn't seem like something a young girl living in her grandfather's house would be capable of.

Elros and Albus evaluated Lumian's explanation with identical, almost mocking smiles. Then, they both turned to him and asked in unison, "Why did you venture into the depths of the underground palace?"

"Me?" Lumian pointed at himself with his free left hand and responded honestly, "Someone entrusted me with investigating the Sauron family's decline and provided me with something."

The "someone" referred to Gardner Martin, and the "something" pertained to the dangerous corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché, although Lumian didn't disclose whether he had accepted it.

Albus smiled, acknowledging the lie while being aware of Lumian's "true identity."

Elros's eyes flickered, swiftly assessing which parts of Lumian's words were true and which were lies or incomplete.

After a moment of silence, Lumian sighed and chided both Albus and Elros.

"You Hunters, despite all you've said, not a single one of you took a step forward!"

The three of them remained at the door, waiting for one another to step into the minefield.

"Talking to you guys is a waste of time." Albus sighed.

Nevertheless, he refrained from advancing. He clicked his tongue and added, "If only a Beyonder of the Sailor pathway were here at a time like this."

“Don’t assume that Beyonders of the Sailor pathway are impulsive, reckless, and impatient. The potion may have an effect, but a person’s character and experience are the most critical factors determining their actions. If you rely on such stereotypes for Beyonders of the Sailor pathway in the future, you may find yourself turned into a characteristic,” Elros mocked Albus.

Lumian abstained from joining their debate and asked contemplatively, “If we hadn’t chosen the middle path and the Door of Madness, would we still be here?”

“Yes, but some rooms are even more dangerous,” Elros replied, her gaze fixed on the hall’s surroundings.

Lumian nodded and asked, “Will we encounter demigod-level monsters?”

“Most of the demigod-level Beyonder characteristics have been retrieved. Many below the demigod level still linger in the underground palace, turning this place into a restricted hunting ground for members of the Sauron family seeking to improve themselves.” Elros didn’t seem inclined to conceal anything for the Sauron family.

Most of them have been retrieved… Does that mean some are still hidden in the depths of the underground palace? Did this coincide with the complete disappearance of some core members? Do the Sauron family not want to retrieve them, or are they incapable of doing so?

Indeed, Elros’s description aligns with the Sauron family’s current situation. There aren’t many saint-level demigods, but it’s still a substantial number. Many core members are scattered in the military, politics, and business world, holding significant influence… Are they lacking strength at a higher level? There are no angels, only a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact. Or is there just one angel? Lumian glanced around and realized that Elros and Albus remained remarkably patient, as if they had frozen in their spots.

Truth be told, Lumian was tempted to observe the outcomes of Elros and Albus, using their luck to gauge the danger of venturing deeper

into the hall within the underground palace. However, given Elros's erratic temperament and the unnerving silence of Termiboros, he abandoned the idea.

Not only was it extremely risky, but it could also mislead him!

At that moment, Lumian suddenly felt a surge of danger.

He swiftly turned, his gaze following the glow of the carbide lamp, and Albus and Elros did the same.

In the diagonal corridor above, a hand with dark-red, almost black blood vessels extended from the darkness, pressing against the wall, illuminated by the faint yellowish glow.

In the bronze coffin, surrounded by white candles, a hand with dark-red, nearly black blood vessels suddenly extended, gripping a shriveled, blackened heart, from which blood oozed!

Has the menacing creature from the bronze coffin surfaced? Before Lumian could activate Spirit World Traversal, an intense fear overwhelmed him, as if it wanted him to yield, and he involuntarily bent forward.

Instinctively resisting and struggling, he, along with Albus and Elros, stepped back and entered the hall.

In an instant, an illusion materialized before their eyes.

Lumian "witnessed" the hall enveloped in surreal purple flames, akin to an inferno from myths and legends.

At the heart of the purple flames was the bronze coffin. It had turned transparent, as if it had lost its physical form, revealing an iron-black ring pressing down on it.

The ring was embedded in the ground, with viscous, bottomless blood-colored spring water in its center. In the spring water, shriveled and blackened hearts bobbed up and down.

Bloodlines extended from the iron-black ring. Some wound around the base of the bronze coffin and burrowed into it, while others

connected to the white candles.

In the next moment, Lumian heard a frenzied and violent illusory roar, as if emanating from deep underground.

His mind reeled, and he lost consciousness.

…

In the boundless darkness, the bewildered Lumian faintly heard a majestic voice, but the words eluded his understanding.

In his stupor, he strained to discern the voice. Aurore's melodious song and the ethereal flute of the shepherds echoed in his ears.

"I'm the elf of spring…"

As the voices gradually grew more distinct, Lumian sensed searing heat in his right palm.

The intensity of the sensation was almost tangible, accompanied by a burning pain.

Pain… Pain! Lumian snapped out of his fugue and forced his eyes open.

Before him, a crimson fireball blazed, and he found himself encased within a metal framework, his body held upright.

At that moment, a man dressed in black robes, sporting a vivid red beard that made him look like a human-lion hybrid, stood before the metal frame. He held softened candles and pressed them against Lumian's body, one by one.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

With a ghostly flicker, he vanished from the metal frame, along with a portion of the candles.

Lumian materialized swiftly at the entrance to Red Swan Castle's underground labyrinth.

He hastily scanned the surroundings and breathed a sigh of relief, seeing that everything seemed normal.

Without delay, Lumian brushed the wax from his body and examined his belongings.

To his astonishment, not only were the original mystical items, gold coins, banknotes, and various lotions intact, but even the Beyonder characteristic of the wax figure artisan and the shriveled heart he had obtained in the underground palace remained.

No one searched me? Amid his bewilderment, fragmented memories flitted through his mind.

He recalled scenes of himself walking in silence through the darkness without his carbide lamp.

In those images, his countenance appeared lifeless and rigid, like that of a wax figure.

Eventually, he reached a room and nestled within a metal framework, calmly awaiting the wax figure artisan's transformation.

This doesn't resemble me at all… Lumian rubbed his throbbing head and opted to ascend the stairs, departing the underground labyrinth.

He promptly returned to the first-floor living room, where he found the poet, Iraeta, happily sipping absinthe.

"You're back too?" Iraeta inquired with curiosity.

"Yes," Lumian replied, having regained his composure, as he settled onto the sofa and offered a smile. "I got separated from them."

As he finished speaking, Albus, with his fiery red hair, made his appearance at the living room door.

Chapter 432 - 432 Beatdown

432 Beatdown

Albus was caught off guard when he spotted Lumian comfortably seated on the sofa.

“That was quick.”

“You’re not slow either,” Lumian replied with a “kind” smile.

From his point of view, breaking free from the ethereal, underground roar and not turning into a wax statue indicated that Albus wasn’t just an ordinary member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Perhaps the sinister corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché was helping him withstand that terrifying roar.

In contrast, Elros Einhorn, with her unique Sauron family bloodline, seemed more likely to emerge unscathed and return safely.

Albus flashed a smile, pulled up a chair, and casually enjoyed some refreshments as though nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. He signaled the servant nearby to replace his tea with a fresh cup of black tea.

After about four to five minutes, both Lumian and Albus simultaneously shifted their attention towards the living room door.

Elros, dressed in a comfortable dress, entered the room.

Seeing Lumian and Albus, she appeared surprised but not shocked. She quickly put on a polite, obedient smile.

Elros resumed her seat, becoming once again the reserved girl staying at her maternal grandfather’s house.

Poet Iraeta seemed oblivious to the unusual atmosphere. He sipped

his absinthe and discussed poetry writing with Lumian.

Fifteen minutes later, Count Poufer, decked out in a scarlet velvet coat, returned to the living room with Novelist Anori and Painter Mullen.

When Poufer laid eyes on Lumian, the owner of Red Swan Castle was visibly taken aback, nearly losing control of his expression.

He never anticipated encountering Ciel Dubois again, or more accurately, Ciel Dubois in his present state!

Shortly after, Poufer's gaze swept across Albus, Elros, and Iraeta, his face reflecting shock and suspicion as if he had stepped into a surreal dream.

"Ah, Poufer, you're finally back. We had given up on the adventure long ago and decided not to delve deeper into the dark maze." Albus set aside his mille-feuille and warmly welcomed him. "How did it go? Did you manage to locate the Count's crown?"

Instinctively, Poufer shifted his body to prevent Albus, with his hands smeared in pastry flakes, from giving him a hug.

He managed to force a smile and replied, "We had no luck finding it either. When did you get back?" nove(l)bi(n.)com

"Less than half an hour ago." Only then did Albus remember to smack his hands and brush off the pastry crumbs.

Lumian rose from his seat and inquired, "Where's Monsieur Ernst Young?"

Novelist Anori shook his head.

"He got separated from us. I hope he remembers to pull the bell rope and summon the servants to find him."

"That's correct. The servants in this castle know the underground palace better than I do," Poufer remarked, his expression returning to its usual state as he settled into an armchair.

Lumian was eager to return and confirm his discoveries. He glanced at the antique wall clock hanging on the wall and smiled at Poufer.

“I still have some matters to attend to, so I won’t be attending the banquet tonight.”

Poufer’s mind seemed preoccupied, and he didn’t press Lumian to stay. He rose once more and escorted Lumian to the living room’s exit.

Lumian cast a grateful look at the owner of Red Swan Castle and shook his hand with sincerity.

“Count, thank you for a fantastic afternoon. I thoroughly enjoyed this game. I hope we can play it again.”

From the depths of his heart, Lumian wanted to express his gratitude to Poufer Sauron. Not only had he provided an “opportunity” to digest the potion, but he had also “unveiled” the family’s hunting grounds, making it easier for Lumian to locate suspected Beyonder creatures related to Conspirers without extensive searching.

How could he not show his appreciation?

Of course, Lumian genuinely desired to eliminate Poufer Sauron. If not for his uniqueness, he would have been turned into a wax statue.

Lumian’s sole reason for not launching a direct attack wasn’t concern about Sauron family retaliation or fear of spoiling the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s plans. Instead, he instinctively believed that even though Poufer Sauron appeared to be an ordinary person or a relatively weak Beyonder with limited knowledge, if Lumian were to confront him, he might well be the one facing danger.

Count Poufer’s expression soured as he received the heartfelt gratitude.

Lumian appeared oblivious to this and reiterated his desire to partake in another underground palace adventure game. With that, he turned and exited the living room, leaving Poufer Sauron perplexed and watchful.

After departing from Red Swan Castle and boarding the four-wheeled, four-seater borrowed from Gardner Martin, Lumian's smile faded, replaced by a solemn countenance.

At the conclusion of this underground palace adventure, he had gained a clear understanding of the disparity between his strength and that of higher-level entities. With a mere illusory roar, he lost consciousness and self-control, unable to resist.

Only thanks to Mr. Fool's seal, Termiboros's presence, and the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor did he manage to escape with his life.

My Sequence is still too low… Lumian sighed inwardly and closed his eyes, reflecting on the adventure's details.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Gardner Martin leisurely roamed through the armor and weapons on display in the hall, running his fingers over the metallic textures as Lumian recounted his encounters in the depths of the underground palace. He described the room with the wax statues, the wax statue artisan, the mutated black spider, the iron soldiers, the bronze coffin, the white candles, and the eerie roar.

However, Lumian omitted the details of how he had escorted Poet Iraeta back to the underground palace's entrance. He also left out the part about burning the wax statues and him murdering the wax statue artisan.

Finally, he couldn't conceal his anger, frustration, and perplexity.

"Commanding Officer, didn't you promise to secretly watch to prevent any mishaps? If I hadn't inexplicably awakened, I'd be a wax statue now!

"Did you use Albus to keep an eye on me?"

Lumian's questioning tone didn't seem to provoke Gardner Martin. The latter turned to him, his smile widening as he spoke calmly.

“I was indeed observing from the shadows.”

At this point, his smile grew even more, but his voice remained composed.

“I witnessed you escorting the poet back to the underground palace’s entrance. I saw you set fire to the wax statues in that room and detonate the wax statue artisan’s head.”

Wh— Lumian’s eyes narrowed, and a shiver ran down his spine as his hair stood on end.

He blurted out, “Albus is already back?”

How did the Boss find out about my actions?

Could he truly be trailing me in secret or monitoring my every move in the underground maze?

How did he do it? I didn’t notice at all!

Gardner Martin chuckled.

“Albus hasn’t returned yet.”

It wasn’t Albus? That’s right, Albus had no knowledge of my actions regarding the wax statue artisan’s demise. No one else was present… How did the Boss discover it? Lumian’s usual tendency to underestimate Gardner Martin vanished, replaced by a sense that the head of the Savoie Mob, the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, possessed more mystery and power than he initially believed.

Previously, perhaps Madam Magician of the Tarot Club and Mr. K of the Aurora Order had displayed abilities that Lumian found beyond imagination or awe-inspiring. Therefore, when facing Gardner Martin, who appeared to be the weakest of the three “superiors,” Lumian had always considered him less formidable. He even believed that if they were within a five-meter range, he might have a chance to eliminate this Commanding Officer.

Now, from the looks of it, Lumian wasn’t confident.

Considering that Gardner Martin might have revealed this information to unnerve him, Lumian didn't attempt to conceal his changing expressions and body language.

Gardner Martin observed Lumian's bewildered and fearful expression and added with a smile, "Do you really think you woke up for no reason?"

Whoa, so you're the one who helped? If I hadn't heard the grandiose voice, Aurore's humming, and the conversation with the people in Cordu and felt the burning pain in my right palm, I would have believed you… In essence, the corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché could have helped me break free from that state, but the Boss had intentionally left it ambiguous. He wants me to believe that he had played a role. This Hunter didn't lie, but he certainly didn't disclose the whole truth. How much of what he said was based on what he saw with his own eyes, and how much was gathered through other means? Lumian's thoughts raced as he bowed his head.

"Thank you, Commanding Officer."

Gardner Martin nodded warmly with a smile and said, "We've gained something from this operation. At the very least, we know that there are terrifying items sealed deep in Red Swan Castle's underground palace. Do you want to exchange them for rewards or save them to trade for valuable items later, such as higher Sequence potions?"

Lumian had accumulated a sum of 20,000 verl d'or over the past month through Gardner Martin's funds, his "salary" from Salle de Bal Brise, and his earnings from acting. Money wasn't an immediate concern.

He pondered for a moment.

"Let's save them for now."

As he spoke, he presented the Beyonder characteristic of the wax statue artisan and other items to Gardner Martin and inquired, "Boss, can I use these to concoct the Conspirer potion?"

Gardner Martin examined the shrunken blood-colored brain and the

shriveled, blackened heart for a moment.

“When combined, they can be used to concoct the Conspirer potion, but they will have additional Hunter, Provoker, and Pyromaniac characteristics compared to ordinary ingredients. You need to be very confident before using them.

“Right, this heart still retains traces of the Sauron family’s bloodline, which might affect your advancement to some extent. If you’re not confident, I can provide you with a Conspirer potion in exchange for these ingredients and make up the difference. Consider it a partial reward.”

In essence, ordinary Black Hunting Spiders and Sphinxes only possess the Conspirer Beyonder characteristic, excluding the ones from before. The wax statue artisan and the mutated black spider were like two halves of a Conspirer. When combined, they formed a complete Sequence 9 to 6 Beyonder… Lumian grasped the situation and smiled.

“It sounds like it will make me stronger. I’d like to see if I can handle the associated risks.”

Gardner Martin didn’t push further and allowed Lumian to depart.

…

Upon returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, Lumian took his place at his desk and began writing a letter to Madam Magician.

Chapter 433 - 433 Secret Past

433 Secret Past

Lumian diligently wrote down every detail of the events that had unfolded from the moment Lumian set foot in Red Swan Castle. He condensed the communications, focusing on the key points.

He had a strong sense that the Sauron family's underground maze concealed a crucial secret. Fearing that he might lack the knowledge and write off problematic parts as normal, inadvertently overlooking something, he decided to mention everything and allow Madam Magician to assess it herself.

It took Lumian half an hour to draft the letter.

He then closed the curtains and performed a ritual, summoning the "doll" messenger.

After nearly twenty minutes, the messenger returned with two folded squares of letter paper.

There are actually two pages. She places quite a lot of importance on this… Lumian contemplated for a moment before silently unfolding them.

"Gardner Martin is correct. The so-called wax statue artisan and mutated black spider are actually an enhanced Sphinx and Black Hunting Spider respectively. They contain Beyonder characteristics of the previous Sequences. What he didn't mention is that using the heart not only affects your advancement but is also linked to a special ritual that causes Beyonders who use it to merge with some of the Sauron family's bloodline, potentially subjecting them to a curse. However, for you, there's nothing to worry about. You've already taken the role of emperor during the King's Pie game. Why should you fear this?

“That tiny trace of the Sauron family’s bloodline might have an undiscovered significance at some point.”

Undiscovered significance… Is Madam Magician hinting at something she observed in her astromancy? If I genuinely use that withered heart to concoct the potion, not only will I possess a hint of the Blood Emperor’s aura, but I’ll also have a bit of the Sauron family’s bloodline. What kind of f*cking amalgamation would this be!? Lumian mercilessly mocked himself.

If he further possessed an Einhorn bloodline, Lumian wouldn’t even dare to imagine whether he’d be considered a prodigy in the Hunter pathway or simply mediocre.

After this self-mockery, Lumian continued to read.

“You’ve gained a lot from this adventure. Combining your experiences, what you’ve witnessed, what you’ve heard, and what you’ve encountered in the previous two King’s Pie games, my initial assessment is that the formidable angel Vermonda Champagne Sauron from 200 years ago is still alive. He resides somewhere underground in that chamber, confined within a bronze coffin, surrounded by white candles, iron-black rings, blood-colored spring water, and the hearts extracted from the Sauron family’s core members through a unique ritual. Even the entire underground maze is linked to a perilous Sealed Artifacts, designed to limit Vermonda Sauron’s movements to the greatest extent.

“This is the first victim of the Sauron family’s curse. Why did He vanish suddenly, why did He descend underground, and why does He remain alive? It has had a profound impact on generations of Red Swan Castle and the Sauron family, driving them to the brink of insanity. This is a crucial matter that requires further clarification. It’s the real cause behind the Sauron family’s decline.

“It’s too dangerous for you. At your Sequence, you would find it extremely challenging to investigate. As you’ve experienced, even hearing Vermonda Sauron’s voice causes temporary disorientation, leaving you in a daze, and the wax statue artisan would reconstruct you. This prevents you from getting close to the bronze coffin and the seal over it.

“Of course, once you possess a trace of the Sauron family’s bloodline and master the special ritual that Poufer Sauron once underwent, you might have a chance to enter that chamber. But all in all, I advise against taking this risk until you’re prepared to advance to Sequence 4 and approach the threshold of godhood. If Gardner Martin assigns a similar mission in the future, just perform it perfunctorily.

“Considering your contributions, the next time you require a potion formula or specific ingredients, feel free to contact me directly. You’ll receive a substantial discount.”

Angel? Lumian’s eyelids twitched.

The mysterious and missing Sauron family ancestor, Vermonda, was, in fact, a formidable angel!

The voice that had instantaneously robbed him of consciousness and nearly caused him to faint belonged to a genuine Mythical Creature!

Furthermore, this angel remained in a state of complete madness and needed to be sealed.

The Sauron family’s underground maze is indeed a perilous place, but it also conceals a wealth of “treasures”… Lumian muttered with a mix of lingering fear and anticipation.

In reality, even without Madam Magician’s advice, he had no desire to risk approaching the chamber with the bronze coffin.

What if Poufer Sauron was waiting there next time, and he ended up losing himself, only to be killed?

It appeared that the mission to investigate the cause of the Sauron family’s decline could only progress once he grew stronger.

Of course, Gardner Martin could handle it himself or seek assistance from the vice presidents of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

After digesting these paragraphs, Lumian exhaled and continued reading the last part of the letter.

“Albus Medici isn’t as straightforward as he may seem—not just a

member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. His last name is self-explanatory.

“In ancient times, before Blood Emperor Alista Tudor became the Red Priest, the God of War had another name. He was one of the eight Kings of Angels who had once served under the Ancient Sun God, known as the Red Angel or War Angel Medici.

“One of His duties was to watch over and instruct Amon.”

King of Angels… How do they differ from regular angels? The Ancient Sun God’s impact on the future was profoundly significant. The one revered by the Aurora Order, some of the seven orthodox gods, Amon, and the former God of War, Medici… Lumian pondered, realizing that many issues of the current era might trace back to events two to three thousand years ago, linked to the Ancient Sun God’s downfall.

His curiosity was piqued, and he read the remainder of the content with greater focus than before.

“Red Angel Medici, the Sauron family, and the Einhorn family’s most ancient ancestor all perished simultaneously under Alista Tudor and the nobles’ combined efforts, giving rise to the Red Priest. However, after the Blood Emperor’s demise, the Sauron and Einhorn families reclaimed their Beyonder characteristics.

“A King of Angels doesn’t meet His end so easily. For some reason, the Red Angel, Sauron, and Einhorn merged into a potent evil spirit, a fusion of malevolence. Just a few years ago, this evil spirit found a means to break free from the geographical confines, vanishing without a trace from its place of origin.

“Red Angel Medici left behind numerous descendants and established a secretive angelic lineage, with many residing in Bansy Harbor. Yes, the same Bansy Harbor I mentioned earlier, which was greatly corrupted and directly annihilated by the Church of Storms. However, over the past one to two thousand years, members of the Medici family have gradually departed the island and returned to the Northern Continent. Albus Medici should be a direct descendant of one such individual.

“It’s reasonable to suspect that Albus may have already crossed paths with this evil spirit. Removing the Sauron family’s curse could be part of the evuk spirit’s agenda, and the portion linked to Red Angel Medici likely desires the Sauron family’s hoarded possessions. They also seek to uncover what Vermonda Sauron experienced.

“As for Albus’s presence at the Sacred Heart Cloister, it might be due to the evil spirit guiding him or the Iron and Blood Cross Order sensing an anomaly and sending him to establish contact with the monks and gather information.

“Don’t worry, Miss Justice and Susie will keep a close watch.”

There’s an issue with the Sacred Heart Cloister… Lumian hadn’t foreseen problems with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s largest cloister in Trier, but Madam Magician’s words had unmistakably highlighted this situation.

Previously, when he speculated about Albus’s purpose at the Sacred Heart Cloister, he had engaged in extensive analysis, yet he hadn’t contemplated an issue with the cloister itself. He had merely assumed that Gardner Martin was seeking to understand certain matters there and gauge the inclinations and attitudes of various Eternal Blazing Sun Church factions.

Combined with Madam Magician’s statement that someone from the Tarot Club was monitoring a potential lead, Lumian now suspected that the issue with the Sacred Heart Cloister might be linked to the worship of an evil god!

A substantial crisis is brewing… Lumian’s sense of urgency surged.

At the end of the letter, Madam Magician wrote:

“Perhaps Gardner Martin’s ability to ‘see’ something in the underground maze is related to his exposure to the corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché. It could also be due to the item smuggled in through Rat. I don’t know what it is exactly.

“Consume the potion soon and advance to Sequence 6. If the catastrophe is averted unsuccessfully in the future, teleport out of

Trier with the Two of Cups and your friends, or seek refuge in Mr. Fool's cathedral."

Lumian read the reply and contemplated it for a moment, silently watching it consumed by the crimson flames.

…

3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Franca, clad in a cotton shirt and light-colored pants, looked surprised when she saw Lumian outside the door.

"Didn't Poufer Sauron's banquet just begin?"

Why did he return so suddenly?

"I ventured into Red Swan Castle's underground maze this afternoon and gained quite a bit," Lumian replied with a smile as he entered the room and closed the door. "I need your help now."

"What did you gain? And how can I help?" Franca inquired, a mix of curiosity and confusion in her expression.

Lumian chose to address the latter question. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

"Help me hold something. If something goes wrong after I consume the potion, open it immediately."

"Consume the potion?" Franca was taken aback. "Have you finished digesting your Pyromaniac potion?"

"The digestion is complete," Lumian affirmed with a smile.

Franca instinctively asked, "Have you gathered all the ingredients for your Conspirer potion?"

"Yes," Lumian replied with a grin.

"…" Franca couldn't help but mutter, "You've only been out for an afternoon, but it feels like you've been gone for two to three

weeks…”

Not only had the Pyromaniac potion been fully digested, but he had also acquired most of the ingredients for the subsequent potion!

Lumian showed an unusual sincerity as he explained, “This is all thanks to nature—no, thanks to Poufer Sauron.”

Chapter 434 - 434 Utilizing the Special Environment

434 Utilizing the Special Environment

In a dim tunnel supported by stone pillars, Franca, indifferent to the presence of carbide lamps, turned to Lumian and expressed her concern.

“Are you absolutely sure there won’t be any issues with using that heart to advance? Even if you don’t appear afraid of the Sauron family’s curse, it could still affect your condition after consuming the potion and potentially lead to failure. Honestly, Gardner’s proposal is worth considering. Consuming an additional Sequence 9 to Sequence 7 potion will make you stronger, but not by much. There won’t be any qualitative changes, so it’s better to take a safer route.”

The Demoness of Pleasure had already learned about Lumian’s experiences in Red Swan Castle’s underground maze and most of the information from Madam Magician’s letter.

While she was awed by the special soldiers’ existence and the frenzied cries of the uncontrollable angel, she couldn’t help but be concerned about Lumian’s plan to use the Beyonder characteristic of the wax statue artisan and the shriveled heart of the mutated black spider to concoct the potion.

Lumian, holding a carbide lamp, chuckled.

“I’m doing it because I’m more than confident.”

Franca remained skeptical. “Do you have a method to negate the influence of the heart’s remaining bloodline?”

At this point, it was as if she snapped out of her reverie.

“Where are we headed? Aren’t you going to drink the potion? Just find a quiet spot. There’s no need to keep wandering underground, right?”

Lumian chuckled.

“It’s precisely because the destination is special that I believe I can minimize the influence of the Sauron family’s residual bloodline in the heart.”

Simultaneously, it would reduce the risk of the corruption in his body during the advancement!

Franca’s curiosity was piqued. “Where are we going?”

Lumian replied with a smile, “You’ll find out when we get there.”

“Dammit! I hate people like you who leave sentences hanging!” Franca couldn’t resist cursing.

…

After more than half an hour, Franca pointed ahead to a naturally formed and modified stone door cave, her expression a mix of surprise and realization. She asked, “Is this the destination you were talking about?”

The entrance was marked with numerous engravings of skulls, skeletal arms, sunflowers, and symbols related to steam.

This marked the entrance to the catacombs, leading to the Death Empire!

“Somewhere inside,” Lumian replied. He retrieved a white candle from the satchel containing the Flog boxing gloves and tossed it to Franca. With a smile, he added, “I want to consume the potion under the watchful eyes of God.”

“Under the gaze of God?” Franca eyed Lumian suspiciously, wondering if he had succumbed to the peculiar habits of an Astrologer.

He didn’t seem to be speaking in a straightforward manner!

Lumian chose not to elaborate. Instead, he lit a white candle and ventured into the catacombs.

As usual, the administrators challenged them, and they made their assurances. The two eventually reached the third level of the catacombs, where they encountered a sacrificial pillar composed of two weathered boulders, surrounded by a small square.

Upon entering this remarkably clean area, Franca had an epiphany.

“Are you trying to exploit the uniqueness of this place?”

She had previously explored the catacombs but hadn’t ventured deep into the third level. Lumian had only mentioned that there was a square here with two sacrificial pillars symbolizing the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery.

Under the protection of these two pillars, even if the candle flames in their hands were extinguished, the individuals in the square wouldn’t be plunged into darkness, and there wouldn’t be any trace of their presence erased.

“Yes.” Lumian smiled.

He handed the white candle to Franca and approached the mottled pillar adorned with symbols like the Sun Sacred Emblem, sunflowers, and radiating lines. He extended his arms reverently and offered a sincere prayer.

“Praise the Sun!”

His plan was to utilize the catacombs’ uniqueness and the protective power of the sacrificial square to suppress the influence of the Sauron family’s residual bloodline and the corruption of Inevitability within his body.

From his experiences, a substantial part of these influences stemmed from external sources and the outside world. For instance, the sealed Vermonda Sauron deep within the underground palace and the power of Inevitability beyond the barrier.

Without these external influences, all that would remain was the corruption within his body. Lumian had endured this during his previous three advancements and believed it was manageable. This was because the external support this corruption received would be weakened by the catacombs' uniqueness and the protection of the sacrificial pillars.

The initial idea for this plan had been inspired by the creation of the Beyonder accessory, Beatrice's Necklace. Madam Magician had mentioned that specific environments could sever connections and prevent the power of a boon from returning to its source, such as the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Lumian believed that although the sacrificial square in the catacombs might not be as special as the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring, it wouldn't be too far off. After considering the catacombs' peculiarity and the protection of the Eternal Blazing Sun sacrificial pillar, the external influence would undoubtedly be significantly reduced.

Furthermore, the sanctity of the sacrificial square stemmed from the protection of orthodox gods. Lumian didn't need to worry about any backlash from consuming the potion to advance here. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Franca watched in momentary surprise as Lumian genuinely praised the Sun.

He was truly under the "watchful eye" of a deity!

But isn't he afraid of being directly purged as a follower of Mr. Fool?

After the prayer, Lumian returned to Franca and handed her an exquisite perfume bottle.

"What's this?" Franca inquired, puzzled.

"Gray amber perfume," Lumian explained with a flicker of emotion in his eyes under the candlelight. "After I consume the potion, watch my reaction closely. If you sense anything amiss, unscrew the cap and bring the bottle to my nose."

Initially, he would have done this himself, but this time, given the influence of the Sauron family's residual bloodline and his status as a Mid-Sequence Beyonder, he was concerned that the situation might worsen. He might not have the strength to open the perfume bottle. Additionally, if he had used it from the beginning, his subconscious might remember that he had created it, potentially negating the intended effect.

"Alright." Seeing that Lumian had no intention of explaining, Franca suppressed her curiosity and refrained from inquiring.

Lumian glanced at the broad stone steps leading to the catacombs' second level and added,

"One more thing, you need to ensure that the tourists don't disturb me."

"Do you think I'm stupid?" Franca rolled her eyes.

Did you really need to ask?

Without further delay, Lumian retrieved a beer mug with a crystal-like appearance from his satchel.

Using a measuring cylinder, he began the process. First, he poured a total of 80 milliliters of the wax statue artisan's dark-red blood into the mug. Then, he added the mutated black spider's poison gland, 10 grams of amber powder, and two white oak fruits he had collected over a month ago.

These ingredients, infused with potent spirituality and corresponding symbols, didn't dissolve instantly; instead, they created a dark foam on the surface.

Lumian gently submerged the blood-colored object that resembled a shrunken human brain and the withered, black heart into the mixture.

With a sizzling sound, a crimson-tinged mist diffused and then receded. All the solid ingredients rapidly disintegrated and merged, causing the potion's color to intensify.

Bubbles rose and burst until the liquid inside the beer mug turned an iron-black hue, with a tinge of reddish rust.

Observing this transformation, Franca mumbled softly, “Indeed, one’s heart is tainted when one employs battle strategies. Even the potion is tainted…”

Contemplating the dark, blood-colored concoction, Lumian removed his satchel and military flask, setting them aside.

After handing Lie to Franca, he took a slow, deliberate breath and composed himself.

After 20 to 30 seconds, he sat cross-legged, his wrist steady as he picked up the beer mug and drank the potion without hesitation.

The potion had a strong rusty taste, cold like a serpent slithering in the darkness, slippery and icy.

However, Lumian’s body didn’t burn as it had before. Instead, he felt a chilling sensation, as if all the flames had been absorbed by the potion.

Simultaneously, his head throbbed with a familiar pain, and his vision quickly blurred. All the thoughts and information he knew materialized, intertwining in the form of miniature pictures, forming layers of interconnected spiderwebs.

This tore Lumian’s mind apart. Terrifying ravings, seemingly emanating from an infinite distance while simultaneously echoing in his ears, were accompanied by violent and frenzied emotions.

Yet, the pain from the former didn’t render Lumian nearly unconscious. He instinctively rolled, his expression involuntarily contorted with malevolence. His hands clenched tightly, and he couldn’t help but groan in pain. The latter was within the tolerance of an Alms Monk.

Lumian’s right palm felt a slight warmth from the stimulation.

Finally, the inferno reached him. This time, it converged within Lumian’s mind, unreal and illusory.

Franca, who had been watching closely, wanted to open the perfume bottle several times, but each time she thought about it, Lumian returned to normal.

The entire ordeal lasted only 20 to 30 seconds. Lumian's clenched hands slowly relaxed, and his contorted facial muscles gradually returned to their original positions.

Phew… Lumian exhaled a scorching breath and opened his eyes.

"Did it work?" Franca asked subconsciously.

Lumian, experiencing sharp pain in his head and body, responded with a wry smile, "If it hadn't worked, you would've already started fighting the out-of-control me."

This had been even easier than his previous three advancements.

"Who knows if a Conspirer's loss of control is an act of pretending to be a normal person and secretly attacking me…" Franca couldn't help but argue, even though she knew she had spoken out of turn.

Lumian raised his hand to rub his temples. Despite the pain, his thoughts seemed clearer than ever.

He quickly recalled the events that had occurred and sensed that some of the details might be problematic.

This was something he hadn't noticed before.

For instance, according to his nightmares, Iraeta, the poet who frequently participated in King's Pie games, should have transformed into a half-wax statue, gone insane, harmed himself or those around him at any moment. Yet, not only was he unscathed, but he had also entered the problematic Sacred Heart Cloister and coincidentally encountered Albus Medici!

Chapter 435 - 435 An Early Acting Principle

435 An Early Acting Principle

In the nightmare, Poet Iraeta failed to escape his deranged fate. It's not that he isn't affected by the King's Pie game, but that he hasn't shown it yet. Just like Painter Mullen and Novelist Anori…

He has a facilitator behind him, ensuring his current safety and allowing him to transmit effective information? If that's the case, who is the facilitator? Someone from the Sacred Heart Cloister? Did he make many similar arrangements after discovering the turbulent undercurrents in the cloister? Lumian's thoughts raced faster than usual, and he quickly made a guess.

He retracted his thoughts and focused on observing the changes in his body after consuming the potion.

In addition to his enhanced insight, sharper and clearer thinking, and a series of specific manifestations, like improved intelligence and the ability to fabricate excuses to convince others, he also had superpowers in misdirection, confusion, and deception.

These abilities were core components of conspiracies, but a qualified Conspirer would only employ them subtly and at critical moments. Under normal circumstances, they tried their best to rely on their wits to prevent targets with backgrounds from detecting the existence of superpowers and seeing through their schemes.

Similar to Misleading, there's another ability called Incitement or Instigation. This is very much like the Demoness' Instigation. And when Lumian played Pyromaniac, he consciously incited others to ignite the flames in their hearts.

Lumian couldn't help but mutter, Is my acting too advanced, or is the Hunter pathway deepening in certain concepts? Is acting in a previous stage an ability at the later stages?

Yes, the Conspirer potion revolves around conspiracies. There's no qualitative improvement in combat…

After repeated confirmation, Lumian realized that his physique had improved to a certain extent, and his precise control over flames had improved. He no longer had to rely on Fire Raven, Fireball, Spear, Fire Serpent, and Fire Wall every time. He could casually shape the flames into different forms, such as whips and sabers.

Similarly, the difficulty of repeatedly compressing the crimson flames to form incandescent white flames decreased. The time required was significantly reduced and, depending on the flame's specific appearance and energy density, it ranged from one to three seconds.

In addition, Lumian could temporarily merge his body with fire. He could use fireballs and other projectiles to quickly shift positions, either escaping the enemy's attack range or closing the distance. This allowed Lumian to have more options in battle. He didn't have to rely on Spirit World Traversal every time.

Conspirer had also enhanced his spirituality. Although Lumian hadn't experimented, he believed that at his limit, he could complete Spirit World Traversal six times, up from the original four times.

Lumian sniffed and unsurprisingly caught a whiff of something further away, discerning more details.

This was due to the enhancement of a Conspirer's information-gathering abilities. It would inevitably enhance their five senses and spiritual perception.

That's about it… Lumian stood up, his body suddenly enveloped in flowing crimson flames.

He transformed into a fireball and flew away with a whoosh.

In less than ten meters, he landed on the ground, and flames dispersed around him.

The current limit is ten meters. It will gradually increase as the potion is digested… Lumian nodded indiscernibly and returned to the spot where he had discarded the black satchel and the military flask.

He was now fully aware that he was already a Sequence 6 Conspirer.

Franca held Lie and the gray amber perfume and asked with curiosity and concern, “Very cool… How do you feel?”

“That’s normal,” Franca consoled, empathetic. “For most pathways, there are only two qualitative changes below the high Sequences. For the Hunter pathway, one is at Sequence 7 Pyromaniac, and the other is at Sequence 5 Reaper. Regardless, each potion brings about new abilities or strengthening of the original abilities. If used well, it’s normal for a Sequence 6 to kill a Sequence 5.”

“I also discovered that I’ve been acting as a Conspirer for a long time…”

When he was wandering, he relied on ruthlessness and conspiracies to fend off humans who were older than him for food and a place to sleep in the cold. When he was in Cordu, every prank could be regarded as a conspiracy with low malice. After leaving Cordu, he had been trapped in conspiracies over the past few months, either screwing over his targets or falling into the traps of others…

Although Lumian didn’t digest a portion of the Conspirer potion on the spot, it made his condition much better compared to when he first consumed the Pyromaniac potion. The potion’s potency didn’t dissipate without control.

He didn’t feel like a Conspirer who had just advanced after consuming a potion. He felt more like a Sequence 6 Beyonder who had some time to adapt to it.

Simultaneously, he deduced two acting principles from his past experiences:

Firstly, a Conspirer’s core lay in their intelligence, not superpowers!

Secondly, the key to a conspiracy lay in concealing one’s true motives!

In the past, the acting principles were derived step by step, leading to a substantial digestion of the potion. In contrast, these two acting principles were accumulated from past experiences. Although they couldn't directly result in the digestion of the potion, they facilitated Lumian's subsequent acting, reducing the time it would take for him to fully digest the potion. To put it simply, he might only need to spend half his energy to achieve twice the effect.

Lumian had originally believed that digesting the Conspirer potion would take at least half a year, but from the looks of it, perhaps three months would suffice. Of course, the prerequisite was that there would always be a chance to act and conclude a new acting principle.

Franca shared his sentiments.

"That's right. Just like how it was easy for me to act as an Assassin. I had too much 'experience.'"

When she said the word "experience," her voice involuntarily softened, as if she felt a little guilty.

Lumian paid no mind to this detail. After stuffing the items on the ground into his black satchel, he retrieved Lie, the gray amber perfume, and the burning white candle.

Seeing that her companion was indeed fine, Franca heaved a sigh of relief and said, "It's a good thing to advance before the catastrophe. Damn it, if it weren't for Browns Sauron being petty and jealous of me, preventing me from attending the orgies, my Pleasure potion would have been significantly digested. Hmph, I'll have her experience true pleasure later!"

For the 103rd time, she cursed Browns Sauron.

Franca then asked, "Are we going to make a move on those individuals next?"

These individuals referred to members of the Sinners organization.

Over the past month, Lumian had repeatedly sought to capture the Sinners' liaison through Guillaume Bénet's widow, Paulina. First, he sought to uncover the Sanson family, seeking revenge for his sister

and tracking Loki's whereabouts—they had a deep connection to Loki. Perhaps they knew the location of the castle where Loki had been resurrected. Second, the Sinners organization also believed in an evil god. It was possible they knew a little about Trier's cultists' abnormal silence. Perhaps it could help Lumian and the others figure out the source of the disaster and the essence of the outbreak.

Back then, Lumian hadn't figured out the pattern of the Sinners organization's liaison, so he had postponed any operation. Later, he planned to wait until he advanced to Sequence 6 and gained greater strength before taking action. After all, other members of the Sinners organization weren't like Padre Guillaume Bénet, whose contract abilities and corresponding negative effects were grasped by him, allowing him to prepare in advance. If the contract abilities of the evil god bestowed synergized well, they would be quite a tough nut.

Of course, Lumian had no intention of completely annihilating the Sinners organization by relying solely on his small team. It was a cult with a saint. His plan was to capture the liaison and obtain the information he needed before calling the Tarot Club for reinforcements. nove(l)bi(n.)com

"That's right." Lumian nodded with a smile and replied to Franca, "In two days, the Sinners' liaison will likely visit Madame Paulina again."

"Yes, I hope he knows something." Although Franca didn't think she could prevent the potential disaster, she still hoped to do something.

She paused for a moment and continued, "Take Jenna to Lavigny Docks tomorrow and introduce her to Mr. Fool's faith."

…

The following morning, Lumian knocked on Apartment 601's door.

He glanced at Jenna, who had changed into a light-blue dress, and smiled.

"I need your help with something."

"Me?" Jenna pointed at herself and turned to Franca. "How can I help?"

“Don’t ask. You’ll find out when you get there.” Lumian couldn’t be bothered to find an excuse.

Jenna’s eyes darted around in confusion.

“Dammit! Can’t you make yourself clear?” As she cursed, she gestured to Franca, indicating her helplessness.

Then, she followed Lumian out of the apartment door.

Franca fell into deep thought when she saw this scene.

…

In the four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage, Lumian didn’t mention the purpose of his trip. He chatted with Jenna about the drunkards at Salle de Bal Brise and the actors at Théatre de l’Ancienne Cage à Pigeons. The atmosphere was relaxed and cheerful, as if they were on a school autumn outing.

Jenna didn’t inquire further and displayed considerable patience.

Finally, the rental carriage arrived at Lavigny Docks. Lumian paid the fare of 1.75 verl d’or, opened the door, and agilely leaped out.

Jenna moved to the carriage door, but before she could gracefully leap down, her eyes narrowed as she let out Franca’s usual sigh.

“Wow!”

Lumian followed her gaze and saw an ancient-looking three-masted sailboat parked at Lavigny Docks, clearly lagging behind the times.

Such a boat was rare at Lavigny Docks, but those who had grown up reading or listening to the The Adventurer series found it oddly familiar.

These great pirates seemed to be fond of such boats.

Chapter 436 - 436 Open and Inclusive Faith

436 Open and Inclusive Faith

Lumian had seen a similar three-masted sailboat in the illustrations of The Adventurer series. It stood out amidst the bustling Lavigny Docks, a contrast to the inland steamboats, and drew the attention of passersby.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt a warmth in his right palm, which then subsided.

What's happening? Has the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor experienced a change under stimulus? This… this feels like a kind of resonance… Lumian pondered in surprise and confusion.

Could there be a connection between this ancient three-masted sailboat and Blood Emperor Alista Tudor?

As Lumian stared at the sailboat, Jenna disembarked from the carriage and playfully remarked, "You didn't bring me here just to show me this vintage pirate ship, did you?"

She had read the first two serialized volumes of The Adventurer series in the newspapers. Books had always been expensive in her family, and when her father's work-related compensation didn't arrive after his unfortunate death, her reading opportunities grew scarce. She'd occasionally find old newspapers used to paste on the wall or for other purposes and read until sunset.

With the presence of street bards and her mother's bedtime stories, her spirit remained far from desolate.

Since arriving in the market district and becoming an underground

singer, Jenna had found a means to earn a substantial income. She had even saved up to purchase a pirated copy of The Adventurer series from an underground bookseller to finally appreciate the intricate illustrations. This endeavor often made her feel remorseful for Madam Fors Wall. She planned to buy an authentic set once she had cleared all her debts.

To her surprise, her debts only seemed to accumulate.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and replied with a teasing grin, “Consider this a bonus.”

The two of them stood on the harbor’s edge, discussing the disparities between the ancient sailboat and the illustrations from The Adventurer series.

After a while, Lumian led Jenna to the unassuming The Fool’s cathedral.

Jenna looked up at the bell tower and steeple atop the four-story building, examining the silver symbol comprising an incomplete Pupil-less Eye and a section of Contorted Lines. Baffled, she inquired, “Is this a cathedral?”

Aren’t cathedrals supposed to be grander?

The cathedral of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church in the market district and Quartier du Jardin Botanique was far more magnificent and sacred in comparison.

“Yes,” Lumian affirmed, leading the way inside.

Jenna trailed closely behind, increasingly surprised by the cathedral’s simplicity.

The stained glass windows were scarce, and there was no ornate gilding to be found. The cathedral lacked intricate machinery. The only semblance of religion lay in the massive murals, which seemed to favor muted colors and subdued illumination.

The most striking feature of the cathedral was the large, numerous windows. Even on the ground floor, the interior was awash with

natural light.

Jenna's gaze flitted over the murals, and she instinctively felt that they symbolized guidance and redemption.

It was slightly past 10 a.m., and the cathedral's attendance was sparse. It was silent, exuding a sense of serenity.

Lumian guided Jenna to the third row of pews facing the altar.

He surveyed their surroundings, his gaze resting on The Fool's Sacred Emblem before him. In a solemn tone, he disclosed,

"You should be aware that Franca and I are keeping something from you. There are some secrets we haven't shared with you."

"Yeah," Jenna nodded gently, awaiting Lumian's explanation.

Lumian continued, "As you can tell, Franca and I aren't related. She and my sister Aurore are close friends who share common interests. Loki and I Know Someone, whom we dealt with previously, are also part of this group, but they betrayed others, causing a disaster in Cordu and costing my sister her life."

"I see…" Jenna replied, having refrained from delving too deeply previously but having a vague understanding.

Lumian's gaze remained fixed on Mr. Fool's altar.

"There's another connection between Franca and me. We don't believe in the Eternal Blazing Sun or the God of Steam and Machinery…"

Jenna couldn't help but chuckle.

"I've already guessed it. When have any of you gone to church? I don't usually see you praying at fixed times!

"At least you know which street église Saint-Robert is on. Franca might not even know where the cathedral's door opens to."

She, on the other hand, prayed, listened to the sermons, and attended

Mass at least once a week. This was both a display of piety to the Purifiers and a habit of faith from all these years.

The only downside was that she often sang at Salle de Bal Brise until midnight before returning to Rue des Blouses Blanches to sleep. She couldn't get up to welcome the morning sun and dawn, so she could only set a fixed prayer time for noon.

"No, I'm not going because I'm a wanted criminal. I can barely be considered a believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun," Lumian replied with a smile. Then, he said solemnly, "Franca and I believe in this orthodox god, the great Mr. Fool."

Lumian pressed his hand to his chest and whispered solemnly, "Praise The Fool!"

The Fool… Jenna found the deity's name peculiar.

After a moment of thought, she asked, "The Fool from tarot cards?"

"Yes, you've guessed it correctly," Lumian affirmed.

Jenna spotted a tall figure in a black trench coat and a half top hat approaching the altar. She instinctively lowered her head and said with a hint of smugness,

"I've discovered almost ten decks of tarot cards from Franca, and she doesn't usually use them for divination."

That fellow… Could it be that she thought it would be cool to toss a Two of Cups on the corpse after taking out a target, so she made preparations? The more Lumian considered it, the more he felt that this was Franca's style.

Jenna paused for a moment and asked, "Does The Fool Pharmaceutical Company also belong to the Church of The Fool?"

"Uh…" Lumian was momentarily caught off guard.

He hadn't given it much thought. Initially, he believed the pharmaceutical company was named after tarot cards.

Now, it appeared that The Fool from the tarot cards seemed to equal Mr. Fool!

Lumian hesitated before responding, “Maybe.”

He wasn’t entirely certain if The Fool Pharmaceutical Company was affiliated with the Church of The Fool or if it was simply a venture by a member of the Tarot Club.

Jenna demonstrated her keen insight as she inquired, “You brought me here not only because it’s a safe place for discussing your faith but also to show that the Church of The Fool is a recognized, mainstream church capable of constructing a cathedral in Trier.”

“You’re not as naive as you appear,” Lumian turned his head and smiled. “My third purpose is to ask if you’d consider converting to Mr. Fool?”

“Convert…” Jenna’s mind was in a whirl.

Lumian adopted a persuasive tone, saying, “This doesn’t conflict with your contract with the Purifiers. Mr. Fool is an orthodox god acknowledged by all the Churches. However, the propagation of this faith is concentrated on the maritime islands and certain regions of the Southern Continent. Most people in the Northern Continent are unaware of it.”

“But…” Jenna hesitated. “I’ve never thought about changing my faith…”

Her faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun couldn’t be described as devout or fanatical, but it was a habit she had cultivated since childhood. She had also accepted most of the teachings. Until today, the idea of conversion had never crossed her mind. She didn’t feel a strong urge to change her faith, nor did she harbor any deep dissatisfaction with the Church.

The only times she’d voiced discontent were during the most challenging years her family endured, especially after her mother’s passing. At those moments, she occasionally grumbled about the Eternal Blazing Sun, feeling that He didn’t protect true believers.

However, these moments were far from sufficient to motivate a conversion.

Lumian glanced at Jenna's face and offered a reassuring smile.

"It's entirely fine if you don't want to convert. I'm merely suggesting it. My main concern is ensuring that if you ever find yourself separated from us during the impending disaster, you know this place is a refuge. Don't worry, even if you're a believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, Mr. Fool's Church will welcome you and provide protection."

Jenna seemed puzzled and asked, "Then why can't I go to église Saint-Robert?"

Lumian collected his thoughts and explained, "Franca and I share the same faith and work for a secret organization. Two days ago, we received information from the organization. This chapter is updat𝓮d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

"There's a problem with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Sacred Heart Cloister, similar to the issues with the Deep Valley Cloister of the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

"In such a situation, some cathedrals may not be trustworthy, and you might not be able to distinguish between the reliable and the unreliable. So, it's better to choose those that are known to be reliable."

Jenna had personally experienced the troubles at the Deep Valley Cloister, so she understood the significance of potential problems in the Sacred Heart Cloister.

She murmured to herself, "Could the catastrophe begin from within the Churches?"

"Perhaps," Lumian replied, though he couldn't provide a definitive answer.

At that moment, a towering figure, dressed in a custom-made black trench coat and a half top hat, approached Lumian and Jenna. He stood at a towering 2.56 meters, with golden hair and eyes.

He looked at Jenna and asked with a warm smile, “Sister, is this your first visit to my lord’s cathedral?”

“Yes, but I’m here with a friend,” Jenna replied. She instinctively resisted the idea of converting her faith and inquired, “And who are you?”

“I am the bishop here, Teslian,” the half-giant introduced himself with a confident smile.

Jenna observed his attire, which looked far from conventional clergy attire.

Teslian turned his gaze to Lumian and continued, “Would you be interested in hearing me introduce our beacon and savior, the great Mr. Fool?

“Don’t worry. Our lord doesn’t compel people to convert, and he doesn’t mind if they believe in him alongside other deities. In turn, believing in him can also coexist with other beliefs.”

“You… you can do that?” Jenna stammered.

This was completely beyond her understanding!

Which deity would allow their followers to have impure or multiple beliefs?

Additionally, why refer to this deity as ‘him’ instead of ‘Him’? The latter is the exclusive pronoun for deities! Why address this deity as ‘mister’?

Jenna’s mind was filled with questions, and her thoughts were in disarray.

“Yes, Mr. Fool is known for his compassion and benevolence,” the bishop responded, seeing that Jenna and Lumian didn’t object. He then opened the black Bible with silver patterns and began to preach.

Chapter 437 - 437 Cashing Out

437 Cashing Out

Jenna remained indifferent during the initial part of the sermon, finding it reminiscent of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Holy Bible.

However, her attention perked up when The Fool requested to be addressed as "him" rather than "Him." This slight change in expression indicated her growing focus.

As the sermon continued, Jenna's surprise became evident, and her face revealed a mix of shock and intrigue.

Is Gehrman Sparrow, the adventurer, truly connected to The Fool's Church?

Could he be an angelic messenger delivering The Fool's message of redemption?

Jenna wondered amidst her astonishment. Teslian, the half-giant bishop, didn't press her about her belief in The Fool but instead turned his attention to a supplicant deeply immersed in prayer.

The supplicant appeared to be a sailor in his prime from the sea. His skin was bronze, and his face bore obvious signs of the elements. His hair was disheveled and dark-blue, and Jenna couldn't see his features due to his bowed head in prayer.

Dressed in the same linen shirt, brown jacket, and loose dark pantaloons favored by sailors and pirates, he also sported a unique belt adorned with a dagger, telescope, and various tools.

He's probably a captain. He looks quite dignified… Lumian retracted his gaze and looked at Jenna.

Jenna, still processing the revelations, rose in a daze and left the cathedral. She wandered aimlessly along the harbor district's edge.

Lumian followed, hands in his pockets, refraining from immediate persuasion.

After walking for nearly ten minutes, Jenna slowed down and muttered to herself, "No wonder you claim to be a shallow believer in God."

The God referred to the Eternal Blazing Sun.

Lumian replied with a smirk, "You can also be a shallow believer in Mr. Fool. He doesn't concern himself with such matters."

"I… I'll think about it," Jenna replied, her beliefs shaken by the unconventional sermon. It wasn't that the Bible was well-written; rather, The Fool's claims and the Church of The Fool's approach differed significantly from her previous teachings. She now hesitated and struggled with her faith.

Lumian glanced at her and didn't incessantly persuade her.

In such situations, it was crucial to know when to stop, as excessive attempts could lead to resistance and repulsion.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian sighed inwardly.

As expected, proselytizing needs to be done by professionals…

Given my friendship with Jenna, she didn't hesitate to reject my suggestion to convert. However, the bishop's sermon had stirred something within her, causing her to reconsider her stance…

The two of them continued in silence for another 10 to 20 meters, with Lumian stealing glances at the bustling harbor and the deserted streets nearby. He casually asked, "How's your progress with gathering the Witch potion ingredients?"

Jenna was caught off guard by the question.

"I only digested the Instigator potion two days ago. How could I have

gathered the main ingredient for the Witch potion so quickly?"

Perhaps it was the residual influence of the cathedral, but Jenna's urge to curse wasn't as pronounced.

Lumian dropped a bombshell. "Well, I digested the Pyromaniac potion yesterday and managed to acquire both the main ingredient and the supplementary ingredients for the Conspirer potion on the same day."

Jenna couldn't help but exclaim, "Dammit! How can we be the same? I want a special hunting ground for hunting and digestion too!"

Franca had already informed her of Lumian's encounter in Red Swan Castle, excluding Magician's response.

Jenna found it surreal.

Just last night, they were both at Sequence 8 and Sequence 7 respectively, and the gap wasn't that significant. Why did the things they experienced differ so much, as if they were worlds apart?

One of them still dwelled on the fringes of mysticism, occasionally encountering the horrifying bizarre. The other had delved deep into the mysteries, surrounded by secrecy and danger.

After venting her frustration, Jenna disclosed, "I asked the Purifiers, and they don't seem very supportive of my advancement to become a Witch. They won't pay me in advance for the main ingredients. They claimed there's no pressing need for my investigations at the moment. However, they did promise to sell me the main ingredients and the more elusive supplementary ingredients at a discount if I can raise the funds. The main ingredients alone cost 16,000 verl d'or each."

A discounted price… Besides, does this promise mean that the Purifiers have every main ingredient for the Witch potion? I thought they only had converged Beyonder characteristics. After all, their method of obtaining Witch-related items should involve hunting… Does the Eternal Blazing Sun Church have a way to restore Beyonder characteristics to main ingredients? Lumian didn't quite understand.

Turning his gaze to the road, Lumian pondered and asked, “Do you owe Franca 60,000 verl d’or now?”

“Yes, I do.” Jenna fretted at the mention of it. I wonder when I’ll be able to pay it back.”

Lumian chuckled.

“In that case, would you like to owe a bit more?”

“Huh?” Jenna’s thoughts froze.

With his hands still in his pockets, Lumian grinned.

“Owe me 35,000 verl d’or, and I’ll help you gather all the ingredients for the Witch potion.”

Jenna, intrigued, inquired, “D-do you actually know where to find them?”

Lumian chuckled.

“I’m not entirely certain, but there’s a good chance.”

He intended to exchange it from the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

Yesterday, he had received recognition from Gardner Martin for his adventure in Red Swan Castle’s underground maze, and this contribution could be redeemed immediately or accumulated for higher Sequence potions. Lumian hadn’t made up his mind on how to use it yet, but now he decided to utilize it to get all the ingredients for Jenna’s Witch potion.

He might need to fork out some money, but disaster could strike at any moment. He might not remain with the Iron and Blood Cross Order in the future. Converting his contribution into a tangible reward made sense. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Moreover, the items gained through such contributions were of lesser value compared to having a willing, living Witch’s assistance.

When the time came, with Conspirer Lumian, Demoness of Pleasure

Franca, and Witch Jenna working together, they could form a formidable team even among official factions and the Inquisition. Combined with the appropriate mystical items, they could handle most Beyonders below the demigod level. Additionally, they had an unofficial member—Psychiatrist Anthony Reid.

Lumian believed that Gardner Martin likely had the necessary Witch potion ingredients. After all, the Iron and Blood Cross Order primarily followed the Hunter pathway, which was closely related to the Assassin pathway. Over the years, it was improbable that no convergence effect had occurred.

If needed, Lumian could also seek assistance from Mr. K and Madam Magician.

Jenna fell silent, unable to respond immediately.

Lumian chuckled again.

“It’s not a good thing to owe me. In addition to repaying the principal, you have to pay interest, which is helping me with certain tasks. Fortunately, you’ll soon have an opportunity to do so.”

Jenna pursed her lips and exhaled slowly.

“Alright, I’ll give you 10,000 verl d’or first, so I’ll only owe you 25,000.”

“No problem,” Lumian agreed indifferently.

Seeing that Jenna was about to say something, he chuckled and said, “No need to thank me…”

He then lowered his voice and feigned a feminine voice. “We’re friends, after all!”

“…” Jenna struggled to find the words. “Dammit!”

Lumian simply chuckled and said nothing.

Jenna, on the other hand, silently followed him across the street toward a few rental carriages parked there.

As they boarded the carriage, Jenna suddenly muttered to herself, “Thank you.”

Lumian appeared to be in his own world, occupying a seat in the carriage and disregarding his image.

…

In the afternoon, at 11 Rue des Fontaines.

Lumian spotted Gardner Martin, dressed in a shirt and sweater.

Lumian got straight to the point, saying, “Boss, I wish to exchange my contributions for the Witch potion or all the corresponding ingredients.”

Gardner Martin, without displaying any surprise, looked at Lumian with a smile and inquired, “Who is the Witch potion for?”

Lumian replied candidly, “It’s for Jenna.”

Gardner Martin appeared to be listening and gestured for Lumian to continue.

Lumian said sincerely, “I’m looking for a reliable ally with considerable strength.”

At this point, he smiled. “Moreover, I want to experience genuine pleasure.”

Gardner Martin burst into laughter.

“Not bad. That’s what an ambitious Hunter should aim for.

“No problem. Come by tomorrow morning to collect the Beyonder characteristics and supplementary ingredients. Oh, and make up the difference with another 10,000 verl d’or.”

Gardner Martin understood that Lumian and Jenna had a close relationship with mutual trust. Furthermore, Lumian and Franca’s cooperation didn’t involve seeking pleasure.

Lumian responded with a smile, “Thank you, Commanding Officer.”

After leaving Rue des Fontaines and returning to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian finally had some free time after a long day of activity.

In the evening, he enjoyed La Fée Verte while listening to Jenna, dressed as Showy Diva, singing passionately to earn money. His mind wandered.

How much can a local singer earn? It’s only a few thousand verl d’or a year…

It’s still better to fleece the Iron and Blood Cross Order and hunt heretics… When Jenna becomes a Witch, she’ll have the strength to participate in battles at this level…

Speaking of which, I didn’t think much of it when I read The Adventurer series in the past. Now that I think about it, doesn’t Gehrman Sparrow spend most of his time hunting pirates with Beyonder characteristics? How can he become a famous pirate or a great pirate without Beyonder characteristics?

Yes, although the corresponding battles are vague and exaggerated, only highlighting the main points, it’s obvious that the author has a certain understanding of Beyonder battles. Is Madam Fors Wall also a Beyonder?

Relaxing until nearly midnight, Lumian returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

As soon as he pushed open Room 207’s door, he saw a square of letter on the table under the crimson moonlight.

Madam Magician’s letter… Lumian lit the carbide lamp and unfolded the letter.

“Mr. Hanged Man hopes that you and the Two of Cups can summon the Armored Shadow again soon. He’ll be responsible for providing the gold.

“Let me know when you’ve confirmed the time.”

Chapter 438 - 438 Ghost Ship

438 Ghost Ship

Mr. Hanged Man is ready… Lumian took out his golden pocket watch and opened it to take a look.

He could summon the Armored Shadow at any moment. His only concern was that it might pose a danger. Summoning it without a good reason could lead to an attack or a curse. However, with The Hanged Man—the Major Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club—present, there was no need to worry about such matters.

The uncertainty now lay in Franca's availability. After all, she had to translate.

Lumian burned the letter and left Auberge du Coq Doré, heading straight for Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

"Why are you here so late?" Franca clearly wasn't the early-to-bed type.

Lumian glanced at Jenna, who had just finished removing her heavy makeup, and smiled at Franca.

"Do you have time tonight? We can summon the Armored Shadow again and ask it questions."

Summon the Armored Shadow again… Franca's eyes lit up as she blurted out, "I'm free!"

The Armored Shadow was most likely from her homeland, involving the secret of their transmigration and their way back. Even at 6 a.m., she would say she had time to be a translator, let alone just midnight!

Noticing Jenna's confusion and curiosity, Franca explained excitedly,

“Didn’t Ciel ask us to gather information on spirit world creatures that fulfill the summoning conditions? One of the summoning targets he chose had a directional ambiguity when designing the summoning incantation, attracting a very peculiar spirit world creature. The ability to snort and spit you saw earlier came from a contract with that spirit world creature.”

Out of jealousy and envy, Franca described the Spell of Harrumph as snorting and spitting.

Jenna had a deep impression of the Spell of Harrumph and found its effects potent and mystical. Her initial reaction was to ask, “Is it possible for us to sign a contract with similar spirit world creatures?”

“Sigh, I wish I had a similar contracted creature, but I can’t obtain such a special contract,” Franca expressed her regret and resentment sincerely. “In short, that spirit world creature is very unique and involves many secrets. A big shot of the organization backing us—uh, a demigod—is very interested. And now, only Ciel can accurately summon the target creature through the contract’s connection.”

Franca asked Lumian, “Is that person here?”

“Yes.” Lumian nodded gently.

Jenna looked at them thoughtfully and asked, “Is it Justice, Magician, or have The Star or The Moon arrived?”

Franca’s expression froze, her mouth slightly agape, her eyes filled with disbelief. Lumian was taken aback. He didn’t expect Jenna to reveal the code names of the Major Arcana card holders and make the connection that her two companions were related to them.

Amidst the indescribable silence, Jenna’s brows relaxed, and she smiled.

“I guessed right! You guys belong to the secret organization that uses tarot cards as their code names!”

“H-how did you know?” Franca asked in surprise.

Jenna pursed her lips and sneered.

“You have nearly ten decks of tarot cards in this room, and you don’t usually use them for divination. Then, Ciel told me that the Mr. Fool you believe in is roughly equivalent to The Fool in tarot cards. As for me, I’ve been attending mysticism gatherings recently and heard about the legend of Justice and the other Major Arcana card holders, as well as the existence of Minor Arcana cards.

“With so much information placed before me, if I don’t make any connections and probe, won’t I appear stupid?”

The more she spoke, the more pleased she became.

Franca was taken aback for a moment before saying, “Your Instigator potion wasn’t wasted…”

“Excellent,” Lumian praised reluctantly. “You’re prepared to drink the Witch potion.”

Without further ado, he left Apartment 601 with Franca. He planned to write a letter to Madam Magician at Auberge du Coq Doré, informing her that he could summon the Armored Shadow now.

Jenna watched them leave and muttered to herself, Witch… What would happen if a man drinks the Witch potion…

…

Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

After Lumian sent the letter, he didn’t extinguish the candle’s flame and waited for a reply under the dual illumination.

Franca paced back and forth in the cramped room, feeling excited and a little nervous.

She yearned for clues about returning home via the Armored Shadow, but she feared that even her last hope would be obliterated.

Time ticked by. Just as the Demoness of Pleasure felt as if a year had passed, the candlelight in the room suddenly surged.

In the dim yellow flames the size of a human head, resplendent

starlight flew out, enveloping Lumian and Franca.

It was as if they had arrived in the boundless cosmos, becoming abnormally insignificant.

After a brief moment of dizziness, Lumian and Franca realized that they had left Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré and arrived on a pitch-black deck.

The first thing they saw was an ancient triple mast, its grayish-white sails curled up like an open door.

The crimson moonlight fell from the sky, but it couldn't completely illuminate the area where Lumian and Franca were. It was dark, and the wooden planks were mottled, like an ancient haunted building.

Franca quickly surveyed the area and sighed with relief.

"Wow, an ancient sailboat.

"It's perfect for horror films!"

"What's a horror film?" Lumian asked casually.

Franca smiled awkwardly.

"A play depicting a ghost story."

As she spoke, she touched the dark flaxen rope resting on the shipboard, as if trying to discern its exact era.

Suddenly, the rope came alive and nimbly wrapped around Franca's right hand, attempting to bind the Demoness of Pleasure.
nove(l)bi(n.)com

A layer of black flames erupted, scorching the dark linen rope that seemed to possess a life of its own.

The rope snapped back, as if in pain.

Simultaneously, a rope that had been lying silently on the deck swung towards Lumian.

Lumian raised his slightly scorching right palm and grabbed the front of the rope.

The rope suddenly turned still, as if all its vitality had been drained.

All the ropes that had come back to life in this area returned to normal. They landed with a thud and stopped wriggling.

Lumian looked down at his right palm and muttered silently, The Blood Emperor's remnant aura on me faintly resonates with this ship…

These strange ropes became obedient when they felt the heat in my right palm…

Is this the ancient sailboat I saw at Lavigny Docks this morning?

Lavigny Docks… The Fool cathedral… Is this Mr. Hanged Man's ship?

Lumian's thoughts raced as he quickly made a guess.

Franca spun around and said excitedly, "This is a ghost ship, a ghost ship!

"It's alive to begin with!"

As the Demoness of Pleasure's voice reverberated across the deck, Lumian heard Madam Magician's words: "Mr. Hanged Man's ghost ship is a relic from the Tudor Empire. There are many unsolved secrets. When he rewards you, you can choose to explore this ship. As for when to embark on the exploration, it's up to you."

As expected, it has something to do with the Tudor Empire… Lumian's resolve grew as he walked towards the cabin.

As Franca followed, she looked around curiously, touching and tapping here and there. Occasionally, she whispered, as if she wanted to communicate with Mr. Hanged Man's ghost ship.

Amidst the creaking sounds, a door in the cabin opened on its own.

A thick, dark-brown carpet covered the area, flanked by bookshelves

and a liquor cabinet. Yellow-covered books and dark-red bottles of wine filled the space.

In front of the bookshelf stood a wide wooden table. On it were a variety of items—an ink bottle, a quill, a brass sextant, a black metallic telescope, and white candles.

Leaning against the desk stood a middle-aged man of average stature. His dark-blue hair was disheveled, and his skin was bronze and rough. He wore a linen shirt, a brown jacket, and loose dark pantaloons. He exuded a dignified aura. He was the supplicant Lumian had seen at The Fool cathedral that morning.

“Are you Mr. Hanged Man?” Lumian inquired.

The man in his prime nodded slightly.

“I’m The Hanged Man.”

Franca scrutinized the man and recalled that they were on a ghost ship. She immediately recalled something.

“Y-you’re Stormbringer Alger? Is this the Blue Avenger?” Franca blurted out in surprise and delight.

The Hanged Man glanced at her and replied expressionlessly, “You’ve heard of me?”

“Of course!” Franca praised sincerely. “You’re a maritime king without the title of a Pirate King. If you hadn’t fought the King of the Five Seas in the Fog Sea and caused the surrounding ships to experience a terrifying storm, no one would have known you were a demigod.

“Furthermore, you’re different from those pirates. You’re a genuine, unadulterated treasure hunter with lofty aspirations. You never plunder proper ships. You’ve been exploring the western borders of the Fog Sea, searching for the Lost City of Newins and the Solomon Empire’s inheritance.”

It wasn’t easy for her to hold back the words “you’re my idol.” She felt that it would appear to transcend the times. Franca had once

dreamed of being a pure treasure hunter and sailing the Five Seas.

Stormbringer Alger… After Lumian discovered that Church of The Fool's power center was at sea, he had consciously shared information about the Pirate Kings and Pirate Admirals with Franca. He knew that Alger, nicknamed Stormbringer, was a demigod captain, but he wasn't a Pirate King. Therefore, his nickname didn't include the term "king." However, Vice Admiral Ailment, who had become a Pirate King, was now known as the Queen of Ailment.

As for the Lost City of Newins and the Solomon Empire's legacy, they were treasure legends that had been popular in the Five Seas for many years.

At times, Lumian couldn't help but admire Fors Wall, the author of The Adventurer series. She had the audacity to write erotic stories about the Pirate Kings.

Aren't you afraid of being found and executed?

Or was she under the protection of the Church of The Fool?

In the face of Franca's enthusiastic praise, The Hanged Man Alger fell silent for two seconds before saying,

"Maintaining a certain level of purity is both a good and a bad thing.

"Can we begin the summoning ritual?"

Franca muttered under her breath, "A man still has a youthful side even in death…"

Lumian responded to Mr. Hanged Man's question, "Anytime."

Chapter 439 - 439 Three Questions

439 Three Questions

With The Hanged Man present, Lumian didn't need to worry about an attack from the Armored Shadow. Instead, he followed a straightforward procedure: creating a protective wall of spirituality and summoning the Armored Shadow as if beckoning a messenger.

Before the candle's dark-green flame, an indistinct shadow silently hovered in midair, adorned in pitch-black armor adorned with golden fish scales.

The contorted faces on the scales twisted ferociously, wordlessly expressing their agony, which had transformed into a deep-seated hatred and malice toward all living beings around them.

The Hanged Man Alger, dressed as a sailor, took a step forward, and subtle silver lightning bolts crackled from the wall of spirituality.

In an instant, they materialized out of thin air, causing Lumian and Franca's skin to prickle.

Amidst the oppressive calm preceding the impending storm, the myriad transparent faces on the Armored Shadow returned to their silence, but their malevolent gazes persisted.

Lumian fixed his gaze on the six radiant gold bars on the altar, steadying himself. In Hermes, he spoke, "I offer a sacrifice. Please answer three questions."

The blurry faces on the Armored Shadow's form shifted their attention to the glowing gold, silently conveying their agreement to Lumian.

Lumian then nodded at The Hanged Man.

After a brief pause, The Hanged Man posed his first question, “Who are you?”

Lumian repeated the query in Hermes. As his contracted creature, the Armored Shadow would only engage in communication under these circumstances.

After a moment of silence, the Armored Shadow spoke in a language that only Franca could barely decipher.

“I am Chen Tu, the God of Ghost Suppression, imperially conferred by the Celestial Master.”

Celestial Master… Franca paused, considering her words carefully.

“His last name is Chen and his first name is Tu; he holds the title of the God of Ghost Suppression, which was granted by the leader of Daoism. He is responsible for suppressing evil spirits.”

“What is Daoism?” The Hanged Man inquired after some thought.

“What does ‘imperially conferred’ mean?” Lumian turned to Franca and asked in Intisian.

To him, referring to as an ‘-ism’, regardless of the prefix, seemed no different from the Church of The Fool or the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

Franca appeared troubled.

“It’s a complex topic. We can discuss it later. I’m afraid the Armored Shadow may not have the patience to wait.”

That’s true… Lumian cast his gaze at Mr. Hanged Man.

The Hanged Man paused briefly before asking the second question, which Lumian translated into Hermes. “What makes the eastern sea so special?”

In a deep and solemn tone, the Armored Shadow replied, “In the East

Sea, there's a long-lost immortal mountain known as Penglai."

Penglai… It's really my homeland… Franca was delighted by this revelation. Her translation speed increased as she continued, "On the eastern sea, there's a mountain peak inhabited by various powerful warlocks and unique deities. It has been lost to history, and its name is Penglai."

Both Lumian and The Hanged Man found these words to be straightforward and didn't raise any further questions.

After a brief pause, The Hanged Man Alger asked in a deliberate manner, "Have there been any unusual occurrences in the eastern sea in recent years?"

In recent years? How could the Armored Shadow be aware of recent events when he was suspected to have been killed by the Underworld Daoist, imprisoned by his side, and transported to the Yellow Springs millennia ago? It's a time when the Blood Emperor had just perished or recently perished. Franca quietly mused on this but refrained from correcting The Hanged Man.

Lumian repeated the question, and the Armored Shadow responded with a cold tone, "A corpse from Penglai floated over via the river…"

Franca was taken aback and quickly translated, "The mountain called Penglai has reappeared. A powerful warlock or special deity residing on it has perished, and their corpse drifted to a place that might be the River Styx! It's—it's the river where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor was suppressed by Underworld Daoist. It's the source of the Samaritan Women's Spring!"

Does this mean that the eastern sea of the world where the Armored Shadow resides has undergone an abnormality in recent years? The long-vanished divine mountain, Penglai, has reappeared, and powerful Beyonders residing there have perished? Has the mountain known as Penglai always stood tall in the East Sea, or does it only appear occasionally? Lumian yearned to inquire further, but he couldn't ask any more questions due to the rules pertaining to summoning.

The six gold bars on the altar disintegrated, turning into sparkling specks of light that merged with the pitch-black fish-scale armor.

This time, nearly one-fifth of the armor plates turned golden and radiant.

The Hanged Man observed as the Armored Shadow faded into the dark-green candle flame. He remained silent, lost in thought, his intentions unclear.

Lumian completed the ritual and swiftly tidied up the altar. Turning to Franca, he said, “You can explain the terms in the first answer.”

You’re killing me! Franca grumbled silently and pondered for a moment before saying, “An imperial conferment is equivalent to a boon. Yes, a boon!

“This Armored Shadow named Chen Tu was granted a position within the Church or a deity’s kingdom. Through this role, he gained the corresponding powers to suppress evil spirits.

“It’s not a direct gift from a deity but rather a ceremonial act performed by the leader of that school of thought, acting on behalf of the deity and bestowing a specific title.”

Lumian listened attentively and started to grasp the concept of imperial conferment.

This more structured boon system not only linked the power of boons to a specific role but also emphasized the role of the deity’s proxy.

Franca exhaled and said, “That’s the basic idea. There are many more intricacies if you delve deeper into it. It’s a complex topic that can’t be fully explained in a short time. Terms like the Heavenly Court, the Netherworld, Ritual Protocols, Receiving Scriptures, and others are related, but I’m not well-versed in all of them. My knowledge is limited to individual terms.”

Seeing Mr. Hanged Man and Lumian still staring at her, her heart skipped a beat.

“You really want me to explain all of it?”

The Hanged Man nodded slightly.

“I understand it might be challenging to explain on the spot, and there may be inaccuracies. You can take your time to recollect and organize the information when you return. It might be helpful to put it in writing and convey it to me through your Major Arcana card holder.”

“Alright.” Franca was relieved that The Hanged Man was understanding and accommodating. He seemed skilled at considering things from another person’s perspective. She then grumbled silently,

Why did I agree so quickly…

The Hanged Man exuded a sense of dignity without arrogance as he smiled and said, “Once you’ve prepared the written information, you can think about what kind of compensation you’d like.”

Franca had several desires, including a mystical item similar to the Spell of Harrumph, a Sealed Artifact that could enable teleportation, and the Sequence 5 Demoness of Affliction potion formula.

She found herself in a dilemma, as she had considered the reward in advance and had almost forgotten to explain the term “Daoism” until Lumian reminded her.

After careful consideration, Franca provided a succinct explanation, “Daoism is a school of thought that venerates the natural laws and the corresponding philosophy that shapes them into unique deities for worship. Their leader is called the Celestial Master, which essentially means a teacher who comprehends the world’s operating laws and spreads that knowledge. The ‘ways of heaven’ refers to the operating laws and corresponding philosophy of the world I mentioned earlier.”

Lumian attempted to distill the main point, asking, “So, Celestial Masters are akin to leaders like pontiffs, popes, chief shepherds, and matriarchs, with different titles depending on the denomination?”

Franca hesitated for a moment before confirming, “You could put it that way.”

As long as one didn't contemplate joining Daoism, this simplified explanation was sufficient to understand the basic concept.

Lumian nodded.

"It seems like a Celestial Master and an Underworld Daoist are on a similar level."

"I agree," Franca agreed.

During their conversation, The Hanged Man, Alger, rarely interrupted. He mostly listened quietly, occasionally expressing his thoughts or asking questions, which allowed the conversation to flow smoothly. Lumian and Franca shared a lot of information in one go.

Finally, the Major Arcana card holder looked at Lumian and asked, "The Armored Shadow's three answers have been very helpful. What would you like as a reward?"

Very helpful? Apart from allowing us to gain a better understanding of that world and know that the missing Penglai divine mountain has reappeared, there's nothing of practical use… Lumian kept to Madam Magician's advice and said without hesitation, "I would like the opportunity to explore this ghost ship."

Franca was surprised by Lumian's request. Her initial shock was quickly replaced by excitement.

I want it too. I want the opportunity to pilot the ghost ship and study it!

The Hanged Man glanced at Lumian and remarked, "As I expected, you've already sensed the uniqueness of the Blue Avenger. It's one of the Tudor Empire's relics. Would you like to explore it now?"

Before Lumian could respond, the deep voice of Termiboros echoed in his mind, "Dangerous."

Danger… For real? Is Termiboros merely concerned about being implicated by me, so He warned me? Or is He afraid that I might gain something special during my exploration of the Blue Avenger, potentially disrupting Trier's potential catastrophe and foiling His

scheme? Lumian was momentarily unsure if he should believe Termiboros's words.

Termiboros continued in a deep voice, "If you wish to resurrect Alista Tudor within your body, you can explore it now."

Lumian didn't pay much attention to Termiboros's words. He recalled Madam Magician's prior hint: I can decide when to begin the exploration… Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Does this mean I should consider delaying it? Otherwise, why mention it at all? Just request the reward to be a chance of an exploration… Perhaps Aurore's philosophy of balance is at play here. My current negative effects are temporarily balanced, so there's no rush to strengthen the Blood Emperor's aura… As a Conspirer, Lumian quickly made a decision.

"Mr. Hanged Man, I'd like to explore the Blue Avenger at an opportune moment."

Chapter 440 - 440 Illusory Sigh

440 Illusory Sigh

The Hanged Man agreed to Lumian's request and instructed him to contact him through Magician.

They noticed that Alger wasn't alone on the ghost ship, the Blue Avenger. A dozen sailors were scattered around, hiding in the shadows and making no attempts to approach.

Suddenly, Lumian and Franca witnessed a brilliant star hanging in front of them. It gleamed with an eerie, blue light, as though it had emerged from another realm.

The star expanded rapidly, as if it had descended to the ground in an instant. Its radiant glow enveloped everything in its vicinity.

Lumian and Franca blinked, momentarily blinded by the starlight. When their vision cleared, they found themselves back in Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré.

"A-absolutely stunning!" Franca exclaimed, her face brimming with longing.

She lamented the fact that her only option for switching paths was to become a Hunter, unable to experience the carefree life of an Apprentice. She could only hope to acquire a Sealed Artifact with similar abilities in the future. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Lumian, lost in thought, didn't echo Franca's praise.

Observing his contemplative demeanor, Franca couldn't help but voice her concerns, "Don't you find this situation a bit odd?

"Gathering 100,000 verl d'or in gold should be a breeze for a treasure

hunter as formidable as a Pirate King. Coming up with those three questions shouldn't take long, yet Mr. Hanged Man only sought you out to summon the Armored Shadow after all these days, and it happened after he arrived in Trier.

"Besides, Madam Magician could easily transport us to the sea and the Blue Avenger before sending us back. So, why wait for Mr. Hanged Man to arrive in Trier to do so?"

Lumian smiled, praising Franca's astute observation.

"You're quite perceptive this time. It seems that putting your brain to work has its benefits. Idleness can give the impression of a lack of intelligence."

"Dammit, are you praising me or insulting me?" Franca retorted, her brow furrowed. "Either Mr. Hanged Man was in some unique situation that prevented an individual from pinpointing his location, or he has other motives for being in Trier…"

At this point, Lumian and Franca both remembered the impending catastrophe and felt the ominous pressure of an approaching storm hanging over the city.

"Could the Tarot Club be dispatching more Major Arcana card holders to Trier? Perhaps to protect as many citizens as possible if we fail to avert the disaster?" Franca speculated.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully, refraining from argument.

After a moment of silence, Franca changed the topic with enthusiasm, exclaiming, "I want to become a demigod. I want to amass gold!"

Observing Lumian's inquisitive expression, Franca continued, driven by her desires, "That way, I can have you summon the Armored Shadow and ask the questions I've been itching to ask. No need to rely on the protection of Major Arcana card holders!"

"Then give it your all, Miss Pleasure," Lumian teased.

The next day, just before noon, Lumian returned from Rue des Fontaines. He led Jenna underground to the third level of the

catacombs, arriving at a small square with two sacrificial pillars.

If she didn't know Lumian well enough to understand his character, she might have suspected that her friend suddenly had sinister intentions.

Lumian, wearing a black satchel slung diagonally across him, stood confidently with his hands in his pockets. He smiled and explained, "I'm giving you the safest environment for your advancement."

Having heard Franca's account and Madam Magician's words, Lumian had reason to believe that Sequence 0 of the Assassin pathway, the true goddess worshiped by the Demoness Sect, was likely a woman who had transformed from a man, and Her nature was deeply twisted.

It was said that this Primordial Demoness was driven by pain and a desire to replicate Her experiences through the generations. Consequently, She despised ordinary women who became Witches. Even the Demoness Sect hunted down female Assassins, female Instigators, and true Witches.

Given this context, Jenna's consumption of the Witch potion might be affected. After all, even the Hidden Sage, an existing occupying Sequence 0, could subtly influence every Beyonder of the Mystery Pryer pathway while they consumed the potion for their advancement. He whispered to them and imparted knowledge to them. There was no reason the true evil goddess, Primordial Demoness, couldn't exert significant influence on the Witches.

At lower Sequences, the influence shouldn't be too strong—even Aurore had advanced to Sequence 7 and become a Warlock under the Hidden Sage's constant whispers. However, it was better to be cautious. Since there was a way to reduce or weaken these influences, it made sense to do so.

Witches represented the first qualitative transformation of the Assassin pathway, perhaps even the core essence of Demoness. The Primordial Demoness, who sought to change men into women, would likely pay more attention to this particular Sequence advancement. Neither Franca nor Lumian wanted Jenna to take unnecessary risks.

Of course, Madam Magician had occasionally mentioned that this evil goddess wasn't in a stable state.

"The safest?" Jenna looked around, still somewhat unconvinced.

The surroundings were immersed in darkness, and corpses were scattered about. How did it seem safe?

Only the two weathered stone pillars appeared strangely warm and calming.

Lumian briefly explained the unique nature of the sacrificial square and concluded, "At the pinnacle of the Assassin pathway is an evil goddess. No one knows if She might suddenly lose Her sanity. Deities of the same pathway have the ability to influence Beyonders when They consume potions for advancement. This, well, divine manifestation, complicates things."

"This place can significantly weaken that connection."

Jenna listened intently and approached the stone pillar engraved with the Sun Sacred Emblem. She extended her arms slightly and began to pray.

Noticing that she hadn't asked Franca why she hadn't been affected by this before, Lumian raised his right hand, stroked his chin, and clicked his tongue.

"Praise the Sun!" Jenna sang praises to the Eternal Blazing Sun reverently as she concluded her prayer.

Lumian remained silent as he handed Jenna the Witch Beyonder characteristic, Shadow Lizard scales, and other ingredients from the black satchel.

He had used her 10,000 verl d'or to obtain these items from Gardner Martin.

Jenna examined the dark-blue vertical eye-like "jewel" and the intricate thread-like patterns on its surface. She knelt on one knee and began concocting the potion on the unusually clean square ground.

Before long, she held a dark-red potion with concealed shadows in her hand.

Jenna steadied herself, feeling as though she had been pushed forward by various events in the past few months. She couldn't stop now.

Perhaps this is my destiny… Praise the Sun! Jenna closed her eyes and added silently in her heart, Praise The Fool!

At this critical moment, in her quest for smooth advancement and survival, her faith inadvertently shifted.

Without hesitation, Jenna swallowed the potion, fully accepting the notion that she had been dead when she assassinated Hugues Artois.

The potion was icy and illusory, like melting frost. Jenna quickly began to feel an itching, painful sensation spreading all over her body.

Her thoughts began to blur, and she felt as though she were slowly sinking into water.

Suddenly, excruciating pain surged throughout her body, jolting Jenna back to full awareness. She found herself surrounded by black, silent flames that were slowly consuming her.

Above her, a translucent layer of frost-encased ice, like a mirror, prevented Jenna from escaping the black flames.

In the next instant, a face and a figure materialized on the ice.

The face bore an uncanny resemblance to Jenna's own!

The figure was another Jenna, but her master hand had transformed into her left!

The Jenna above the ice stared at the figure engulfed by the black flames with anticipation and desire.

Experienced in combat, Jenna reacted quickly despite her surprise and horror. She summoned all her strength and delivered a powerful

punch upward.

The ice shattered without a sound, and the “corrupted” Jenna plunged into the black flames.

In the distance, a python-like black object swayed gently, with a dark-blue vertical eye at its tip.

The bizarre “python” vanished in an instant, not entering the area. Instead, it delved into a black shadow.

Almost simultaneously, Jenna heard a long, painful sigh.

The ethereal sigh seemed to emanate from very close to her, as if it originated from the vicinity of the sacrificial square and the surrounding corpses.

The black shadow cast by the strange serpent expanded wildly, growing larger and fainter.

It enveloped Jenna and the malevolent figure and seeped into their bodies.

Jenna refused to surrender. Enduring the pain and dizziness, she crawled out of the abyss of black flames and onto the nearby ice. The black shadow weakened and ceased its pursuit. It could only drag the malevolent Jenna into an unfathomable abyss.

The scene shattered instantly, and Jenna’s vision returned to normal. She saw the mottled stone pillar engraved with the Sun Sacred Emblem.

Her face contorted, but the pain in her body gradually subsided.

Lumian watched as the black flames on Jenna’s body rapidly shrank and dissipated, while the surrounding frost melted. He understood that his companion had successfully advanced to Sequence 7 and had become a Witch.

Only then did he turn his gaze towards the edge of the sacrificial square, where the tomb and the surrounding corpses lay in darkness.

Not long after Jenna consumed the potion, he sensed an anomaly in that direction. However, nothing entered the clean square with the two sacrificial pillars.

When Jenna's unusual state finally subsided, she rose to her feet and noticed Lumian gazing into the distance. Puzzled, she asked, "After drinking the potion, I thought I heard a sigh from over there."

Lumian nodded slowly and replied, "On this level of the catacombs, there's a Krismona Night Pillar. It represents a Demoness of Catastrophe who once met her end here."

Chapter 441 - 441 Demoness Cooperation

441 Demoness Cooperation

“Demoness of Catastrophe…” Jenna had never heard of this term from Franca. “Is it a Sequence name?”

Lumian didn’t hold anything back.

“Yes, a Sequence 2 angel. Heh heh, the term angel and Demoness always seem strange together.”

Angel… Jenna didn’t have a clear impression of individuals at this level. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Though she had often heard Lumian and Franca talk about the terror and might of demigods, it had remained theoretical for her. She didn’t know how terrifying or powerful they were.

Jenna muttered to herself, “Krismona… Hasn’t She already perished? Why am I still hearing Her sigh? It should be from Her, right?”

Lumian looked at Jenna and said solemnly, “For such a formidable figure, even if They were to perish completely, there would still be remnants of Their mind that wouldn’t dissipate. It’s like not stiffening even after becoming a corpse.

“In the future, if you come into contact with the inheritance of a similar influential figure, you must be very, very careful.”

Jenna looked surprised and vigilant. She glanced at the edge of the sacrificial square and asked with concern, “What do we do now?”

Lumian chuckled.

“What can we do? What else but wait for Her to sigh? Do you have thoughts of comforting Her?

“Don’t worry. She’s imprisoned by death and bound by the spring water. She can’t leave the fourth and third levels of the catacombs. As long as you don’t explore this place, you don’t have to worry about anything.

“How was it? Was there any influence from the Primordial Demoness?”

It was only then that Lumian, holding the white candle, assessed Jenna’s appearance.

Her skin, which hadn’t been particularly good due to her background and experiences, seemed to have been reborn. Her facial features looked the same as usual, but the details had become more exquisite, as if there was a luster flowing through them. Overall, she exuded an alluring charm and became even more feminine.

Even with Lumian’s experience, he couldn’t help but marvel inwardly.

Jenna was also scrutinizing herself. She felt that her height had increased a little, and the ratio of her body parts she had previously been dissatisfied with had approached perfection.

“I sensed a peculiar python appear, but it didn’t really approach me. It quickly vanished…” Jenna recalled as she took out a prepared mirror. Facing the yellow candle flame in Lumian’s hand, she scrutinized her reflection and couldn’t help but smile.

It was common for most people to appreciate beauty, and Jenna was no exception. Seeing how beautiful and charming she had become made her quite happy. She even felt enchanted by herself.

Reluctantly, she put away the mirror and assessed her changes from various angles.

I can now use black flames that incinerate the Spirit Body and spirituality. I’ve gained the blessing of frost. I’ve mastered various forms of black magic. With prepared ingredients, I can directly

become invisible and cast rare spells. Additionally, I can curse targets through blood and other media. I've unlocked the door to Mirror magic and now possess anti-divination and the ability to create substitutes. I am skilled in using staff and can also use them as substitutes…

Compared to Assassins and Instigators, Witches had undergone a qualitative transformation. They possessed comprehensive abilities, considerable strength, and excelled in survival. Only then did Jenna truly feel like a member of the world of mysticism and a controller of superpowers.

She suddenly felt an urge to test a Witch's various abilities on a target.

However, after glancing at Lumian, she abandoned the idea.

She felt that there was still a significant gap between them. Even a Sequence 6 Franca likely wasn't Ciel's match. Of course, if Franca truly intended to assassinate Lumian, her chances of eliminating him weren't slim. Most Beyonders below Sequence 4 were relatively weak. If they committed an error, it could very well plunge them into the depths of hell.

Lumian tossed a burning white candle to Jenna and pointed at his black satchel.

"There's some cosmetics in here. Make yourself look less attractive to hide your striking charm. That way, the Demoness Sect's hidden members won't recognize you as a Witch at a glance."

For this purpose, he had brought a set of women's cosmetics.

Jenna clicked her tongue.

"You even thought of such details in advance…"

"In the Beyonder world, being cautious and meticulous effectively increases your chances of survival," Lumian said, turning around. "Let's disguise ourselves elsewhere. It's not suitable to stay here for too long."

“Why do I get the feeling that you’re often impulsive and a little crazy…” Jenna muttered softly before smiling. “Do you also think I’ve become more beautiful now?”

She wasn’t wearing any makeup, but her blue eyes seemed to contain starlight as they darted around.

Lumian scoffed.

“I respect the potion’s effects and believe in the influence of Beyonder characteristics.”

With that, he turned around, holding the candle, and walked towards the wide stone steps leading up.

You sure never lose out in a battle of tongues! Jenna cursed under her breath, quickly packed her things, and followed him.

Before she could figure out how to continue teasing Lumian and express her gratitude, she heard the man slowly walk forward and casually say, “Also, you have to work for me tomorrow.”

“Dammit!” Jenna blurted out.

…

In the library district, Rue des Terraces.

The street was known for its diverse terraces, frequented by tourists.

Lumian stood on a café terrace decorated in shades of green and white, casting a sidelong glance at Building 20, where Guillaume Bénet’s widow, Condiment Beauty Paulina, resided.

The terrace of the house was painted a refreshing white, supported by a wooden frame that shielded it from the wind and rain. It resembled a resort hotel on the southern coast of Intis.

Lumian sipped his coffee as all the information and conjectures he had gathered during this period flashed through his mind.

Every week, a mysterious man visits the Condiment Beauty at night.

Once or twice a week… At least once this week. It should be within these two days…

According to the observations of the surrounding citizens, there are a total of three mysterious men who visited Paulina at night. One is young, one is in his prime, and one is nearly 60 years old…

Who among them could be the Sinners' liaison, Bouvard Pont-Péro?

One of Bouvard's contracted abilities is Transfiguration. These three might or might not be him. They're just substitutes he creates to attract attention, and he sneaks in disguised as one of Paulina's servants…

The price of Transfiguration is one's own face. The downside is the desire to abuse others… The buildings on Rue de la Terrasse are quite soundproof. None of the neighbors heard Paulina's screams…

Some time has elapsed since Guillaume Bénet's demise. It's highly likely that Paulina officially joined the Sinners organization, received a boon, and became a Beyonder…

The most important part of the plan is to determine who Bouvard Pont-Péro is…

Lumian had a plan. As the sky darkened, he finished his coffee and donned his brown round hat. Without making a sound, he left the building and vanished into an alley on the side of the street.

…

20 Rue de la Terrasse, in the spacious and warm master bedroom.

The mature and beautiful Paulina, adorned in a pale-white nightgown, walked to the full-body mirror, removed her clothes, and examined the whip-like marks on her body.

They had faded to a faint dark-red hue, likely to dissipate completely within a few days.

Paulina let out a soft sigh at the thought of the pain she would have to endure for the next two days.

Her gaze fell upon the black mark on her right shoulder, and she rejoiced that the first contract ability she had chosen after becoming a Contractee was Regeneration.

Once activated, it could regenerate flesh and skin to a certain extent, allowing various injuries to quickly recover.

Paulina had never tested whether this could regenerate limbs, believing it should work if the conditions were met.

Of course, the dead couldn't activate their abilities.

Paulina adjusted her light-white nightgown and prepared to put on light makeup to welcome a potential guest.

At that moment, she suddenly felt a strong sense of danger.

This also stemmed from her contract ability. She felt that sensing danger was more important than actual combat.

For this, she had paid the price of "fertility" and received the negative effect of mild mental weakness.

Paulina's nerves tightened, and her body abruptly bent backward. With the flexibility of a Dancer, she distanced herself from the source of danger.

Simultaneously, she opened her right palm, and silver-white lightning shot out, intertwining with a crackling sound, enveloping the area where she suspected the assailant was hiding.

This was her third and final contracted ability, Electric Arc. It could effectively compensate for her weaknesses in offensive means. The price was that she was prone to lightning strikes in a thunderstorm. The downside was that her body had become more sensitive. She could originally withstand 70-80% of her original threshold for pain. This made Paulina resistant to Bouvard Pont-Péro's visit. She relied on Alms Monk's endurance to hold on every time.

With a cracking sound, a mirror suddenly appeared in the area covered by the lightning in her palm. It quickly charred and shattered into pieces.

From the corner of her eye, Paulina spotted a figure swiftly outlined by the drawn curtains. She hurriedly contorted her body to avoid it.

Suddenly, a white fist materialized behind her head and smashed below her ear.

With a bang, Paulina blacked out.

Behind Condiment Beauty, Jenna, dressed as a female mercenary, instantly appeared.

She and Franca easily controlled their target with dual invisibility, anti-divination tactics, one to attract attention, and the other to launch a sneak attack.

Franca took a few steps forward, retrieved the Bliss Society's sedative, and brought it to Paulina's nose.

After completing her task, Jenna drew the curtains to leave a slight crack, casting her outstretched palm in the light of the room.

This was a signal to Lumian that the operation had succeeded.

Before long, Lumian scaled the outer wall and entered the master bedroom with Jenna's help.

Then, he tossed the Lie earring to Franca.

Franca transformed the mystical item into a silver pendant and hung it on her chest.

Her appearance and height changed, becoming more and more like Paulina.

Chapter 442 - 442 Opportunity to Act

442 Opportunity to Act

Seeing Franca appear before her as Paulina, Jenna couldn't help but marvel at the wonders of the Lie accessory.

Franca gazed at her reflection in the full-body mirror and stroked her face gently. She chuckled and said, "I like this style too."

"What don't you like?" Lumian mocked.

"This is called having an eye for beauty!" Franca opened Paulina's wardrobe and chose a pair of pajamas that could hide many items. She entered the master bedroom's washroom and began changing.

Soon, "Madame Paulina" emerged. Jenna knew Franca well, but she temporarily couldn't tell the authenticity.

After Franca entered Invisibility, Lumian administered some truth serum to the unconscious Paulina.

He estimated the time and felt that it was about time. Then, he took out the Mysticism Smelling Salts and brought them to Paulina's nose.

Amidst the sneezes, Lumian capped the bottle and retreated into a crevice beside the wardrobe, preventing Paulina, who had regained consciousness, from seeing him.

Jenna retrieved a small revolver from her dark brown belt, squatted down, and pressed it against Paulina's forehead, ready to pull the trigger.

Paulina snapped out of her daze and saw a face adorned with a

silvery-white half-mask.

The face was uncovered, and although the skin wasn't fair and had some flaws, and the texture was concealed by cosmetics, the curves were quite beautiful, making people of the same sex take a second look.

Immediately after, Paulina felt the coldness of the gun's barrel and saw a revolver held to her head.

Her body tensed instinctively.

Jenna didn't give her a chance to express her doubts or pleas. She asked bluntly,

"When will Bouvard Pont-Péro arrive?"

Paulina replied subconsciously, "In the next two days…"

Before she could finish, she suddenly shut her mouth, disbelief etched on her face.

W-why did I say what was on my mind?

Jenna raised a second question based on her preparations.

"In the past two months, among the mysterious men who visited you under the cover of night, who was Bouvard Pont-Péro? Or were all of them him?"

Jenna asked curiously, "Will the others Bouvard Pont-Péro send sleep with you?"

"No," Paulina replied, swallowing her saliva. "Bouvard possesses a strong sense of possessiveness. Since I've already become his lover, he won't allow me to have any more intercourse with other men. The people he sends will only chat with me, have dinner with me, and wander around the bedroom for a while before leaving."

Very possessive… Lumian's thoughts raced as he listened in the shadows, recalling the mysticism knowledge he had obtained when he became a Contractee.

Soon, he found a contracted creature that fit the criteria and its corresponding abilities.

Evil Shadow Black Beast, a spirit world creature that resides in the shadows of creatures. The birth of its descendants requires the stripping of a shadow as a carrier. Creatures that lose their shadows will die on the spot…

By sacrificing a human's shadow, he could obtain the Shadow Substitution ability from the Evil Shadow Black Beast, and his possessiveness would significantly increase…

By controlling the target or subduing them in advance, he could complete Shadow Substitution in battle and use someone else's shadow to take damage on his behalf, avoiding dangerous attacks. Under such circumstances, the distance between the main body and the target couldn't exceed 20 meters…

"I wonder how much those actors earn…" Jenna teased with a smile before asking, "What Sequence Beyonder is Bouvard Pont-Péro equivalent to. What contractual abilities does he possess?"

Paulina pursed her lips, unwilling to answer.

After a few seconds, she couldn't resist the urge to spill the beans. She opened her mouth and said, "Bouvard is an Ascetic. He said that a Fate Appropriator is the most important Sequence of the Inevitability pathway before obtaining godhood. One needs to make significant contributions to obtain the corresponding boon. He's still far from that.

"He once mentioned that Ascetic can have six contractual abilities, but I don't know if that refers to ordinary circumstances or special circumstances."

Leaning against the wardrobe, Lumian couldn't help but chuckle inwardly.

Temiboros, are you aware of this?

He didn't ask because he knew Termiboros wouldn't answer such a question.

Paulina continued, “He didn’t display all his abilities in front of me. He always wore pajamas and didn’t expose his upper body during sex.

“I’ve seen him emerge from the shadows and know he has three imps. He even suggested I choose the Danger Premonition ability, believing it to be useful.”

Shadow Burial, Tamed Imps, Danger Premonition, Shadow Substitution, Transfiguration… That’s a total of five contracted abilities… If Bouvard Pont-Péro is nothing special, there should be only one unknown contracted ability. Even if he’s stronger than ordinary Ascetics, there’s a high chance that his total abilities won’t exceed eight… Lumian quickly formed a clearer understanding.

The price of Shadow Burial was having normal dreams. The downside was becoming more extreme and paranoid. The price of Tamed Imps was three infant corpses that had died before they were born. The downside was that he had to use his life force to feed the imps, and there was a risk of backlash. The specific method was to grow sarcomas that looked like breastfeeding. Danger Premonition involved sacrificing fertility and become mentally weak…

Contractee abilities are truly peculiar… Ever since becoming a Witch and becoming deeply involved in the Sinners organization, Jenna had learned about Contractee, Alms Monk, Ascetic, and other Inevitability Sequences. She now knew why Lumian possessed Spell of Harrumph, Spirit World Traversal, and other abilities.

She thought for a moment and asked, “Apart from contractual abilities, does Bouvard Pont-Péro possess any mystical items, Beyonder weapons, or other items?”

Paulina shuddered inexplicably.

“H-he has two pockets that I can’t touch. He always chooses the kind of pajamas with pockets or pants pockets.”

Carries some items… I wonder what powers they possess… But at least we won’t end up empty-handed… Lumian allowed his thoughts to wander.

Jenna followed the predetermined rhythm of their conversation and inquired about Paulina's performances in front of Bouvard Pont-Péro, her interactions with the butler and servants in the building, her abilities, and her assets.

Then, Paulina fainted again.

"She possesses Regeneration, much like a Vampire's self-healing ability. The sedative's effects will likely be diminished and won't endure for long," Jenna inquired. "Why didn't you simply eliminate her?"

Lumian cast a glance at the new Witch and let out a chuckle.

"You're quite the ruthless one, aren't you?"

Jenna pursed her lips and stated, "Showing kindness to heretics only harms innocent citizens."

"Exactly!" Franca, disguised as Paulina, deactivated her Invisibility and concurred.

The more she observed Witch Jenna, the more she found herself liking her. Despite Jenna deliberately donning unattractive makeup and a half-mask, Franca had a discerning eye for beauty.

Lumian scoffed and said, "Haven't you heard that Bouvard Pont-Péro seems to possess Danger Premonition? Even though you can counter divination, if Paulina were to die now and her boon's power returns to its source, do you think Bouvard won't receive a warning from fate?

"Anthony still has time to enter. He won't engage in direct combat, but he'll serve a purpose in my scheme."

Lumian not only aimed to capture Bouvard Pont-Péro but also intended to act as a Conspirer in this endeavor.

"I understand," Franca said with widened eyes. "I just adhere to the notion of being ruthless toward heretics."

As she spoke, she removed the Lie silver pendant from her chest and

tossed it to Jenna. Lumian instructed Anthony Reid to infiltrate the building via the outer wall of the master bedroom.

…

As the drizzle descended into night, the gas street lamps on both sides of the street emitted a hazy glow.

At 20 Rue de la Terrasse, a man in a silk top hat, black suit, and dark bow tie rang the doorbell.

He had an ordinary appearance, short, thick eyebrows, and deep blue eyes. He wouldn't attract anyone's attention when he walked along the bustling arcade.

The butler of the house opened the door. He glanced at the visitor and discreetly gestured.

The man formed a circle with his hands and asked, "Where's Paulina?"

"Madame awaits you in the bedroom," the butler replied respectfully.

The man nodded and made his way through the living room and up the stairs, arriving outside the master bedroom.

Without knocking, he turned the handle and entered.

In the spacious and warm master bedroom, the wall lamps had all been extinguished. The candlelight flickered dimly, casting a soft, rosy glow that quickened one's pulse.

The man's eyes fixed on Paulina, reclining on the bed, and a grin crept across his face.

"Why does it feel even more enticing than before?"

"Something special just for you," Paulina whispered.

The man stared at the alluring contours, his pulse racing. He chuckled and said,

“Why do I find you more captivating than ever?”

“I dressed up just for you.” Paulina, in her two-piece pajamas, seemed bashful, her cheeks flushed as she closed her eyes.

The man swallowed hard, his mind on high alert, though his body couldn’t resist taking a step forward.Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Chapter 443 - 443 Trap Within A Trap

443 Trap Within A Trap

The man suspected to be Bouvard Pont-Péro took a step forward and finally regained some rationality.

He adjusted the dark bow tie beneath his neck, and three indistinct figures materialized above his head and shoulders.

These figures weren't large; they looked like newborns with pale-white, bluish skin and sinister expressions on their round, distorted faces.

Tamed Imps!

The three translucent and indistinct imps burrowed toward Bouvard Pont-Péro's chest, each finding its place and began suckling in a frenzied manner.

Suddenly, their figures became much clearer. They left his body, circling around and flying at an extremely fast speed to different parts of 20 Rue de la Terrasse. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

With no corporeal form, they effortlessly traversed walls and doors. In a short span of time, they went through the master bedroom's wardrobe, desk, changing room, and washroom, leaving no room for any assailant to hide.

One sinister-looking imp with a bluish-white face even circled the room's shadows, ensuring that no Beyonder could rely on supernatural powers to lurk in this special environment.

Seeing Paulina's puzzled and watery gaze as she opened her eyes, Bouvard Pont-Péro subconsciously explained, "My Danger Premonition tells me that something is amiss here. Lately, I need to be extremely cautious and avoid making any mistakes. After I eliminate the hidden danger and confirm my safety, I'll enjoy my evening with you."

For some inexplicable reason, Bouvard's tone was gentler and more eager to explain than before when facing Paulina. It was as if her attire and demeanor tonight had touched his heart, making him irresistibly attracted and eager to please her.

As Bouvard Pont-Péro finished speaking, one of the imps left the master bedroom and entered the adjacent room.

With its bluish-white skin, it reached the end of the corridor, passed through the wardrobe, and entered.

In the next moment, it saw a figure bound and gagged.

The figure wore a pale-white nightgown, and her clothes were disheveled, revealing a large area of her skin. She was beautiful, elegant, and had a plump body like a ripe fruit. She was another Paulina!

The contorted-faced imp let out a shrill cry and rushed back into Bouvard Pont-Péro's embrace. As it drew closer to his chest, sucking, it relayed the scene it had witnessed to its feeder.

Bouvard Pont-Péro's expression changed, realizing he had fallen into a trap and been ambushed.

Luckily, he had been cautious enough to detect hidden dangers in advance!

The Sinners' liaison darkened and merged with his shadow, sliding into the wall's shadows like a snake.

His Shadow Burial's ability was unlike that of many Beyonders. They relied on the dimness of shadows to hide, while he transformed himself into a shadow, truly becoming part of the darkness. Just like the special creatures that inhabited such environments, he could

stray into alternate spaces connected to certain shadowy regions.

At that moment, Bouvard Pont-Péro felt as if he had plunged into a lightless sea. His body extended and merged with the inky droplets.

Quickly, he darted towards the room at the end of the corridor.

His mission: to save Paulina and escape Rue de la Terrasse with her.

He harbored an extraordinary possessiveness for this Condiment Beauty.

As Bouvard moved through the shadows, he suddenly heard a crisp crack.

The yellow gas wall lamp blazed to life, filling every inch of the glass cover with flames.

The gas lamps in the corridor transformed into miniature suns, banishing the shadows.

Only a serpentine humanoid shadow remained on the floor.

Jenna, who had transformed into the lady's maid using Lie, emerged from a side room, casting a black flame onto Bouvard Pont-Péro's shadow.

The Sinners' liaison immediately felt pain and weakness originating from the depths of his soul.

Without hesitation, he used Shadow Substitution.

In 20 Rue de la Terrasse, Paulina's butler and servants had already become believers in Inevitability. They submitted to the envoy, Bouvard Pont-Péro, and their shadows were offered for exchange!

In Paulina's lady's maid's room, the human shadow suddenly squirmed and transformed.

The black shadow stood up, becoming plumper, resembling Bouvard Pont-Péro.

The shadows in the corridor quickly dissipated under the black flames. The lady's maid in the room twitched a few times, and black flames oozed from her nostrils, ears, mouth, and eyes. Then, she fell silent and ceased breathing.

Bouvard Pont-Péro seized the moment when Shadow Substitution took effect to activate another contracted ability.

He sprinted forward, leaving behind dozens, even hundreds of phantoms.

His body flickered amidst the phantoms, shifting positions so that Jenna couldn't lock onto him or distinguish him.

In the blink of an eye, Bouvard Pont-Péro, accompanied by a group of figures, entered the room where Paulina was bound and opened the corresponding wardrobe.

Paulina's eyes were filled with surprise, desire, and hope as she watched Bouvard's right hand, gleaming with a metallic luster, become incredibly sharp.

In an instant, the Sinners' liaison severed the rope and attempted to escape the encirclement with Paulina.

He had a total of eight contracted abilities, one of which had never been used before.

At that moment, as the rope loosened, Paulina couldn't help but remember her traumatic experiences of abuse at the hands of Bouvard, the pain etched into the depths of her mind.

Uncontrollable hatred surged in her heart. She longed for the one who had harmed her to face justice.

She suddenly raised her right hand.

Alarm bells rang in Bouvard's mind as he sensed an intense Danger Premonition.

Yet, at this distance, no one could react faster than Electric Arc.

Silver-white lightning shot from Paulina's palm and struck Bouvard's body. His body went numb, and even his thoughts seemed to be engulfed by lightning, temporarily rendering him powerless.

Franca, disguised as Paulina, had already closed within five meters, aiming the Ring of Punishment she wore.

Lightning flickered in her eyes, and Bouvard's body shuddered, as if his soul was being torn apart, in excruciating pain that left him unable to think straight.

Psychic Piercing!

Smack!

Jenna, who had dashed to her target's side, clenched her fist and struck behind Bouvard's ear before he could rely on his Ascetic endurance to recover.

The Sinners' liaison slipped into unconsciousness.

Before Bouvard lost consciousness, he glimpsed a pair of black leather shoes and heard a taunting voice.

"I don't even need to lift a finger when dealing with you."

…

Bouvard abruptly broke free from the darkness and regained consciousness.

The first thing he saw was a right leg resting on his left knee and that pair of black leather shoes. Then, he saw a young man leaning back in an armchair, his hands pressing on the armrests.

Bouvard instinctively wanted to use his abilities, but all his thoughts seemed to sink into a quagmire, unresponsive.

In the next moment, he noticed that his feet had transformed into cow hooves, and he was wrapped in a layer of brown cowhide.

Animal Creation Spell… Bouvard instantly grasped his predicament.

He watched as the young man with golden and black hair leisurely flipped through the grayish-blue cloth bag he had hidden in his pocket.

Wh— Bouvard instinctively held his breath, hoping that the other party would take out the item.

Soon, the young man retrieved a gold coin with a 5 verl d'or denomination with a Sunbird relief from a grayish-blue cloth bag.

Yes! That's it! Bouvard anticipated what would happen next.

Simultaneously, he focused on observing the other party's luck.

This was one of the few abilities not restricted by the Animal Creation Spell.

Bouvard's bullish face now donning an honest look, suddenly froze.

He saw his enemy's luck of all kinds, and he saw layers of colors constantly changing!

A sharp pain pierced Bouvard's brain, and he instinctively closed his eyes. He felt a sticky, warm, and bloody liquid slowly trickle down from his eyeballs.

As Bouvard's pain subsided, as if he had seen something he shouldn't have, he heard the young man say with a smile, "Were you hoping that I'll take away this gold coin of misfortune and have my luck changed passively, allowing you to escape your predicament?"

He knows the Luck Transference Spell… He also knows the Animal Creation Spell… Does he belong to another organization that believes in Inevitability or… A name suddenly flashed through Bouvard Pont-Péro's mind: Lumian Lee?

Lumian seemed to sense Bouvard's thoughts and smiled without humor.

"I thought you were always on guard against me."

Bouvard's heart sank, and he abandoned any hope of luck. He

immediately used his spirituality to stir the air within the cowhide and indistinctly recited the honorific name of the individual.

However, he quickly realized that his spirituality was on the verge of drying up, and his mind was extremely weak. He couldn't even do such a thing.

"If you understand your situation, you can answer my questions," Lumian said with a smile.

Bouvard subconsciously opened his mouth and mooed.

He had an urge to communicate with the other party, but he could only let out a cow's moo.

Jenna, dressed as a female mercenary, brought over a brass mechanical typewriter and placed it in front of Bouvard.

This was Franca's suggestion: There was no need to worry that Bouvard Pont-Péro wouldn't be able to answer questions after being transformed into a bull by the Animal Creation Spell. As long as he wasn't illiterate and had a certain level of intelligence, he could compose answers by typing on the keyboard. The only drawback was that his speed wouldn't be too fast.

Seeing the calf sit down on its hind legs and place its front hooves on the mechanical typewriter's button with difficulty, Franca, who was invisible and could stop the other party from doing any irrational act at any moment, muttered silently, Now, no one can tell if the person typing at the keyboard is human or bull…

Lumian glanced at Bouvard and asked bluntly, "Where are the Sansons?"

Chapter 444 - 444 The Sinners' Leader

444 The Sinners' Leader

The brown male calf's front hooves delicately tapped the mismatch-sized mechanical typewriter, careful not to press any keys accidentally.

Lumian toyed with the gold coin of misfortune, patiently awaiting Bouvard's full response.

Seizing the opportunity, he swiftly reviewed the operation in his mind.

From the start, he had no intention of acting personally. First, he wanted to try playing the role of a Conspirer. Second, he aimed to improve the performance and teamwork of the small team members.

Considering Bouvard Pont-Péro's possessiveness, Lumian shifted his attention to Paulina. Through Anthony Reid's repeated Psychological Cues, the woman's accumulated resentment from the abuse had fermented, turning into a seed that would sprout once her restraints were removed.

To make Bouvard lower his guard, allowing his Danger Premonition to only trigger at the end, Lumian not only made Franca prepare against divination but also had his companion masquerade as Paulina, making the target believe subconsciously that the one tied up was the real Paulina.

Of course, she was the real deal. Before Bouvard cut the rope, Paulina didn't hold any true grudge against him. Her sincere desire was to be rescued, an emotion that couldn't be feigned. It was enough to convince Bouvard without setting off his Danger Premonition.

Jenna's role was to launch an attack and provide suppression, preventing the target from observing the environment or contemplating details. This forced him to approach Paulina and escape from 20 Rue de la Terrasse with his precious belongings as quickly as possible. Additionally, they wanted the enemy to instinctively believe that the ambush centered around the master bedroom. The room where the actual Paulina was held was, therefore, relatively secure.

As Lumian had foreseen, Bouvard "sprinted" right into the trap.

Without focusing the conspiracy on Paulina, with Bouvard's Danger Premonition, regardless of how convincing Franca's performance was or how similar she looked to Paulina, he would have sensed it in advance and sent his imps to confirm it cautiously.

From this act, traps are the simplest and most direct conspiracy, while conspiracies are the deepening and escalation of traps… Lumian sensed the potion's minute digestion and sighed inwardly.

Simultaneously, in her invisible state, Franca sensed no impending or brewing danger as Bouvard's hooves struck the keys. She gradually relaxed.

She couldn't help but recall her conversation with the Sinners organization's liaison while impersonating Paulina. Her face flushed red, and she felt intense embarrassment.

How embarrassing! How f*cking embarrassing!

Finally, Bouvard completed his initial keyboard conversation.

Jenna ripped the paper filled with words from the mechanical typewriter and swiftly read it to Lumian and Franca.

"More than two months ago, the Sansons went somewhere and haven't returned yet.

"I don't know where that is. From what they said, it's related to something important.

"Before this, Constace, the mistress of the Sansons, had already gone

mad. To prevent her from taking drastic actions when out of control and attracting the attention of official Beyonders and affecting the other members of the organization, her husband, Voisin Sanson, along with their child, killed her and allowed her to return to the Lord's kingdom."

Purged due to madness? When did you get the impression that you weren't mad? However, the extent of your madness isn't serious. You're at a stage where your perspectives are distorted and abnormal. You even know how to disguise yourself… Lumian muttered silently after hearing that.

From his perspective, ever since establishing a connection with the entity known as Inevitability, those believers were no longer ordinary people. They had more or less been corrupted and had potential mental problems. At some point in time, they might completely lose their minds or collapse.

If Lumian didn't possess Mr. Fool's seal and had the Beyonder characteristics balancing things out, he would have been crazier and more terrifying than Constace, whom Bouvard had mentioned.

Jenna, who stood between him and Bouvard, couldn't help but hiss. She felt that it was a good thing to be ruthless to heretics.

Those people had lost their normal emotions. They killed their wife or mother without hesitation!

If they could even do this to their loved ones, one could imagine how they would treat the people around them!

"Who were the ones who went to the unknown place you mentioned?" Lumian inquired.

Tap! Tap! Tap! The calf began typing on the keyboard again.

This time, it was much more proficient than before. Its answers appeared character by character on the paper.

"Voisin Sanson is our leader. He received a revelation and led a few Fate Appropriators in Trier to that place."

“Voisin Sanson is the leader of the Sinners organization?” Lumian asked in surprise.

According to I Know Someone, didn’t Voisin Sanson choose to join the Sinners organization because he was on the verge of bankruptcy and later successfully changed his luck and obtained the power of boons?

Tap! Tap! Tap! A new answer was printed on the paper and read out by Jenna.

“He was the first to spread the faith of Inevitability in Trier. He obtained godhood nearly three years ago and became a Circle Inhabitant.

“He likes to disguise himself. In front of his collaborators, he pretends to only be a key member of the organization and not the founder. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“His wife and children were all brought into the mysticism world by him to become the bestowed of Inevitability. Apart from the deceased Roche, his wife and three other children are now Fate Appropriators. Of course, Constace has already been purged.”

A demigod—a Circle Inhabitant—actually interacted with Low- to Mid-Sequence Beyonders like Loki and I Know Someone. He’s truly sinister and cunning… I wonder if I Know Someone and the others noticed. If they didn’t, they’re truly living in their own world. They think the people around them are fools who can be exploited and squeezed dry of their value… Who’s the hunter and who’s the prey? Lumian mocked the two key members of April Fool’s once again.

Simultaneously, he gained a deeper understanding of the Sinners organization.

The cult had been established with the Sansons as its core.

As for how Voisin Sanson had come into contact with the faith of Inevitability and obtained the boon of an evil god, that was another matter.

From the looks of it, his business had failed, and he was on the brink

of bankruptcy. With no other choice, he had tried various things.

“Why didn’t Voisin Sanson let Guillaume Bénet know he was the leader of the Sinners?” Lumian attempted to confirm the details.

Guillaume Bénet was already a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator, on par with the Sansons and other key members. He was significantly stronger than Bouvard Pont-Péro.

Once again, the calf satiated his desire to share information with his typewriter.

“His Excellency Voisin believed Guillaume Bénet was overly ambitious. If he’s involved in core matters, it will make him arrogant and do unnecessary things.”

To put it simply, Guillaume Bénet’s early conduct of the sacrificial ritual in Cordu had left Voisin dissatisfied. He believed that he had messed up the descent of the Inevitability angel. However, due to the entity known as Inevitability not punishing the Fate Appropriator on the spot, he could only suppress his dissatisfaction and temporarily accept Guillaume Bénet before marginalizing him? Lumian roughly grasped Voisin Sanson’s take on the matter from Bouvard’s response.

He pondered for a moment and changed the question.

“Has Voisin Sanson occasionally contacted you after visiting that place? What are you responsible for? Why do you think you need to be cautious and not make any mistakes?”

The calf’s proficiency with the mechanical typewriter increased once more.

“Before His Excellency Voisin departed, he informed me that he wouldn’t contact me for three months and would only return after the matter was concluded.

“Me and a few other members are responsible for managing different businesses and contacting different believers. We want them to focus on their prayers and businesses for the next three months and not cause any trouble. Likewise for the few of us.”

Does Inevitability's oracle believe that the catastrophe will descend within three months? It's been more than two months since Voisin Sanson and company vanished… In less than three weeks, the problem will definitely erupt? Time is of the essence… Lumian inquired about the Sansons and the Sinners organization's current situation, but it was evident that Bouvard Pont-Péro didn't know much. He only knew about the matters under him.

Finally, Lumian pointed at the items he had retrieved from the other party's pocket and asked, "What are these? What's their purpose?"

The calf replied truthfully through the mechanical typewriter: "You were holding a gold coin of misfortune made using the Luck Transference Spell.

"I once encountered an extremely unlucky person and used the Luck Transference Spell to give him a new life. As a result, he became a believer of my lord. This gold coin of misfortune was the product of that help."

Once… Lumian frowned and said, "How long can the Luck Transference Spell of an Ascetic last?"

At the Alms Monk stage, he had relied on a ritual to transfer a target's fate to a corresponding item. The effect could only last three days. Beyond this time limit, if he didn't find another person to shoulder the fate, it would return to the original owner and couldn't be transferred again.

After becoming a Contractee, Lumian hadn't used the Luck Transference Spell again. He could only estimate that the duration would increase to somewhere in the vicinity of five to seven days based on the mystical knowledge he had obtained.

As he spoke, he focused on the 5 verl d'or gold coin in his hand and realized that it was entwined with blood-red—nearly black—luck. It tried to spread towards him but failed to do anything.

Ordinary misfortune can affect me, but extreme misfortune will affect the intertwined fates of Termiboros and me. Without the corresponding level, it can't shake the main stream… Lumian made a

preliminary judgment.

The calf replied amidst the tapping: “Thirteen days is the limit of the Luck Transference Spell. If I want to raise it further, I can only rely on the abilities of a Fate Appropriator.

“In 13 days, if I don’t have an enemy I need to deal with, I’ll randomly choose a target and subject him to misfortune. Then, when his misfortune starts, I’ll promote the power of Inevitability and help him change his luck. I’ll obtain another gold coin of misfortune and a new believer.”

Dammit, a perpetual motion machine! Franca, in her invisibility state, couldn’t help but criticize.

Chapter 445 - 445 Spoils of War

445 Spoils of War

Lumian was flabbergasted.

You can do that?

After careful consideration, he realized that it was indeed possible. The mystical knowledge that came with the boon only stated that if bad luck hadn't been transferred and returned to the original individual, it couldn't be affected by the Luck Transference Spell. It didn't mention anything about whether people whose fates had been altered by cursed gold coins and other items could be transferred again.

I can't underestimate others. Although they are mostly foolish and not very clever, they occasionally come up with strange ideas and unusual methods. Aurore had once said that no matter how foolish a person is, they will always succeed once after thinking a thousand times… As a Conspirer, Lumian couldn't ignore such a possibility. Otherwise, he might stumble over a proverbial obstacle sooner or later and fall hard. This experience provided Lumian with valuable insight.

Since he didn't show any signs of losing control or the potion's power dissipating after advancing to Conspirer, and he had already digested a bit of the potion, Lumian could pray for the Ascetic boon in a few days and gain the ability to establish a new balance.

Lumian gazed at the calf "sitting" there with difficulty and pondered.

"Can one keep repeating this process?"

Bouvard's hooves tapped on the brass mechanical keyboard, while Jenna read the contents of the paper.

“With each transfer of luck, the river of fate will undergo a certain change and advance to a higher level. This will result in misfortune occurring sooner. The difficulty of stirring it will also keep increasing.

“Two or three more people’s fates on the gold coin of misfortune aren’t something Ascetics can stir. The same goes for the unlucky banknote.

“An Alms Monk can only maintain one item of fate at a time, while an Ascetic can manage two.”

The unlucky banknote referred to a single 20 verl d’or banknote that had originally been stored in the grayish-blue cloth bag. On the front was a bust of Intis’s first president, Levanx, and a large dock on the Srenzo River.

So it wasn’t that you didn’t want more gold coins of misfortune, but you couldn’t make them… Lumian nodded slowly.

“How much longer can the gold coins of misfortune and unlucky banknotes last?”

“Ten days.” The calf quickly typed out two words.

Franca had heard Lumian mention the Luck Transference Spell, instructing her and Jenna to carefully distinguish spoils of war when facing those on the Inevitability pathway and not to touch anything they shouldn’t.

Listening to their conversation, she muttered silently, What unlucky banknotes? I think they’re life-threatening banknotes!

Before I transmigrated, I knew a little about such sorcery, but I thought it was fake and rooted in feudal superstition. But now, it seems that humans’ thoughts and beliefs are similar in similar environments. Even the sorcery they create is relatively similar. Or could there be traces of an Inevitability evil god or a deity in a similar domain in our world?

Lumian pointed at the two metal canisters beside the gold coin of misfortune and the unlucky banknote and inquired, “What are they?”

“They’re all Prophetic Concoctions,” Jenna recited the sentence typed by the calf.

Prophetic Concoctions? I’ve always found them troublesome, so I didn’t make them. Besides, if I were to find a corpse and administer the Prophetic Concoction, I might be secretly influenced by Termiboros, resulting in inaccuracies or misleading outcomes. Lumian shifted his attention to the item he found in Bouvard Pont-Péro’s other pocket.

It was a monocle—something Lumian didn’t dare to recognize—with a peculiar design.

Its main body was a thick, circular cover made of pale-white flesh and dark blood vessels, as if it could be worn directly over one’s ear.

One end of the circle extended, connecting to a lens intertwined with a transparent purple tube, still flowing with blood.

Just now, when Franca put on her gloves and took out the item, a strange and illusory voice echoed in her ears, but she couldn’t hear it clearly.

“What’s this?” Lumian asked.

Bouvard tapped on the mechanical typewriter’s keyboard.

“A dangerous mystical item. I call it the Eye of Truth.

“It seems to have been severely corrupted. All that’s left is the ability to see through illusions and perceive the truth, the light of spirituality. If you wear it, you can hear the voice of some hidden entity at any moment and experience an irresistible negative influence.

“If you only carry it and don’t touch it with your body, you’ll only experience faint tinnitus and auditory hallucinations.”

An incomplete Eyes of Mystery Prying… Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before asking, “Don’t you have any ritual sheepskin or dog skin?”

“There are three ritualistic dog skins back home,” the calf eagerly shared. He took the initiative to provide details even without Lumian asking. “The incantation for usage is ‘Circle,’ and the dispelling incantation is ‘Arrangement of Fate.’ Any language that can stir supernatural powers is fine.”

Quite devout… Lumian exhaled and smiled.

“What other valuable items do you have at home?”

“There are banknotes worth over 13,000; gold coins, gold bars, and accessories currently valued at 30,000 verl d’or; 20,000 verl d’or worth of stocks and bonds, and real estate deeds for three houses.” The calf listed his assets.

Stocks? I need to secure those stocks and sell them on the black market. Who knows if they will crash tomorrow! Franca keenly caught the keywords relevant to her.

Real estate that can’t be easily discovered by official Beyonders and is difficult to liquidate with more than 60,000 verl d’or… As expected of the liaison responsible for a portion of the Sinners organization’s believers and corresponding businesses… Lumian immediately inquired about the whereabouts of Bouvard’s residence.

Finally, Lumian inquired about the other liaisons and important members of the Sinners organization, but Bouvard had limited knowledge. They mainly had one-way contact with the Sansons and handled their own specific tasks. Interaction with other members was minimal, with occasional meetings at the Sansons’ residence once or twice.

Lumian listened quietly but didn’t immediately decide Bouvard’s fate. Instead, he turned to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony Reid, who was waiting outside the door, avoiding Bouvard’s sight.

“With Paulina’s assets, we’ll gain 75,000 verl d’or, the Eye of Truth, three ritual dog skins, two bottles of Prophetic Concoction, a gold coin of misfortune, and an unlucky banknote,” Lumian explained.

“None of you can take the last two items. Only I can carry them. In

addition to them, I want the Eye of Truth and a ritualistic dog skin. You decide what spoils of war you want."

Jenna cast her gaze at Franca, feeling that her companion's "sacrifice" was somewhat excessive. She had the right to choose first.

Franca dispelled her invisibility and considered her options. She finally said, "I want the two bottles of Prophetic Concoction and a ritual dog skin. Well, forget it, I can't get used to it yet. I'll switch to 15,000 verl d'or, all in gold!"

Jenna then turned her gaze to the door, signaling to Anthony Reid to make his choice.

Anthony's voice quickly reached their ears.

"I want two ritualistic dog skins. They'll be very useful to me. Ciel, I'll need your help when the time comes.

"Oh, and another 20,000 verl d'or."

Jenna realized that she had a total of 40,000 verl d'or left for her own selection.

She looked at Lumian with a touch of uncertainty.

"I'm essentially working for you as interest payment."

Lumian replied with a smile, "There are spoils of war even for work. Take them all. Have you noticed that making money has become easier since advancing to Sequence 7?"

Jenna pondered for a moment before saying, "Alright, I'll return 25,000 to you and 15,000 to Franca."

With this decision, Jenna's debt was significantly reduced, and she no longer owed Lumian anymore. The speed at which she was amassing wealth had surpassed her expectations.

As Lumian and the others discussed the distribution of the spoils of war, Bouvard couldn't help but find the situation intriguing. Most of the items they were talking about had once belonged to him.

He observed them engrossed in their discussion, and even the Demoness, who had been invisibly monitoring him, seemed to relax her vigilance. His heart stirred.

He sensed that Lumian wasn't an Ascetic, as he had questioned about those abilities. This indicated that the ritualistic cowhide covering him likely originated from Guillaume Bénet. The fact that he hadn't been awakened by the power of Inevitability while unconscious suggested that it wasn't a live ritual.

Bouvard was well aware of Guillaume Bénet's Animal Creation Spell item's usage and dispelling incantations.

After a prolonged interrogation, Bouvard's spirituality had somewhat recovered. He began to secretly gather his focus, preparing to recite the incantation of "His Grace."

However, just as the first word echoed within the brown cowhide, Bouvard's eyes narrowed when he realized that Lumian was looking at him with a faint smile.

"Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot out and rendered Bouvard unconscious once more.

Lumian looked at the collapsed calf and chuckled.

"The test is completed. There are no other secrets. He only possesses the padre's dispelling incantation."

Rather than dealing with Bouvard first, Lumian had discussed the distribution of the spoils of war, hoping to uncover any additional secrets held by the Sinners organization's liaison, who had somewhat recovered spiritually.

Franca glanced at the unconscious calf and subtly hinted, "Should we take him away?"

Her suggestion implied taking Bouvard to the pillared square in the catacombs for sacrificial purposes, potentially preventing some of the boon's power from returning and forming Beyonder items.

Lumian considered for a moment before responding, “We might be discovered. Let’s deal with him here.”

Lumian couldn’t teleport Bouvard to a specific area in the catacombs from the outside world. Various entrances were guarded by tomb administrators, and any suspicious activity might trigger their intervention or a police report.

“Alright,” Franca responded after a brief pause. She added with anticipation, “I happen to want to try the Prophetic Concoction.”

This experiment required a recently deceased corpse, one that had not been purified or cremated and had been dead for less than seven days.

Lumian stood up and gestured toward the door.

“Call me when Bouvard is dead.”

He carried the Flog boxing gloves with him as he left the scene. Staying in the vicinity might disrupt the return of the boon’s power.

Franca acknowledged his instructions and then turned to Jenna with a mischievous smile.

“Take care of this. This is your chance to act as a Witch.”

“Can this be used to act as a Witch?” Jenna had previously found the Sequence name of Witch to be abstract and comprehensive, and she hadn’t yet thought of a specific way to act as one. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Franca smiled and explained, “In mysticism, Witches are often associated with negative forces that bring catastrophe. They are seen as possessing mystical, evil, and powerful traits.

“Imagine this: a woman using black flames to kill someone and then pumping their corpse with a strange concoction to make prophecies about the future. It’s sinister and mysterious, just like a Witch.”

Chapter 446 - 446 Prophecy

446 Prophecy

Witches are associated with negative forces that bring catastrophe… Catastrophe… Jenna, in her role as an Instigator, had come to understand that instigation inevitably led to catastrophe. However, given that the outcome depended on the subjective intentions of the Instigator and the uncertainty of the recipient, Jenna was quite sensitive to the term “catastrophe” and believed it could be a key element in portraying a Witch.

At the same time, she confirmed a suspicion.

Negative force… Witches do indeed represent a negative force…

Sequence 2 of the Assassin pathway is called Demoness of Catastrophe… This means that even at the demigod level, catastrophe is crucial…

Jenna nodded slightly and approached the door of the activity room. She turned the knob on the wall, causing the gas wall lamps to emit a dimmer light.

After doing the same for all four gas wall lamps, the room grew darker. The faint light blended with the shadows, creating an atmosphere of impending terror.

Franca surveyed the room, her curiosity piqued as she asked, “Are you trying to create a dark, terrifying, and eerie atmosphere?”

Jenna smiled and said, “Don’t Witches always appear in such settings in various plays and novels?”

“As expected of a true apprentice actress,” Franca praised Jenna, a sense of pride swelling within her. She, too, had quickly grasped the

essence of portraying a Witch. she had even experimented with concocting dark potions for a period, though it paled in comparison to the work of Apothecaries.

In the gloomy and dimly lit room, Jenna returned to the calf.

She leaned forward slightly and, in a deep voice, whispered two words from the Hermes language, “His Grace.”

Nothing happened.

Outside the door, Lumian chuckled, recognizing Jenna’s commitment to her role. She knew she lacked the bestowed powers of Inevitability and couldn’t use the simplified Animal Creation Spell. To portray a Witch convincingly, she had to follow a predetermined process.

Lumian raised his voice, mimicking the grandeur of Termiboros, resembling a hidden entity responding to a Witch reciting an ominous incantation.

“His Grace.”

In the activity room, an eerie darkness enveloped the area, causing the brown cowhide to split open, revealing Bouvard Pont-Péro. He was dressed only in a white shirt, black pants, and dark socks.

With this accomplished, Lumian proceeded until he reached the entrance of 20 Rue de la Terrasse. Through the glass of the oriel window, he stared at the drizzle, which seemed to meld with the night.

Jenna crouched down and placed her right hand on Bouvard’s forehead.

From her palm, black flames emerged, seeping into the Sinners organization’s liaison.

These flames didn’t crackle but engulfed Bouvard like inky water.

After over ten seconds, Bouvard’s body convulsed violently.

Moments later, his body relaxed, and the smell of incontinence

wafted through the air.

He had lost his life.

Dressed as a female mercenary, Jenna examined her attire with dissatisfaction. She stood and extended her hand to Franca.

Franca understood this as her acting as a mysterious and powerful Witch, so she handed her a bottle of Prophetic Concoction.

Jenna genuflected once more and poured the potion into Bouvard's mouth.

The dark liquid, bubbling with silver-black light, flowed into the corpse's mouth and lingered there.

A faint gust of wind blew, and the dim gas wall lamp's light took on a faint blue hue.

Sensing this familiar change, Lumian knew that Bouvard was now entirely lifeless, and the power of the boon had returned to its source. Thus, he turned away from the door, passed Anthony Reid, and re-entered the activity room.

Gulp!

The sound of the corpse swallowing the liquid reached his ears.

With a swish, Bouvard sat up. His face was deathly pale, and his eyes had turned translucent and devoid of color.

As Jenna gazed into those clear eyes, she marveled at their magical quality—the vibrant colors, the pure light, the invisible form, and the mercurial ripples. She endured the intense chill and then turned her attention to Lumian and Franca.

She had no questions; she was merely acting.

Franca motioned for Lumian to take the lead in asking the questions, as she aimed to learn how to make better use of the remaining canister of Prophetic Concoction.

Lumian, well-versed in the rules, carefully considered the inquiry and addressed Jenna, saying, “Ask, where is Voisin Sanson, the former owner of the Voisin Café in the Trier region of the Intis Republic, this time next week?”

This question carried not only its apparent meaning but also a hidden implication.

If Bouvard’s corpse couldn’t provide a valid answer, or if the response seemed abnormal, it could indicate that Voisin Sanson had left the place where the powerful bestowed resided, possibly signaling an impending catastrophe.

Jenna nodded and posed the question to Bouvard’s lifeless form, her voice deep and enchanting.

The corpse’s pale face, tinged with a hint of dark green in the dim blue light, opened its mouth and replied in Intisian, “Room 7.”

Room 7… So specific? But there’s no restrictive description from before… Lumian originally imagined that Bouvard’s corpse would be like the deceased he had previously used, using a broader description like Trier’s Quartier de la Princesse Rouge. This could narrow down the scope of the Tarot Club’s investigation. However, he never expected Bouvard’s corpse to directly reveal Voisin Sanson’s room number.

To Lumian, this answer wasn’t as useful as the Quartier de la Princesse Rouge. There were countless Room 7s in Trier.

Furthermore, what if Room 7 wasn’t in Trier? It wasn’t necessary to plan a conspiracy while in Trier!

Bouvard is a bestowed of the Inevitability pathway. He possesses the power of fate and the corruption left behind by the power of Inevitability… After his corpse consumed the Prophetic Concoction, it must have seen more than the average deceased and foreseen it more clearly. Is that why such a change occurred? Lumian muttered inwardly.

He then asked for confirmation.

“Ask him where Pualis de Roquefort from the Dariège region of the Riston Province in the Intis Republic is this time next week.”

After hearing the Witch’s relating it, Bouvard’s corpse responded with an illusory and ethereal voice, “Room 12.”

Room 12, Room 7… Madame Pualis and Voisin Sanson are indeed in the same place. The powerful bestowed of these cults in Trier are gathered together. They definitely aren’t here for food and drink… Lumian nodded slightly and quickly thought of what to ask next.

From the two responses, he vaguely guessed that it had something to do with where the evil god bestowed were. The Prophecy Spell appeared significantly interfered with and was unable to provide precise information. He could only ask in another manner.

A few seconds later, Lumian looked at Jenna and said, “When will Voisin Sanson leave his current building?”

This question aimed to determine the timing of potential catastrophe or the significant operation.

The strange scenes in Bouvard’s eyes quickly dissipated. After hearing Jenna’s question, he opened his mouth and replied faintly, “Rain, water…”

Suddenly, Bouvard’s eyes burst open, and blood sprayed from them, leaving behind two contaminated black and red cavities.

His body started to swell, becoming pale, dim, and moist, as if he had been submerged in water for an extended period.

In the blink of an eye, the corpse vanished from the sight of Lumian and the others, as if it had never existed.

Franca, clutching the mirror and preparing to cast a curse on the mutated corpse, lost her target. She frantically scanned the area but found only remnants of the exploded eyeballs.

Drawing from her limited experience, Franca speculated, “Could it be that an extraordinary event or entity was prophesied, leading to a horrifying backlash that dragged him away into the unknown?” The

sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

She sighed and added, “See, divination and prophecies are treacherous undertakings.”

Lumian nodded in agreement and suggested, “Let’s leave now and head to Bouvard’s residence to secure the remaining spoils of our mission.”

“Yes, we must be cautious,” Jenna said, gazing up at the ceiling. “What shall we do with Paulina and the other heretics? Should we eliminate them all?”

“I’ll take care of it! I’ll handle this!” Franca eagerly raised her hand. “I want to find some enjoyment, no—pleasure for myself!”

She wanted to simply act.

Observing the perplexed expressions on Jenna and Lumian’s faces, Franca retorted,

“What’s on your minds? I’m not talking about that! That’s not the only way to have pleasure!”

Doing something to entertain herself? Lumian scoffed and walked out of the activity room, leaving a parting remark. “You have five minutes.”

Five minutes? Franca muttered as she settled in front of the brass mechanical typewriter. Donning gloves, she swiftly typed on the keyboard.

Before long, Paulina, the butler, and the others who were securely bound had notes attached to them. The notes read:

“We’re heretics!”

“Our faith is in an entity known as Inevitability!”

“Arrest us!”

“Our leader is Voisin Sanson!”

“Voisin Sanson and his core subordinates have gone somewhere. It’s said that they’ll stay for three months!”

“They went there over two months ago!

“I have Regeneration, Danger Premonition, and Electric Arc. Please be careful!”

After pasting the papers, Franca scanned the notes with a sense of delight.

She then turned her attention to the unconscious Paulina and remarked, “A Dancer’s flexibility might help you escape the ropes. I can only add two more layers of unconsciousness to you.”

With that, she ignited Paulina’s Spirit Body with black flames, significantly weakening her. She followed this with the Bliss Society’s sedative.

Clap! Clap! Franca clapped her hands together and left the room, leaving behind black flames that burned all kinds of traces.

…

After ensuring the success of their police report, Lumian and his companions retrieved assets that could be quickly converted into cash from Bouvard’s residence in the library district.

Reverting to his original appearance and taking a carriage back to the market district, Lumian was on the verge of inquiring Franca about something when he noticed a figure darting through the darkness outside the window.

The figure was dressed in a white shirt, black pants, and dark socks. Its eye sockets were hollow and empty, and its skin appeared swollen and pale, as if it had been soaked in water.

Bouvard Pont-Péro!

Bouvard Pont-Péro’s previously vanished corpse!

Chapter 447 - 447 Association and Speculation

447 Association and Speculation

Lumian's body tensed, then he quickly relaxed.

"What's the matter?" Anthony Reid inquired of Lumian.

Lumian chuckled. "Nothing."

Franca, seated across from him, remarked, "Your smile and your responses always make me suspect you're up to no good!"

Lumian's lips curved into a smile.

"When you assume I'm up to no good, only to discover I haven't done anything, could it be seen as a conspiracy?"

"Why does your sister always teach you such things?" Franca critiqued, sounding "severe."

Jenna glanced at Lumian but didn't press for more information. She remained on guard.

The four-wheeled rental carriage returned to Rue des Blouses Blanches in the market district. The team didn't immediately go their separate ways. Following Lumian's suggestion, they gathered in Franca's apartment to discuss Bouvard's "confession" and prophecy.

As Lumian closed the door, he suddenly spoke, "I need to use a bedroom."

"Now?" Franca's smile faded.

She sensed the seriousness in Lumian's tone and, considering the

earlier events, realized that something had indeed occurred.

“Yes,” Lumian replied, heading toward Franca’s bedroom and closing the door behind him.

Jenna, Franca, and Anthony Reid exchanged glances but remained standing. They each took positions beneath the glow of the gas wall lamp, neither too close nor too far from one another.

In just three to four minutes, Lumian reemerged from the master bedroom.

Franca peeked inside and noticed that the curtains in her bedroom were drawn.

Lumian surveyed the area and smiled before Franca could voice her question.

“Let me introduce you to a friend, but I need you to turn off the lamps first.”

“What friend? You’re acting all strange. You can’t even speak properly after becoming a Conspirer,” Franca muttered as she turned the knob valve at the bottom of the black gas wall lamp.

Jenna murmured, “He didn’t like to talk nicely before either. It always felt like a Provocation…”

Soon, the lamps were extinguished, plunging the living room into darkness. Only the crimson moonlight and dim starlight near the window provided some visibility.

Franca, experienced, asked thoughtfully, “Do we need to activate Spirit Vision?”

“I don’t think so…” Just as Lumian finished speaking, he saw a face reflected in the dark glass window.

The skin on the face was puffy, pale, and moist. The eyes were empty, save for two black holes that were dyed red!

Bouvard Pont-Péro’s vanished corpse reappeared!

Jenna, who had little experience with such situations, took a step back in fear, and black flames ignited in her palm.

“Has… has it been following us?” Franca had already taken out a mirror.

“That’s right,” Lumian said with a relaxed smile. “According to my observations, it only appears in a very dark environment. As for when it will attack us, I’m not sure yet.”

“Aren’t you worried or nervous? This thing is a severely corrupted mutated corpse. No one knows what terrifying abilities it possesses.” Franca was affected by Lumian’s relaxed attitude and didn’t rush to deal with Bouvard Pont-Péro’s corpse, which had its face pressed against the glass window.

Lumian chuckled.

“Shouldn’t you be happy to see an old friend again?”

He paused for a moment and explained simply, “I regretted not being able to prevent Bouvard’s corpse from vanishing.

“Although its prophecy has been interrupted, the source of the corruption and the backlash it suffered, as well as its traits, can point to many problems and some hidden entities.

“Isn’t this also a clue?”

Just as Lumian finished speaking, Bouvard Pont-Péro’s bloated corpse, as if drowned, suddenly fell backward. It was as if someone had grabbed his collar and yanked him out of the living room window.

Behind him, the darkness intensified, as if a strange tunnel had opened, leading to an unknown destination.

In the depths of the tunnel, specks of starlight flickered in the distance.

Bouvard Pont-Péro’s eyeless corpse plummeted into the tunnel, accelerating and shrinking until it vanished entirely, swallowed by

darkness.

“I just found a helper.” Lumian’s smile persisted.

Even if the four of them could easily deal with Bouvard’s mutated corpse, Lumian didn’t think anyone present could carefully investigate and determine the source of the problem while ensuring their safety. They had to seek help. In that case, it was better to seek help from someone capable from the beginning.

Entering the room to write to Madam Magician… Franca came to a realization and didn’t probe further.

Jenna also guessed that the secret organization that used tarot cards as their code name had taken action.

Their members were connected by messengers!

Anthony Reid pondered for a moment and asked, “So, the next step is to await the autopsy report?”

He looked at Anthony Reid and gestured towards the divan, signaling him to take a seat.

“Did you find anything in your investigation of the Dreamseekers charity organization?”

It was a private charitable organization that had received a substantial donation from General Philip’s widow.

Anthony Reid shook his head.

“No. In the past two months, they’ve been operating very regularly. There were no abnormalities. Perhaps, as you said, the key members of the heretics have gone somewhere. The rest have been instructed to behave themselves for the time being.”

Lumian nodded slightly and turned to Franca, who had settled into the recliner.

“Do you know what happened to the Bliss Society?”

“It’s similar to the Sinners. They’ve eliminated several key members, but the two most important ones seem to have vanished. They must have gone to that place too,” Franca recounted the information she had obtained from Browns Sauron.

‘They’ referred to the Demoness Sect.

That place… Lumian leaned back on the sofa, his mind racing as he searched for any possible clues.

Ultimately, his thoughts settled on the prophecy made by Bouvard Pont-Péro’s corpse.

“Room 7, Room 12… Where could it be?”

Anthony Reid pondered and said, “If it were a private house, there wouldn’t be such a numbering scheme.”

“Sounds like an apartment.”

“Or a hotel,” Franca added.

Hotel… Hotel… Lumian’s eyes widened as a bolt of lightning flashed through his mind, illuminating a detail he hadn’t previously found problematic.

After he and Franca killed Beatrice Incourt, a key member of the Bliss Society, they found a note on her body. It read:

“Go to the hostel and retrieve the painting within three days.”

Isn’t a hostel a lower-class hotel? Isn’t it normal to have Room 7 and Room 12? Lumian’s thoughts instantly became clear.

At the time, he had thought that the note belonged to Beatrice, disguised as Theresa, who had purchased the receipt for a painting. Now, it seemed that the note belonged to Beatrice, a key member of the Bliss Society. It was very likely sent by the Bliss Society’s high priestess, Siber, who resided in the hostel, for Beatrice to retrieve a painting!

“Hostel…” Lumian uttered the term.

Is that where Trier's numerous evil god bestowed go?

Franca, who had overheard Lumian's question about Theresa, remembered the note's contents.

Her excitement was palpable as she turned to Lumian and asked, "Did Voisin Sanson, Pualis, and the others go to that place with the codename 'hostel'?"

Lumian replied slowly, "We still need to confirm it," before swiftly inquiring, "Has Theresa, the art dealer, returned?" Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

He had questioned Browns Sauron about Theresa's whereabouts upon discovering the note. According to the member of the Demoness Sect, the art dealer had been sent to St. Millom, the capital of the Feysac Empire, for a business deal, allowing Beatrice to impersonate her without raising suspicion.

Franca responded uncertainly, "She should be back. It's been quite some time."

She hadn't paid much attention to the ordinary art dealer's activities.

Jenna, perplexed, interjected, "What's this about a hostel and an art dealer?"

Franca briefly explained, omitting Browns Sauron's involvement, attributing it to an operation against the Bliss Society.

Anthony Reid, after careful consideration, voiced his thoughts, "The problem now is that even if the 'hostel' is indeed where the heretics gather, we still don't know what it refers to or where it is."

Lumian sighed softly and flashed a smile. "It's better than having no direction."

He then turned to Franca and said, "Ask about the real art dealer, Theresa's residence tomorrow. I want to visit and confirm if the note belongs to her or Beatrice."

"Understood," Franca replied enthusiastically.

She had two motives: pressing Browns Sauron to determine when the assessment period would end and contributing to averting the impending catastrophe.

Back in her gaming days, she often chose storylines that involved saving humanity. Only when she grew bored of that did she experiment with something different.

Sigh, the phrase Demoness doesn't quite align with preventing catastrophe… Franca sighed inwardly.

Lumian shifted his attention to Anthony Reid, pondering for a moment before revealing his plan,

"Since they've all been behaving themselves, it's our turn to misbehave."

Anthony Reid, catching Lumian's drift, asked in confirmation, "What do you mean?"

Lumian's smile broadened.

"We'll abduct General Philip's widow and the true controller of the Dreamseekers Charity Organization and interrogate them!"

Chapter 448 - 448 The Power of Painting

448 The Power of Painting

The next morning.

Madam Magician has unearthed clues from Bouvard's tainted remains? Lumian's spirits soared with anticipation. He expressed his gratitude to the messenger and proceeded to unravel the letter's contents.

"We possess limited knowledge regarding the evil gods beyond the barrier. The Hostel and its location still eludes us, but we have formulated some conjectures.

"In examining Bouvard Pont-Péro's corrupted remains, I discerned a corruption bearing a resemblance to the Apprentice pathway—a contamination from alternate dimensions and spacetime. Had I not intervened, unless it had manifested and attacked, you would not have been able to make direct contact with it.

"In the past, we've encountered similar instances, primarily involving artists, writers, and avid readers.

"We've observed that painters often descend into madness, but due to their artistic disposition, their ramblings and abstract fantasies often go unnoticed. Some of these musings unveil profound truths about our world, while others exert an uncanny influence on their surroundings, turning the fictional into reality. They emerge from canvases or pages, though their presence typically has a time limit.

"An example involved an artist who, under the influence of a psychotropic substance, painted an indescribable creature. This entity materialized from the canvas, murdering its creator and any other

living beings in the apartment.

“I once encountered a perilous artwork, a Sealed Artifact that resembled a painting. The deity portrayed within it came to life and vanished, thankfully without triggering a catastrophe.

“Similarly, while confronting a deranged heretic, we encountered Gehrman Sparrow, the Queen of Ailment, and various characters and scenes that were originally confined to novels within the structure he inhabited.

“Fortunately, these manifestations lacked the full potency of their original counterparts. They possessed only a rudimentary semblance of their appearance, personalities, and abilities.

“It was confirmed that these creations were the handiwork of a deranged bestowed of an evil god. He had been a fervent reader of novels and, upon losing his sanity, instinctively recreated a fantastical realm within his abode, mirroring the content of the novels.

“From this standpoint, it also bears some resemblance to the Spectator pathway, but it is fundamentally distinct. One derives its power primarily from the mind, while the other seems to harness the qualities and might of alternate dimensions or alternate spaces to manifest entities. Initially, it might function as a gateway or perilous portal, but in time, it could evolve into a near-real alternate space or even an entirely separate world.”

As Lumian absorbed the contents of the letter, his eyelids twitched with a whirlwind of thoughts.

His initial reaction: Is this something I can read?

While some portions seemed manageable, others, particularly the elaborate examples and analysis, left Lumian’s mind in turmoil. His heart raced, and he felt a peculiar tightness in his skin.

A deity from a painting coming to life and stepping into reality?

Is it that terrifying?

If the painting hadn't been sealed, wouldn't it be able to destroy the entirety of Trier?

Given more time, the entire world might have been finished!

Amidst this mental storm, Lumian's mind struck upon an idea.

It was akin to a resurrection.

While his heart pulsated with the desire to attempt such a feat, rationality won the battle within his mind. The Aurore "resurrected" through this method would likely be a perilous entity, masquerading as Aurore, rather than the genuine person. If it was merely her appearance he sought, he could achieve it at any time with Lie's abilities.

If it was merely her appearance he sought, he could achieve it at any time with Lie's abilities.

In the wake of this realization, Lumian's thoughts turned to a mystical item he hadn't employed in quite some time: the Mystery Prying Glasses!

The brown gold-rimmed Mystery Prying Glasses, originating from a deceased Beyonder, held a mysterious and intriguing history. Its previous owner had crafted an oil painting infused with madness, vibrant colors, and a mesmerizing, psychedelic pattern before their untimely demise.

When Lumian put on these Mystery Prying Glasses, the world around him transformed, revealing hidden truths that were once invisible. Occasionally, these revelations kindled a desire to sketch, resulting in drawings imbued with supernatural power, each with unique effects. For instance, they could cause an itching sensation across his body, ushering in warmth and radiant sunlight, aligning with Madam Magician's account of paintings by evil god bestowed that influenced their surroundings.

With the abilities granted by the Niese Face and Lie earring, Lumian no longer required the Mystery Prying Glasses for disguise. However, he retrieved them from his pocket and pondered for a moment.

Was its original owner a bestowed of a Hostel-related pathway, or did it come into contact with a corresponding item and suffer a certain level of corruption?

Yes, I'll report to Mr. K later and inquire about further details. Uh… The Aurora Order is fanatical about hunting heretics. Perhaps they possess more information about evil gods than the Tarot Club. Mr. K might know something about the Hostel…

Lumian was part of four different secret organizations and could gather information from four unusually well-developed information systems. As a result, he didn't have an urgent need to participate in mysticism gatherings. He only visited occasionally to join in the fun and listen to rumors and stories.

After stowing the Mystery Prying Glasses, Lumian continued reading the letter's content.

"Until now, the evil god bestowed following this pathway have been relatively passive, avoiding bloodshed and not frequently engaging in sacrificial rituals. Even if they did, it was usually confined to themselves and those in their immediate vicinity, minimizing the danger.

"However, their nature may not be as 'harmless' as previously believed. They could pose a significant threat.

"You might want to consult Termiboros about the Hostel. He possesses the most extensive knowledge of these evil gods and their bestowed. Although, don't be surprised if He chooses not to share."

Lumian set the letter ablaze with crimson flames and whispered with a chuckle, "Termiboros, do you know the meaning of Hostel and its association with which evil god?"

Termiboros's majestic voice resounded. "Not an evil god, but a great existence."

After retorting, He answered Lumian's question, "I'm aware."

Then, there was nothing else.

This provoked Lumian.

Was I hoping to hear you say you are aware or not? What I wanted to know what it represents and to which pathway it belongs!

After pressing further, Termiboros asked in a deep voice, “Do you truly wish to know?”

Lumian, sensing danger, responded cautiously, “There’s no need for an honorific name or other details about the evil god. Just describe the situation and characteristics of the corresponding pathway of Hostel.”

Termiboros fell silent, withholding the requested information.

Lumian scoffed, believing that the entity’s response indicated: “I have nothing to lose. Why not give it a shot? What if my vessel suddenly turned foolish?” Termiboros had no intention of revealing details about Hostel.

…

As Lumian made his way to Avenue du Boulevard, Franca had already met up with Browns Sauron.

Both were clad in hunting attire, armed with double-barreled shotguns, and positioned at the edge of the East Lognes Forest, where they took aim at wild deer hidden behind the trees.

“Browns, when will you f*cking end my assessment?” Franca stressed her original gender with a touch of stereotypical vulgarity.

Browns, her orange-red hair mostly concealed beneath a deerstalker hat, peered forward and responded, “Soon, soon.”

Franca, her frustration palpable, retorted, “Does the high-ranking Demoness in charge of Trier want to keep testing me indefinitely, or are you playing tricks?”

Browns, her trigger finger poised, stopped abruptly, a subtle change in her expression evident. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“Could it really be you?” Franca exclaimed in surprise.

Browns replied solemnly, “I merely suggested it. The higher-ups agreed.”

“Why on earth would she agree to such an absurd proposal? Is she your mother?” Franca cursed.

Bang! Browns squeezed the trigger, and the bullet pierced through the forest, narrowly missing the wild deer.

Watching this, Franca mused, Could they really be related, or perhaps they’re intimate lovers?

The Demoness Sect is essentially a family, and it’s common for members to have some familial connections…

The Sauron family once held sway in the neighboring Assassin pathway, so it’s not inconceivable that the Demoness Sect has infiltrated certain branches over the years.

Observing Franca’s silence, Browns cleared her throat and made an offer, “If you promise not to partake in the Red House Café’s orgies, your assessment will end this week.”

“…” Franca fought the urge to curse and burst into laughter instead. “Haha, I’d call you ‘pure,’ but you’re quite the expert in female orgies. As for ‘promiscuous,’ you’re selective with your participants.”

Without waiting for Browns’s reply, Franca continued, “I can promise that. Besides, I can organize orgies myself.”

Her true intentions were rooted in the impending catastrophe that might engulf Trier in a week or two. She needed to swiftly infiltrate the Demoness Sect and procure valuable information. After the crisis subsided, and if she was still alive, she could contemplate participating in Browns’s orgies.

A true man could be indulgent and flashy, but when necessary, he could bear personal hardships.

Browns turned her head to scrutinize Franca, who met her gaze

without a hint of guilt.

After almost ten seconds, Browns whispered, “Remember what you just said.”

Franca responded with a smile, signifying her agreement.

With the assessment period now set to conclude, Franca raised her shotgun and shared,

“Some time ago, Ciel and I ventured into the catacombs and reached the Krismona Night Pillar. I had a peculiar feeling about that pillar. Could it have been left behind by a Fourth Epoch Demoness?”

After hearing about the sigh from Jenna, Franca had become intrigued by the Krismona Night Pillar.

“Ciel? Your lover?” Browns turned to Franca.

Franca replied candidly, “Yes.”

Browns fell into a brief silence before revealing, “Krismona is indeed a Fourth Epoch Demoness. S-She is the child of the Goddess.”

Chapter 449 - 449 Tracking Clues

Chapter 449 Tracking Clues

＜nulli＞A child of the Goddess… Franca jumped in fright, almost causing the double-barreled shotgun, which wasn't aimed at the target, to discharge accidentally.

She glanced at Browns and sought confirmation, "A child of the Primordial One?"

Even though her assessment period wasn't yet over, she had already passed the audit and was now considered an associate member of the Demoness Sect. She knew that this secret organization worshiped the deity known as the Primordial Demoness, often referring to Her as the "Primordial One."

Browns nodded slowly and replied, "As far as I know."

The Primordial Demoness had once given birth? Franca couldn't hide her curiosity and asked, "Who is Krismona's father?"

"I don't know," Browns cautioned Franca. "That's not something we should be privy to."

＜nulli＞This is a scandal at the deity level… Franca thought to herself and shifted the conversation to her primary reason for coming to Trocadéro today.

"Has Beatrice Incourt returned from the Feysac Empire? Do you know where she is residing?"

"Why do you ask?" Browns inquired warily.

In her eyes, Franca Roland and her lovers were powerful and dangerous Beyonders. Only Jenna, who lived with her, seemed relatively ordinary.

Franca chuckled.

“Yesterday, I helped Ciel exact revenge and apprehended a heretic who believed in Inevitability. From him, I learned that many of Trier’s bestowed individuals have disappeared to some mysterious and strange place.”

“Based on the information he provided, we suspect that the ‘hostel’ mentioned in the note about Beatrice is the destination for these bestowed of evil gods. We want to confirm with Theresa whether the note is intended for her or Beatrice.”

Browns felt uncomfortable hearing Franca mention heretics and the bestowed of evil gods.

In the world of mysticism, the Primordial Demoness had always been considered an evil goddess.

Of course, their sect, followers of the Primordial Ones, believed they were devoted to an ostracized true god, an existence shrouded in secrecy.

After Franca finished speaking, Browns replied, “There’s no need for you to seek out the art dealer. When we discovered that the Bliss Society’s high priest and another key member had vanished, we patiently waited for Theresa’s return based on the contents of the note.

“She told us that she doesn’t know what the ‘hostel’ is, and she hasn’t purchased any artwork from any painter staying at a motel.

“We’ve verified the authenticity.”

Franca felt a growing frustration and said, “It’s really a message meant for Beatrice. Judging from the note, Beatrice knows the location of the ‘hostel.’ Otherwise, she wouldn’t have the ability to retrieve the painting within three days.

“If only we had found the note first and performed the spirit channeling afterward…”

A realization struck Franca, and she sensed that fate was playing a cruel game in this matter.

It seemed like fate was conspiring to keep information about the “hostel” hidden.

＜nulli＞Is Inevitability’s power at play, or is it the evil god pathway that Ciel previously mentioned, using death to escape its original fate? Is information about the “hostel” destined not to be leaked? Franca’s thoughts raced as she felt an increasingly abnormal aura surrounding the situation.

Seizing a rare opportunity, Browns immediately struck Franca down.

“Aren’t you guys quite experienced? You conducted spirit channeling without thoroughly examining the corpse. The hour after death is prime time. There’s no need to rush.”

Franca considered explaining that fate might be at play, but she decided against it.

Why should she warn Browns and give her a lesson?

It was better to keep her in the dark, potentially for future exploitation!

Franca looked at Browns and clicked her tongue, saying, “You’re quite the talker…”

Before she could finish her sentence, she extended her right hand with a smile and gently grasped the other party’s chin.

“I don’t mind skipping your orgies, but I’d like to undergo your ‘assessment.’

“Are you up for it?”

Browns instinctively pushed Franca’s right hand away, taking a step back and saying, “If you acted like a regular woman, I might consider

assessing you, but right now…”

Her implication was that Franca’s current demeanor resembled a libertine, a playboy who embraced Dandyism.

“You’re a tough one,” Franca scoffed, her words, though unusual, comprehensible to Browns.

She picked up her double-barreled shotgun and strolled into the forest without further conversation with Browns.

…

On Avenue du Boulevard, 19 Rue Scheer, at the base of the luxurious beige house,

in the basement, Lumian once again met Mr. K, who was cloaked in a black robe and a wide hood.

He had already reported the unusual silence of the cults to his superior, and Mr. K had verified this information after an investigative period. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Today, Lumian’s focus was on Bouvard’s corpse’s prophecy, his own thoughts, and the Sinners’ situation.

He relayed the information he received from Madam Magician as Bouvard’s confession, including having seen a painting with strange powers from Voisin Sanson.

Finally, Lumian presented the Mystery Prying Glasses.

“Mr. K, has this mystical item also been affected by the Hostel pathway’s influence?”

Mr. K stood before a red armchair and spoke in a low, raspy voice, “Wait a moment.”

With a soft clap of his hands, he summoned an attendant into the room and whispered something to him.

As Mr. K waited for the attendant to return, the entire basement fell

into an eerie silence due to Mr. K's silence.

Lumian felt somewhat awkward in this silence and thought to himself, <nulli>Say something. Even sharing your faith would suffice. You can't just leave me standing here like a fool…

Of course, Lumian was well aware that Mr. K's silence was intentional, and he was likely communing with a deity or uncovering hidden information.

Before long, the attendant returned, holding an oil painting about half a meter in height and nearly 70 centimeters in width.

The painting depicted a dark forest, accentuating the turquoise grass illuminated by the sun.

Upon closer inspection, there was a white area on the grass that appeared to have been scratched, resembling a figure.

Mr. K finally spoke.

"It was discovered with the Mystery Prying Glasses. Apart from the mysterious and chaotic oil painting that can affect one's mind, there was also this artwork hanging on the wall.

"It was originally meant to be a portrait, but when we saw it, the person had disappeared from it. Only the scenery remained."

<nulli>Walked out of the painting? Lumian felt a sense of alarm as he recalled Madam Magician's example.

He chose not to share this information with Mr. K, considering Bouvard didn't seem to be well-informed.

"Did something abnormal occur that caused the portrait to vanish?" Lumian inquired.

Mr. K's hooded head nodded slowly.

"Perhaps it returned to life and left the painting.

"It could be the source of that Beyonder's anomaly."

<nulli>The Aurora Order appears to be quite knowledgeable… Lumian remarked sincerely, “A strange power, a horrifying phenomenon.”

Mr. K added in his raspy voice, “We investigated fairly famous painters in Trier and found that, aside from a few who had completely lost their minds or even died long ago, most seemed relatively normal. However, there were instances of abusing psychotropic substances and alcohol-based drinks.

“Based on other information we acquired, we can confirm that it’s not that painters easily become heretics of that pathway and gain corresponding powers. Instead, the bestowed of that pathway gain the ability to create art and naturally become painters. However, only a small number of them specialize in painting. The rest blend into society and create their own works without publicizing them.”

“Is the Sequence name Painter?” Lumian asked thoughtfully.

This seemed to align with the power.

“God says yes,” Mr. K replied devoutly and zealously.

Lumian immediately lowered his head.

“What else does the Lord instruct us?”

“God has revealed that foreign visitors stay at the Hostel.” Mr. K appeared satisfied with Lumian’s attitude.

<nulli>Foreign visitors? Visitors from outside the barrier? Lumian’s senses heightened as he became increasingly focused.

However, Mr. K didn’t share further revelations. It appeared that this was all the divine guidance he had received.

Mr. K’s raspy voice carried a hint of seriousness.

“Our most crucial task now is to locate the Hostel.”

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, he took two steps forward and continued, “The number of evil god incidents we handle pales in

comparison to those holding official positions. Perhaps they have more information.

“It’s inconvenient for me to directly intervene in this matter, but you can attempt to gather information from them through other means.”

＜nulli＞The Aurora Order seeks collaboration with the authorities, not necessarily to prevent the catastrophe but to thwart the ambitions of these evil gods. For this purpose, they are willing to humble themselves and cooperate with the authorities… Lumian silently mused and solemnly agreed.

…

On the roof of Apartment 17 on Rue Doyle in the market district, Jenna, disguised to conceal her allure, met with Imre and Valentine.

She cast a glance at the verdant trees lining the street below and began, “I’ve got important information.”

Valentine’s expression turned serious.

“What information?”

He had been worried that the Assassin might inquire about the primary ingredient in the Witch potion, but now his attention was fully on work.

Jenna spoke truthfully, “I’ve received news that some individuals suspected of being followers of evil gods have gone to a place known as the Hostel.”

She didn’t mention the eerie silence of the evil god’s followers. With the help of 007, this had become a consensus among Trier’s official Beyonders. Jenna had already been given hints regarding what to focus on.

“Hostel…” Imre, who hailed from the Southern Continent, furrowed his brow slightly.

＜nulli＞Such a reaction… Jenna keenly sensed their reaction and posed a question, “Do you know what Hostel means?”

Imre and Valentine exchanged troubled glances.

They didn't want Celia Bello to be fully informed, but if they kept her completely in the dark, she wouldn't be able to assist in gathering the necessary clues. She needed some information to know what they wanted her to pay attention to.

After a brief pause, Imre carefully composed his words and said, "One of our colleagues once heard the term Hostel from a peculiar creature."

Chapter 450 - 450 Infiltrating Openly

Chapter 450 Infiltrating Openly

＜nulli＞They really know about the Hostel… Jenna couldn't hide her curiosity and concern.

"What kind of peculiar creature was it? What did it say?"

Imre glanced at Valentine before responding, "Under normal circumstances, it's an invisible creature. You can only confirm its existence through some traces and see if it's lingering around you."

Valentine explained eagerly, "From what I understand, it exists somewhere between the spirit world and reality. It's untouchable and difficult to detect with Spirit Vision. It's in a very peculiar state."

"I don't think that's all. According to the dossier, there are a few conceptual and abstract aspects about it. In short, you can only perceive it or sense its form through its reactions—if it's willing—or when it attacks you," Imre corrected Valentine.

＜nulli＞Th-this is very similar to Bouvard's condition after his corpse was corrupted… However, Bouvard's corpse wasn't that formidable. As long as the environment is dark enough, it can be seen. Yes, according to Ciel, other than Beyonders of a few pathways who have reached a certain Sequence, it's indeed impossible to touch it directly and deal with it… Jenna made a connection and increasingly believed that the Hostel Valentine and company knew was equivalent to the one they knew, unless there were more than one of the same nature.

Imre, who had a habit of wearing skin-colored tape across the bridge of his nose, paused for a moment before continuing,

“If that peculiar creature hadn’t attacked our colleague, it wouldn’t have been discovered.

“We obtained several pieces of information from it. One of them mentioned the Hostel.”

“What did it say?” Jenna played along.

Perhaps this contained the future direction of their investigation!

Valentine furrowed his brow.

“It only said that it comes from the Hostel—their home in this world.”

Jenna didn’t use her Instigation ability, but it was akin to instigation. “Is there any other information? Otherwise, I wouldn’t know how to help you gather information and who to watch out for.”

Imre hesitated for a few seconds.

“The rest of what it said isn’t suitable for you to know.

“Yes, it calls itself a Pixie.”

＜nulli＞Pixue… An untouchable pixie… The corresponding Sequence name of the boon’s pathway? Jenna nodded thoughtfully.

After a brief silence, Valentine said, “Our colleague encountered this peculiar creature in an artist’s studio.

“As for the painter, he was once treated for mental illness. He always claimed to travel with his Spirit Body every night and enter a strange space that’s neither in reality nor in the spirit world. He fought invisible creatures, strange souls, and evil spirits that attempted to invade reality through that space to protect the peace of the entire street.

“Such claims led to him being sent to the asylum for treatment for a period of time. Subsequently, he was under prolonged medication. Our colleagues confirmed that what he said might be true.”

“It sounds like he’s corrupted by an evil god… But why would he wander about as a Spirit Body and guard the street?” Jenna didn’t mention the term bestowed.

Imre smiled disinterestedly and replied, “The power of an evil god isn’t necessarily evil, but They often bring catastrophe or cause illusions and changes in the recipient’s personality. Can you accept that you’re no longer yourself?”

Jenna wanted to habitually respond using silence, but she remembered that there were two Purifiers opposite her, so she slowly shook her head.

Valentine’s tone remained anxious.

“We’re telling you this because we want you to pay more attention to painters, novelists, or those who have private hobbies of painting, reading, and telling stories. If you discover anyone’s abnormal behavior and language, report it to us immediately.”

“By the way, some painters’ works also possess a certain amount of supernatural power. That’s also one of the clues,” Imre added.

Jenna nodded solemnly. “No problem.”

…

Lumian, who had gathered a wealth of information from various sources, realized that although he and the others had a basic understanding of the Hostel pathway, they lacked substantial progress in their investigation. They still didn’t know the location of the Hostel or the heretics’ plans.

He had no choice but to turn his attention to General Philip’s widow and the charity organization known as the Dreamseekers.

Late at night, at 9 Rue Lviv, Quartier 3, also known as the administrative district.

It was a three-story beige building surrounded by a garden, lawn, stables, a fountain, and statues.

“I was hoping to find an opportunity to ask for your help. I could use the ritualistic dog skin to infiltrate this place and search,” Anthony Reid, with his buzz cut, said, glancing at Lumian beside him.

Lumian let out a chuckle.

“Official Beyonders can’t afford to worry about such trivial matters in the current situation.”

As he spoke, he crossed the street towards the beige building with sculpted outer walls.

The two of them circled to the side of the garden and watched as the two valets passed by together and turned to the front.

Lumian leaped up, pressing his hand against the white-painted iron fence. He stretched his body and leaped over, landing silently.

Anthony Reid was a seasoned veteran who had been forged by the crucible of the battlefield and maintained a habit of exercising. Although Sequence 9 to 7 of the Spectator pathway didn’t significantly enhance his combat techniques, nor did his physique improve significantly, it didn’t prevent him from easily vaulting the fence and entering the garden.

Lumian didn’t bother concealing himself. Holding a top hat, he left the garden with one hand in his pocket and approached the main building.

Occasionally, he paused, avoiding the gazes from inside the building’s windows and the maid who was eager to return to her room.

Before long, they arrived at the side door.

The wolf-shaped dog guarding the area had already fallen asleep.

Anthony Reid guessed that it was the doing of the two Demonesses who had long concealed themselves and whose whereabouts were currently unknown. However, he felt that if that was the case, why act as if they were infiltrating?

Lumian seemed to sense the Psychiatrist’s thoughts and smiled.

“The sedative we obtained from the Bliss Society is very effective. We have to use it sparingly.”

Furthermore, the Demoness Sect had already purged the Bliss Society once, leaving only two key members and Maipú Meyer, who was currently hiding in the market district. For the time being, no one was available to provide Lumian, Franca, and the others with supplies. Of course, the Demoness Sect had definitely gained a lot. After Franca passed the assessment, she should have a chance to obtain something from them.

Lumian walked past the unconscious dog, retrieved a wire, and expertly opened the side door of the building.

At that moment, almost all the lights in the house had been extinguished, and the corridor was shrouded in darkness.

With one hand in his pocket and the other clutching his top hat, Lumian made his way upstairs to the master bedroom, openly treating it as though it was his own home.

＜nulli＞Last time, he hid behind the scenes and instructed his partners to set traps. This time, he’s using himself as bait to lure out potential problems? Different choices and different acting methods for a Conspirer? Anthony Reid followed Lumian from behind, enlightened.

Lumian reached the third-floor master bedroom. Along the way, he took a detour and climbed up from the second-floor balcony, avoiding the bodyguard at the staircase.

Gazing at the vermilion door, he chuckled and said, “After General Philip passed away, didn’t his widow receive the protection of Beyonders?

“The bodyguards they hire with their own money can only scare off ordinary thieves and bandits.”

“There are Beyonders, but Beyonders working as bodyguards not only charge a high price, but they also have an attitude. They typically don’t do night duty,” Anthony Reid recounted his observations during

this period. “Let’s pay attention to our volume later.”

“At a time like this, the benefits of being a Sleepless will be revealed,” Lumian responded in a deep voice as he used the wire to open the master bedroom’s door.

Sleepless was a Sequence 9 of the Evernight pathway, renowned for not needing much sleep while staying vigorous.

Anthony Reid followed Lumian into the room and closed the wooden door behind him.

Then, Lumian donned a black top hat and lit the gas wall lamp on the wall.

In the yellowish light, they saw a woman wrapped in a silk blanket lying on the bed.

The woman stirred slowly, her wavy black hair framing a face that had seen four decades of life. Though traces of age marked her features, her skin remained remarkably smooth.

Her amber eyes gradually blinked open, revealing a faint yellowish glow. They fixed on Lumian’s transformed face, courtesy of the Niese Face, and the black top hat.

Just as she prepared to speak, a cold muzzle pressed against her crimson lips.

“Relax. We’re here for a small fortune and a few answers. If you cooperate, you won’t get hurt,” Lumian assured her with a smile. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Despite having her house broken into in the dead of night and held at gunpoint, General Philip’s widow, Annis, didn’t dare to resist. She nodded quickly, signifying her willingness to comply.

“Look me in the eye. I want to be sure you’re telling the truth.” Anthony Reid lit a cigarette and brought it to his lips.

Annis subconsciously met the gaze of the intruder, doing her best to convey her sincerity through her eyes.

She couldn't help but notice the robber's unusually clear, dark brown eyes, as if they held the key to his soul. The cigarette between his lips burned with a fiery red glow.

The red dot flickered…

After a while, Anthony Reid, who had used his actions, words, and demeanor to lull Annis into a semi-hypnotic state, delved into the depths of her Body of Heart and Mind.

"Why did you donate so much of your wealth to the Dreamseekers charity organization?"

Annis's Body of Heart and Mind replied without reservation, "It was in Philip's will. If I didn't donate two-thirds of my assets to that charity, my child and I wouldn't inherit the remaining third."

There is something suspicious about the Dreamseekers, and perhaps even General Philip too… Lumian found it difficult to believe the general to be that generous.

Noting that Annis continued her life without any disruptions and seemed oblivious to any potential issues with General Philip, Anthony Reid changed his line of questioning.

"Was Philip still a devoted follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun?"

The Psychiatrist believed that the general's daily routines in a marriage were hard to hide from Annis, even when other problems remained concealed.

Annis's eyes grew distant as she replied, "He hadn't prayed fervently in a long time, and his praises were quite perfunctory.

"I overheard him whisper in the corridor once, 'Goddess bless.'"

Chapter 451 - 451 Fate's Prank

Chapter 451 Fate's Prank

＜nulli＞Goddess bless… Is he a believer in Evernight or an evil goddess? From the looks of it, it's likely an evil goddess… Lumian made a preliminary judgment as he listened to Annis's answer.

Simultaneously, he sighed silently.

＜nulli＞No wonder people who believe in evil gods love to convert their parents, spouses, and children into one. Otherwise, no matter how cautious they are, many details can't be hidden from their families who spend day and night with them…

Anthony Reid held the quietly burning cigarette in his hand and pondered for a few seconds before saying, "How did Philip die?"

The information he had gathered so far indicated that General Philip had succumbed to a sudden ailment, but that was the public declaration. The actual situation remained unknown.

Annis's tone drifted as she replied, "He had a heart attack in the middle of the night and couldn't make it to the hospital before he died."

Anthony Reid asked calmly, "Where's his body?"

"It was purified, cremated, and sent to the family cemetery in Quartier de l'Erato." What Annis said was public information.

Lumian turned to Anthony Reid.

"Ask her about the fate of his Beyonder characteristics."

He believed that Philip was definitely a Beyonder. After all, he had managed to rise up the ranks to general in the army, and he also

came from an aristocratic family—the chances of him not being a Beyonder were slim.

After the Psychiatrist finished his question, Annis said in a daze, “What are Beyonder characteristics?”

Anthony Reid analyzed the mentality and knowledge of the individual and changed his question.

“Where did the thing that emerged from Philip’s body go? Or did he have any special items on or around him? Where did it go?”

Annis recalled and said, “When the servant arrived to carry him downstairs to take the carriage, he told me with difficulty that if he died, there was no need to be surprised by any strange changes in his body. I was to stow away the thing that appeared and leave them for the children.

“L-later, too many things happened during the funeral, and I was too sad. That thing disappeared and was never to be found…”

＜nulli＞Never to be found… Lumian had long suspected that General Philip was faking his death. Now, he was more inclined to believe it.

He even felt that the other party’s Beyonder characteristics hadn’t truly emerged. The phenomenon Annis saw and the thing she had put away were an illusion created by a corresponding ability or ritual, and they naturally vanished in time.

Anthony Reid, who had discussed this matter with Lumian and the others several times, clearly had similar thoughts. His voice was calm as he asked, “What did it look like?”

Annis’s Body of Heart and Mind replied in a voice, “It was his fist. It turned skinless, and the joints were like black metal. They were very sharp, and they easily cut through the back of the chair…”

＜nulli＞The Beyonder characteristic fused with a certain part of the body, transforming into the potion’s main ingredient… Lumian was experienced in this.

Anthony Reid further inquired and confirmed that Annis didn't have much information. She didn't even know the Sequence of General Philip's original pathway.

Seeing this, Lumian circled the master bedroom, and his gaze landed on a photo frame on the desk.

On it was a photo of Philip's family, but color photography technology that had emerged in recent years wasn't used. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

In the family portrait, General Philip wore a high-ranking military officer's suit adorned with numerous medals. He wasn't too tall, and judging from the surrounding items for scale, he stood about 1.7 meters tall.

His hair was thick and slightly curled, and his eyes were small, but they had the sharpness of an eagle staring at its prey. The beard around his mouth was neatly trimmed, and the tip was even coated with paraffin. The bridge of his nose was unique, as if it had been broken and hadn't healed, causing the middle section to bulge.

Lumian observed closely and memorized Philip's exact appearance and characteristics.

If he had truly faked his death to escape his original fate, according to Madam Justice, this likely involved the loss of an old fate and the acquisition of a new one. It wouldn't alter his appearance.

In other words, the current individual was likely a stranger who looked identical to General Philip. Lumian hoped to recognize him at a glance if he encountered him in the future.

"Let's go," Anthony Reid concluded his Telepathy and said to Lumian in disappointment.

Lumian wasn't disheartened by the setback. He nodded gently and said, "To that charity organization."

The purpose of the charity organization, known as the Dreamseekers, was to provide assistance to outstanding young men who had come to Trier to pursue their dreams but had temporarily fallen into a

predicament. To this end, even the staff employed such young men and provided them with free apartments.

The apartments were located in a house rented by the Dreamseekers. The lower two floors housed workplaces, and the upper two floors housed staff quarters.

Ossa, who controlled the charitable organization, also resided there, indicating that he was genuinely assisting the Dreamseekers and not seizing the opportunity to amass wealth.

After leaving Rue Lviv, Lumian and the others hurried towards Quartier 2, the arts and financial district.

Quartier 2 was very close to Quartier 3, where they were currently located. Before long, they arrived not far from Rue Saint-Varro.

The Dreamseekers was located in Building 11 there.

As soon as they alighted from the carriage and before they could approach the street where their target was, Lumian and Anthony Reid saw crimson flames rising in the dark night.

Fierce flames transformed a building into a colossal torch in the night.

Lumian's eyes narrowed as he had a bad premonition.

After exchanging glances with Anthony Reid, they sprinted towards Rue Saint-Varro.

<nulli>Thud! Thud! Thud! The two of them passed through an alley with a barricade and saw that the house that had turned into a fiery hell was Building 11. It was the office and staff quarters of the Dreamseekers!

The crackling flames soared into the air, sealing off the four-story building and scorching it black. No one cried out for help or attempted to leap down from the windows. It was as silent as if everyone had died long ago.

Residents of the street woke up and fled in a hurry, others wanting to

help the firefighters or watching the commotion from afar.

Anthony Reid looked at the burning building and sighed. “We’re too late…”

Lumian stared intently for a moment before slowly shaking his head.

“No.

“Perhaps fate doesn’t want us to gain anything. No matter how early we arrive, we’ll see something similar.”

With so many evil god-blessed involved in the planning, investigations would inevitably encounter various forms of interference. Some were direct, some indirect, some seemingly normal, some rather bizarre, and some seemingly failing to gain fate’s favor.

Lumian paused momentarily before continuing,

“At least this means we’re on the right path.”

Anthony Reid fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “This indirectly proves General Philip’s connection to an evil god’s faith. My encounter with my comrades might stem from this…”

As he spoke, his voice trailed off.

Dozens of meters away from the burning building, Lumian’s face mirrored the fiery inferno as he gazed ahead, his voice steady.

“Do you still want to pursue this?”

“This situation is getting more perilous with each passing moment. It’s far more dangerous than the encounter with gunfire you’ve experienced before.”

“Up to this day, do you still wrestle with the fear from that night, the sounds of sudden gunshots? Do you truly possess the courage and determination to press on?”

Anthony Reid lapsed into silence. The middle-aged man, battle-

hardened and weathered, remained contemplative for an extended moment.

Before them loomed a house engulfed in raging crimson flames. Masked firefighters in their red and blue uniforms, citizens in disarray, and chaos swirled around them.

After an uncertain pause, the Psychiatrist, his receding hairline and slightly plump face, spoke softly.

“Perhaps I perished in that attack. What remains is an avenging spirit, relentless in its pursuit of truth and retribution.

“I can be vanquished, but I can’t relinquish the pursuit. That’s what I felt when you mentioned the existence of leads and hope.”

Lumian offered a sly grin and turned toward Anthony.

“Welcome to the abyss of vengeance.”

…

Returning to the market district, Lumian wasted no time in composing a letter to Madam Magician, apprising her of the night’s operation and its final outcome.

He couldn’t shake the feeling that the current situation had stretched beyond the capabilities of his team. Regardless of the clues they unearthed, it seemed as though the threads of destiny conspired to sever them, leaving their investigations seemingly fated to failure.

This uncertainty gave Lumian pause, making him wary of delving deeper into the mystery, fearing that their actions might inadvertently endanger the slim glimmer of the less significant leads on your own. Termiboros resides within you—a heavy stone capable of stirring ripples in the River of Fate. He’s not easily swayed, unlike the hope they still clung to.

Before long, the “doll” messenger returned, bearing neatly folded papers.

“All fates intertwine to weave a grand drama.

“Should you come across any future clues, share the vital ones with me. Investigate the less significant leads on your own. Termiboros resides within you—a heavy stone capable of stirring ripples in the River of Fate. He’s not easily swayed, unlike the others.

“Furthermore, we shall make other attempts.”

＜nulli＞Other attempts… Lumian sensed that the Tarot Club had undertaken numerous clandestine endeavors, yet like his own, these investigations had ultimately proved futile.

Considering the Tarot Club’s potency, Lumian suspected that this case might be met with direct interference from angels or even evil gods.

After reducing the letter to ashes, Lumian reclined on his bed. As he prepared for sleep, he contemplated the direction his investigation should take.

“Linked to the Hostel, individuals engaged in painting, writing, and those with a penchant for reading tend to encounter trouble…”

In the whirlwind of his thoughts, Lumian’s mind settled on one person.

Gabriel, the playwright who had once taken up residence at Auberge du Coq Doré.

Gabriel had relocated to Rue Saint-Michel in Quartier 2, a district teeming with painters and authors. It was an ideal hub for artistic exchanges.

＜nulli＞Mr. K and the official organizations had only ruled out well-known painters and authors. Countless aspiring talents who hadn’t yet made a name for themselves flock to Trier. The investigation of all these hopefuls within a short span seems an insurmountable task. Moreover, many young dreamers pursuing artistic ambitions call this city home. The Dreamseekers had even thrown their records to the flames…

Lumian quickly reached a decision. At the break of dawn, he planned to visit Gabriel, inquiring whether the playwright had encountered any obscure authors or painters who had yet to garner recognition, or

if any unusual anecdotes had circulated among these artistic circles.

Chapter 452 - 452 Manuscript

Chapter 452 Manuscript

At noon the following day, Quartier 2, Rue Saint-Michel.

Lumian quickly realized that it was only a short distance from Rue Saint-Varro, where the Dreamseekers charity organization was situated, just a block and a square away.

＜nulli＞As expected of the arts district… Lumian raised his brows, feeling that he was drawing closer to the truth and edging ever closer to the answers he sought.

He glanced away from the Sun Obelisk standing proudly in the square's center and strolled along Rue Saint-Michel, tracing the path that winded past the ancient and weathered buildings.

He couldn't help but notice impoverished painters hunched over their sketchpads at the square's edge and along both sides of the street. Musicians played their diverse tunes with guitars, violins, and flutes. Every so often, white homing pigeons glided gracefully beside a fountain that sent water cascading in sync with the music.

The warm autumn sun cast a poetic charm over the scene.

Having spent a considerable amount of time in the market district, often consumed by thoughts of revenge, engrossed in investigations, or participating in banquets, Lumian had rarely immersed himself in the everyday life of Trier's core area.

Unfazed by the sunlight and the languid ambiance, donning a brown round hat, a light-blue shirt, and a casual brownish-yellow suit, he made his way into a bar named "Third-Rate Authors."

Here, most patrons sported well-worn attire, sipped affordable spirits,

and engaged in animated discussions on various subjects. Occasionally, when inspiration struck, they'd retrieve well-thumbed notebooks and jot down their thoughts with the fountain pens they carried.

As Lumian approached the bar counter, he couldn't help but overhear a lively discussion among some of the patrons regarding the latest art exhibition.

"That piece called 'Cafe' is incredibly controversial. Some people laud it for its vibrant colors and audacious composition, seeing it as a silent protest delivered in an absurd form. Others think it's a deliberate attempt at abstract art, a ruse to dupe the public's intellect."

"I find it fascinating. The artist's ideas are vividly depicted through those overlapping colors. Just think about it. Isn't that how many cafés are? Noisy, bustling, with people from diverse backgrounds clashing and mingling like a chaotic blend…"

"I'm willing to call it a groundbreaking masterpiece of abstract art!"

"Are you talking about the kind of abstract art that's never been recognized or sold?"

Lumian couldn't help but think, <nulli>Café… Isn't this the painting Mullen created using his buttocks? Someone genuinely holds it in high regard? Could it possibly become the most renowned and valuable work of his life? He pursed his lips, inwardly sighing. <nulli>You Trierians…

Upon reaching the bar counter, Lumian spent eight licks on a glass of absinthe and raised his voice.

"Everyone, I have a question. If anyone can provide the answer, this glass is on me!"

As all eyes in the bar turned towards him, Lumian spoke up:

"I'm looking for the playwright, Gabriel.

"I need him to write a script."

In Rue Saint-Michel, nearly anyone one bumped into on the road could be an author or painter, let alone in a bar known for its literary discussions and artistic creativity.

Gabriel had frequent meetings with fellow writers and may even host private gatherings in his rented apartment. After all, “Lightseeker” had seen successful screenings and was quite popular, which would bring him significant benefits.

“He hasn’t shown up for a few days. He claims he’s locking himself away to finish a story,” a middle-aged man near the bar counter responded to Lumian’s inquiry with a smile. “He’s probably swamped with scripts. Would you consider other playwrights? There are several equally talented young folks around here.”

＜nulli＞Hasn’t shown up for a few days… Lumian furrowed his brows momentarily before relaxing.

“How will I know if I don’t give it a try? I come with plenty of sincerity.”

“Alright,” the middle-aged man in the tattered formal coat murmured. “I hope you won’t be disappointed.”

He led Lumian to 34 Rue Saint-Michel and climbed the stairs up to the fifth floor, near the attic.

The outer walls and stairs had a slightly outdated but still well-maintained appearance, and it was notably cleaner and more spacious compared to Auberge du Coq Doré.

“This is where Gabriel resides,” the bearded middle-aged man informed Lumian, rapping on the brown wooden door of Room 503.

A muffled sound echoed, but there was no response.

“Perhaps he’s out searching for food, or maybe he’s completed his work and gone to see the theater manager who commissioned it,” the middle-aged man suggested with a forced smile. “Would you like to return to the bar for another drink? I’m an experienced writer myself, though I’ve never ventured into script writing. My novels sell quite well in the underground market.”

“What have you written?” Lumian asked, glancing at the firmly closed brown door, showing no signs of anxiety.

The middle-aged man sighed and said, “I wrote ‘Monk Pursuing Dog’ and its sequel, ‘Dog Pursuing Monk,’ but they weren’t published under my name. For one, it would lead to my arrest by spies, and secondly, my boss wouldn’t permit it.”

“A sequel?” Lumian hadn’t visited an underground book market or a banned bookstore for some time. His last visit had been to purchase “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles.”

As he looked at the somewhat forlorn and slightly greasy middle-aged man, his perspective shifted.

He could be considered one of his initiates into the adult world!

“It came out last month,” the middle-aged man replied, nodding gently. “These two novels have made my boss a fortune, but I didn’t even get a tenth of that, no, not even a hundredth!”

“Boss?” Lumian inquired, recalling that Bard, a key member of April Fool’s, had once authored “Emperor Roselle’s Secret Chronicles.” He saw this as an opportunity to gain insight into the workings of this profession and prepare for future tracking.

The middle-aged man sighed again.

“We don’t have authorship rights, just writing tools for the boss. He pays us a fixed but tiny salary for our manuscripts, specifies the direction and requirements for our writing, and then sells them through his own channels.

“On Rue Saint-Michel, there are many third-rate authors like me who don’t even have pen names. We’re like assembly line workers.”

Lumian, showing respect, asked, “May I know your name?”

The middle-aged man replied, “Rabe.” His eyes were filled with hope as he gazed at Lumian.

Lumian probed further into the world of underground literature,

gaining insight, and ultimately said, “If my attempt to reach an agreement with Gabriel falls through, I’ll consider offering you an opportunity.”

Rabe’s joy was palpable as he responded, “As long as the boss doesn’t assign me any new missions, you’ll find me here at Third-Rate Authors every day!”

Watching the underground author, an initiate for many Intis youths, descend the stairs, Lumian took a wire from his pocket and unlocked Gabriel’s door.

Compared to the playwright’s room at Auberge du Coq Doré, this space was considerably more expansive, encompassing a bathroom and a small bedroom. Beyond that, it served as a living area, study, dining room, and kitchen. A coal stove for cooking was neatly arranged in a corner.

Lumian quickly surveyed the room and noticed a jumbled stack of papers that resembled manuscripts on the desk by the window.

He shut the wooden door behind him and proceeded towards the desk.

＜nulli＞It’s Gabriel’s handwriting. Rabe was telling the truth. This is definitely Gabriel’s residence… Lumian mused as he held the stack of papers and began to peruse them.

Moving into the bedroom, he spotted a pair of black dungarees casually draped over the bed. The sight confirmed his earlier suspicion—he was in the right place.

This was a pair of pants Gabriel had frequently worn in the past.

However, the playwright himself was conspicuously absent.

Recalling Rabe’s statement that Gabriel hadn’t been seen for several days, Lumian’s caution escalated.

He meticulously examined every item in the room, much like a hunter tracking the movements of his prey.

After a few minutes, Lumian picked up a white-glazed porcelain cup with a single handle from the desk. He noticed that about a third of it still held cold water, with dust floating on the surface, too subtle for ordinary eyes to discern clearly.

<nulli>At least a day. Lumian's heart tightened with concern.

<nulli>What could have happened to Gabriel?

<nulli>Was it possible that his prominence had attracted the attention of government spies seeking a "conversation"? Or perhaps he had unwittingly become the target of money-seeking kidnappers?

Setting the porcelain cup down beside the manuscript, Lumian meticulously combed the room, searching for any clues or signs of interest. His search yielded nothing of note.

Returning to the desk, he picked up the stack of manuscripts, eager to delve into Gabriel's work before his unexplained absence.

The script told the tale of a struggling author who crossed paths with a woman coerced into joining a criminal organization. Together, they found solace in their shared despair, pain, torment, and the harshness of daily life. They offered each other encouragement and warmth, ultimately leading to the author's recognition by the newspaper's editor-in-chief and a steady income. His reputation steadily grew, while the woman, still trapped in her circumstances, chose to vanish.

Before the story could conclude, it ended with a passage about the lover's disappearance and the author's introspective musings:
Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"She's here;

"My beloved has arrived from the night.

"She's left;

"My beloved walked towards the distant hostel…"

The mention of the word "hostel" made Lumian's forehead twitch.

Though it was an ordinary word in a script, it stood out to him due to his daily contemplations and associations, sparking connections in his mind.

His gaze suddenly shifted from the manuscript to the desk.

At some point, the white-glazed porcelain cup with a single handle, which he had moved to the manuscript, had somehow returned to its original place!

Lumian's eyes narrowed, and the muscles under his clothing tensed.

As a Hunter, he had an unwavering memory for any alterations he made in his surroundings—it was a fundamental part of him!

＜nulli＞A creature that is challenging to detect with the naked eye and can only be confirmed by certain traces. Lumian silently recollected the information Jenna had relayed from the authorities.

Suddenly, he reached into his pocket and retrieved a pair of glasses.

They were brown gold-rimmed glasses—Mystery Prying Glasses!

Chapter 453 - 453 Missing Author

Chapter 453 Missing Author

Lumian carefully positioned the Mystery Prying Glasses on the bridge of his nose, and immediately, the room seemed to whirl, and the ground beneath him trembled.

Suppressing his nausea and dizziness, he observed the scene before him fragment and overlap, creating a surreal and captivating tableau.

The bed pressed against the desk, which seemed to lean against the ceiling. Behind the ceiling appeared to be a tap, as if it were installed within a wardrobe. These scenes were like translucent canvases superimposed on each other, reflecting themselves in Lumian's vision.

A pale-white face materialized beside the wardrobe.

The face had disheveled brown hair, naturally parted. Dark-brown eyes glistened beneath black-framed glasses. It was Gabriel, looking cleaned up and as though he hadn't burned the midnight oil in a while.

The playwright gazed at Lumian with a vacant, distorted, yet strangely genuine smile.

His right hand reached out from the void, waving gently before his face shrank into the depths of the translucent layers, vanishing completely.

Lumian quickly surveyed the room, but Gabriel hadn't reappeared. He promptly removed the Mystery Prying Glasses, replacing them with the Eye of Truth on his left side.

This mystical item, composed of pale-white flesh and dark blood vessels, covered the corresponding ear, allowing Lumian to hear rapid voices from the distant horizon. The intertwined purple blood vessels formed a lens that adhered to his eye, revealing faint blood, layers of colors, and the room with a third of it blending into the surroundings. An invisible curtain resembling mullioned glass was also discernible.

The latter two phenomena rapidly dissipated or gradually returned to normal.

Before the whispers could become more distinct, Lumian removed the Eye of Truth and massaged his throbbing forehead.

Based on the combined information from both mystical items, he deduced that Gabriel had been corrupted by Hostel, becoming a presence that couldn't be perceived or touched in the conventional sense.

However, the playwright retained a certain degree of rationality. He recognized Lumian and even happily bid him farewell.

Returning the white porcelain cup with a single handle to its original position seemed to serve as a greeting, an attempt to capture Lumian's attention.

Lumian frowned slightly. <nulli>Why does Gabriel seem to accept his transformation into a monster and was even pleased. When had he come into contact with Hostel?

His gaze shifted to the manuscript on the desk. The story in the unfinished script felt eerily familiar.

Lumian picked up the manuscript and read it meticulously, at a slower pace than before. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

After perusing the first section, he confirmed that the protagonist of the script was Gabriel himself. The character's personality, the details of his life, the cold treatment he endured, and the demand to produce vulgar works all aligned seamlessly.

Regarding the female lead, who immersed herself in the underworld

and persistently encouraged the male lead's creations, Lumian couldn't help but feel that if it weren't for the difference in gender, he could be the one with such a background.

However, the female lead's personality, her way of speaking, and her encouraging words were entirely distinct from his own. Even in the scenes involving the mobs, Lumian could discern traces of Charlie.

<nulli>In essence, the female lead's identity, background, and experiences in the mob appeared to be a blend of Charlie's and my situation. It was however someone else who interacted with the male lead. Gabriel had previously mentioned that only me and the human model Séraphine encouraged him at Auberge du Coq Doré. Charlie merely drank with him without mocking him or teasing him. A human model… that's right! The human model for a painter. Séraphine spent a night with Gabriel before moving out. Lumian rapidly connected the dots, sensing that the root of the problem might lie with Séraphine, the human model!

This woman had once accompanied a painter to a small seaside town as a model. After an extended absence, she returned to Auberge du Coq Doré.

Painter!

Could Gabriel have been corrupted on that night when Séraphine returned? Was it possible that Séraphine had moved to the Hostel? Lumian meticulously perused the script, leaving no word unread.

Since this was a story born from Gabriel's own experiences, it undoubtedly contained numerous factual details and genuine emotions—invaluable clues!

As Lumian continued to read the script, bathed in the sunlight filtering through the oriel window, he sensed the concealed love that resided within Gabriel's heart. He could feel the ache of remorse, reluctance, and the yearning for a relationship that Gabriel believed he could easily discard when he moved to a better neighborhood to start anew. In the end, he found himself unable to forget it.

The protagonist, increasingly aware of his heart's true desires and

feelings, ceased to evade them and actively embarked on a quest to uncover traces of his beloved.

He sought out people who were acquainted with her, visited motels and hotels that occasionally haunted his dreams, and explored galleries in search of new artworks based on his lover…

Yet, his endeavors proved futile, leading him to compose the inner monologue.

＜nulli＞It ended here abruptly… I can't tell if he found Séraphine… Lumian placed the manuscript down in disappointment and decided to check the drawer for any drafts, outlines, or notebooks that might contain further information or inspiration.

Regrettably, the contents of the drawer only covered the first half of the script. By the time Gabriel had reached the second half, he appeared to have delved deeply into his emotions and penned his inner monologue in a single burst.

Lumian looked at the papers before him, pondering the situation.

＜nulli＞From the script and the other items in the room, it's apparent Gabriel hadn't managed to locate Séraphine…

＜nulli＞In other words, he hadn't actually come into contact with the Hostel…

＜nulli＞Furthermore, neither the script nor Rabe's description suggests that Gabriel exhibited any signs of corruption or boons until he ceased writing. While he was undoubtedly suffering from the loss of his lover, this was a typical emotional response…

＜nulli＞So, why had this person suddenly transformed into an untouchable, unseen monster? ＜nulli＞Just knowing about the Hostel shouldn't lead to such a situation… ＜nulli＞Apart from me being special, Franca and Jenna know about the Hostel. Anthony Reid, Theresa, the Demoness Sect member in Trier, Mr. K of the Aurora Order, and a large number of Purifiers of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church all know about it. There are ordinary people and Beyonders among them, but none of them are in trouble…

<nulli>Beatrice of the Bliss Society knows the location of the Hostel and aims to retrieve a painting, which was the reason Franca and I made a mistake. Bouvard of the Sinners prophesied a catastrophe associated with the Hostel, leading to his corruption into a peculiar corpse. The Dreamseekers charity organization likely sponsored heretics connected to the Hostel, such as painters and authors, and they were destroyed at the slightest hint of exposure.

<nulli>What was the reason for Gabriel?

<nulli>Could he have recently encountered something that deepened his understanding of the Hostel, or perhaps he had found traces of Séraphine?

Lumian made a preliminary guess and conducted a thorough search of Gabriel's rented apartment with a clear objective in mind.

Nothing.

He then left 34 Rue Saint-Michel and made his way back to the Third-Rate Author bar, where he seated himself next to Rabe, who was engrossed in his drink.

"A glass of La Fée Verte," Lumian ordered as he tapped the bar counter.

Then, he turned to Rabe and inquired, "Do you have any idea where Gabriel has been over the past few days?"

Rabe pointed to a small round table near the window and replied, "You'll have to ask them."

As an underprivileged author working as a ghostwriter without a pen name, Rabe considered himself fortunate to know a rising star like Gabriel and attend his private gatherings. He had to work regularly every day to fulfill the missions assigned by his boss, preventing him from participating in their activities.

Guided by Rabe, Lumian approached the small round table and was taken aback upon seeing the four individuals seated there.

<nulli>Weren't these the same individuals who had discussed

Painter Mullen's art spoof art, "Café"?

In response to Lumian's inquiry, the leader of the group responded with a puzzled expression, "We last saw Gabriel two days ago. We all went to the Trier Art Center together to attend an art exhibition."

＜nulli＞Art exhibition… Lumian's eyebrows twitched.

…

Trocadéro Town.

Franca, dressed in a white jacket, followed Browns Sauron, who wore a black coat, as they navigated through the manor adorned with grapevines.

With curiosity evident on her face, Franca, who had been invited, couldn't help but ask, "Where are you taking me?"

Browns cast a brief glance in her direction.

"I'm taking you to meet my teacher. You've successfully passed the assessment and are now an official member of our sect."

＜nulli＞Browns Sauron's teacher… A high-ranking Demoness? Could this person be the leader of the Demoness Sect in Trier? Franca's thoughts raced as she smiled and inquired, "Does this mean I can enjoy the membership perks?"

The term "perks" was coined by Emperor Roselle and had gained recognition in Intis.

Browns maintained a bit of distance from Franca as she questioned, "What would you like in exchange?"

Without hesitation, Franca responded, "The potion formula for Affliction."

Affliction was the name of the Assassin pathway's Sequence 5, often referred to as the Demoness of Affliction.

Browns let out a scoff.

“Quite bold to make such a request. Do you believe you have accrued enough contribution points to ask for the potion formula for Affliction?”

She paused for a moment before adding, “Of course, if you can assist the sect in achieving something, this can be your perk.”

Franca, who had initially held limited hope and was merely testing the waters, glanced at Browns.

“And what’s that something?”

Seizing the opportunity, Browns explained, “We’ve received information that the Iron and Blood Cross Order discreetly smuggled an item into Trier through an underground tunnel several months ago. If you can uncover what it is and identify its possessor, you’ll be entitled to the Affliction potion formula.”

＜nulli＞A few months ago… The underground tunnel… Secret delivery into Trier… Franca suddenly recalled “Rat” Christo’s loss of his biological brother.

In an effort to aid the Savoie Mob’s smuggling leader in recovering his brother and the transported goods, she and Lumian had been drawn into a strange mirror world, where they narrowly escaped.

During their adventure, Franca had acquired a classic sterling silver mirror.

Chapter 454 - 454 Hidden Honorific Name

Chapter 454 Hidden Honorific Name

＜nulli＞From the looks of it, the Demoness Sect attaches significant importance to that item… That's right. Given that this item had triggered the strange mirror world, it is highly likely that it was linked to the powers of the Assassin and Hunter pathways… Franca took a moment to consider and then admitted, "I know what you're referring to…"

She explained to Browns Sauron in the same manner they had explained the situation to "Rat" Christo in the past. In essence, she shared everything except the fact that she and Lumian had been drawn into a mirror world. Instead, they relied on Lumian's unique ability to escape and how she obtained a classic silver mirror that led them to the mirror world.

"According to the 'Rat,' his brother and many of his subordinates turned into monsters, including the reversal of their left and right hands. This attracted the Purifiers' attention were eliminated." Franca deliberately elaborated, probing Browns Sauron gauge her reaction to the appearance of the mirror people.

Browns displayed a slight furrow of her brow.

"How did the official Beyonders become aware that something was amiss?"

＜nulli＞She seems to know about the mirror people and their specific traits… Franca looked away and shook her head.

"For that question, you'd need to approach a Purifier, not me."

Without further discussion, Browns led Franca to a circular pavilion enclosed by grapevines and various vines.

Seated in the circular pavilion was a woman donned in a black court dress. Her bright dark gray eyes held a touch of sadness, and her neatly tied black hair featured a few loose strands, which cascaded naturally and added a hint of allure to her otherwise composed countenance.

Upon catching sight of the woman's slightly curved red lips, graceful jawline, and soft facial features, Franca was initially struck by the overwhelming beauty that met her gaze. However, her astonishment was quickly overshadowed by an unexplainable sense of sympathy.

Although she was taken aback and touched by a sense of heartache, it took nearly ten seconds for Franca to remember encountering this woman before.

She had seen her during her and Lumian's surveillance of the fake Theresa, Beatrice Incourt, at the concert. As the most beautiful woman in attendance, she had been invited on stage to take a photograph with the orchestra as a keepsake.

＜nulli＞Is she Browns's teacher, a high-ranking Demoness? It's no surprise; having a high-ranking Demoness overseeing the operation and ensuring its success… Franca was momentarily surprised but soon realized that this situation was in line with what she had anticipated.

What she hadn't expected was that this woman had openly followed them and even participated in a photograph on stage.

Browns Sauron introduced her teacher, saying, "This is my teacher, Demoness of Black Clarice."

＜nulli＞Demoness of Black… According to Madam Judgment, Demonesses with a color in their title are considered exceptional even among the demigods of the Demoness Sect. Some are even suspected of being angels. Franca placed her hand over her chest and offered a slight bow. In a polite and gentlemanly manner, she said, "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Demoness of Black."

Franca avoided complimenting the woman's appearance. She understood that most Demonesses in the Demoness Sect took pride in their beauty while simultaneously harboring inner conflict regarding it. Compliments from outsiders were typically accepted with grace, potentially leading to some embarrassment. However, if Franca, who knew their true gender, were to offer such compliments, it might be perceived as provocation or mockery.

Demoness of Black Clarice nodded slightly and said, "Every member needs to believe in the Primordial One. You should have known about this more than a month ago. It's time to officially pray to Her."

Franca was not surprised at all. Secret organizations that worshiped evil deities typically required new members to open themselves to their deity, thus gaining a measure of control and filtering out most insecurities.

"We are all the children of the Primordial One," Franca responded devoutly and respectfully, adhering to Browns's guidance during this period.

"Recite the honorific name of the Primordial One with me in Hermes.

"The source of all catastrophes, the symbol of destruction and the apocalypse, the Demoness who controls Chaos…"

Although the Demoness of Black spoke in Intisian, the surroundings darkened significantly. The grapevines writhed gently, as though transforming into venomous snakes.

Franca remained composed and repeated the three-lined honorific name in Hermes.

Suddenly, she saw grapevines extending towards her.

They grew thicker and thicker, completely enveloping the circular pavilion.

One of the python-like vines extended toward Franca, and a dark-blue vertical eye opened at its tip.

It reflected Franca's figure.

The figure rapidly distorted, transforming into a man with a bloodied face.

The man had short flaxen-colored hair, slightly thick brown eyebrows, and lake-blue eyes. His lips were thin, and his appearance was ordinary.

Franca was taken aback. This face was familiar to her.

It was the face she saw in the mirror every day before consuming the Witch potion.

This was her past self, Franco Roland!

In the deep-blue vertical eye, Franco Roland's expression turned ferocious. His eyes held a tangible hatred, and his face was filled with a viciousness that could cause nightmares.

Franca's body stiffened, as if she had turned into a statue made of rock.

After staring at her for a few seconds, the vine with the blue vertical eye retracted into the canopy of grapevines, its eyes reflecting its unhappiness.

Franca finally felt her body. She blinked and saw that everything around the circular pavilion was normal. Sunlight pierced through the gaps between the vines and shone here.

There were no python-like vines, nor were there any blue vertical eyes. It was as if the bizarre and nightmarish encounter had never happened. All of it appeared to be a fleeting, surreal vision.

She lowered her head and completed her prayer.

As Franca continued her rituals, she couldn't shake the eerie experience from her mind. The connection between the Primordial Demoness and the underground mirror world was undeniable.

She had encountered her past self, Franco Roland, in the mirror world as well.

This time, it wasn't Franca reflected in the blue vertical eye either. It was Franca's former appearance—Franco Roland!

Clarice, with a black veiled hat on her head, nodded.

"Now, you're a child of the Primordial One."

"Thank you for your guidance." Franca smiled and inquired, "I thought the honorific name for the Primordial One would include a description akin to the Ruler of the Mirror World. I'm surprised it's not part of it?"

The Demoness of Black, Clarice, replied in a cold, indifferent, yet pitiful tone, "This isn't the complete honorific name of the Primordial One. There are two more lines you can't know right now."

＜nulli＞The Primordial Demoness has two hidden lines for Her honorific name? Franca suddenly felt that this detail revealed something, but she was uncertain about its significance.

Clarice continued, "Every new member receives a Primordial One statue. It possesses anti-divination and early warning abilities, and it can assist you in performing rituals. You must pray to it every day."

While speaking, she produced a bone statue, the palm-sized statue vaguely resembling a beautiful woman with hair that reached her ankles. Each strand of hair was intricately carved with distinct, snake-like eyes, some open and others tightly shut, densely packed and unsettling.

＜nulli＞Praying every day… Franca hesitated, deciding to be patronizing on this matter.

After Franca stowed away the Primordial Demoness statue, Clarice's brow furrowed imperceptibly.

"Keep a close watch on the Iron and Blood Cross Order, especially Gardner Martin. If they make any unusual moves, contact Browns immediately. If the situation becomes critical, retrieve the Primordial One statue, set up the altar, and perform the designated ritual. After completion, place the prepared letter into the mirror on the altar."

＜nulli＞Keep a close watch… Unusual moves… Franca extracted the key points from the Demoness of Black's instructions.

She sensed an impending catastrophe and couldn't help but grow anxious.

＜nulli＞Does the Demoness Sect believe that the Iron and Blood Cross Order is on the brink of launching a major operation?

…

In Quartier 2, outside the Trier Arts Center, Lumian stood on the steps, contemplating the authors' responses that flashed through his mind.

"Gabriel has been enjoying art exhibitions and galleries for the past month or so."

"He doesn't pay much attention to each painting. It's as if he's searching for the one his soul has been waiting for."

"There's nothing unusual about him."

"He didn't fixate on any other visitors at the exhibition."

"…" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The information revealed by these answers left Lumian puzzled about his next steps. Nonetheless, he had decided to visit the Trier Art Center to explore the art exhibition titled "Future Impressions."

It was scheduled to end in another two days.

Before arriving, Lumian had secured a hotel and a room for setting up a ritual. He summoned a messenger and informed Madam Magician about Gabriel's encounter and the direction of his investigation.

Initially, he had planned to relay the message from the bar's washroom, but he recalled that the "doll" messenger had severe mysophobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Consequently, he opted to spend a bit of money to find a clean and suitable place.

As he gazed at the colorful art center with its sun-like roof, Lumian took a slow breath and presented his ticket to enter the building.

“Future Impressions” wasn’t a large art exhibition, occupying only three exhibition halls. Lumian strolled through, admiring the artworks displayed on the walls.

Suddenly, he spotted a familiar figure.

Chapter 455 - 455 Two Children

Chapter 455 Two Children

Ludwig stood in front of a wall painting adorned with doughnuts, his young eyes fixated on the artwork. Sensing someone watching him, he turned around and spotted Lumian.

Lumian smiled and playfully teased, “Running away from home again?”

Ludwig, this time with more composure, replied, “No. I told my godfather that learning can’t be limited to textbook knowledge. It’s equally important to read more, hear more, and interact with other things.”

Lumian inquired, “And he brought you here to see the art exhibition?” However, he couldn’t spot Baron Brignais in the vicinity.

He noticed that Ludwig’s intelligence and knowledge seemed to have improved a bit, allowing him to come up with an excuse he had used before. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

It appeared that learning was having a positive impact on him!

Ludwig nodded and added, “Yes. It’s important for a child to cultivate an appreciation for art from a young age.”

Lumian clicked his tongue and continued, “So, no textbooks, homework, or exams today?”

Ludwig responded, a joyful smile unknowingly plastered across his face, “It’s incidental.”

Internally, Lumian noted, <nulli>There’s been some growth, but not much…

At that moment, Baron Brignais, donning a silk top hat and a black suit, approached from the other side of the exhibition hall.

Lumian couldn't help but make a mocking remark, "Aren't you worried he'll get lost?"

As a Conspirer, Lumian picked up on something unusual about this situation.

Given Brignais's past anxiety when Ludwig ran away, he shouldn't have left the child alone in the exhibition hall!

Brignais smiled and said, "Ludwig has been doing well recently and hasn't tried to run away from home. He was engrossed in admiring the paintings, so I didn't want to disrupt him when I went to the washroom."

<nulli>Sounds like something an irresponsible parent would do, but Baron, you weren't like this before. I suspect you did it on purpose… You deliberately left Ludwig alone in the exhibition hall to see what this strange child would do? Heh heh, you don't have to worry about him. You have to worry about the surrounding visitors. If this guy gets hungry and you don't provide food in time, I'm afraid someone will be eaten, Lumian criticized as he made a guess.

He sensed that Baron Brignais had an ulterior motive for arranging this visit to the exhibition. It was akin to leading an experienced hound to a specific occasion, releasing its ropes to see if it would track down certain prey.

After answering Lumian's question, Baron Brignais, clutching his bulging briefcase, looked at Ludwig.

"When you get back, write an essay regarding the art exhibition, detailing your feelings and the work that left the deepest impression."

Lumian was not surprised. He had plenty of experience being thrown into such a situation.

Regrettably, Lumian's exploration of the three small exhibition halls yielded no significant findings. Instead, Mullen's "Café" drawing, which he had created with his buttocks, drew the attention of

numerous tourists, sparking both admiration and criticism.

Standing in the final exhibition hall, Lumian contemplated his next move. Retrieving his brown, gold-rimmed glasses, he decided to give them a try.

Since his unaided vision and Spirit Vision revealed no discernible issues, he opted to test the Mystery Prying Glasses from the same pathway!

Carefully positioning the glasses on his nose bridge, Lumian braced himself as the world around him seemed to spin and whirl. His focus remained on the scenes unfolding within his “vision.”

Each painting took on a life of its own, breaking free from the confines of the walls.

Some of the paintings seemed to regard Lumian with a chilling, penetrating gaze.

Initially taken aback, Lumian feared that something extraordinary was afoot with all the portraits, potentially placing him in a dire situation. However, he soon realized that he wasn’t under attack.

The figures within the portraits merely stared at him with silent and cold intensity.

It was as if they had attained a degree of consciousness and a sense of being, yet they hadn’t fully emerged from their canvas confines to walk among the living.

A revelation dawned upon Lumian.

Through the lens of the Mystery Prying Glasses, he was witnessing another reality.

Perhaps, in some parallel aspect of the world, each painting held a semblance of reality. However, they remained two-dimensional, flat, and lacking in depth, incapable of significantly impacting the human realm or the spirit world. There might be exceptions, moments where extended contemplation of certain works induced feelings of delirium or anxiety.

It occurred to Lumian that Painters could potentially amplify the limited, flat nature of these objects, opening a pathway to the realm of the real.

In essence, the characters within ordinary paintings might possess an incomplete, condensed, and spiritually deficient existence in this two-dimensional, flat world. With the aid of the Mystery Prying Glasses, they were unveiled in their true form.

Likewise, Lumian's perception unveiled deeper truths—the artist's most profound creative intentions.

One painting depicted the future of Trier, a divided realm. On the surface, men and women reveled in lavish banquets, adorned in opulent attire. Beneath the surface, ragged individuals dwelled in dark tunnels, subsisting on earthworms, rats, and moss. Yet, through the Mystery Prying Glasses, Lumian glimpsed fat, glutinous pigs with oil oozing from their mouths on the surface. Below, grotesque, contorted visages and decaying hands reached upwards.

This was the true message the artist sought to convey.

In the next instant, Lumian spotted Baron Brignais and his godson Ludwig.

The former appeared unremarkable when viewed through the Mystery Prying Glasses, but there was a faint, brassy aura emanating from his form. As for the latter, something chilling unfolded as he abruptly turned his head, seemingly locking eyes with Lumian across two exhibition halls.

Ludwig's chubby face took on an unsettling transformation; his skin seemed to writhe, as if it were on the verge of shedding, and something from beneath the surface attempted to burrow out.

Lumian's heart tightened, and he instinctively removed the Mystery Prying Glasses,

instantly restoring the scene to its normal state.

He had always sensed that Ludwig was far from ordinary, but this encounter had sent his danger instincts into overdrive.

The true nature of the innocent-seeming human skin concealing the boy beneath remained an ominous mystery.

<nulli>Ugh… Lumian had worn the Mystery Prying Glasses for an extended period this time, and his discomfort was overwhelming. Despite the diminishing dizziness, he felt profoundly nauseous, with a painful ache in his stomach, a pressing need to vomit and tend to other bodily functions.

Even a Conspirer's constitution couldn't withstand this.

Taking a deep breath, Lumian made his way to the washroom adjacent to the three exhibition halls.

It was situated at the end of a long corridor adorned with statues and paintings, perfectly in line with the Trier Arts Center's ambiance.

Once inside the washroom, Lumian attended to his urgent needs, and after washing his face with cold water, he gradually regained his composure, with the discomfort dissipating.

Exiting the washroom, Lumian's gaze naturally drifted toward the opposite wall, where a series of paintings were on display.

One particular painting drew his attention, a macabre and enigmatic piece that gripped his senses.

It was an oil painting set against a vividly layered background, with a focal point on a naked woman.

Her face remained blurred, as if the painter had intentionally left it blank. On her body, distinct faces emerged, each bearing a different emotion—anger, hatred, malice, joy. Some of these faces resembled those of cats, others of dogs, and some appeared to exist solely in the realm of fantasy. What united them was their eerie, translucent yet lifelike quality.

As Lumian stared at this unsettling painting, a thought dawned on him.

During Gabriel's visit to the art exhibition, he had seemed perfectly normal, at least as per the accounts of the authors. But they couldn't

have monitored his every move, especially during mundane activities like visiting the washroom!

…

Avenue du Marché, Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Jenna had just stepped out when she spotted a familiar figure standing beneath a gas street lamp on the opposite side of the road.

It was a young boy, dressed in a white shirt, silver vest, black coat, and a mercury bow tie, his light-yellow hair neatly combed.

<nulli>The child who brought me good luck last time… that formidable Beyonder! Jenna exclaimed inwardly, taken aback. She instinctively crossed the street and approached the boy.

With a slight bow, she greeted him with a smile, "Were you waiting for me?"

The boy glanced at her and muttered, "I wasn't waiting for you. You were waiting for me. You met me earlier than any other choice."

<nulli>What's the matter this time? Are you offering me good luck for the impending catastrophe and getting me to discover something? Jenna's thoughts raced as she casually asked, "Didn't you say that this direction was a little dangerous last time? Why are you here this time?"

The boy's response was measured and earnest, "That day was that day, and today is today. Just because it was a little dangerous that day doesn't mean it's dangerous today."

"Alright…" Jenna probed with a probing smile. "Do you need my help to buy you an ice-cream?"

The boy, however, responded with a long, almost adult-like sigh.

"It's something else; I'll pay you."

<nulli>Pay? Giving me good luck? Jenna had a vague idea, but she didn't inquire about the reward. She decided to cut to the chase,

asking, “What’s the favor?”

The boy reached into his pocket and retrieved a gleaming golden coin, sidestepping her question.

“This will be your reward—a lucky gold coin.”

Chapter 456 - 456 The Charlatan's Instructions

Chapter 456 The Charlatan's Instructions

The boy chuckled and explained, "This is a gold pound, more valuable than Louis d'or."

"You're not from Intis?" Jenna was taken aback, but she didn't think there was a problem.

The boy's appearance did differ somewhat from the locals.

"I'm Loenese," the boy with neatly combed, light-yellow hair replied honestly.

Jenna chose not to dig deeper, understanding that whether the coin was a gold pound or Louis d'or didn't affect its practical worth.

Based on their previous encounter, she trusted the boy's ability to bring good luck.

She looked at him, awaiting his next words.

The boy returned the lucky gold coin to his pocket, showing no intention of prepayment.

Instead, he pointed at the ground and said, "At ten tonight, enter Underground Trier from the entrance here. Proceed as far as you can, following any available path, until you reach an underground river.

"Find a hiding spot nearby and wait for the first person to pass by. Take all their belongings."

"Before completing this matter, you can't tell anyone what you want to do or where you plan to go."

Go underground purely based on intuition and rely on luck to find prey? Jenna found the boy's instructions rather reminiscent of Ciel's "charlatan temperament."

As for how to acquire the person's belongings, there seemed to be only one solution: through combat; she was to subdue the other party!

Jenna knew the boy was likely a formidable Beyonder aligned with her cause, and without hesitation, she agreed, "Got it."

The boy smiled.

"When you obtain those items and hand them over to me, I'll pay you the lucky gold coin as a reward."

"How should I address you? And where should I find you when the time comes?" Jenna, aware that he wasn't an ordinary boy, couldn't help but speak in a respectful tone.

The boy mumbled, "You can call me Will. Talking to me like that makes me sound like an adult. I'm just in elementary school!

"When the time comes, you'll naturally encounter me."

Will waved her off and said, "You may leave."

However, after walking for more than ten meters, her curiosity got the best of her, and she turned to glance at the iron-black gas street lamp pole.

The strange boy, Will, had vanished from his spot.

Jenna took a closer look and realized that he had entered the nearby café and was now seated at a booth by the window, where an attendant had just brought him a cup with three scoops of ice cream.

He's truly just a child… Jenna mused, her curiosity satisfied as she continued on her way.

…

In the financial district, within the Trier Arts Center, The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian took out the brown Mystery Prying Glasses once again after having surmised something.

With no hesitation or fear, he donned the mystical item.

The exhibition hall had been his main focus, with the washroom separated by a long corridor.

Amidst the familiar dizziness, the oil painting in front of Lumian underwent a peculiar transformation.

The faces adorning the naked woman's body turned to look at him.

Simultaneously, Lumian sensed the presence of a creature on the rooftop, where the overlapping sky was, staring at him from a distance. It appeared to be trying to navigate the obstacles and approach him rapidly.

As the blurry face of the woman in the oil painting gradually clarified, her true identity became apparent: brown eyes darting, brown hair cascading, a plump, smooth-skinned face, and an air of detachment…

Lumian recognized her. She was none other than Miss Séraphine, the former tenant of Auberge du Coq Doré, the human model, and the lover playwright Gabriel had been searching for!

As Séraphine's face became clearer, Lumian's surroundings darkened, as if faces were on the verge of emerging from the painting or the void.

Quickly, he removed the Mystery Prying Glasses from his nose bridge, and all the anomalies vanished in an instant, leaving only the sensation of raised hair on his skin.

As expected, the human model for this oil painting is Séraphine…

Although Gabriel is an ordinary person and doesn't possess the Mystery Prying Glasses, he once slept with Séraphine and knows her

physical characteristics. That must have been how he noticed traces of his lover when he entered and exited the washroom…

Could it be that Séraphine possesses multiple faces on her body, appearing both painted and alive, just like this oil painting?

Wasn't Gabriel afraid back then?

After discovering the oil painting with Séraphine as the model here, he encountered that normally difficult-to-see creature when he returned?

The timing matches up—the water glass on his desk was more than a day old, and he visited the art exhibition two days ago… Something must have transpired late at night.

As Lumian's thoughts raced, he turned his attention to the oil painting's signature—Claude Pierre August.

The painter was not widely recognized; otherwise, his artwork would not have been hung along the corridor to the washroom. Furthermore, his work was perhaps added for the "Future Impressions" exhibition.

Likewise, he believed that since something had happened to Gabriel, Pierre might have gone missing. He had even gone to the "Hostel" when Séraphine moved out of Auberge du Coq Doré.

Regardless, I should inform Madam Magician. What if there are any clues left behind? Otherwise, they wouldn't have dealt with an ordinary person like Gabriel. Lumian had no intention of pursuing Claude Pierre August himself. This was because it would take a lot of time to gather information about the other party through various channels. And with the target's name and identity, an astromancy master like Madam Magician should be able to quickly lock onto the painter's residence.

In addition, Gabriel had been attacked late at night after learning about Claude, the painter. Lumian's current information was only a fraction of his own.

Lumian gazed at the oil painting, his lips curling into a smile.

Will I be attacked?

I'm looking forward to it.

…

Around 9 p.m., at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601, Franca, recalling the Demoness Sect's mission, suspected the Iron and Blood Cross Order would soon make a significant move, and her plan was to visit Gardner Martin while digesting the Pleasure potion along the way.

Rather than her usual method of knocking on the door and entering, Franca decided to take a more covert approach.

She intended to hide around 11 Rue des Fontaines, in the garden, or on the lawn, observing discreetly before finding Gardner Martin.

Recognizing Gardner's Sequence and abilities, she returned to her bedroom and retrieved a palm-sized Primordial Demoness statue, which she concealed in a pocket.

This would enhance her ability to remain hidden and reduce the chances of Beyonder powers detecting her.

"I'm heading to Gardner's." Franca waved at Jenna, opened the door, and left Apartment 601.

Jenna acknowledged and breathed a sigh of relief.

She was about to leave and was a little nervous.

Franca arrived at Rue des Fontaines via a rental carriage but chose not to have the driver stop at Building 11 as usual. Instead, she disembarked from a distance and swiftly disappeared into the shadows, stealthily making her way to Gardner Martin's residence.

Her familiarity with the surroundings allowed her to find a gap in the guards' patrol, and she nimbly scaled a side wall to silently descend into the garden.

Franca didn't attempt to infiltrate the building directly. Instead, she

followed the shadows, circling to the edge of the front lawn. Next to a gas street lamp, she observed the grayish-white three-story villa, still illuminated.

As time passed, Franca remained vigilant, focused on observing the figures appearing at the windows and their activities.

Suddenly, the main door of the villa swung open, and butler Faustino emerged, accompanied by a figure cloaked in black.

The black-cloaked individual was of average height, standing at around 1.75 meters. Their entire form was concealed, making it impossible to discern their appearance or physical attributes.

Who could it be? Gardner Martin's partner, or a key member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in charge of other regions? Franca wondered.

As the black-cloaked figure exited the iron fence while butler Faustino retreated into the villa, Franca hesitated for only a moment before making a decision.

She realized that unless she ventured inside Gardner Martin's residence thoroughly, she wouldn't obtain valuable information. Her earlier exploration had been open and yielded little. The cloaked individual might provide her with fresh leads leading to unexpected gains.

Franca, who was invisible, touched the Primordial Demoness statue in her hidden pocket and grew confident.

She circled around the lawn's edge and scaled the iron fence, stealthily trailing the mysterious figure in the black cloak.

…

At 10 p.m., Jenna embarked on her journey into Underground Trier, an entrance not far from Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons.

Lacking a carbide lamp, she relied on her Assassin's night vision to navigate in the pitch-black environment. Jenna was determined to commit the path to memory and proceeded deeper into the

underground tunnels, trusting her instincts.

As she advanced, the silence around her grew ever more profound.

Jenna exhaled slowly, alleviating the tension and fear in her heart.

Jenna deliberately moved away from the tunnel's center, pressed herself against a rock wall, and continued cautiously.

After an indeterminate amount of time, the sound of running water reached her ears.

She proceeded for another seven to eight meters around a rocky outcrop, where a small river flowed slowly in the dark underground.

Jenna steadied herself, spotting a mottled stone pillar to hide behind, her form merging with the dense shadows.

She refrained from using Invisibility, recognizing her limitations as a Witch—the duration she could maintain her powers was limited, and she had no way of knowing how long it would take for the target to arrive.

In the silent underground, time seemed to stretch, and Jenna's mental stress steadily built up.

At last, the reverberation of footsteps reached her ears.

Chapter 457 - 457 Unexpected Target

Chapter 457 Unexpected Target

His next objective was to ascertain whether the enigmatic entity that had targeted him from afar, attempting to approach rapidly while he observed Séraphine's oil painting with the Mystery Prying Glasses, would pay him a visit during the night, much like how it had dealt with Gabriel.

He lay on the bed, closed his eyes, and gradually drifted off to sleep.

Lumian had full confidence in Madam Magician. As a Major Arcana card holder in the Tarot Club, she appeared to possess the ability to launch long-range attacks and was skilled at dealing with untouchable and enigmatic creatures.

As his thoughts blurred and he succumbed to slumber, Lumian found himself in a hazy dream, returning to Auberge du Coq Doré. Dim light filtered through the glass windows on each floor of the slightly tilted building. Gabriel, attired in a white shirt, dark jacket, black pants, and strapless leather shoes, sat on the entrance steps.

The playwright's visage was somewhat translucent, and an air of detachment lingered in his eyes.

Upon spotting Lumian, Gabriel stood up abruptly, a conspicuous smile crossing his face.

Lumian halted warily and looked at him.

"What are you doing here?"

Gabriel's smile waned as he spoke urgently,

“Leave Trier immediately! This place is about to become extremely dangerous!”

Lumian frowned and inquired, “What have you discovered?”

Gabriel cast a wary gaze around before responding, “I’m not entirely sure what they’re planning, but I do know it will bring destruction to all of Trier.”

They… Lumian pressed for more information. “Are you staying at the Hostel? Where is it?”

A hint of confusion appeared on Gabriel’s face.

“You need to be like me to enter or gain the approval of the pixies.

“I didn’t know how to find it. I found myself at the door as soon as I arrived.”

As expected, the Hostel is closely related to the Pixies… Did Gabriel rely on the corruption to alter his existence and reach the Hostel like teleportation? Lumian’s thoughts raced as he asked in a deep voice, “Why did you choose to go to the Hostel? Were you coerced into it?”

“No,” Gabriel shook his head, his voice softening. “I did it of my own accord. Séraphine came to fetch me personally, and I couldn’t refuse. It’s what I wanted.”

A touch of happiness crossed his face.

“Have you realized that you’ve become a monster?”

He paused a beat before continuing, “My script has already achieved success. I have the reputation and income I desired most. I have no regrets in that regard. All I want now is to be with Séraphine, whether she’s human or a monster.”

Lumian didn’t scold or berate him. Instead, he looked at Gabriel and let out a long sigh. “I understand your feelings and thoughts.”

Gabriel’s face showed gratitude, and he spoke sincerely, “After becoming a monster, I seem to have the ability to see a certain future.

That's why I knew you would come to me. I asked Séraphine to let me stay in the room for two more days to bid you farewell. She agreed. She's not a pure monster!"

Lumian's heart stirred, and he spoke in a bewitching tone, "Do you want me to rescue you and Séraphine from the Hostel?"

"Is it possible?" Gabriel's face contorted, and his eyes revealed a mixture of yearning, as if his body and mind existed in different worlds.

Lumian took a step closer and spoke earnestly, "There is hope, but I need you to tell me all the details."

Gabriel's expression shifted between blankness, coldness, excitement, longing, and rejection, each emotion expressed vividly.

In that moment, he extended his hand, his eyes filled with intense fear. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Silently, Gabriel's form shattered, and the image of Auberge du Coq Doré disintegrated, along with the faint mist.

Lumian's eyes snapped open, and he found himself gazing at the ceiling of the second-floor bedroom in Salle de Bal Brise.

It had all been a dream, but it had felt incredibly real.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Franca, carrying the Primordial Demoness's statue, followed the black-cloaked man while remaining invisible.

The man appeared to have extensive experience and skill in evading pursuit. He frequently changed direction and even doubled back on his path.

If Franca hadn't relied on her invisibility and the assistance of the Primordial Demoness statue, she would have lost him several times.

Finally, the black-cloaked man came to a stop in front of an entrance to Underground Trier.

He half-turned and examined his palms under the crimson moonlight, leaving Franca perplexed.

What's going on? Is he performing palm-reading on himself? Remaining hidden behind a gas street lamp pole, the invisible Franca observed his actions with curiosity.

After a moment, the man descended the steel staircase and disappeared into the dim entrance.

Franca followed closely behind, venturing deeper into Underground Trier.

Twenty minutes later, the black-cloaked man reached a sealed tunnel.

Franca, standing a few meters away, looked over and saw three lamps embedded in the stone wall.

Three classic oil lamps, one high and two below, each with a flame burning inside.

Franca had been in Trier for a long time and had a good understanding of the situation here. This scene triggered a connection in Franca's mind.

Carbonari!

She recognized this as one of the symbols of the Carbonari, an organization seeking to overthrow the government. Lighting three lamps was symbolic in their ranks—the one above represented the sun, while the other two below symbolized the moon and the stars.

The Iron and Blood Cross Order collaborates with the Carbonari? Franca was both surprised and unsurprised.

From her perspective, the Iron and Blood Cross Order aimed to seize power in Intis itself by toppling the government, but their current focus seemed to be on the underground and the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier.

The black-cloaked man swiftly passed through the self-opening stone door, and Franca noticed a thin, ever-changing white fog emanating from inside.

This fog looks familiar. There must be something wrong… Franca hesitated to follow when she felt a slight tremor in her hidden pocket.

Franca reached out and touched it, her expression changing slightly.

The classic silver mirror had trembled slightly—the one connected to the underground mirror world!

Franca remained in her concealed position, watching the stone door slowly close without taking another step forward.

…

Beside the flowing underground river, the figure moved swiftly along the water.

He didn't use lanterns, carbide lamps, or other sources of light, yet he moved through the darkness with ease, navigating around potholes, rocks, and obstacles effortlessly.

Jenna, hidden behind a mottled stone pillar, noticed a flickering red light in the target's eye.

Taking a deep breath, she retrieved the ancient Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from her black coat and prepared herself for the confrontation.

Her combat experience wasn't limited, but it wasn't much either. In particular, she had never faced a Beyonder alone. All she could do was use everything in her arsenal to augment herself from the onset. She had to go all out to minimize any accidents.

Jenna plunged the obsidian arrow into her chest, letting it draw her blood and come to live.

Before the figure could approach, she sprinkled fluorescent powder over herself and chanted a Hermes incantation at an almost inaudible

volume: “Body Concealment!”

With that, Jenna vanished completely, blending into the darkness, her movements masked by the sound of the underground river.

Moments later, the figure with the red eye arrived in the area. Jenna watched from the shadows.

Suddenly, the darkness came alive beneath the figure’s feet, forming inky black chains that wrapped around the legs, waist, and torso.

The figure stopped abruptly, a red light shooting from its eye.

From behind, Jenna’s form materialized.

Only then did Jenna get a clear look at her target. He was a man, holding a grayish-white cloth bag and wearing a dark gray robe similar to that of a monk. His face was a menacing sight, constructed with iron plates, gears, springs, screws, cranks, and other mechanical contraptions. There was a vivid red gem embedded in his right eye.

A monk from the Deep Valley Cloister? Jenna’s heart raced. She hadn’t anticipated Will targeting a monk from the God of Steam and Machinery Church.

She and Franca had crossed paths with similar monks in the Deep Valley Quarry before. These monks had augmented their bodies with mechanical modifications, giving them an eerie appearance.

Confronted with a target whose skull had transformed into metal, Jenna abandoned her initial plan of striking behind the ears. Instead, she concentrated a dark flame in her right palm and pressed it against the mechanical monk’s head amidst the howling wind.

Simultaneously, a red beam shot forth, slicing through a few shackles resembling the Abyss. However, it only addressed the front. The other directions were already ensnaring the mechanically enhanced monk.

With a resounding impact, Jenna thrust the black flame into the target’s head.

The silent yet menacing black flames expanded instantly, consuming the monk's Spirit Body and setting his spirituality ablaze.

Leveraging the high-speed agility granted by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Jenna continuously shifted her position around the monk to evade counterattacks.

Simultaneously, she sought opportunities to weaken him to the fullest extent with the Demoness's black flames, bolstered by dark, binding spells.

In less than two minutes, the monk, unable to break free, collapsed to the ground, rendered unconscious and weakened.

Jenna exhaled and lowered herself to the ground.

She picked up the grayish-white cloth bag, untied the rope, and inspected its contents.

Inside, she found an array of canned paints and oil paintbrushes.

Chapter 458 - 458 Same Direction

Chapter 458 Same Direction

Could this monk be a passionate painter?

Or was he simply delivering paint and brushes to an artist?

It seems like a routine task, but the fact that he had chosen the depths of Underground Trier for this errand raises suspicion. It didn't appear to be a matter of time constraints…

Either there's a problem with his destination, or the painter he's looking for is problematic. Perhaps everything is problematic…

A barrage of thoughts raced through Jenna's mind, leading her to suspect a connection between the mechanically enhanced monk and the Hostel they were investigating.

It was possible that an artist with supernatural powers was working on murals underground, requiring a substantial supply of paint and tools!

Jenna decided to search the monk's robe for any clues, finding only a few coins and banknotes.

She placed these items in the same grayish-white cloth bag and secured it with a knot. As she examined the intricate mechanical components that comprised half of the monk's body, she contemplated using the Demoness's black flames to incapacitate him once more. Her plan was to transport him back to the surface for an "interrogation" with the help of Ciel, Franca, and Anthony.

Being a Witch, Jenna had mastered ritualistic magic related to spirit

channeling, but she lacked practical experience and was concerned about making a mistake that might disrupt their lead. She also needed a safe prayer target, so she intended to leave this task to the experienced Lumian and Franca.

As Jenna was about to put her plan into action, multiple gears on the unconscious monk's face suddenly began to turn on their own,

producing an unsettling clicking and clacking noise. The mechanical parts came to life,

spinning wildly and devouring the flesh and blood on the other side of the monk's body, turning it into a gruesome mess.

The scene resembled a horrific accident in a factory where an operator had fallen into a massive machine.

Jenna's instincts immediately warned her of impending danger, but before she could react, the mechanical parts, along with her own flesh and blood, lunged towards her.

Amidst the coexisting sounds of cracking and creaking, she transformed into a mirror, shattering inch by inch.

Jenna managed to reappear approximately ten meters away from the underground river.

Without looking back, she swiftly grabbed the grayish-white cloth bag and the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty embedded in her chest. She darted around the rock wall, making a hasty escape to the surface.

Behind her, the sounds of metal grinding and colliding persisted, but they couldn't catch up to her. Gradually, the commotion began to subside.

Finally, Jenna heard the crisp sound of metal parts falling to the ground,

Jenna ran until she reached a named location in Underground Trier, where she finally slowed down and carefully removed the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from her chest.

If not for that, she might have been caught by the menacing mechanical body before having the opportunity to use the mystical item once more.

As Jenna assessed her surroundings and sought out the underground Avenue du Marché, she reflected on her harrowing experience. It felt as though the chilling tales Franca and Ciel had shared, along with their horrifying abilities, had become a reality.

The parts of the monk's body that had undergone mechanical enhancements had assumed an eerie lifelike state!

And the revived machinery was devouring human flesh and blood!

This is the true nature of the mystical world, where Beyonder powers are accompanied by unimaginable perils… Jenna turned onto the underground Avenue du Marché and made her way towards the stairs that would lead her back to the surface.

Simultaneously, she couldn't shake the suspicion that the enigmatic monk and the sinister secret cave she and Franca had stumbled upon in the Deep Valley Quarry were somehow linked to the impending catastrophe.

…

After the stone door closed, and the dark tunnel fell silent, Franca emerged from her hiding place and remained invisible as she returned to the surface.

She replayed the scene she had just witnessed, trying to pinpoint the source of the familiar feeling emanating from the ever-shifting thin white fog. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Just as she was on the verge of resorting to Magic Mirror Divination or Dream Divination to find answers, a memory resurfaced.

She recalled the moment she and Jenna had eliminated the Deep Valley Cloister's Warlock-dressed man underground. A similar fog had appeared in the mirror during their spirit channeling!

The other party's exploded corpse transformed into a blood mist,

revealing the corresponding characteristics, but the colors were different!

007 had informed us that by the time the Purifiers arrived in Deep Valley Town, their target had already shifted. The items on the altar were gone, leaving behind only cryptic words on certain papers…

Those words were Albert Goncourt, Underground, Riot, and Time… Albert Goncourt is one of the leaders of the Carbonari… and this aligns with the three oil lamps I had seen moments ago! Could it be that the Iron and Blood Cross Order is collaborating with the Carbonari to incite a riot, possibly involving monks from the Deep Valley Cloister?

Hiss, could it be that the item Gardner Martin used to smuggle “Rat” Christo into Trier was requested by the Carbonari?

Is it located not far behind that stone door? Is that why my ancient silver mirror reacted?

Franca gradually connected the dots.

She realized the urgency of reporting this matter. Though it wasn’t directly related to their primary mission of finding the Hostel, it seemed far from a trivial issue. If it escalated, it could lead to another catastrophe, and Franca felt compelled to do her best to prevent it.

In the next moment, Franca pondered her options.

Should I report to the Tarot Club, the Demoness Sect, or inform the authorities through 007?

She quickly made up her mind.

Only children choose to do multiple-choice questions. Adults select them all!

…

Lumian awoke from his dream, his mind filled with questions as he slowly sat up and surveyed his surroundings.

There were no signs of Madam Magician pursuing Gabriel at the Hostel.

Madam Magician didn't realize that Gabriel had used a dream to warn me to escape Trier immediately? That's impossible. This lady possessed the ability to enter and exit my dreams at will in Cordu, and she is known to be the bane of these special monsters. Even Bouvard's lifeless body, which should have been untouchable, hadn't been spared when she dragged it away… Lumian paced back and forth in the room, pondering the puzzling situation.

He couldn't believe that Madam Magician wasn't paying attention. She had the means to observe from a distance, so there was no urgency in rushing to Salle de Bal Brise.

The insight he gained from Conspirer's influence left Lumian with a nagging sense that the dream was not what it seemed.

To deceive Madam Magician while communicating with him indicated that there was something extraordinary about Gabriel or the Hostel itself!

As Lumian was only a Sequence 6 and lacked extensive knowledge of mysticism, he refrained from speculating and instead sat at his desk, taking up a pen and paper to write a letter.

Knowing the "doll" messenger's preferences, he decided to send the letter only after returning to Auberge du Coq Doré, patiently awaiting a response.

Before long, Madam Magician's reply arrived.

"I didn't notice Gabriel influencing your dream.

"Initial considerations are:

"You have a close connection to the Hostel."

There's a close connection between me and the Hostel? Lumian's forehead twitched as he read the message, feeling as if a bucket of ice-cold water had been poured over his head.

How is that possible?

When did I establish such a bond with the Hostel?

Could it be that Gabriel used this connection to conceal himself from Madam Magician's scrutiny and directly influence my dream?

Lumian found Madam Magician's hypothesis absurd, but he couldn't help but analyze the possibilities.

As Lumian pondered the situation, a sudden realization struck him like a bolt of lightning.

Maipú Meyer!

Susanna Mattise's lover, the ostracized key member of the Bliss Society, the former manager of Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, who had claimed to be returning to the market district to do something!

Could it be that Maipú Meyer had secretly done something in the market district that led to my unexplained close connection with the Hostel?

He wants to prove himself. I'm definitely one of the targets… Was it his plan for me to establish a close connection with the Hostel and detonate it at a critical moment?

How did he do it? I had a close connection to the Hostel without realizing it… Lumian subconsciously glanced at his left chest and suspected that Termiboros, the traitor, might have played a role in this matter.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have failed to notice anything amiss.

Amidst his surprise, Lumian didn't panic. Instead, he felt a sense of joy.

I wonder if I can use my close connection to the Hostel to find that place…

When the time comes, I might have the opportunity to meet the

Sansons and have the support of numerous Major Arcana card holders…

Just as Lumian was about to write and inquire about Madam Magician, he heard soft footsteps approaching his room.

Knock, knock, knock. There was a gentle knock on the door of Room 207.

Lumian opened the door and was surprised to find Franca and Jenna standing there.

One of them wore a garish blouse, and the other was dressed as a female mercenary. Their expressions were serious.

Franca felt the need to communicate with Lumian before writing a report. “We’ve discovered something significant.”

You’ve found something important too? Lumian was taken aback, pointing at the ceiling.

“Call Anthony over as well.”

Nearly fifteen minutes later, Franca and Jenna shared their experiences in Room 207 of Auberge du Coq Doré, carefully omitting details about the Demoness Sect and Will.

As Lumian listened, his brow furrowed.

Some of the Deep Valley Cloister monks are suspected to be linked to the Hostel and the impending catastrophe?

That was an important cloister of the God of Steam and Machinery Church!

Lumian couldn’t help but rub his temples, recollecting that something unusual had also occurred at the Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s Sacred Heart Cloister.

Are the two Churches no longer as reliable?

Could Trier still be saved? Could there be a future?

Chapter 459 - 459 Price of Bestowment

Chapter 459 Price of Bestowment

“At the very least, those monks at the Deep Valley Cloister are still discreet when they’re up to no good. It means they still have reservations, which suggests that the entirety of the God of Steam and Machinery Church isn’t problematic. A significant number of clergymen, or maybe even the majority, are normal.”

“I think so too,” Anthony Reid agreed, raising his hand and drawing a triangle on his chest.

Lumian continued, “At this point, this is no longer something a small team like ours can handle. It’s best to leave the Deep Valley Cloister’s problem to the Purifiers and the Machinery Hivemind.”

What he didn’t say was that the Tarot Club would keep a close watch. After all, no one knew how many hidden dangers were waiting to emerge within the two Churches. What if someone triggered them prematurely, delaying the investigation of the Deep Valley Cloister?

“Alright,” Franca concurred; it was her original plan to begin with.

With the plan confirmed, Franca and Jenna left Auberge du Coq Doré and returned to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Lumian drew back the curtains, gazing at the crimson moon in the sky. Casually, he said to Anthony Reid, who was about to leave, “Your best option now is to head to Suhit’s steam locomotive station as soon as you wake up tomorrow and purchase a ticket to leave Trier. The sooner the departing train, the better.”

Anthony, dressed in military-green camouflage, halted in his tracks,

slowly turning around, his gaze locked on Lumian's retreating figure.

"Oh?"

Lumian poured himself a glass of light beer, which served as potable water, and took a sip. He continued to peer out the window and said, "You've been with us recently, and you've learned a lot. You should be able to discern the looming issue in Trier. The impending catastrophe will be dire. If you don't depart quickly, you might never get the chance.

"As for seeking revenge, for finding Philip, who faked his death, we can wait until the catastrophe is over. There's no rule stating you can't return after leaving Trier." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Anthony Reid fell into silence for a few seconds before slowly joining Lumian at his side. He too gazed at the night sky and asked, "Why aren't you leaving?"

Lumian replied with a smirk, "Aren't you a Spectator? Can't you see we're on a mission? How can we just leave Trier like that?"

Anthony turned his head to fix his stare on Lumian's face and eyes, remaining silent for a long while.

Lumian held the light beer in his hand, his gaze still fixed outside the window. His eyes were vacant, and his focus seemed clouded.

After a while, he scoffed.

"Besides, I have the ability to survive such a disaster. I can protect Franca and Jenna, but only the two of them. Do you think you can compare to beautiful women who have a deeper relationship with me?"

His "protection" referred to teleporting Franca and Jenna to The Fool's cathedral at the Lavigny Docks.

Anthony didn't respond and looked at the dark sky outside once more.

Taking a few deep breaths and exhaling white smoke, the Psychiatrist muttered to himself, “I was born and raised on the West Midseashire Coast. It’s an area with many industrial cities, where the God of Steam and Machinery has more believers than the Eternal Blazing Sun.

“When I was fortunate enough to become a Beyonder, my greatest dream was to retire safely from the army with some savings. I’d buy land near my hometown, close to the forest. I’d hire a few people to help me with farming. In my free time, I’d secretly hunt in the forest, breathe the sea air, or go fishing. Heh heh, you might not know this, but the fish in Midseashire are inedible due to heavy industrial pollution. Locals only eat it if they have no other choice.”

Anthony Reid’s voice deepened.

“If I were to return to the West Midseashire Coast and my hometown now, I might never be able to enjoy such a life. It’s not about money; I need a sense of relaxation.

“I still have nightmares about our camp being ambushed, with corpses everywhere. Every time, I can feel my heart racing. I can imagine that if I leave tomorrow and see the news and photos of the Trier catastrophe in the newspapers, I’ll have similar nightmares. I’ll dream of Trier being incinerated by flames, with corpses strewn everywhere.

“That time, I fled out of fear. This time, I don’t want to do that again.”

Anthony Reid took another drag on his cigarette.

Without waiting for Lumian’s mockery, he added, “I’m well aware of my limitations, and all of this doesn’t directly concern me. However, I’ve been in Trier for several years. I know many informants, neighbors, and children who will trade information for sweets or coppet. I don’t want to hear about their deaths in a few days and see their pained faces when I close my eyes.

“I’ll do my best to cooperate with you and do what I can. Only when there’s no other choice will I consider retreating.

“You don’t need to understand. This might be the paranoid decision of a patient with severe psychological problems.”

Lumian chuckled and commented, “You make it sound as if nobody else has psychological problems.”

Before completing my treatment, my psychological problems were far worse than yours!

A smile appeared on Anthony Reid’s face.

“So, you chose to stay too, didn’t you?”

He turned around and left Room 207, puffing on his short cigarette.

Lumian relished the night view of Trier, the enduring cacophony of Rue Anarchie serving as a backdrop to his contemplation. He emptied his glass of light beer.

Then, he took his seat, drew the curtains, and commenced writing to Madam Magician.

“New leads…

“There are now three investigation directions:

“Firstly, the Deep Valley Cloister and the Sacred Heart Cloister.

“Secondly, I can use the strong connection between myself and the Hostel to infiltrate the underground route that Jenna followed when she encountered the monk by the river. By following my instincts, I can attempt to reach the Hostel directly.

“Thirdly, an assault on Gardner Martin. Since the Iron and Blood Cross Order collaborates with the Carbonari, which is linked to the Deep Valley Cloister incident, they might be involved and have valuable information.”

After dispatching the letter, Lumian paced his room, grappling with a mixture of worry, frustration, and anticipation.

“We’ll take responsibility for the first direction. I refrained from

mentioning the second direction because it poses a significant risk to you. Furthermore, Gabriel's warning has likely been detected, so the Hostel will be on high alert against such intrusions.

"We can cautiously explore the third direction, but you must be well-prepared before confronting Gardner Martin."

Silently, crimson flames erupted, setting the paper in Lumian's hand ablaze. He planned to get some rest to recover from mental fatigue. At dawn, he would convene with Franca, Jenna, and Anthony to discuss their plan of action.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca hadn't changed into her cotton pajamas; she was still dressed in her daytime attire.

Observing her pacing the room, Jenna asked, her brow furrowed in confusion, "What's bothering you?"

Franca sighed and replied, "I intend to seek out Gardner now. Although Ciel didn't mention it just now, I can sense that he will propose dealing with Gardner in the next two days. This is a clear breakthrough. Sigh, I must seize the opportunity to digest more Pleasure."

Jenna regarded Franca's profile, pursing her lips before changing the topic.

"Don't you have many lovers? Even without Gardner Martin, there are others."

Franca couldn't help but clear her throat and smile wryly.

"Long gone, long gone. Gardner and his lovers are my current interests."

Jenna chuckled and playfully teased, "Without Gardner Martin, you can turn to Ciel."

“No, no!” Franca waved her hand vigorously. “I can’t get past myself.”

With those words, she headed toward the door.

“I’m going to Rue des Fontaines.”

Jenna’s smile faded as she offered a solemn reminder, “Don’t display any unusual behavior later.”

“I understand,” Franca replied, her expression turning serious. “I won’t let Gardner feel like I’m giving him hospice.”

With that, she opened the door and exited.

Jenna let out a soft sigh as she watched Franca vanish behind the closed door.

Then, her gaze turned to the grayish-white cloth bag on the coffee table, and she muttered to herself, I wonder when I’ll encounter Will to deliver this bag…

…

In the middle of the night, Jenna awoke suddenly from a vivid dream.

In her dream, she found herself in an underground quarry cave, with Will standing before her.

Although it was only a dream, Jenna had an uncanny sense of familiarity with the location and knew how to reach it in reality.

Understanding the significance of her dream, Jenna nodded slowly and changed into her female mercenary attire. Carrying the grayish-white cloth bag, she left Apartment 601 and ventured underground through the entrance on Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Following the revelations of her dream and guided by her spirituality, she descended, turned, and squeezed through gaps at times. Finally, she arrived at the quarry cave she had seen in her dream.

In the center of the mine, Will, dressed as he had been during the day, held an orange jack-o'-lantern. He didn't appear particularly pleased, resembling a student caught playing hooky by parents and teachers.

"Is this what you want?" Jenna handed him the grayish-white cloth bag filled with various paints and brushes.

Will accepted it but didn't open the bag. Instead, he retrieved an item known as the lucky gold coin and sighed.

"This is your reward.

"This is both your luck and misfortune. It signifies that you will encounter many things and bear significant responsibility.

"You may not fully grasp it now, but one day, you will."

Ever since the heretics brought catastrophe to the market district, there's been no turning back for me… Only by forging ahead in this perilous world of mysticism can I protect those I care about… Jenna silently mused, taking the Loen gold pound. She inspected it and inquired, "How should I use it?"

"Simply keep it with you," Will advised, waving his hand before vanishing into the depths of the quarry cave, clutching his jack-o'-lantern.

Jenna stowed the lucky gold coin and made her way back to the surface. To her astonishment, she found that she couldn't recall the route she had taken.

While she had arrived guided by her spirituality, she was now fully awake and devoid of the same guidance.

Jenna had no choice but to navigate her way independently, following a general principle of "ascending."

After walking for some time, the ground suddenly shook violently, as if an explosion had occurred in the distance.

An earthquake or some other anomaly? Jenna furrowed her brow and

quickened her pace to find a path leading upward.

As she turned a corner around a rock wall, her feet abruptly gave way.

The ground had already caved in, and now, it had completely collapsed.

Amidst the deafening sounds of collapse, Jenna couldn't react in time and tumbled deeper as the ground disintegrated.

She swiftly adjusted her body and activated her Assassin abilities, allowing her to descend gracefully like a feather.

Chapter 460 - 460 Chain Reaction

Chapter 460 Chain Reaction

After the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery lost all its dioceses in the Loen Kingdom, the former Archbishop of Backlund, a member of the Divine Council, returned to the headquarters in Intis. Over the past few years, he had traveled to various places like a firefighter, handling various serious Beyonder incidents.

He understood better than most clergymen of the God of Steam and Machinery Church that, despite the outward appearance of peace, the world was riddled with festering wounds. Problems abounded, and hidden dangers lurked in the darkness. The orthodox Churches and government organizations could only strive to maintain stability.

Horamick collected his thoughts and sighed silently. He turned to the Machinery Hivemind deacon beside him and declared, “Let’s take action. God will protect us. By steam!”

As he spoke, he drew a Triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

The burly Machinery Hivemind deacon issued the command for purification, and the members of the Hivemind sprang into action. Some raised iron-black barrel-shaped objects, while others shouldered weapons resembling steam firearms, devoid of backpacks or golden ammunition belts. Still, others produced leather scrolls, charms crafted from various metals, and some pointed rings, canes, and other objects forward.

Rumble!

The miniature sun-like golden fireball was the first to blast out of a cannon barrel, landing at the heart of the quarry cave.

Behind it followed a cascade of colorful “cannonballs” and bullets of varying shapes. The light and dispersed waves purged the entire Deep Valley Quarry repeatedly, maintaining the cave’s structural integrity, resulting in only a slight collapse.

After a few rounds of purification, the concealed cave within the quarry was breached, unveiling its interior.

Horamick’s eyes gleamed with an inhuman, dark-red light. He could clearly discern that the white mist within the secret cave had nearly dissipated entirely. Human arms and legs were embedded in the rock walls on either side.

The archbishop advanced, leading two squads of Machinery Hivemind members through the quarry and into the concealed cave.

Before entering, he cast a glance back at the nearby Deep Valley Cloister, closely monitored by Trier’s archbishop with Sealed Artifacts.

Horamick studied the human arms and legs attached to gears, crankshafts, and other mechanical components, resembling experimental subjects.

Under the deacon’s orders, the Machinery Hivemind members initiated another round of purification. They persisted until the arms, legs, and machinery had turned to ashes or fragments, allowing them to proceed further into the secret cave and descend the tunnel.

After several iterations, Horamick and the Machinery Hivemind members, their pale-white hair concealed by clergyman bonnets, reached a vast, laboratory-like chamber.

Here, human arms intertwined with machinery, following ceiling tracks, perpetually gripping cabinets, sinks, long tables, and iron boxes, moving them toward the blazing fire at the deepest part of the hall.

A few human corpses were piled in the chamber, and a humanoid figure made entirely of machinery stood among them.

This mechanical being stood at a towering height of over three

meters. One of his cybernetic eyes resembled an emerald, while the other resembled a ruby, supported by numerous components. His temples were encased in a transparent special material, revealing the squirming grayish-white brain within.

The mechanical giant cast a glance at Horamick and the others, who were scattered at the entrance of the chamber, and emitted a metallic chuckle.

“Seeing this, you have no reason to doubt, right? We are the chosen children of God. We follow the true teachings of God, while your spirits and flesh have been tainted by the pleasures and indulgence of the mortal world, causing you to abandon the throne of God!”

Turning his attention to the mechanical giant, his benevolent expression remained undisturbed.

“You used a spirituality gem, didn’t you?

“Using humans to refine spirituality gems is even more ruthless and wasteful than employing steam to drive them.

“Claude, I thought you were momentarily lost and would gradually return to your senses within the Deep Valley Cloister. I didn’t anticipate that you would become a heretic!”

“Heretic?” The mechanical giant laughed. “You are the heretics! When was the last time any of you received a revelation?”

“All the time,” Horamick responded with composure. “Claude, tell me, where is the Hostel? Are you in league with those evil gods to set your sights on Fourth Epoch Trier?”

In his mechanical giant form, Claude’s eyes emitted red and green lights as he spoke with solemnity,

“You have strayed from the teachings of God. You no longer possess the spirit of sacrifice.

“The future of this world and the chance for a deity to ascend to the pinnacle lies within Fourth Epoch Trier. The sooner we unlock it, the greater our hope!”

Without waiting for Horamick's reply, the mechanical giant declared coldly, "I will show you who the heretics are and who the true followers of God are!"

As soon as Claude finished speaking, the light in his cybernetic eyes flared, and the entire chamber trembled. The sounds of machinery in operation resonated with an enigmatic aura.

In an instant, the Machinery Hivemind members, who had been on the verge of unleashing their firepower, witnessed projected paintings depicting the evolution of humans emerging from obscurity, advancing step by step, and building civilizations at various stages.

These paintings were ethereal, weighty, delicate, and magnificent. Horamick and his companions seemed to transform into the people within the paintings, experiencing the gravity and splendor of civilization.

At that moment, a face appeared "outside the painting."

This figure wore a towering crown, with his nostrils decayed to the point where only two black holes remained. His eyes were filled with countless overlapping star charts, and they stared greedily at Horamick and the others, as well as their civilization.

Silently, more faces pressed against the surface of the painting. Some had their heads bisected by a ruler, while others were adorned with yellow paper covered in strange symbols. Some were covered in ears of wheat and rice, while others barely took on human forms, their bodies adorned with various symbols.

These faces were larger than Horamick and his companions combined. They stared fixedly at the scene through the painting.

The Machinery Hivemind members who beheld these faces experienced a profound fear from the depths of their hearts, as though their entire civilization would be obliterated.

Just as they were on the verge of losing control, the faces vanished mysteriously, just as they had appeared.

The scene before Horamick's eyes reverted to its normal state. The

mechanical giant Claude and the frenziedly operating chamber reentered his field of vision.

The archbishop remained unruffled, though his voice resonated with anger.

“Heretics!”

The sound of gears clicking filled the chamber, illuminating it as brightly as daylight.

The Machinery Hivemind members launched their attacks in succession.

Rumble! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The Deep Valley Quarry experienced a distinct tremor, as though a brief, violent earthquake had struck.

…

In Underground Trier, just outside the stone door through which the Carbonari had disappeared, crimson fireballs hovered in the air, casting a warm glow in the dark tunnel.

Blazing Danitz, dressed in a linen shirt, a brown jacket, dark pants, and black leather boots, had one hand in his pocket as he fixed his gaze on the nearby stone door.

His burnt-yellow hair and eyebrows framed his face, and he casually held a weed in his mouth, surveying the surroundings with his dark-blue yet bright eyes.

Nearly 20 men, all dressed as sailors, silently fanned out in the vicinity. Some twirled daggers, others wiped the barrels of their revolvers, and a few stretched their necks in anticipation.

A grinning, brown-haired sailor finally broke the silence and questioned Blazing Danitz, “Captain, why are we aiding the Intis government in pursuing the Carbonari? And why are we doing it for free?”

Danitz glanced at him, spat out the weed from his mouth, and muttered under his breath, “Damn fools, do you want to see Trier in ruins? Are you lads not still Intisian?”

As he spoke, he swung his fist at the stone door.

Doesn’t this group of assholes not know that their captain owns numerous properties in Trier?

Upon the surface of Danitz’s clenched fist, blazing white flames gathered as he thrust forward. Eventually, they coalesced into a fireball emitting a destructive aura.

Boom!

The ground shook, and the stone door shattered.

…

Jenna descended gracefully in the seemingly endless darkness, occasionally brushing against gravel but escaping physical harm.

After what felt like an eternity of descent, her feet finally touched solid ground.

Her beautiful blue eyes reflected a building.

It was a slightly crooked beige house. The lower three floors bore the architectural marks of Roselle’s era, featuring pillar walls, arches, and large windows. The top two floors, in stark contrast, seemed crudely appended as an afterthought.

This is… Jenna was visibly taken aback.

The building before her was one she recognized all too well.

It was Auberge du Coq Doré!

At that moment, light streamed from numerous rooms within Auberge du Coq Doré. Jenna spotted a man and a woman, standing on the third-floor balcony, wrapped in each other’s embrace.

The man sported black-framed glasses, his neatly combed brown hair adding to his refined appearance. As for the woman, she wore a lake-blue dress, her plump face and ethereal brown eyes creating a curious juxtaposition.

Thud, thud. Jenna's heart raced.

She had never actually met the woman, but she was familiar with the man.

It was the missing playwright, Gabriel!

Chapter 461 - 461 Strange World

Chapter 461 Strange World

Only then did Jenna, who appeared to be lost in a daydream, snap back to reality. Instinctively, she took two steps back and melted into the shadows cast by the building.

As her thoughts raced, chaos reigned in her mind.

Is that Gabriel?

I'm seeing him again… Didn't he morph into a monster and head to the Hostel?

Is this the Hostel? Auberge du Coq Doré is the Hostel?

No, the real Auberge du Coq Doré definitely isn't a Hostel. Otherwise, Ciel and the secret organization with tarot cards as their code names would have discovered it long ago…

Is this a mirror image of Auberge du Coq Doré, or is it the sketch of someone somewhere?

Jenna quickly deduced, relying on the information at hand.

Yet, upon further reflection, she sensed that something was off.

Auberge du Coq Doré used a naming system like Room 207 and 305. According to Bouvard's prophecy, Voisin Sanson was in Room 7, and Pualis de Roquefort was in Room 12. They didn't match up.

There must be something awry!

Jenna averted her gaze from the counterfeit Auberge du Coq Doré

and surveyed her surroundings.

She noticed that this place was identical to Rue Anarchie. The buildings lined up perfectly, some tall, some short, some askew, and some precariously balanced, but all standing firm.

On the street, vendors peddled meatloaf, Whiskey Sours, and other wares. Pedestrians streamed in and out, creating a bustling scene.

If she hadn't spotted Gabriel and had been plummeting this entire time, Jenna would have believed she'd returned to the surface and Rue Anarchie.

As Jenna carefully observed the pedestrians and vendors, it became clear that something was off.

Their vacant expressions and infrequent changes gave them an eerie, mechanical quality. Many familiar faces seemed to vanish at the end of the street, only to reappear, circling around from somewhere and returning to the entrance of Rue Anarchie in a repetitive cycle.

It's indeed fake… like a massive stage production. Most people, like the surrounding buildings, serve as a backdrop, but it's just a backdrop… Jenna analyzed the scene, drawing parallels with theatrical performances she knew well, trying to make sense of what she was witnessing.

Her attention then shifted to the counterfeit Auberge du Coq Doré and Room 207.

After a few moments of contemplation, Jenna decided not to risk infiltrating the fake Auberge du Coq Doré. She opted to explore the area carefully, gaining a rough understanding of the overall situation to see if there was a way out.

The layout and situation here mirrored Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman. Jenna barely needed to distinguish the path before returning to Rue des Blouses Blanches.

With every step, her sense of unease grew. She even began to question if her usual neighborhood was real.

Jenna couldn't help but look up at the sky from the shadows. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Blue sky, white clouds, the westering sun, and billowing smoke.

It all felt real, yet helped Jenna confirm that this wasn't the genuine market district.

She had descended into the underground in the middle of the night to search for Will. Could she have been missing for twelve hours?

From across 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Jenna surveyed Apartment 601.

Beside the glass window in the living room, she saw Franca, dressed in a blouse and holding a bottle of dark red wine in her hand. Her flaxen hair was tied in a ponytail.

Behind Franca, Jenna, dressed in a light-blue dress, busied herself with tidying up, occasionally disappearing from the window's view.

Jenna wasn't shocked, but her heart sank.

She and Franca were undeniably present!

Is this really the reflection of the market district?

Jenna closely observed Franca and confirmed that Franca still used her right hand, ruling out the possibility of her being a mirror person.

Likewise, in Apartment 601, both Franca and Jenna's vacant expressions persisted as they continued their lives following predetermined paths without any deviations.

While remaining hidden in the shadows, Jenna pondered the location of the exit.

Lacking much experience, she sought inspiration from Lumian's accounts and the plays she had witnessed.

Should I head to the border and investigate the edge of this fake world?

Since this place faithfully replicates the market district, well, at least Rue Anarchie and Rue des Blouses Blanches, it resembles a reflection. Could I find the exit by locating distinct places?

The Church has always told us that we can seek refuge in the cathedral in times of danger or accidents… I wonder what église Saint-Robert looks like here. Does it seek God's protection or adhere to the Black Sun? If it's truly the Black Sun, it's an entirely different realm…

Jenna decided to stealthily make her way to Avenue du Marché and observe the state of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's église Saint-Robert in this strange world.

She made sure not to expose herself to passersby, residents on both sides, or newsboys peddling their wares. Through the various shadows, she carefully and quietly turned onto Avenue du Marché.

After advancing a distance, Jenna's eyes suddenly froze.

There was no sign of Salle de Bal Brise on Avenue du Marché!

Where the khaki-colored building and the skull statue should have been, there was only impenetrable darkness. Even the sunlight from the sky couldn't pierce it.

In this dark black hole-like scene, bright red lines alternated between slowly materializing and being consumed by the surroundings. Their ultimate destination remained a mystery.

What's most peculiar about this place is Salle de Bal Brise? Ciel mentioned that there's something ancient and sinister beneath Salle de Bal Brise… Jenna stared into the darkness, sensing that this might be the heart of the problem.

Muttering to herself, Jenna contemplated, Will I be able to leave this strange world by walking into that darkness? But I have a hunch that not only does it not lead to safety, but it also represents danger. I can't enter rashly…

As these thoughts raced through Jenna's mind, she was suddenly jolted by a commotion.

Swiftly, she cast her gaze towards the other end of Avenue du Marché, where she spotted several indistinct figures hovering in the air, emitting a faint glow as they meticulously scrutinized every shadow and conceivable hiding spot for humans.

They clutched a stack of papers, which they compared to the pedestrians on the road.

Jenna's heart tightened as a thought crossed her mind.

Did the masters or guards of this world discover the collapsing tunnel above and suspect that outsiders had entered, prompting them to launch a thorough search?

Uncertain about the abilities of these blurry figures emitting a faint light, Jenna didn't dare risk assuming they couldn't spot her lurking in the shadows. Her only option was to swiftly retrace her steps and return to Rue des Blouses Blanches, planning to take a detour through an area that had already been inspected.

Yet, even on the other side of Rue des Blouses Blanches, faintly-lit figures were conducting inspections.

Jenna's heart raced, and amidst her unease, she had a sudden idea.

She slipped into a nearby building, scattered dust in an inconspicuous corner, and recited an incantation to become invisible.

With this newfound invisibility, she dashed along the street's shadows and infiltrated Apartment 601 before the floating figures could search 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

After patiently waiting for several moments, Jenna discreetly followed the imposter Jenna into the washroom.

Seizing the moment while the impostor was occupied with washing a piece of cloth, Jenna, still in her invisibility state, drew a dagger and executed an Assassin's Mighty Blow.

Her form materialized as her dagger found its mark in the impostor Jenna's back.

The fake Jenna's eyes bulged in shock, but Jenna swiftly covered her mouth and nose to stifle any outcry.

After a brief struggle, the imposter met her end.

Rather than withdrawing her dagger, Jenna chose to change into the fake Jenna's clothes. Her extensive experience with worn-out clothes helped her conceal the hole at the back.

She then concealed the impostor's body in the cupboard beneath the sink to prevent any blood from flowing.

With this done, Jenna wrangled up the cloth and mimicked the actions she had observed, maintaining the vacant expression.

Soon, a faint figure floated outside Apartment 601's window.

Jenna didn't look up, continuing to tidy the coffee table, which had already been devoid of miscellaneous items. She could sense two substantial gazes on her, accompanied by the sound of paper being flipped.

After an agonizing seven to eight seconds, the faint figures moved on to search the next apartment.

Jenna let out a relieved breath and proceeded to the washroom with a measured pace.

After what had just transpired, she felt an urgency to seek help. She couldn't afford to wait any longer. Even the suspected exit seemed too dangerous to approach, and numerous figures emitting a faint light were "patrolling" the area.

While these figures didn't appear overly formidable, Jenna knew that engaging them would undoubtedly draw the attention of the administrators of this world.

If this place was indeed the Hostel, the previous residents, granted boons by evil gods, would pose a significant threat. This included Madame Night Pualis, who alternated between a demigod and a Sequence 5, or the true demigod, Circle Inhabitant Voisin Sanson.

Jenna hadn't reached out to the outside world for help from the beginning because she lacked the means to send a message without leaving this place. Now, she was left with no other choice but to attempt something.

I wonder if the telegraph office here can be of any use… It doesn't seem promising… Uh… perhaps I should offer a prayer to a deity and recite His honorific name in Hermes. I hope He can hear my plea…

Jenna's heart raced as she seized the opportunity to clean the cloth in the washroom. She outstretched her arms and began reciting the honorific name of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

"The mighty Eternal Blazing Sun, Inextinguishable Light, Embodiment of Order, God of Deeds…"

As the soft Hermes words reverberated, Jenna's surroundings remained unchanged.

She couldn't help but regret not having made up her mind after becoming a Witch and putting her faith in Mr. Fool. That way, she might have obtained The Fool's honorific name from Lumian. But now, it was too late to consider that option.

Phew… Jenna let out a sigh and retrieved the lucky gold coin from a hidden pocket in her light-blue dress.

She felt that her best option was to rely on luck for now. She wanted to see if luck alone could help her elicit a response without using a complete honorific name.

Holding the lucky gold coin, Jenna continued her prayer in Hermes, "Great Mr. Fool, please help me leave this place. Please protect Trier…"

…

In the market district, Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 207.

Lumian suddenly awoke, sensing a faint warmth in his left chest.

Chapter 462 - 462 Critical Interference

Chapter 462 Critical Interference

What happened? Mr. Fool's seal has been activated… Did Termiboros attempt to escape? Lumian's thoughts raced. However, as he pondered, he began to sense that something was amiss.

Sunlight filtered through the drawn curtains, casting a semi-darkness over Room 207.

At first glance, there was nothing unusual, as if someone had overslept until the sun was high in the sky.

But Lumian was different. He reset his body and mental state every morning, waking up naturally at 6 a.m. It was already autumn, and Trier didn't see the first light until 7 a.m.

Lumian recalled an earthquake that had occurred not long ago, and he suspected that the official Beyonders might have taken action. However, after carefully listening to his surroundings and confirming the safety of the market district, he had gone back to sleep.

It was still late at night!

Either Termiboros has escaped, and I'm no longer affected by the Circle Inhabitant's power, or there's been an anomaly in the market district… Lumian shrank into a gentle crouch, leaning against the desk beside the bed. He cautiously raised a corner of the curtain.

What he saw was a familiar daily scene, but soon, Lumian noticed blurry figures floating in the air, emitting a faint, eerie glow.

These figures had different faces, but they all shared an unsettling

stiffness, emptiness, coldness, and detachment. They bore a certain resemblance to the corrupted Bouvard's corpse and Gabriel, who had transformed into a monster. It was as if they could disappear into the crevices of space at any moment, gazing coldly and dispassionately at reality.

The monsters of the Hostel pathway have invaded Trier? But where are Trier's protective powers? This doesn't feel very strong; it's more like a product of corruption… He observed carefully and noticed that the street vendors and pedestrians also appeared somewhat empty, as if they too had been affected. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Combined with the anomaly in time and the westering sun, Lumian quickly surmised the situation.

I'm not in the real market district!

I've been drawn into a strange world suspected to be the Hostel. This is the reason why Mr. Fool's seal was activated!

Lumian released his right hand's grip, allowing the curtains to gently fall back against the wall, sealing off the interior from the exterior once more.

With a sense of purpose, he got out of bed and checked his belongings to ensure they were all intact.

Without wasting any time, Lumian set up the altar and erected a wall of spirituality, readying himself to perform ritualistic magic to seek Mr. Fool's assistance.

One by one, he used his spirituality to light the three candles and incinerate the herbal powder and essential oil. Stepping back twice, he began to solemnly recite The Fool's honorific name.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"I implore you…"

Lumian's thoughts slowed down once more, and an uncomfortable

sensation coursed through his flesh. It was as if an army of countless worms were wriggling beneath his skin.

This malevolence would briefly fade, only to surge back. It didn't fully dissipate, nor did it manifest into tangible reality.

The cycle of vanishing and resurfacing was akin to a monstrous entity in the water extending its tentacles to the shore, only to be pulled back into the deep sea by an unseen force.

Lumian struggled to complete the ritual, waiting in vain for the angel's protection or any revelations to come.

The influence of the gray fog intensified, leaving him with no choice but to prematurely end the ritual and extinguish the candle flames.

As the wall of spirituality disintegrated, Lumian's thoughts finally returned to their normal pace.

Sometimes malice, sometimes no issues… Is The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings interfering with Mr. Fool's response?

He usually can't do it. Has He gathered enough strength to take a risk at a critical moment?

This implies that the situation has reached a critical turning point…

…

In Quartier éraste, outside the Sacred Heart Cloister with its numerous golden steeples, the Major Arcana card holders, Magician —clad in a white knotted shirt and a beige dress—and the elegant and pristine Justice, stared at the magnificent building.

A golden retriever accompanied them, doing the same as well.

Rumble. The ground quaked, as if a brief earthquake had struck Trier.

Magician smiled and said, "It's beginning."

They understood that this commotion was likely stemming from the

Deep Valley Cloister and the quarry. Their aim was to initiate a series of changes and set off a chain reaction, with the hope that Lady Moon, hidden within the Sacred Heart Cloister, would step out on her own and trigger their plan ahead of schedule.

By doing so, they could avoid forcefully entering the Sacred Heart Cloister and provoking the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. Their target was Lady Moon, the evil god's bestowed who nurtured a deity.

Assuming there were very few Angel-level heretics Blessed within the barrier, Lady Moon represented the Great Mother and the most potent power among all of Trier's heretics. It was highly likely that she was at the center of the problem. By controlling her, they could disregard the intricate web woven by fate and grasp the heart of the issue, possibly resolving it on the spot.

If Lady Moon didn't emerge, Magician intended to capitalize on the chaos in Trier, attempting to conceal the grand complex of buildings blessed by the Eternal Blazing Sun, and forcibly locate her target.

Justice nodded gently.

"In fact, I've always had a sense that something is amiss with Lady Moon. The problem may not be what we've suspected and might have lured us here.

"However, regardless of the situation, we have many dependable companions. Even if something occurs elsewhere, I believe they can handle it."

Magician concurred tersely.

"The two of us can't do everything. Believing in our companions is both hopeful and necessary."

Justice asked calmly, "What's the matter?"

Magician frowned and replied, "The seal experienced a fluctuation… Mr. Fool has also sent a revelation, but I'm not certain if it's authentic…"

…

After tidying up the altar, Lumian was just about to settle down and consider the current situation and ways to contact the outside world when he heard two sets of footsteps approaching from upstairs.

Are they heading for Room 207? Had the dissolution of the wall of spirituality alerted someone here? Lumian surveyed the area, his fingers finding the gaps in the newspaper-covered wall as he climbed up to the ceiling.

Like a colossal spider, he relied on a Dancer's flexibility and a Hunter's physique to silently cling closely to the wall, waiting for the two people in the corridor to approach.

If they didn't spot anything unusual, he would consider it a successful deception and let them pass. If they sensed anything was amiss, he would strike without hesitation.

At that moment, Lumian felt a deep sense of gratitude for Auberge du Coq Doré's aged appearance. It was filled with damage and signs of repair. This was why he could grasp certain protrusions, secure his grip in certain crevices, and anchor his body safely to the ceiling.

In just over ten seconds, the door to Room 207 creaked open.

Lumian's eyes focused on Gabriel's hairline and forehead, as well as the black-framed glasses perched on the bridge of his nose.

Behind the playwright stood Séraphine, a model clad in a lake-blue dress, exuding an aura of detachment.

It's indeed the Hostel… Although Lumian couldn't fathom why he had inexplicably ended up at the Hostel, he still felt a surge of excitement despite his taut nerves.

From this point onward, as long as he could deceive Séraphine and the others, establish a connection with the outside world, and seek help, there was hope for resolving the problem!

Gabriel took two steps inside and halted. He scanned the room and said to Séraphine, "No issues here."

Séraphine tersely acknowledged his words and proceeded to inspect

the other rooms.

Gabriel followed the model closely, making sure to close the door of Room 207 behind him.

After they ascended from the second floor, Lumian released his grip on the ceiling and gently landed on the floor.

He pulled up a chair, turned it around, and sat down, leaning back as he kept his gaze locked on the door.

After a few minutes, footsteps approached from the third floor.

Lumian remained motionless, unsurprised as he watched the wooden door gently open.

Gabriel's figure appeared.

"Why did you come in?" the playwright, now a monster with a slightly vacant expression, asked with a note of rational concern.

Lumian chuckled.

"I'd like to know that too."

Gabriel entered the room quietly, shutting the door behind him.

He was dressed in a white shirt, a dark jacket, black pants, and strapless leather shoes, his face showing signs of pain.

"Leave this place as soon as possible. I'm losing control. I don't know when I'll betray you. By the way, Jenna has also entered. I don't know where she's hiding."

Jenna is here too? Lumian raised his eyebrows and asked the most critical question, "How do I leave?"

Gabriel began to respond, but the door to Room 207 creaked open once more.

Only then did Lumian sense the intrusion and turned his gaze towards the door.

Séraphine stood there, with her plump face, naturally disheveled brown hair, and brown eyes exuding a unique ethereal aura.

Lumian didn't panic. He put on a calm demeanor and said, "You seem to know Gabriel so well."

Despite his outward composure, every muscle in his body tensed.

"He's not good at hiding his thoughts," Séraphine replied in an empty voice.

Communicable… Lumian suppressed his urge to use the Spell of Harrumph and sighed.

"I thought you had already become a pure monster."

Séraphine's lips formed a self-deprecating smile.

"The difference between me and them is that before I turned into a pure monster, I realized there was still someone who truly loved me."

Gabriel smiled.

Lumian sighed and inquired, "Is this the Hostel?"

"Yes," Gabriel confirmed before anyone else could.

Lumian glanced at the dimly lit corridor.

"But the room here isn't Room 7, Room 12. It's still Room 207, 309."

Séraphine gazed at Lumian, her expression becoming increasingly ethereal, and her voice even more illusory.

"Here, they call me: Room 12."

Chapter 463 - 463 Noncorresponding Details

Chapter 463 Noncorresponding Details

He had considered various possibilities, but he hadn't guessed what Room 12 signified.

Room 12 was where Madame Night Pualis de Roquefort, her husband, butler, lady's maid, and the children resided!

Almost simultaneously, Lumian recalled the oil painting he had seen at Trier's art center. The woman in the painting, modeled after Séraphine, was naked, her skin adorned with faces.

Were those faces the symbols of the room's occupants, or were they the manifestations of the Hostel itself? Lumian's pupils dilated as he fixed his gaze on Séraphine, prepared to activate the black mark on his body at any moment and use the Spell of Harrumph to block the exit of Room 12's occupants.

He was still haunted by the memories of Madame Pualis.

Séraphine tugged at her lake-blue dress, her plump face contorting with obvious pain.

"I can't influence how long the residents inside can sense the outside world…"

In other words, Madame Pualis hasn't discovered me yet… Lumian heaved a sigh of relief, but he didn't dare to be careless. What if Séraphine's interference quickly failed?

At that moment, Séraphine pulled down the collar of her dress, revealing a portion of her skin.

Lumian could clearly see the oil painting-like faces there. They were half-hidden and half-exposed, looking exceptionally terrifying.

This confirmed Lumian's guess and piqued his curiosity.

Why use a corrupted human model as a room in the Hostel? Why allow Madame Pualis, Voisin Sanson, and other powerful evil god-bestowed individuals to stay there? Couldn't they just move into this replica—the fake Auberge du Coq Doré?

Was this to interfere with divination, prophecy, and other mysticism methods employed during a search?

Why does it feel like a ritual? It's like a specific setup and requirement… As an Alms Monk with ample knowledge of ritualistic magic, Lumian sensed something sinister about this matter.

Seeing that Séraphine hadn't left, he seized the opportunity to inquire, "How many rooms does the Hostel have?"

"From Room 2 to Room 13," Séraphine replied in her ethereal voice.

"No Room 1?" Lumian asked immediately.

Gabriel answered for his lover. "There's supposed to be one, but we've never seen it. Room 1 has never moved into the Hostel."

Mysterious Room 1… It's confirmed at the moment that there are 12 rooms, but there might be more than one evil god bestowed living in each room… Lumian realized that time was of the essence and quickly changed his line of questioning.

"How can I escape from here?"

"With the permission of the pixies or through the black hole on Avenue du Marché, but it's very dangerous. It might lead you to places you shouldn't be," Séraphine replied, her eyes shifting between emptiness and pain.

Avenue du Marché's black hole… Lumian inquired further, "How many pixies are there, and where can I find them?"

“Three,” Gabriel responded. “They don’t reside in this world and only visit occasionally. They typically allow the servants to maintain order here—they are the flying and glowing figures you see outside.”

Three pixies… According to the Purifiers’ information, the Sequence of a Pixie likely hasn’t reached godhood. I can tentatively consider them equivalent to Sequence 5, but their unique states mean that unless they actively enter reality, some Saints might not even be able to attack them… I do have the potential to deal with the pixies when encountering them, especially if I could capture one to facilitate my escape… Lumian’s thoughts raced as he asked further, “Do the pixies have a regular pattern of entering and exiting?”

“No…” Séraphine replied, her demeanor gradually fading as she shook her head slowly.

Lumian switched to another line of questioning, “Do you know where Jenna is hiding?”

“I don’t know,” Gabriel replied quickly. “The pixies’ servants haven’t located her either. They’re uncertain if anyone has truly entered this place. The pixies must have ordered an investigation based on the changes in the outside world out of caution.”

Before Lumian could ask another question, Séraphine’s face twisted once again.

She turned and left Room 207, heading upstairs.

It was evident that her ability to influence the residents’ perception of the outside world was quickly fading.

Gabriel’s condition worsened as he slowly made his way to the corridor outside.

“Is there a boundary here?” Lumian inquired one last time.

Gabriel nodded, his eyes growing increasingly vacant.

“Only Avenue du Marché and the area around it are real.

“It’s surrounded by a dark, deep void with a formless barrier.”

Barrier… Lumian repeated this word in his heart, his expression unchanged as he watched Gabriel close the door for him and listened to his footsteps returning to the third floor.

The word “barrier” brought to mind something Madam Magician had mentioned before.

She had spoken of a barrier outside their world, preventing the invasion of alien evil gods.

Although Gabriel’s description of the barrier might not be the same as Madam Magician’s, Lumian couldn’t ignore the possibility that these barriers were connected, especially given the evil god believers’ grand plans.

Turning away from the door, Lumian realized that time was of the essence.

Séraphine and Gabriel’s corruption would only worsen, rendering them increasingly out of control. Once fully mutated, they would no longer help Lumian and Jenna hide the truth, likely reporting it to the pixies.

There are two pressing issues at hand. First, how to contact the outside world or escape this place. Second, finding Jenna. Lumian focused and employed his Conspirer thinking abilities.

Regarding the first question, especially how to contact the outside world, he quickly brainstormed several potential solutions:

1. Fully activate the Blood Emperor’s aura in his right hand to see if it could break through the barriers of this abnormal world, attracting the attention of the demigods in Trier.

2. Set up a boon-seeking ritual to bypass The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings’s interference and transmit information to Mr. Fool.

3. Test the spirit and flesh connection between himself and Mr. K’s finger.

4. Attempt to summon Madam Magician’s messenger.

5. Attempt to summon Madame Hela's messenger.

6. Recite the incantation used to enter the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's gathering—the Nation of the Evernight palace—to see if it could be of use in this situation without any prior request.

7. Find the fake Franca in this world and check if she possesses the ancient silver mirror they had obtained from underground to potentially use it to escape.

8. Create a commotion to attract one or two pixies and capture them.

9. …

Before diving into any of his numerous plans, Lumian knew that locating Jenna was a top priority, as any of his actions could potentially alert the pixies and draw their attention.

How should I find Jenna? He tried to put himself in Jenna's shoes, considering how she, an experienced Witch, would handle being in this strange world, suspected to be the Hostel's location.

Jenna must have also seen Gabriel, and she wouldn't take the risk of entering the fake Auberge du Coq Doré immediately.

She can become invisible and hide in the shadows. She usually has the patience to observe. It's not difficult for her to notice the peculiarities of pedestrians and vendors…

Under these circumstances, what should I do if I were her?

Yes, I'd search for the boundaries of this place… I'd see if cathedrals and other deity-protected buildings have been replicated. If they have, I'd investigate what's inside and whom they believe in… I'd identify the differences between this place and the real market district to find any clues for my escape… And my first task will be to confirm if there's a fake me.

The pixies' servants were conducting a search…

Lumian's thoughts gradually cleared. He returned to the desk, drew the curtains slightly, and peered outside. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on

novelb((in).(com)

Lumian waited until the ethereal pixie servants, blurry figures emitting a faint glow and wearing blank expressions, had finished their investigation and disappeared before he took out the silver Lie earring and placed it on his left ear.

Swiftly, he transformed into Madame Fels and descended to the first floor, as though inspecting every room.

Then, he became a vendor who didn't sell his wares nearby, passing by Madame Fels and leaving Auberge du Coq Doré.

This was his home territory. Even though it was a replica or a reflection, it didn't stop him from already knowing the environmental details and the common figures that often appeared in this area.

Lumian didn't hurry to Rue des Blouses Blanches. Instead, he circled Rue du Rossignol and entered his secure hideout.

As soon as he opened the door, his brow furrowed slightly.

There was only one trap at the door among the many he had set up—the simplest one.

Lumian's gaze then swept across the room, but he didn't see the ritualistic furs or the used cowhide and dog skin that were placed here in the real world.

It's not a strict correspondence… he muttered to himself.

The more he thought about it, the more he realized that this place resembled the real market district on the surface. In particular, in a room protected by traps, various details didn't correspond.

It's like an external observation and the re-creation of key rooms… It's like… It's like… Lumian's pupils dilated as he had an epiphany.

It's like painting!

…

Fake 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, Apartment 601.

Jenna clutched the lucky coin and offered a brief prayer to Mr. Fool. A thin gray fog materialized before her eyes but then dissipated.

“It… it’s actually working,” Jenna stammered.

That lucky gold coin proved to be truly lucky enough!

Jenna didn’t receive any revelations, so she had no choice but to persevere and maintain her guise as her counterfeit self. She diligently tidied up the room and wiped the coffee table.

Time in this world appeared to pass slowly, with the sun in the sky staying fixed in its position, unmoving.

Suddenly, Jenna heard the door open and instinctively turned her gaze in that direction. The fake Franca continued with her task, showing no reaction.

Jenna’s eyes locked onto Lumian’s golden-black hair. She immediately averted her gaze and assumed an expression of emptiness, not certain if Ciel was the real deal.

In the next instant, she heard a familiar, taunting voice.

“As expected, you’re here. That’s all you can think of.”

Chapter 464 - 464 A World in a Painting?

Chapter 464 A World in a Painting?

Lumian closed the door behind him and smiled.

“You’re quite energetic. You’re not crying from fear.”

Jenna cautiously looked out the window, confirming that the faintly glowing figures had long disappeared.

Suppressing her urge to argue with Lumian, she wasted no time and asked, “How did you get in here too?”

As she spoke, she reminded herself, As an adult woman with rich life experiences and many setbacks, I shouldn’t argue with such an immature minor at such a critical moment!

Lumian’s gaze moved over to Franca, who was sipping red wine by the window. He settled onto the divan and leaned back comfortably.

“First, tell me how you got in.”

To be honest, he didn’t know why he had suddenly arrived in this strange place resembling Hostel.

Jenna remained standing by the coffee table, ready to assume a dummy appearance at any moment.

She then recounted how she had received a dream revelation, came underground to deliver the mission item, and acquired a lucky gold coin.

Lumian listened attentively without interruption. Finally, he chuckled.

“Now, I can answer your question.

“I was sent here by Mr. Fool to save you.”

He roughly understood why he had appeared in Room 207 of the fake Auberge du Coq Doré after waking up.

“Did Mr. Fool really send you? I don’t even know His—his full honorific name. Did my prayer succeed with just the lucky gold coin?” Jenna had her suspicions, but she still found it unbelievable.

“Of course it’s true,” Lumian replied sincerely.

What puzzled him was something else.

Why did Mr. Fool send him and not Madam Magician?

If it were Madam Magician who had been pulled into the Hostel, the problem would have been easily resolved!

I’m afraid there’s another reason I don’t understand… Lumian pondered for a moment and focused on Jenna’s description of the world, then asked for confirmation, “From the outside, the only difference between this place and reality is Salle de Bal Brise?”

“I’ve only explored a few nearby streets and less than one-fifth of Avenue du Marché,” Jenna replied cautiously to prevent Ciel from making a misjudgment.

She then continued, “And inside, there are many differences. For example, here, the layout of the room, large pieces of furniture, and reality are the same. The other details are somewhat different.

“I suspect, I suspect…”

Lumian looked at Jenna and spoke before she could.

“A world in a painting.”

“Yes, a world in a painting!” Jenna’s hazy thoughts finally became clear.

Combined with the Painter Sequence and the paints and brushes she had found from the mutated monk, she believed that it was an oil painting that only copied some of the streets in the market district and possessed supernatural powers. It was called Hostel!

Jenna was both concerned and intrigued.

Drawing a painting seemed to create a world!

Lumian teased, “I’m glad you could also come to such a realization. It’s no easy task. This painting world isn’t considered advanced. The oil painting created by an angel of the Painter pathway might truly be a world with living beings inside.”

Unlike the current one, there were many aspects with fakeness.

What was the purpose of such a relatively low-level painting?

Without waiting for Jenna’s response, Lumian instructed her, “Check Franca’s hidden pocket and see if there’s a classic silver mirror.”

“Why don’t you search for it yourself? You know what that mirror looks like better than I do.” Jenna suddenly chuckled. “Don’t tell me you’re shy?”

Lumian said nonchalantly, “If you’re not here, I’ll search for it on my own. But since I can instruct you, why should I tire myself out?”

Jenna gritted her teeth and wasted no time. She walked to the window and rummaged through the fake Franca’s various pockets.

She quickly came to a conclusion.

“There are no ancient mirrors. Many of the hidden pockets weren’t depicted.”

Lumian nodded slowly and inwardly crossed out Plan 7. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

He turned to Jenna and said, “Try Magic Mirror Divination and see if it works.”

Jenna, experienced, knew that Lumian wanted to use this opportunity to confirm if the world in the painting was connected to the spirit world and determine if his “teleportation” could succeed or help them leave. Therefore, she took out a makeup mirror from her hidden pocket and prayed to one of the safer targets Franca had provided.

Before long, the preparations for Magic Mirror Divination were completed. The palm-sized mirror turned gray, but there was no aqueous light.

With a subtle nod, Lumian replied, “It’s likely that there’s a fake spirit world here. If you activate Spirit Vision, you might be able to see a few remnant souls, but this isn’t connected to the real spirit world, so you can’t find the entity you’re trying to inquire about.”

In other words, he could “teleport” within the world within the painting, but he couldn’t leave it.

Lumian reached into his pocket, retrieved Mr. K’s finger, and flicked it in front of his eyes.

There was no reaction, nor was there any change.

“What’s this?” Jenna was taken aback.

Ciel actually carried a blood-stained human finger with him!

“It’s a mystical item. It can’t contact the outside world,” Lumian explained patronizingly.

Simultaneously, he sighed inwardly.

Mr. K’s finger seemed impressive, but it could never be used to its full effect.

Most of the time, Lumian had no use for it. When he needed it, the environment was often special, preventing him from using its connection to the true form to summon Mr. K.

Jenna didn’t press further. She pursed her lips and said, “So, what should we do next?”

She couldn't think of any other way to leave this place. She could only consider starting with the black hole in Salle de Bal Brise, the edge of the painting world, and the situation with the two fake cathedrals.

Lumian chuckled.

"No need to rush. I still have eight plans left.

"But before we try them, we need to make a trip to Avenue du Marché and observe the black hole at Salle de Bal Brise up close."

"Are you planning to leave from there?" Jenna asked with a frown.

It seemed perilous.

Lumian stood up and walked towards Apartment 601's door. "It is my last resort, but it's also a necessary preparation. I don't want to try the other methods and fail, only to be discovered by the pixies and blocked by the tenants of the Hostel. When that happens, I won't even be able to approach Salle de Bal Brise even if I want to risk it."

Jenna looked out of the window again, only to see that the Sun was setting in the west, and the pixies' servants had yet to return.

Only then did she quickly follow Lumian down the stairs.

On the way, she inquired, "Why did those heretics create such a painting world to hide the Hostel's residents?"

Lumian pondered for a moment and replied thoughtfully, "I believe this is a secondary purpose. Overall, it seems more like a ritual.

"Think about it. This place resembles a phony market district. The Salle de Bal Brise should be the only place left without any correspondence. And I've already told you that beneath the Salle de Bal Brise are old bones from the Fourth Epoch. It's connected to the secret of église Saint-Robert's old cemetery. It's definitely not a coincidence that the world in the painting left it blank."

"I also think that's the key to the problem." Jenna instinctively wanted to prove that she wasn't stupid by having a similar guess.

As Lumian descended, he pondered and said, “When the abnormality truly occurs, will such a painting world temporarily replace some streets in the real market district? Will only Salle de Bal Brise remain intact?

“Who and what is this to confuse…

“In mysticism, this represents the application of the Law of Similarity. When the similarity reaches a certain level, acts on the counterfeits can be reflected in reality…

“Could they be using this method to unravel Salle de Bal Brise’s underground secrets and uncover the old bones of the Fourth Epoch?

“No, it’s probably not just for the old bones… Are they trying to open the entrance to Fourth Epoch Trier?

“But it’s not that simple. The entire sealing system hasn’t been destroyed or weakened…”

Lumian gradually formed an idea, sensing that he was getting closer to the key plan of this disaster.

If he could ultimately grasp the truth, it would be an excellent performance for a Conspirer’s observational abilities.

Jenna nodded slightly, agreeing with Lumian’s guess.

As they conversed about the fake 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, their gazes suddenly froze.

On the road diagonally opposite, a woman in a loose strapped white dress was staring at them!

The woman had a beautiful face, her slightly curly black hair cascading messily over her shoulders. Her blue eyes were rather vacant, and her entire person appeared detached yet real.

Lumian and Jenna had encountered similar auras and feelings in another person.

It was the human model, Séraphine, Room 12 of the Hostel!

Is this another room in the Hostel—another human model? Why is she here? It's as if she's waiting for Jenna and me. Lumian tensed up and instinctively reached out with his right hand to grab Jenna's shoulder.

Simultaneously, the beautiful woman's voice drifted with a smile.

"Fate predestined us to meet.

"Convergence always happens inadvertently."

Chapter 465 - 465 Circle

Chapter 465 Circle

Convergence… Predetermined fate… Could it be Room 7, Voisin Sanson, and his family? As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder without hesitation.

Spirit World Traversal!

He and Jenna vanished, heading for the entrance of Auberge du Coq Doré. Lumian had never set foot on Avenue du Marché in the painting world, so he didn't have the coordinates for the spirit world there.

The spirit world in the painting realm still comprised dense layers of colors and countless transparent, strange figures. However, the seven bright and pure lights at the "top" appeared rather blurry, as if separated by many panes of mullioned glass.

Guided by his spirituality, Lumian pinpointed the corresponding coordinates at Auberge du Coq Doré's entrance and teleported there.

They swiftly departed the spirit world and found themselves on the street.

But what Lumian saw before them was the building at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, the very spot where they had just been.

They hadn't left the street onto Rue Anarchie; they had merely shifted seven to eight meters from one side of the road to the other.

Circle Inhabitant… Jenna and I are already ensnared in the Circle? Lumian turned his head and wasn't surprised to see the beautiful woman suspected to be Hostel's Room 7, standing only a few meters

away on the same side of the street as them.

“Voisin Sanson?” Lumian asked in a deep voice.

He temporarily abandoned the idea of teleportation, as their previous attempt had proven ineffective in escaping Rue des Blouses Blanches.

As Lumian spoke, Jenna discreetly retrieved a mirror, preparing to utilize black magic to maneuver around and launch an attack.

She sensed that, at such a tense and crucial moment, Ciel’s inquiry, instead of initiating a series of attacks, might be an attempt to divert the enemy’s attention and create an opportunity for her to deliver a fatal blow.

Although Lumian had mentioned that Voisin Sanson was a Sequence 4 Circle Inhabitant of the Inevitability pathway, a Saint bestowed with a boon, a true demigod, she believed that they had to make an attempt, despite the odds. So what if he had undergone a qualitative transformation in various aspects compared to Low- to Mid-Sequence Beyonders that even a small team combined wouldn’t be a match for him?

Upon hearing Lumian’s question, the beautiful woman in a white dress revealed a fleeting and distant smile.

“Seems like you’re well-informed…”

Before “she” could finish her sentence, Lumian took a step forward and harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot out from his nostrils and landed on the woman suspected to be Room 7.

Although the Spell of Harrumph’s power had increased following his advancement to Sequence 6, he didn’t believe it would truly work on a Saint. At best, it might make her sway slightly.

Lumian opted for this approach instead of donning the Flog boxing gloves to target the various negative effects of a Contractee. As a Conspirer, he keenly noticed a crucial detail: he and Jenna were trapped in the “Circle,” but Voisin Sanson hadn’t left Room 7. He

remained within the beautiful woman's body.

This clearly hindered his performance.

Therefore, he either had arrogance as a negative side effect of his contract ability, or he couldn't leave the Hostel's room for some reason.

Combined with his earlier hypothesis that the world in the painting and the situation in the Hostel were part of a ritual, Lumian was more inclined to believe the latter possibility.

In that case, even if my Spell of Harrumph can't affect you, can't it affect your room?

The human models, corrupted by the Painter pathway and adorned with special patterns, were equivalent to Mid-Sequence monsters!

As two beams of white light descended, the beautiful woman in the white dress fainted.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian and Jenna's vision blurred, and they felt slightly dizzy.

When they regained their senses, they found themselves back at the exit of 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, facing the beautiful woman in a white halter dress diagonally across from them.

The woman's lips curled up, but she didn't repeat her previous statement.

Circle Inhabitant!

Lumian realized that he and Jenna were truly trapped in a loop, and the successful attack on Room 7 triggered the loop's restart.

Moreover, he confirmed that Voisin Sanson and his family couldn't leave Room 7 until something concluded. They could only exert influence on the outside world through obstacles. Otherwise, they would have opened the door and confronted Lumian with all their might. They sought to control the target with an Angel sealed in his body as efficiently as possible!

Even if Voisin Sanson had the negative side effect of arrogance, it was improbable for all three of his children to be the same!

Without hesitation, Lumian sank his consciousness into his right palm, revealing a few bright red scars.

An extraordinarily frenzied, violent, and high-and-mighty aura surged into the sky, as if it sought to dominate the land.

Alista Tudor!

Lumian activated the Blood Emperor's mark.

While this had no real impact in the physical world, it caused those around him to feel a slight fear, making them tremble. However, the response from the painting world exceeded Lumian's expectations.

The sky suddenly turned dark-red, and the westering sun appeared tinted with an iron hue as it swayed left and right.

Rue des Blouses Blanches and the entire world trembled as if struck by an earthquake.

The vendors and pedestrians on the street, as well as the residents and animals on both sides, blurred and distorted.

The beautiful woman in Room 7 of the Hostel was taken aback. She instinctively trembled and wanted to hug herself tightly.

An invisible force shrouding half of Rue des Blouses Blanches materialized, resembling transparent glass.

Suddenly, it shattered, revealing multiple cracks.

Seeing this, Lumian grabbed Jenna's shoulder and activated the black mark on his right shoulder once more.

This time, they swiftly passed through the local spirit world and arrived at Auberge du Coq Doré's entrance. They didn't return to the Circle.

The painting world existed between reality and fiction, and it was

very sensitive to the aura of high-level figures, materializing the impact. As Lumian's thoughts raced, a distant rumble reached his ears.

It emanated from Avenue du Marché! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian and Jenna exchanged glances as a term came to their minds: Salle de Bal Brise!

Has something happened to the black hole corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise?

Was it a subsequent change brought about by The Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's aura, or has the ritual officially begun, heralding the impending catastrophe? Lumian's thoughts raced as he raced towards Avenue du Marché.

Jenna's response was as swift as his, making the same decision.

…

Deep underground, in a hidden cave undetectable to the outside world.

The rock walls here had been meticulously modified, featuring two vertical beams and multiple horizontal beams, each marked with longitudinal gaps.

To anyone familiar with Trier's map, these formations would correspond strictly to a section of Avenue du Marché. Each rock wall was the equivalent of a side street, and each vertical gap represented an alley.

Adorning each rock wall were lifelike oil paintings, portraying buildings of various architectural styles, dark iron street lamps, pedestrians dressed as clerks, vendors selling an array of goods, and scenes from windows, all depicted with vivid and natural colors.

These scenes were almost identical to those on the corresponding streets.

On the eastern rock wall of Avenue du Marché, three men in white shirts with unbuttoned vests were using mural tools to craft a complex, bright red door at the spot corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise.

Their bodies were coated in paint, and their eyes displayed a peculiar detachment, as though they were gazing at a distant realm rather than a rock wall.

Each time they completed the bright red door on the rock wall, it mysteriously vanished after a fifth was completed. The three painters had no choice but to repeat their efforts in vain.

Suddenly, the mine trembled gently, and minuscule cracks that were almost imperceptible to the naked eye appeared on the rock wall adorned with various scenes.

The female painter in a blue beret and the male painter in red pants looked up at the depiction of Avenue du Marché on the rock wall.

In the next moment, they pressed their hands against the rock wall and vanished.

Two figures emerged within the massive oil painting. One was a woman donning a blue beret, and the other a man in red pants. They both wore white shirts and open beige vests.

The third painter, a man in his twenties, remained on the outside. He was clad in black pants with tassels, his brown hair disheveled, and a bit of stubble adorning his mouth.

The distant expression in his flaxen-colored eyes faded as he cautiously surveyed his surroundings.

Observing that the mine's tremors were limited to this area and that the anomaly in the painting hadn't extended, the young painter let out a sigh of relief. He redirected his gaze to the empty Salle de Bal Brise, seemingly contemplating whether to change his approach or wait for the right moment to try again.

At that precise moment, a skeletal palm suddenly extended from the rock wall and the ground.

It had a yellowish hue and a withered texture, with its surface covered in iron-colored rust, giving it an ancient appearance.

As soon as the skeletal palm appeared, it seized the young painter's ankle, aiming to drag him deep into the earth.

…

Late at night, 11 Rue des Fontaines, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Franca's dream had been an odd one, with various bizarre scenes woven together into a nonsensical narrative.

Suddenly, she jolted awake and instinctively looked to her side.

Although the room was shrouded in darkness due to the heavy curtains blocking the crimson moonlight, it didn't hinder her from noticing that the spot under the velvet blanket beside her was empty; Gardner Martin was nowhere to be found.

Franca's pupils widened with a mixture of surprise and suspicion.

It wasn't that she was shocked by Gardner Martin's disappearance. There was nothing he could do that would truly surprise her. What caught her off guard was her failure to detect his departure.

Demonesses possessed formidable spiritual senses. It was impossible for someone sleeping beside them to slip out of bed and leave without their knowledge. Franca had only snapped out of her reverie when she felt the drop in temperature on the other side of the bed!

Franca swiftly got out of bed, dressed, and opened the bedroom door.

The corridor lay in darkness, and an eerie silence hung in the air.

Chapter 466 - 466 Encounter

Chapter 466 Encounter

Franca blended into the shadows and moved silently through the shadows, her eyes fixed on the crimson-lit corridor.

She even began to suspect that Ciel had failed to find her and had enlisted the help of Madam Magician to teleport Gardner Martin away. How else could he have vanished without her noticing?

The third floor of the grayish-white villa remained still. Franca listened closely, feeling like she was the only one left in the building. The butler, valet, maid, gardener, and chef seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

She cautiously approached the valet's room, extending her right palm and silently turning the handle.

Through her Dark Vision, Franca spotted two people lying on the bed, wrapped in each other's embrace and covered by a thin blanket.

Almost simultaneously, Franca's pupils dilated.

The two of them were headless, their necks nestled against each other, their wounds stained with blood.

Initially taken aback, Franca recalled Ciel's description of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's Supervisor Olson. She suspected that Gardner's valet and his lover had experienced a similar situation. Their heads had seemingly "come to life" and left their bodies.

Without further scrutiny, she quietly closed the door and blended into the dense shadows of the staircase.

Franca wanted to see if anyone else in the building had suffered a

similar fate.

Upon descending to the first-floor hall, her eyes froze.

The armor and weapons that had been there were gone!

What a drastic change… F*ck, how did I not notice it at all? Franca, who had been confident in her abilities, experience, and reactions, couldn't help but waver.

In the next moment, the washroom door on the first floor swung open, and a lady's maid in an old nightgown emerged.

The lady's maid shook off the liquid in her hand and slowly made her way back to the servants' quarters, her head empty and her neck stained red.

Hidden in the shadows, Franca cast her gaze out the window. The two patrolling guards had also lost their heads, and the shadow reflected in the glass was like a magnified beer bottle.

Franca, having roughly confirmed the situation at 11 Rue des Fontaines, didn't hesitate and quickly sneaked out of the villa.

She planned to report this to Madam Judgment immediately and use the Primordial Demoness figurine to inform Browns Sauron and Demoness of Black Clarice about the anomaly here.

The latter necessitated a ritual. Franca was concerned that attempting it in this abnormal building would trigger unnecessary changes and bring unpredictable danger, so she decided to escape the abnormal environment before taking the corresponding measures.

In the darkness of the night, the Demoness of Pleasure lurked in the shadows of an empty house. She exited the building from the side and circled the lawn ahead.

…

Beneath Trier, Blazing Danitz forcefully opened the stone door.

Behind them, they found a small mine, with three classical oil lamps

embedded in the stone wall—one high, and two low.

In the center of the mine, a staircase descended into darkness. The bottom was hidden in shadow, appearing to have no end.

Danitz retracted his fist and turned his body, signaling the nearly 20 sailors following him to enter the mine and cooperate.

Among them were Hunters responsible for observing the environment and detecting hidden traps and subtle traces. Seers used coin tosses or crystal pendants to determine the direction and danger of pursuit. A Mid-Sequence Sailor was ready to assist his teammates and handle any mishaps…

With this coordination, Danitz's team swiftly made their way through the stairs and tunnel, and their vision suddenly brightened.

They found themselves in a caved-in quarry cave, scattered with straw mats, rags, pottery jars, and other items.

Danitz scanned the area and chuckled.

"It's been turned into a weapons cache… Not long ago, dozens of rebels lived here."

His gaze shifted to the end of the quarry cave, where a wide tunnel led to an unknown destination.

A sailor standing beside Danitz clicked his tongue and remarked, "There should be many similar military hideouts nearby. Are the main rebel forces led by the Carbonari all here?"

"I'm not blind. I can see!" Blazing Danitz cursed. "The question now is, where did they go? Is the chaos about to begin?"

…

In the market district, at Auberge du Coq Doré, Room 305,

Anthony Reid was awakened by the previous earthquake.

Ever since his escape that night, he had become sensitive to various

movements, although not as fearful as when he heard gunshots.

Given the dangerous signals provided by the intelligence they had discussed earlier, he couldn't fall asleep quickly.

Anthony Reid got out of bed and poured a glass of light beer to ease his anxiety.

After using Placate on himself, he intended to force himself to sleep a little longer.

At that moment, he heard pounding at the motel's entrance.

Who returns so late at night? It feels a little urgent… Anthony Reid listened intently, sensing that something was brewing in secret.

Before long, footsteps approached his door,

and Anthony Reid immediately opened it to peer into the dimly lit corridor.

He spotted an impatient man in a grayish-blue worker's uniform and cap.

This was an informant he had developed at the docks.

"What happened?" Anthony Reid asked in a calm and gentle voice.

Having been placated, the informant's anxiety dissipated, and he cautiously glanced around before lowering his voice.

"There will be a huge strike at the docks tomorrow. Rumor has it that weapons will be issued."

"Issued weapons…" Anthony Reid's mind instantly filled with images of barricades, incendiary bombs, smoke grenades, rifles, and two-wheeled carts symbolizing Trier's chaos.

In Trier, due to the strong resistance of the citizens and their adeptness at protests and battles, such occurrences weren't too unusual, happening every two or three years, sometimes even two or three times a year. The only difference was in their scale. However,

considering the critical situation before a terrifying catastrophe, a massive strike suddenly distributing weapons led Anthony Reid to consider the possibility that it had been premeditated and was part of the impending catastrophe.

The information broker produced a Louis d'or and instructed the informant, "Your intel is very important. Find an excuse not to go to the docks tomorrow and hide at home."

Instinctively, the informant bit into the gleaming Louis d'or, bid Anthony Reid a cheerful farewell, and departed from Auberge du Coq Doré.

Anthony wasted no time and swiftly descended to the second floor, arriving at Lumian's room.

He knocked lightly on the wooden door of Room 207, but as the sound reverberated, there was no movement inside. It was so silent, as if no one had lived there for a long time.

Anthony Reid stopped and furrowed his brow.

…

In the painting world, the westering sun cast its illumination on Rue Anarchie, keeping the sky bright.

Lumian and Jenna hurried past the broken gas street lamps, sprinting toward Avenue du Marché.

They were uncertain when Room 7, where Voisin Sanson's family resided, would discover their teleportation destination. Their goal was to reach the black hole representing Salle de Bal Brise before the other party could lock onto them again. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

This way, even if their other plans failed or couldn't be completed in time, they still had a final option—to enter the black hole and try their luck to see where they would appear.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Lumian led Jenna forward, and Avenue du Marché came into view. He grabbed Jenna's shoulder and spewed

crimson flames from his body, enveloping them both in a huge fireball.

The fireball sped forward with incredible velocity.

Lumian forcefully led Jenna across a distance of seven to eight meters towards the intersection of Rue Anarchie and Avenue du Marché.

During this process, Jenna, unlike Lumian, wasn't immune to the flames. Her hair and skin singed, but she didn't struggle violently. Instead, she shrank her body and created frost to resist the crimson flames, easing the pain.

In the blink of an eye, they reached the edge of Avenue du Marché.

From there, they had a clear view of Salle de Bal Brise in the distance and the pitch-black darkness.

This allowed Lumian to identify his destination without needing coordinates.

What he saw was where they'd arrive!

The black mark on his right shoulder emitted a dim light once more.

Spirit World Traversal!

In an instant, Lumian and Jenna appeared beside the darkness.

At that moment, a crystal-like wall materialized before them.

It extended upward, enclosing the entire Salle de Bal Brise like a transparent lid.

Lumian and Jenna subconsciously gazed up and saw two figures in the air.

One was a young woman wearing a blue beret, a tied-up white shirt, and dark pants. Her beige vest was open, and her body was covered in paint. Her orange hair was short, and her yellow eyes were deep and ethereal, as if hiding a world.

The other man, in his thirties, wore similar attire but with red pants for his lower body. He had gentle facial features, light eyebrows, and distant, ethereal blue eyes.

He still held a thick paintbrush in his hand, with a palette of mostly used paint.

Behind them, a pair of translucent dragonfly-like wings flapped gently, helping them hover in the air.

Painters? Those Pixies? Lumian and Jenna instantly speculated.

The man looked at Lumian with surprise and spoke in a voice that seemed to come from afar,

“Welcome back to the Hostel, Room 1.”

Room 1… Lumian’s eyes froze.

Room 1? Jenna couldn’t help but turn to her companion in shock.

Chapter 467 - 467 Old Bones

Chapter 467 Old Bones

Upon hearing the term “Room 1,” Lumian was genuinely surprised, even with his wealth of experiences.

Séraphine and Gabriel had previously mentioned that the Hostel had a total of 13 “Rooms,” but Room 1 had never been mentioned. It was as if it had never entered the Hostel. Lumian had always found this to be a mysterious omission, suspecting that there were critical points hidden in this fact. To his amazement, the painter-dressed man, likely a Pixie, now addressed him as “Room 1.”

This was beyond belief!

Lumian was certain that the symbols on him were related to Mr. Fool and the entity known as Inevitability. They had nothing to do with the Painter. While Termiboros, an evil god’s Angel, resided within him, it was fundamentally different from the Hostel Rooms like Séraphine’s.

They had different sources of power and were different forms of abode!

At that moment, Lumian didn’t waste time analyzing why the suspected Pixie called him Room 1 or whether there was important information hidden in it. He knew one thing—unless he could quickly eliminate or control the two enemies in midair and take command of the black hole in the Salle de Bal Brise area, the Hostel residents would undoubtedly notice the abnormality and rush their Rooms to the scene, making the situation more complicated.

Upon hearing “Room 1,” Jenna was equally shocked, but she didn’t question Lumian or waste time seeking answers. She retrieved the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, made of obsidian, and plunged it into her

chest, despite having used it only a few hours ago.

At this point, she cared little about the accumulation of mutations in her body.

Similarly, even if something was amiss with Ciel, she would have to wait until they escaped before inquiring about it.

As the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty pierced her chest, a dense black fog emanated from Jenna's back, forming a pair of colossal and rather illusory bat wings.

With a powerful flap, she lunged for the woman in the blue beret and the man in red pants.

Simultaneously, black flames gradually condensed in the Witch's palm.

The colossal bat wings extended from bottom to top, obscuring the Painters' line of sight.

The man in red pants swiftly turned his paintbrush around and dipped it in silver paint, drawing a menacing lightning bolt on his clothes.

Silver-white lightning detached from the man's white shirt and struck Jenna's illusory membraned black wings, numbing her entire body with the crackling electrical energy. The dense black fog that had formed the bat wings was diminished by the lightning, and Jenna began to descend slowly as she lost control of her flight.

In that critical moment, Lumian's form materialized in midair right behind the painter in red pants.

Without the ability to fly or float, Lumian chose to "teleport."

Seeing Jenna use the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty to create Wings of Darkness and fly boldly towards the two presumed Pixies, Lumian understood that his companion was likely drawing the enemy's attention and creating an opportunity for him to swiftly attack one of their targets.

Witches rarely fought in such a manner.

“Ha!” Lumian exclaimed as a pale-yellow light, resembling a stream of air, shot forth from his mouth and struck the man in red pants.

Before the Painter, who had just drawn lightning, could react or even realize that Lumian had appeared behind him, he closed his eyes and lost consciousness.

Without suspension, he plummeted to the ground.

The woman in the blue beret remained composed. Figures emerged in her eyes, as if they held a world within them.

One of the figures traversed the boundaries of fiction and reality, moving from the realm of fantasy into the world within the painting.

Dressed in a light-blue dress with long, thick blond hair and serene light-blue eyes—Aurore!

It was Aurore!

Upon witnessing this, Lumian’s resolve remained unwavering. His eyes burned with anger.

Are you worthy of imagining Aurore?

As he descended from the sky, crimson fireballs materialized around his body and were launched towards the woman in the blue beret.

The woman extended her right hand and pressed it into the void. Her entire being suddenly turned illusory, her expression vacant and cold.

Numerous fireballs landed on her, but they didn’t detonate, as though there was nothing there.

They passed through her figure and exploded nearby. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

At the same moment, the Painter in red pants landed before Jenna with a distinct cracking sound.

The excruciating pain brought him back from the unconscious state induced by Lumian's Spell of Harrumph. He instinctively opened his eyes.

Just as the woman in the blue beret dodged the explosion, she exited her peculiar state and flew toward Jenna, who was about to land.

In an instant, she collided with Jenna, sending starlight and sparks flying like meteors.

Crack!

Jenna's body shattered into fragments, transforming into mirror pieces that reflected the sunlight.

Her form reappeared beside the profound darkness within Salle de Bal Brise.

Lumian descended with a whoosh, his feet landing heavily on the ground, his body swaying.

At that very moment, the three of them, along with the woman in the blue beret, seemed to sense something. They turned their heads, casting their gazes towards the intersections leading into Avenue du Marché.

Women with detached dispositions, fleeting eyes, and indifferent expressions emerged from different directions. They were Room 12—Séraphine—and Room 7, which Lumian and Jenna had recently encountered.

Gabriel followed closely behind Séraphine, his gaze growing increasingly vacant, his face contorted with agony.

Jenna and Lumian felt a creeping unease, as if they were inexorably descending into an abyss.

Suddenly, a hand extended from the darkness within Salle de Bal Brise.

It was a hand devoid of flesh and skin, composed of withered, yellowed bones stained with rust.

…

In the enigmatic cave adorned with a colossal mural, the young painter altered his form and broke free from the skeletal palm's grasp.

He existed in a state between reality and the spirit world, untouchable by anyone and unable to touch anyone. His only capacity was to observe as the empty space on the rock wall and the ground intersected, turning dark and viscous, akin to a bottomless swamp.

At that moment, an incomplete skeleton, composed of dark-red stained bones and rust, emerged from the swamp.

The skeleton appeared to hail from ancient times. It extended its bony fingers into the oil painting on the rock wall, corresponding to the incomplete Salle de Bal Brise.

Beneath it, more yellowed skeletons crawled out from the depths of the swamp. Some bore shattered iron-colored armor, others carried rusty weapons, a few were missing a third of their bodies, and some were devoid of their heads…

…

In the market district, beneath église Saint-Robert, within the Inquisition.

In his office, Angoulême de Fran?ois, donned in a golden shirt, attentively observed his subordinates delivering intel one by one.

"A violent explosion in the direction of the Deep Valley Cloister…"

"Abnormal activity detected underground…"

"Saint Vièvе Cathedral has issued an order to maintain maximum vigilance tonight…"

"Someone at the docks is organizing a huge strike tomorrow morning and distributing weapons…"

“There are also people organizing a march at the factories to the south…”

The Purifiers had a vast network of informants, surpassing even the most prolific information brokers. The manifold reports concerning unusual events in various locations within the market district nearly made Angoulême lose control of his expression. His facial muscles twitched ever so slightly.

When it finally grew silent, and no more subordinates came in to report, Angoulême stood up, adjusted his collar, picked up a substantial dossier, and slammed it onto the table.

While doing so, the Purifier deacon cursed silently, Hidden Blade, do you want me dead?

Ever since Hidden Blade had informed him about Gardner Martin’s collaboration with the Carbonari, the anomalies between the Carbonari and the Deep Valley Cloister, and the Hostel’s situation, various irregularities had emerged from every corner, relentlessly testing his nerves.

Only a few hours had passed, but Angoulême felt as though a tempest was gathering.

Phew… Angoulême exhaled and compiled the gathered intel, Hidden Blade’s reports, and the questions she had requested clarification on into a single document. He pinned it to the wall with a thumbtack, hoping to discern any patterns or overlooked details.

The Purifier deacon’s gaze roved the room.

After some time, his eyes settled on one of the documents.

Hidden Blade had inquired about the secret of église Saint-Robert’s old cemetery but hadn’t received an answer.

The old cemetery lay within the current Salle de Bal Brise.

Angoulême’s heart stirred, and he resolved to seek answers to this question once more.

It was one of the few things he could undertake at the moment.

Blasted Hidden Blade, once this matter is resolved, if you don't leave the market district, I'll request a transfer! Angoulême inwardly cursed as he hurried into the telegraph room, angrily composing a telegram.

He intended to convey to the higher-ups that they shouldn't be overly strict about confidentiality classifications when it concerned intelligence.

The sooner he could figure out the details, the sooner he could unearth the truth and forestall impending catastrophe.

After a ten-minute wait, Angoulême received a response:

"The old cemetery of église Saint-Robert is situated above a node for the sealing of Fourth Epoch Trier. In the past, there was a breach that led to the release of some Fourth Epoch deceased. Subsequently, it was reinforced, and the situation was contained.

"When the sealing system for the catacombs replaced such nodes, the old cemetery lost its significance and wasn't retained."

Chapter 468 - 468 Q&A Game

Chapter 468 Q&A Game

He returned to the office and fixed his gaze on the piece of paper pinned to the wall.

The paper not only clearly detailed Hidden Blade's previous inquiry about the old cemetery's secret but also provided the circumstances under which she had made the inquiry.

This was all part of their investigation into the Sick Church case!

Their goal was to uncover the reasons behind the unusual quietness of Trier's heretics and their activities as though they had gone into hiding for some massive endeavor.

Hidden Blade suspects that the old cemetery's secret is somehow linked to the heretics' plans? They aim to use the former leakage point to bypass the seal and open the door to Fourth Epoch Trier? Angoulême, with his experience, immediately connected the dots.

Entering the telegraph room, he informed the higher-ups of his theory and made a recommendation.

"Send one or two teams underground to investigate the original leakage point as soon as possible, preferably led by Saints."

After sending the telegram, Angoulême breathed a sigh of relief.

His next task was to assemble his team and coordinate with the police, military police, and army to prevent the protests from escalating into riots before dawn.

This process would inevitably lead to clashes with members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the Carbonari. Beyonders would also

be involved.

Additionally, as 007, Angoulême needed to find an opportunity to contact Hidden Blade and share the secret of the old cemetery with her.

There was no more time for casual chats in the telegram group; he had to activate their prearranged practical approach.

…

Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

“Ciel is missing too?” After informing Madam Judgment and Demoness of Black about Gardner Martin’s abnormality, Franca returned to the market district, only to realize that Jenna, who should have been asleep in bed, had vanished. Before she could inspect the house, Anthony Reid, with his buzz cut, visited late at night and reported that Lumian had mysteriously vanished. There were no signs of a fight at the scene.

“Yes,” Anthony Reid was even more certain that something was amiss. It wasn’t Lumian switching to a safe house for sleep.

“There are no signs of a struggle here either…” Franca walked to the guest bedroom door and looked at the lifted blanket.

She could tell that Jenna had taken her time before leaving. Not only had she removed her pajamas and changed into her female mercenary attire, but she hadn’t messed up the bedroom.

Franca furrowed her brow, pondering the possible reasons.

Amidst her thoughts, she remembered that Jenna hadn’t handed over the grayish-white cloth bag she had obtained from the cyborg monk to the strange boy, Will.

Seeing the grayish-white cloth bag vanish, the Demoness of Pleasure heaved a sigh of relief.

Jenna must have been “notified” by the strange boy, Will, to deliver the mission item somewhere and collect the corresponding reward.

And why did Ciel disappear?

Could it be that Will's request was for Ciel to accompany her?

Yes, after all, he was invited by Ciel's Major Arcana card holder, Madam Magician…

"Doesn't seem like a terrible thing?" Anthony Reid keenly sensed Franca's change in state.

"So far, that's the case." Franca produced a palm-sized mirror. "I'll use Magic Mirror Divination to confirm."

She retrieved Jenna's pajamas and caressed the mirror with her free hand.

Simultaneously, she recited in Hermes, "Celia Bello's current location, Celia Bello's current location…"

Although the name "Jenna" could also be used for divination, as Jenna had been using this stage name for a long time, and most people around her called her that, Franca felt that it would be more accurate to use her real name at a time like this.

In the gas-lit living room of the apartment, the lights dimmed, and the environment became oppressive.

The mirror's surface emitted an aqueous light, as if it had sunk into the depths of a river.

However, Franca saw nothing. Snowflakes kept appearing in the mirror like noise.

The divination yielded no results… Franca frowned again.

Could it be because of the presence of the strange boy, Will?

However, after handing over the mission item and obtaining the lucky gold coin, Jenna should have separated from Will. They shouldn't have been together for more than five minutes. Theoretically, it can't be such a coincidence…

Franca was cautious. “We’ll try again in five minutes.”

Anthony Reid nodded gently and asked, “Do you need me to go to Auberge du Coq Doré and retrieve one of Ciel’s clothes?”

“No need.” Franca shook her head without hesitation.

That fellow bears Mr. Fool’s seal and the aura of the Blood Emperor. It would be strange if I could gain anything from divination!

Time ticked by, and finally, five minutes passed. Franca used the simple Magic Mirror Divination to inquire about Jenna’s location once again.

There was still no answer, and no scene appeared.

In the dark mirror, an aged voice echoed, accompanied by the sound of water.

“Celia Bello is in an undetectable location.”

Undetectable… Franca began to feel that the problem might be more complicated and troublesome than she had guessed, so she asked, “Where is Lumian Lee now?”

Amidst the sound of water, the aged voice replied, “I can’t see, I can’t see…”

The voice gradually faded into confusion and disorder. Franca hastily ended Magic Mirror Divination.

She paced back and forth, feeling that she had to report this matter to Madam Judgment.

But before that… Franca clenched her teeth and said to Anthony Reid, “I want to use Magic Mirror Divination to pray to an unknown and hidden entity. The results of His divination are the most precise. Perhaps it can help us obtain an answer, but you have to swear to the God of Steam and Machinery not to divulge everything you hear later.”

“No problem.” Anthony, clad in military-green attire, gestured a

Triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

After Anthony swore an oath to the deity he believed in, Franca didn't hesitate. She lit three candles in a ritualistic manner and extinguished the gas wall lamps in the room.

In the dim light, her right hand caressed the mirror's surface three times as she recited an honorific name in Hermes.

"Eyes that watch all living beings, the stigmata from the Primordial Land, the omniscient one who serves The Fool, the great Arrodes…"

The glass of the makeup mirror darkened, fluctuating and enshrouding at times, emitting aqueous light.

As a Psychiatrist, Anthony Reid suddenly felt a strong sense of unease, as if a pair of eyes had scanned him from top to bottom.

Franca finished her preparations and asked, "Where is my friend, Celia Bello, now?" Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

In the mirror, an aqueous light flickered, revealing an image:

It was a mine that was too blurry to see the details clearly.

Immediately after, the scene shifted, revealing a portion of Avenue du Marché.

Franca recognized it immediately as the Salle de Bal Brise area, but the building didn't exist. Instead, it was replaced by a dark and crystal-like barrier. Jenna, dressed in a light-blue dress, stood beside the barrier, her expression solemn as she observed an unrevealed part of the scene. Beside her was a figure suspected to be Lumian.

As expected, they're together… Where is this place? Just as these thoughts crossed Franca's mind, she saw a few lines of ancient Feysac words dripping with blood appear on the mirror.

"Based on the principle of reciprocity, it's my turn to ask a question."

"If you answer incorrectly or lie, you will be punished."

Franca closed her eyes, waiting for the question to be raised.

The blood-red letters formed another sentence: “Have you ever fantasized about doing Trieriens’ favorite activity with Jenna?”

Thankfully… Franca breathed a sigh of relief.

The shame of this question depended on Jenna’s presence. If she were present, Franca would rather slam her head against a wall. But now, there was only one Psychiatrist watching.

Is there a problem with telling a Psychiatrist that I have a psychological problem and like women, my good friend, so much so that I want to do that with her?

Franca couldn’t help but blush, but she replied smoothly, “I did.”

Anthony Reid, who was observing, wasn’t surprised at all. As a Spectator, if he didn’t discover Franca’s abnormal feelings and thoughts about Jenna, it could only mean that he wasn’t up to standard.

He hadn’t expected Franca to be relatively calm and not ashamed.

Franca then asked the magic mirror, “Where is the Avenue du Marché where Jenna currently is?”

This time, there was no scene in the magic mirror. Instead, bright red terms appeared: “A world in a painting.”

A world in a painting… Painter, Pixie… Franca immediately made a connection and a guess.

On the mirror’s surface, bloody words distorted and squirmed, forming new words:

“Based on the principle of reciprocity, it’s my turn to ask a question.”Have you ever fantasized about doing Trieriens’ favorite activity with Lumian Lee?”

“…” Franca’s face burned. She could feel the temperature rising.

I-I haven't… She subconsciously wanted to respond, but then she remembered the pain of being struck by lightning.

She gazed at the magic mirror, striving to forget that there was a Psychiatrist beside her. Her lips quivered as she replied, "I-I have. Sometimes, just occasionally! I can't control myself in my dreams!"

Anthony Reid didn't allow his gaze to shift to Franca's face, nor did he allow his expression to change. It was as if what he saw and heard was ordinary.

This was the basic professionalism of a Psychiatrist.

Franca hurriedly concluded Magic Mirror Divination and entered the master bedroom. She organized information on Lumian, Jenna's disappearance, and the Magic Mirror Divination's response into written information and reported it to Madam Judgment.

After completing this matter and returning to the living room, she was about to discuss the situation with Anthony Reid when she heard a rumbling sound from the northwest of Trier.

It was as if multiple cannons were firing.

Chapter 469 - 469 “Reinforcements”

Chapter 469 “Reinforcements”

Quartier éraste, Trier’s garrison encampment.

Under the dim moonlight, a significant number of soldiers poured out of various buildings. They organized into teams with remarkable precision, either firing cannons at the distant roadblocks or shouldering rifles as they advanced toward Avenue du Boulevard in coordinated squads.

Among them were combatants equipped with steam-powered backpacks and massive firearms, strategically positioning themselves on elevated vantage points and in concealed spots.

Inside a building within the camp, Albus, his hair appearing to be dyed red, sat confidently in an officer’s chair, his legs casually crossed at the edge of the table before him.

In his field of vision, disembodied heads dangled by bloody spines, almost like they had extended tails.

These severed heads soared toward headless bodies clad in blue soldier coats adorned with golden threads. They aimed for the vacant necks, inserting their bloodstained spines with precision.

Crack! They completed their “integration” simultaneously, twisting left and right to acclimate themselves to their new hosts.

The freshly created soldiers promptly retrieved their weapons and charged out in an orderly formation, following mysterious directives.

Albus Medici clicked his tongue and remarked, “This is quite the

reminiscent sight. Will this night turn into a bloodbath?"

…

Beyond the multitude of towering steeples and the golden-hued buildings, Magician and Justice were alerted by the distant rumble of cannons.

"An early uprising?" Magician, dressed in a crisp white collared shirt and a beige dress, gazed with starlight in her eyes, as if she had glimpsed through the veils of the spirit world and witnessed the turmoil at the military encampment.

Her prior astromancy predictions had suggested that the catastrophe was still some time away. However, when Jenna caught the cyborg monk and discovered their ties to the heretics and job of transporting paints and brushes, it was evident that destiny had shifted, setting the illusory gears into motion prematurely.

The catastrophe had begun without proper preparation.

Justice, garbed in a light-blue dress, listened to the booming cannons and responded with a composed tone, "Given the scale, it's clear that this won't topple Intis's current government. It can only incite a certain degree of temporary chaos…

"Could there be strikes, protests, marches, riots, and other forms of civil unrest colliding?"

"These are the strengths of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the Carbonari. Perhaps Gardner Martin and some of his associates went into hiding to spark the flames, but it appears their coordination isn't strong enough. Without effective collaboration, they can't establish a connection." Magician's gaze shifted toward the southeastern region, where Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, the market district, and Quartier du Jardin Botanique were situated.

Justice nodded in agreement and added, "This means that our efforts have yielded results. They were compelled to accelerate their plans. It's impressive they accomplished such a feat given these circumstances."

As soon as she finished speaking, the “doll” messenger, dressed in a light-gold gown, materialized from the void and handed the letter from Judgment to Magician.

“Good evening, Miss Justice. A good day to you,” the messenger cheerfully greeted Justice.

She was a mysophobic, obsessive-compulsive creature from the spirit world with a penchant for beauty, and Miss Justice was the embodiment of her preferences.

On the other hand, her employer had many shortcomings that she found intolerable. Therefore, she often took on additional tasks herself. This, however, had built a strong bond of closeness and trust between them.

Magician unfolded the letter and quickly scanned its contents. Her expression underwent a subtle change.

“A world in a painting.”

“Did Arrodes use the lucky gold coin and The Fool’s seal on Lumian to gain a vague glimpse of the scenes within the painting world?

“Partial glimpses of Avenue du Marché…”

After murmuring to herself, Magician turned to Justice and said, “I have a rough understanding of what those heretics are after and why they are utilizing the Hostel’s form and the essence of its rooms.

“We can’t afford to waste any more time. Let’s take action now. Control or eliminate Lady Moon before we search for the painting world.”

Justice nodded. “Agreed.”

She then smiled and added, “We should place our trust in our comrades and collaborators.”

“Very well.” Magician took a step toward the Sacred Heart Cloister, her beige dress hem billowing in the breeze.

She raised her hands, and a constellation of resplendent stars materialized around her.

They appeared both distant and densely packed, converging to create a night sky over the highlands.

The countless stars cast their radiance upon the surface of the Sacred Heart Cloister.

With a determined effort, Magician lifted the void in front of her, as if bearing a heavy burden.

Amidst the tumultuous yet silent vibrations, the Sacred Heart Cloister, along with its myriad steeples and the ground beneath it, was “projected” into a pitch-black void. Fierce hurricanes and layers of darkness encircled them.

Almost simultaneously, brilliant sunbeams illuminated the interconnected buildings, as if conjuring thousands of miniature suns.

They resisted the encroaching darkness, striving to reveal the concealed void.

Magician and Justice vanished, reappearing in a space that seemed to bend and contract, forming a dark sphere.

Close by, a crouching golden retriever activated Psychological Invisibility, carefully observing her surroundings and maintaining the highest level of vigilance.

…

Painting world, Avenue du Marché.

From the darkness that corresponded to Salle de Bal Brise, dark-red and rust-stained yellow skeletons emerged.

They exuded a palpable aura of death, and the strong scent of rust and blood hung heavy in the air. When gathered together, they created and intensified a frenzied and violent atmosphere.

This sensation was tangible, immediately shaking the crystal barrier

enveloping the darkness. It produced numerous cracks before silently collapsing.

Witnessing this horrifying scene, the woman in the white halter dress who had brought the Sansons to Avenue du Marché and the various rooms with similar auras to Séraphine's brought over, certain words spoken by the "doll" messenger flashed through Lumian's mind.

Those old bones!

With a swift thought, he seized Jenna's arm with his left hand and immersed his consciousness into his right palm.

Bright red scars reappeared, and an exceptionally violent, maddening, and domineering aura surged from his body, causing the blue sky, white clouds, and the setting sun to visibly quiver.

Even Séraphine and the other "rooms," despite their experience, were taken aback and couldn't help but shudder.

The two pixies outside were even more terrified, convinced that a formidable presence had descended and that the painting world was on the brink of collapse.

The yellowish, ragged, and incomplete old bones creaked and turned, bowing their heads in unison to Lumian. They refrained from instinctively attacking the nearest humans.

Lumian raised his chin slightly and pointed his right hand with an icy determination at the "rooms" and the two pixies.

The old bones, clad in tattered armor and brandishing rusty weapons, transformed into dangerous incandescent fireballs that exploded towards every genuine target.

The blue-beret-wearing pixie's pupils dilated, and she abruptly extended her palm into the void.

Her form turned ethereal once more, suffused with even greater emptiness and indifference, as if she had hidden herself in another realm.

Boom!

The white-hot fireball merged with her form, resulting in a powerful explosion, but it couldn't reach the distant fantasy world and harm its intended target.

The Painter, donned in red pants, had suffered a severe fall, with fractured bones and a lingering sense of dizziness. There was no time to change his condition. His only option was to attempt a rapid repositioning, employing the maximum speed a Sequence 8 could muster. Yet, just as he sprang to his feet, he was struck by a blazing white fireball.

Boom!

The Pixie was left in a gory state from the explosion. His abdomen was torn open, internal organs spilled out, and his left arm severed. Severe burn marks covered his body.

He lost consciousness, his life ebbing away.

The incandescent white fireball hurtling toward Séraphine and Gabriel suddenly veered into the wilderness, distancing itself from the indifferent and vacant human models by several hundred meters. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

The farther it flew, the weaker it became. After enduring for a hundred to two hundred meters, it eventually touched the ground and exploded.

Perhaps the most dangerous factor was the woman in the white halter dress, with curly black hair and a beautiful face. She appeared soulless as multiple blazing white fireballs were aimed at her.

However, the hazardous fireballs either bypassed the raised palms of the human model or exploded prematurely in a strange manner. Some even ascended into the air and transmuted into fireworks.

It was akin to Room 7 being impervious to attack.

Not far from Séraphine, there stood a stunning woman in a bright red dress. Her eyes held a vacant quality, and her aura appeared

somewhat detached.

At that moment, she watched a blazing white fireball hurtling toward her like a meteor, remaining utterly motionless.

The blazing white fireball grew fainter and smaller. Just as it was about to collide with its target, it completely extinguished and reverted to a yellowish skeleton holding a rusty spear.

The skeleton swayed a few times before disintegrating, the withering sensation becoming more pronounced.

In the café diagonally opposite, an elegant plump lady in a black dress materialized. On one hand, she seemed to have lost her vitality and appeared unusually ethereal. On the other hand, she displayed a yearning expression and gaze. She opened her mouth as the incandescent white fireball approached and raised her hands, clutching a silver knife and fork.

With a whoosh, she sliced the blazing white fireball in half.

An illusory vortex filled with fanged phantoms formed in her mouth, devouring a portion of the fireball, “neutralizing” the threat.

Boom!

Most of the fireballs lost their course and veered off, shattering the café’s glass and toppling tables, chairs, and nearby outer walls.

Beside the darkness of Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian watched the old bones transform into blazing white fireballs, attacking the various “rooms” and the two pixies. He didn’t wait to see the final outcome or seize an opportunity to launch a surprise attack. He grabbed Jenna’s arm, kicked with his right foot, and lunged towards Salle de Bal Brise’s original location, where the old bones had emerged.

Chapter 470 - 470 Three Heads, Six Arms

Chapter 470 Three Heads, Six Arms

Lumian and Jenna plunged into the darkness, the area that should have been Salle de Bal Brise before the Hostel's "rooms" and the blue-beretted pixie could escape the entanglement of old bones.

His vision plunged into darkness before specks of spiritual light emerged ahead.

They converged like resplendent stars, turning densely packed, akin to a black velvet curtain adorned with diamonds or countless grains of sand in water.

Amidst these spiritual lights, an ancient, heavy, illusory, and mysterious door materialized in distortion.

Iron-black, its surface marred by dark-red rust, as if a large amount of blood had spilled upon it.

…

In Underground Trier, within the undetectable mine.

In his untouchable state, the Painter witnessed yellowed skeletons clamoring into the colossal oil painting on the rock wall. Iron-black and dark-red lines outlined themselves in the previously empty Salle de Bal Brise, forming a door that shouldn't exist in reality.

"It's not time yet, not time yet…" The Painter, with tassels adorning his trouser legs, stared blankly, unable to believe such a development.

Though he and his accomplices had been attempting to depict this imaginary door, they knew it was destined to fail. At most, they would complete a fifth of it before having to start anew. They persisted for the experience, anticipating that once the ritual commenced, they could draw the crucial parts swiftly.

Having already finished the main part of the Hostel oil painting, they had nothing else to do. Why not try a few more times? What if a miracle occurred?

Now, a miracle unfolded without their attempts! Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

The Painter gazed at the transformation before him, a mix of anticipation and shock.

He couldn't help but look up at the cave ceiling and silently mutter, Do we not need cooperation from aboveground to make the entrance appear?

Could the abnormality in the painting world be causing this?

If we don't coordinate with the surface in time, even if the entrance appears, we won't be able to bypass the seal and enter…

…

Lumian and Jenna descended as if through a dark pipe, uncontrollably approaching the void adorned with spiritual specks of light and the bloodied, rusted door.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian's left chest heated up, and terrifying ravings echoed in his ears from an infinite height and distance.

Familiar with this sensation, indicating the corruption of Inevitability in his body, Lumian knew Termiboros was up to something, and Mr. Fool's seal had been triggered.

However, unlike before, Lumian refrained from attempting to crack the seal to steal Inevitability's power. Consequently, he didn't enter a state of excruciating pain, just a bit dazed.

In his daze, Lumian saw Séraphine—Room 7—clad in a white halter dress. Other “rooms” with varied appearances and attire, yet nearly identical dispositions,

seemed to detach from the painting world and overlap with the fake Avenue du Marché.

The left chests of these “rooms” emitted a faint glow, suggesting they too had seals on them.

Lumian’s head spun as a scene—whether real or fake—unfolded before him.

Séraphine and the other 12 “rooms” stepped into the void and surrounded him, invisible and hidden connections intertwining.

Jenna, arm clutched by Lumian, sensed something and turned her head.

Flesh on Lumian’s left and right shoulders writhed as two illusory heads emerged.

One head looked like a ten-year-old Lumian, covered in dirt, and his eyes filled with ruthlessness. The other, nearly thirty, with blood-red hair and iron-black eyes, looked violent and crazy.

Wh— Jenna felt as if she had entered a nightmare, witnessing her companion transform into a monster.

Lumian’s body expanded, gripping Jenna like a palm-sized puppet.

Behind him, illusory arms sprouted from his ribs.

Lumian didn’t neglect the changes in his body. He saw his current form in Jenna’s eyes.

A three-headed, six-armed giant!

It bore a striking resemblance to the monster in Cordu’s ruins!

However, Lumian didn’t lose his mind. He was certain The Fool’s seal on his chest and Termiboros were still intact.

An illusory collision reverberated as Lumian crashed into the ancient, heavy, and mysterious door, causing it to tremble and creak. It was about to open.

At that moment, the spiritual spots on the black velvet curtain lit up, stabilizing the iron-black door stained with blood and rust.

Witnessing and experiencing this, Lumian suddenly grasped what Hostel was, why they referred to him as Room 1, and the heretics' intentions and plans.

The concept of Hostel likely emerged after the Tree of Shadow disaster.

At some point, Maipú Meyer, ostracized, established contact with other cults, informing them of Lumian's existence and state.

They imitated the situation where an evil god's Blessed was sealed within Lumian's body, creating Hostel, Rooms 2 to 13. They invited various evil gods' Blessed to take up residence, establishing a mystical connection among them based on this systematic similarity.

When Lumian entered the painting world, actions taken on the other "rooms" of Hostel were equivalent to acts on Lumian.

When the Hostel took shape and all the "rooms" were pieced together, Lumian couldn't help but be affected.

Since the "rooms" displayed the levels of their residents, Lumian underwent a corresponding change.

The resident within him was an Angel, Termiboros!

After the mysticism-based Hostel ritual, Lumian, lacking the strength of an Angel or a true Mythical Creature form, had briefly attained the level of an Angel!

This explained why Voisin Sanson and company didn't leave the room and attacked Lumian directly.

Termiboros was sealed, so they naturally wanted Him too. They had to maintain this state until the ritual ended!

Of course, the heretics weren't kind enough to help Lumian experience the state of an Inevitability Angel. Their goal was to use this opportunity to enter Fourth Epoch Trier.

Opening the door using an Angel's level!

Hence, the Hostel had to align with some areas of the market district and exhibit environmental similarities.

Lumian speculated that the Salle de Bal Brise's underground corresponded to a weak spot in the seal. In the past, there had even been problems. Many old bones, guided by Alista Tudor's aura, had crawled out. The corruption leaked, affecting 13 Avenue du Marché.

This made Lumian wonder if his arrival in the market district and his stay at Auberge du Coq Doré had something to do with the attraction the underground area had on Hunters.

Due to this crucial information, the Salle de Bal Brise in the painting world remained blank and dark. The streets surrounding it and the people who often appeared nearby were replicated in appearance.

When the corresponding ritual truly commenced, the surface's market district and the underground market district would likely undergo a switch. Reality would become a fabrication, and fabrication would become reality, revealing or outlining the seal corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise, weakening it to the extreme.

When the time came, Lumian, an Angel, could "open" the door to Fourth Epoch Trier!

Maipú Meyer's return to the market district aimed to harness his Actor abilities, acting as different individuals. He would enter various houses and assist Pixies in grasping the specifics of these streets to complete the massive painting of Hostel.

Worried that Lumian, Franca, and others would notice in advance, he avoided their rooms, lacking sufficient knowledge.

Looking at the mysterious door beneath him, Lumian tried to distance himself, but he couldn't break free. It was as if a huge magnet was sucking him—now an Angel—behind the door, causing him to

involuntarily squeeze inside.

Thanks to countless spots of spirituality in the surrounding darkness, the ancient door, stained with blood and rust, didn't open.

Lumian sensed that this was because the Hostel ritual hadn't fully commenced.

He and Jenna had barged into the painting world ahead of time, disrupting the heretics' arrangements!

Now, if the Hostel ritual was to be completed and the surface and underground switched, there were at least two key points that couldn't be matched.

Firstly, the subterranean seal, which could only be released by destroying Trier and eliminating most of the people here, now had the switch between reality and fabrication, a temporary acquisition of an angelic level, and the discovery of weakness in the seal; thus, the requirement could be significantly reduced. However, lowering the requirement further would necessitate a riot bringing chaos to the surface Trier.

Secondly, it was afternoon in the painting world, and the Sun was only westering. The sky was still bright, but in reality, it was the middle of the night. The moonlight was dim, and the darkness was dense.

…

Avenue du Marché, market district.

In a double-breasted brown coat, Angoulême de Fran?ois noted the secret of église Saint-Robert's old cemetery on paper, placing it in the safe house provided by Hidden Blade, hoping she would discover it in time.

The Purifier deacon guided his robot toward Imre and Valentine, who awaited near Salle de Bal Brise.

At that moment, the rumbling salvos reached his ears.

Instinctively, he turned his head to see Trier's sky illuminated by flames.

An army rebellion? Angoulême furrowed his brow.

Now, most Purifiers from the dioceses were dispersed to quell strikes, marches, and protests after daybreak.

Unexpectedly, trouble arose in the military camp!

Was news of the massive strike deliberately sent to us, forcing a dispersion of forces and making it impossible for us to organize manpower to resolve the problem in a short period of time? A conspiracy by the Iron and Blood Cross Order? Angoulême instantly had a suspicion.

…

In Quartier éraste, a wilderness emerged from the Sacred Heart Cloister that had been thrown into turbulence and darkness.

Lady Moon's voice resonated, her smile evident as she addressed Magician and Justice,"You might not have guessed who's sheltering us this time…"

Before she could finish, the sound of a baby crying echoed.

"Waaa!"

The baby's cries were vibrant, bringing forth endless golden sunlight.

The entire Sacred Heart Cloister transformed into a blazing sun, piercing through the turbulent storm and distorting space.

In the real Trier, the still-sleeping citizens were jolted awake by the sunlight.

In Apartment 601, Franca and Anthony Reid instinctively looked up at the suddenly bright sky.

A dazzling golden sun hung in the sky, positioned to the west.

Chapter 471 - 471 Topsy-Turvy

Chapter 471 Topsy-Turvy

Angoulême, racing towards église Saint-Robert with Imre and Valentine to gather more intel and receive the latest orders, suddenly found himself blinded by sunlight. It was as though he had been shrouded in darkness for too long, struggling to adapt to the sudden brightness.

After a few moments, he and his teammates gazed skyward.

In Trier, where it had been late at night, the scene had transformed into a sunny afternoon!

Feeling the warmth of the sun, Angoulême couldn't shake off the chill crawling down his spine. He sensed that the problem had escalated dramatically, and a catastrophe loomed on the horizon.

In the blink of an eye, a series of explosions echoed from the Rist Docks, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Suhit's steam locomotive station, and the nearby depot and warehouses.

Thunderous rumbles echoed through the air. Even from a distance, Angoulême and his comrades witnessed the crimson flames and burning structures. Gunshots, salvos, and shouts pierced through the chaos.

The entire market district plunged into anarchy.

Is Quartier éraste's military rebellion thinning Trier's Beyonder forces to support the insurrection in the market district? This can't be the same group responsible for the earlier docks and factory strikes at dawn… What is happening? Angoulême's expression hardened as he changed course, hastening towards the epicenter of the most intense explosions.

Imre and Valentine followed closely behind.

…

In Salle de Bal Brise, the café on the second floor,

Gardner Martin donned his silver-white full-body armor and positioned himself by the window. A smirk played on his lips as he observed Angoulême de Fran?ois and his team departing the area.

The leader of the Savoie Mob could already envision the chaos unfolding at the Rist Docks, Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, and other key locations.

Without reservation, he unveiled the hidden might of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in the market district, aiming to sow maximum chaos in the shortest time possible.

Whether it was “Blood Palm” Black overseeing Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman, Vincent Lorraine at the Rist Docks, Parsifal managing the depot, or Faustino, the infiltrator at Suhit’s steam locomotive station, each was leading a team in acts of arson, detonating explosives, and unleashing indiscriminate destruction and carnage.

“Fortunately, we were well-prepared. Even if we had to expedite our plans, we can still complete the corresponding ritual,” Gardner Martin remarked to Supervisor Olson, standing not far behind him.

Olson, resembling a starving bear, clutched his small brown suitcase, his voice indifferent as he inquired, “You didn’t eliminate the Demoness?”

Gardner Martin grinned. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“No need to waste effort on such a foolish Demoness. She poses no real threat. Moreover, taking her down would be time-consuming, and you’re aware of their formidable survivability. It might cause us to miss the crucial moment.

“As for the others causing trouble, I dispatched Albus to the military camp in Quartier éraste. Lumian…”

At the mention of Lumian, Gardner Martin's smile broadened.

He lifted the visor of his helmet, peering out the window once more.

Under the brilliant sunlight, the flames of Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman painted the sky crimson. Shouts, cries, gunshots, and explosions reverberated through the air.

Gardner Martin tilted his chin upward, closed his eyes, and contentedly awaited the unfolding climax of the play.

The ritual was on the brink of completion.

…

In the painting world, the westering sun in the sky assumed a heightened realism, its glow merging with the faint shadow in an uncanny dance.

Similar transformations unfolded across every structure. Vendors and pedestrians on the streets ceased to be lifeless figures, now frantically darting about in pandemonium, desperately seeking refuge.

The subterranean market district and its surface counterpart gradually transitioned into tangible existence. One was now bathed in flames like an oil painting, and the two began to mirror each other, interweaving as "projections" in the spirit world.

Suddenly, like illusory objects flipping upside down, the painted market district emerged on the surface, severing its complete seal with the rest of Trier. The authentic market district had transformed into a mural within the cave, linked to the underground.

In the actual Trier, Salle de Bal Brise existed in darkness, mitigating the effects of the seal.

Within that darkness, the three-headed, six-armed giant, Lumian, adhered to the enigmatic door. With a resonant creak, it slowly swung open, stained with blood and red rust, revealing a crevice seemingly ablaze with invisible flames.

Rumble!

Trier shuddered in its entirety, and the sunlit sky descended into a twilight adorned with fiery clouds.

…

Quartier éraste, Red Swan Castle.

Count Poufer, roused from his slumber, snapped awake in the midst of a dream.

Blood-stained sunlight filtered through the thick curtains, accompanied by cruel and frenzied screams.

The beige castle, adorned with ancient bloodstains, trembled violently, as if a colossal entity beneath the ground clung to its foundations.

Poufer felt a summoning and a magnetic pull from the depths of his soul. Excitement painted his expression as he hastily vacated his bed and dashed out of the bedroom.

In his frantic haste, he disregarded slippers and eschewed a change from his dark-red cotton robe. Barefoot, he sprinted down the corridor, the hem of his robe swinging behind him.

How many nights had he yearned for this awakening?

It signified the long-awaited recognition from the remnant spirit of his ancestor, the fulfillment of the prophecy by the mysterious leader of the Secret Order, and the dawn of hope for the Sauron family to reclaim their strength. It meant the end of the curse that haunted the other Saurons and the promise of rebirth!

Count Poufer understood the potential consequences for himself, but he faced the situation without flinching or hesitation.

Hadn’t every member of the Sauron family, choosing to reside in Red Swan Castle and not relocating after reaching adulthood, been mentally prepared for this moment?

To become the vessel for their ancestor’s resurrection, to merge with Him, was an honor for every Sauron family member!

Descending the stairs, Count Poufer entered the underground maze.

In the darkness behind him, a figure emerged from the vicinity adjacent to the stairs.

It was Elros, donned in beige hunting attire with her long auburn hair tied into a ponytail.

The girl, bearing both the Sauron and Einhorn bloodlines, followed her cousin at a steady pace, her presence silent yet profound.

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, in the market district.

Franca and Anthony Reid found themselves momentarily bewildered as they witnessed the sun appearing and hanging low in the west.

It's past 2 a.m. What sun could there be?

What was going on?

Why was this strange phenomenon happening?

Their thoughts were abruptly shattered by the reverberations of explosions and gunshots in the market district. Anthony visibly trembled, instinctively attempting to dodge the unforeseen onslaught.

Fortunately, having chosen to remain in Trier earlier, he managed to regain control more effectively than in past episodes.

A shared glance exchanged between Franca and Anthony revealed surprise, confusion, and underlying worry.

"Has the catastrophe struck?" Anthony Reid queried in a deep, resonant voice.

Franca, brow furrowed, mused, "But according to Bouvard's corpse's prophecy, the catastrophe was accompanied by rain and water, and now…"

Before she could complete her sentence, her spirituality alerted her to

something outside the window.

An unmistakable phantom materialized in the building opposite, the two figures overlapping and swiftly parting ways.

Simultaneously, a wave of dizziness enveloped Franca, as if she had plunged weightlessly and failed to utilize an Assassin's Feather Fall.

Anthony Reid experienced a similar sensation. He spoke solemnly,

"Indiscriminately affecting everyone?

"The effect of a ritual?"

A ritual to trigger the catastrophe?

Just as Franca considered suggesting leaving the apartment to approach The Fool's cathedral at the Lavigny Docks for a clearer understanding, her attention was drawn to the abrupt changes in two items tucked within her hidden pockets.

She quickly made a judgment based on the locations they were located.

One was the palm-sized Primordial Demoness figurine, which, even through clothing, exuded an abnormal coldness.

The other was the ancient silver mirror from the underground, an object connected to a peculiar mirror world. It trembled subtly, as if stirred or resonating with the current environment and nearby objects.

Wh— Franca's eyes narrowed.

Coupled with the simultaneous movements of the two items, she suspected the presence of a high-level Beyonder of the Demoness pathway nearby!

…

In the Sacred Heart cloister, now transformed into a sun, the continuous cries of an infant filled the air.

The cries unsettled Madam Magician with a starlit visage, causing a multitude of door-shaped insects to crawl in and out. Miss Justice, her skin covered in grayish-white scales, was compelled to Placate herself.

The piercing sunlight forced the two Major Arcana card holders to instinctively shut their eyes. Before them, voids intersected, and layers of starlight blocked the spreading flames “into the distance.”

They recognized the incoming force all too well.

It was the divine power of the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Although this true god hadn’t physically descended from the spirit world into reality, Lady Moon, who had nurtured a deity, and the newborn baby she held, indirectly channeled some of His strength.

The power of a god!

Magician and Justice, though struggling to endure, remained composed. They knew they weren’t alone.

Upon discovering Lady Moon’s hideout in the Sacred Heart Cloister, they had anticipated the worst-case scenario.

…

On the Blue Avenger at the Lavigny Docks, The Hanged Man Alger, adorned in a sailor’s attire with dark-blue hair, positioned himself at the bow of the ship. Witnessing the sudden brightening of the sky and the sun hanging low in the west, a mix of worry and excitement washed over him. Swiftly, he retrieved an item from his possession.

It was a card featuring Emperor Roselle with raised hands and a papal tiara adorning his head. Behind him, the depiction showcased lightning, violent winds, and tumultuous waves.

The Tyrant card!

One of the Cards of Blasphemy crafted by Emperor Roselle.

The Hanged Man Alger had made a special trip to Trier, abstaining

from involvement in operations elsewhere, anticipating the worst calamity!

Through prior communication, pre-installed imprints, and adept prayers, as a Saint of the Sailor pathway, he possessed the ability to employ the Tyrant card. This allowed him to temporarily harness someone's power, enabling resistance against the sun in the sky without jeopardizing the stability of the astral world.

Whoosh!

As Alger bowed his head in prayer, the Tyrant card illuminated, causing Trier's sky to darken. Countless water droplets descended to the ground beneath the sunlight.

Rain, a deluge of torrential rain.

Chapter 472 - 472 Weather

Chapter 472 Weather

His body involuntarily straightened, and his head snapped up.

The Tyrant card in his hand suddenly thickened and brightened, transforming into a luminous book.

The pages of the book rapidly flipped, revealing various forms of Emperor Roselle. He alternated between the attire of a Sailor, sporting a nautical hat, and singing with head held high amidst the waves…

The scene settled on the Emperor donned in a papal tiara and a pontiff's robe.

His interaction with the dim sky summoned a colossal bolt of lightning, piercing through the clouds.

Rumble!

Amidst the thunderclaps, the illusory figure of Emperor Roselle merged with The Hanged Man Alger.

His demeanor abruptly became dignified, and the Srenzo River around the Blue Avenger instantaneously calmed, resembling a windless lake.

"Adorning" the papal tiara and "draping" the pontiff's robe, The Hanged Man Alger conjured a silver staff condensed from lightning.

Stepping forward, he ascended into the sky, surrounded by the wind.

Rumble!

Above Trier, thunder roared, and a visible hurricane swept up myriad

dark clouds, forming a colossal, dark, and ominous vortex.

Within the vortex, dense bolts of lightning of various hues intertwined, extending out to shroud the blazing sun in the west.

Whoosh!

The rain, like an opened faucet, cascaded into every nook of Trier, creating a misty fog that enveloped everything.

In the blink of an eye, a layer of water covered the ground, illuminated by both sunlight and lightning.

The citizens, roused by the morning sunlight, now felt an impending apocalypse as they stared at the pitch-black backdrop untouched by the blazing sunlight and snake-like lightning.

…

In the profound darkness corresponding to Salle de Bal Brise, Lumian, a colossal giant standing over ten meters tall with two additional illusory heads and four exaggerated arms, witnessed the mysterious door to which he was attached slowly creaking open with a weighty grinding sound. Gradually, a crack emerged, and within the fissure, formless flames flickered.

The iron-black door, tainted with blood and rust, finally broke free from its constraints, and the crack became more pronounced.

Holding Jenna tightly, Lumian couldn’t resist the ominous pull and descended through the door.

His left chest glowed, and, along with the entire Hostel and the other twelve rooms, they were on the verge of passing through the mysterious door.

…

In the real market district, on the second floor of Salle de Bal Brise.

As reality and fiction switched, Gardner Martin, Supervisor Olson, and the members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, who hadn’t gone

to set fire to Rist Docks and other locations, seamlessly transitioned into the painting world.

They remained on the ground, beside the deep darkness that represented Salle de Bal Brise. This was thanks to a figure who had silently materialized behind them.

Behind Supervisor Olson stood a man in formal attire, sans a bow tie. Aged between his thirties and forties, he possessed a high nose bridge, deep-set eyes, and light-blue irises. His slightly curled brown hair framed an unusually stiff countenance, his eyes reflecting open disdain and arrogance.

Behind Gardner Martin stood an old man with meticulously combed dark-red hair, clad in a blue military suit adorned with a sash and medals.

Though wrinkles marked the old man's face, his dark eyes emanated sharpness capable of toppling houses and uprooting the earth wherever they landed.

They were the president and the most powerful vice president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order. Under their guardianship, Gardner Martin and Olson remained unaffected by the heretics' ritual, refraining from entering the painting world.

As for the other upper echelons of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, they wreaked havoc in various parts of Trier, diverting the attention of official Beyonders.

Observing the dark depths of Salle de Bal Brise morph into a pair of blood-stained iron-black doors, the four members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order entered without hesitation, as if they had executed the maneuver countless times before.

…

In the deepest depths of Red Swan Castle, within the hall located in the underground maze.

Count Poufer, clad in a robe and barefoot, had already arrived. By the glow of white candles, he fixated on the rusty bronze coffin.

The coffin's lid shifted, unveiling illusory purple flames that filled the interior.

These flames merged with the iron-black ring embedded in the ground, beneath the bronze coffin. They blended with the viscous blood and withered hearts within the ring, forming an entrance—a deep entrance tainted with blood and rust.

Through this entrance emanated a lofty, bloody, and frenzied aura from the underground.

Count Poufer trembled under the influence of the aura, yet his eyes burned with fanaticism and fearlessness.

This was his first proximity to the ancestor's mind!

A twisted smile adorned Poufer's face as he strode forward, passing through the peripheral glow of candlelight and approaching the anomalous bronze coffin.

In the entire world, only the Sauron family members with the corresponding talents who had bided their time in Red Swan Castle, the mysterious leader of the Secret Order, and the long-dead Emperor Roselle knew that beneath Red Swan Castle lay another breached seal of Fourth Epoch Trier.

Vermonda Champagne Sauron, who once dominated the Sauron family, had gone mad and entered the upper levels of Fourth Epoch Trier!

His frenzied spirit lingered at the seal, inextinguishable. His anguished roars echoed, affecting everyone in Red Swan Castle and those of the same bloodline.

Now, it was time to put an end to the curse that had caused the Sauron family's decline and trapped the Saurons in nightmares!

Count Poufer felt a potent sense of mission and honor. With the conviction that he would die here, he laughed maniacally, pressed his hand to the edge of the bronze coffin, and lay down.

His figure plummeted into the deep entrance stained with blood and

rust.

As Count Poufer vanished into the bronze coffin, Elros Einhorn, in a beige hunting suit with a ponytail, entered the hall.

Her gaze swept over the white candles and the bronze coffin, scrutinizing the changes in the seal. She then cut her finger, dripping three drops of bright red blood on the ground.

Lowering her head, she recited solemnly, “The embodiment of Iron and Blood, the symbol of the Calamity of War, the Priest who controls the weather, the great Snarner Einhorn…”

After finishing the incantation, the blood on the ground boiled, expanding into a blood-colored lake before condensing into a figure clad in iron-black, blood-stained armor.

Standing over 1.8 meters tall, with long dark-red hair and flamboyant golden earrings, the figure exuded androgynous, handsome features.

Darkened brown eyes fixed on Elros as the figure nodded gently and spoke,”Well done. In the previous war, the family lost its most important object. We must seize every opportunity to make up for our losses, even if it’s just a portion.” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

With that, Snarner Einhorn entered the deep entrance of the bronze coffin.

Elros’s eyes flickered as she observed the scene.

Finally, she sighed and said, “Regardless, the Sauron family’s curse will end…”

…

In Apartment 601, 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Franca, with a mixture of surprise and concern, took out the Primordial Demoness’s bone figurine and the ancient silver mirror she had obtained from underground.

Uncertain about the significance of the abnormality in these two items, she decided to place them at a distance. Her plan was to wait and observe subsequent changes before deciding on the next course of action.

At that precise moment, the classic silver mirror unexpectedly reflected the Primordial Demoness figurine, even though it wasn't in its line of sight. This occurrence triggered a seismic disturbance throughout Rue des Blouses Blanches.

Dark light surged from the mirror, enveloping Franca and Anthony Reid before they could employ any abilities.

As the darkness subsided, only the coffee table, sofa, and various furnishings remained in Apartment 601.

Adjacent to the mural depicting a segment of the market district, behind the ecstatic Painter, an ancient silver mirror detached from the painting world and gently descended into the shadows. Gradually sinking deeper and deeper, it swiftly vanished.

…

Amidst the indescribable heat and the swirling world, Lumian and Jenna landed on a ground covered in pale-black stone bricks.

Their eyes were met with the sight of a magnificent city in the distance, featuring asymmetrical black buildings and vibrant red houses.

A thin fog intermittently shrouded the city, giving it the appearance of a mirage, the kind occasionally encountered by pirates and sailors.

In the wilderness beyond the city, dark clouds gathered, lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, and rain poured. A colossal figure, dozens of meters tall, stood surrounded by these natural phenomena, barely visible and indistinguishable.

"He" lingered outside the city, enveloped in smoke, flames, hail, lightning, torrential rain, and violent winds, as if perpetual.

Is this Fourth Epoch Trier? Lumian speculated, though uncertainty

lingered. This wasn’t quite what he had expected.

Jenna subconsciously turned to look at him and noticed that he had reverted to his original appearance, no longer abnormally huge. He no longer possessed three heads and six arms.

Chapter 473 - 473 Weakening of Corruption

Chapter 473 Weakening of Corruption

“You’ve recovered,” Jenna whispered to Lumian.

She refrained from speaking loudly, fearing that it might agitate her companion and trigger the same mutation again. Plus, there was the concern of attracting the ominous giant’s attention, shrouded in smoke and rain that made it elusive.

Lumian locked eyes with Jenna and realized from the reflection that he was back to normal.

Subconsciously, he responded, “This means the Hostel ritual, conducted by the heretics using me as a template, has ended…”

Suddenly alert, Lumian scanned the area.

With the Hostel ritual concluded, he anticipated the arrival of the evil gods’ bestowed from the other twelve rooms.

His gaze focused on an unusual area adorned with pale-black stone bricks, dominating the scenery.

It sprawled out, filling Lumian’s field of view, except for where it stopped short of the distant grand city and the colossal figure amidst the turbulent weather.

Stretching across his vision, grayish-white stone pillars loomed every 20 to 30 meters, some standing tall and others succumbing to collapse. These pillars, broad enough to span the reach of three to four people, obstructed Lumian’s and Jenna’s view beyond.

The sky above, supported by these stone sentinels, took on an odd translucency, as though an unseen fire silently raged, invisible to the naked eye.

The resulting glow cast an eerie brightness, akin to dusk on a war-torn battlefield. Lumian, lacking Dark Vision, could perceive his surroundings clearly without conjuring a crimson fireball.

He didn't notice Madame Pualis and the other bestowed of evil gods.

"Did the residents of the Hostel not enter, or are they scattered in various places, arriving at random locations?" he mused aloud.

Unfazed, he redirected his focus, hoping Jenna possessed the pertinent information.

Though Jenna grappled with the concept of "random," she grasped Lumian's intent.

Without delving deeper into that mystery, she pivoted to the more pressing concern.

"What should we do now?"

At the same time, Jenna made a connection.

The Hostel was created using Ciel as a template… Based on the mystical knowledge involved in a Demoness's curse, could Ciel harbor an evil god's bestowed within him? Uh… He seemed to have mentioned before that he had Mr. Fool's seal on him, and the one sealed is an evil god's bestowed? The transformation was actually similar to the effects of a curse, but due to the seal, there were no serious consequences?

What do we do? Lumian assessed the chaotic scene before him: a colossal, blurry giant amid smoke, rain, lightning, and flames. He chuckled,

"Our move now is to put some distance between us and that giant."

"We'll head in the opposite direction of the city, find a secure hiding spot, and observe the unfolding events. Our goal is to locate an exit

swiftly."

Despite feeling an unusual pull towards the giant and the city, Lumian managed to resist. He was no longer under the intense attraction that had gripped him before—now that he lacked an angelic level. Rationality prevailed as he carefully considered the risks and benefits.

The giant, undoubtedly godlike in nature, seemed to be in a state of madness. Lumian, a Sequence 6 Conspirer, couldn't afford to approach it casually. Just a glance could make him lose control!

The city, possibly Fourth Epoch Trier, held its own dangers—one that caused even demigods to perish within—with potential undead creatures and corruption like the old bones. Lumian had The Fool's seal and the aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, but he couldn't feel as relaxed, carefree, or fearless as returning to Cordu before the corruption.

If he had entered the Fourth Epoch's Trier with such intentions, he might have turned into an irrational, perpetually lingering monster sealed with an angel in the blink of an eye.

With that, Lumian turned and sprinted in the opposite direction of the giant's figure in the ever-changing weather, away from the magnificent city.

He needed to put some distance between himself and the looming threat. Nobody could predict if the massive creature would make any noise!

The unrestrained voices of high-level Beyonders posed a grave danger to Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

Jenna put her trust in the seasoned Ciel and followed him with grace. They maneuvered past the grayish-white stone pillars, some standing tall while others lay in ruins, pushing further into the area paved with light-black stone bricks.

As Lumian sprinted, a slight frown creased his forehead.

He could feel a significant drain on his spirituality after the intense

battle in the painting world and multiple Spirit World Traversals. If another mishap occurred, he questioned how long he could endure.

I need to find a way to replenish my spirituality… In reality, it's midnight. Should I lay low until 6 a.m.? Lumian contemplated as he dashed forward.

…

In the fake market district on the surface, torrential rain cascaded upon Séraphine and the other "rooms."

They stood on the street across from Salle de Bal Brise, their chests radiating with various hues.

One by one, figures materialized, piercing through the void and descending into the profound darkness. They entered the iron-black door tainted with blood and rust within the depths of the shadows.

Séraphine gazed at the surreal scene, her vacant eyes and rigid expression suddenly overtaken by sorrow. Rainwater drenched her long brown hair.

Beside her, Gabriel's face beamed with joy as he spoke in an otherworldly tone, "Is it over? Can we be together forever?"

Séraphine's rain-soaked face twisted. She instructed Gabriel, "Leave this place and stay away from me!"

"Why?" Gabriel questioned, perplexed.

Séraphine's role as a Hostel Room had been fulfilled. There shouldn't be anything else, right?

The monster could resume its normal life.

Séraphine uttered in pain, "With the tenants gone, the Hostel's rooms no longer hold any value…"

Before she could finish, a pair of transparent dragonfly-like wings sprouted from her back, etched with open, cold eyes.

Silently, Séraphine's form disintegrated. The wet lake-blue dress lost its support and plummeted to the ground. Adorned with writhing flesh and blood, each piece bore dragonfly-like, dreamy wings and eye-like patterns.

Séraphine's head remained relatively intact. Surrounded by blood dragonflies, a few wheat ears and mushrooms sprouted from her face. Raindrops struck her face and slid.

She opened her mouth, as if leading to another world, and her voice turned shrill.

"We're not bestowed, but the work of pixies!

"Go!"

Gabriel stared vacantly at Séraphine, a composition of blood dragonflies and a head. An indescribable sorrow etched across his empty, cold face.

In the midst of the pouring rain and sunlight, he instinctively took a few steps in the opposite direction before halting.

The playwright turned, retracing his steps toward Séraphine.

A gentle smile curled on the corners of his mouth.

"I'd forgotten. I'm already a monster. Where can I go?

"I'm grateful you let me run on my own in the end."

As Gabriel spoke, he bent down, allowing his knees to touch the ground and the puddles.

His arms enveloped the countless blood dragonflies and Séraphine's struggling head, and he planted a deep kiss on the lips adorned with wheat ears and mushrooms.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The blood dragonflies sliced through his flesh with their wings, burrowing into his body, draining his life force.

He persisted in the kiss.

Raindrops pelted them.

Before long, translucent and dreamy wings emerged from Gabriel's back, stained with blood.

Amidst the spine-chilling gnawing sounds, Gabriel's body collapsed and melted, likewise for Séraphine's head.

In the midst of the ensuing blood, strange-shaped dragonflies with translucent wings, resembling meatballs, soared into the air, resembling bright fireworks in a storm.

Suddenly, blazing sunlight descended, engulfing the area and the abnormal bodies.

Not far away, Angoulême, Valentine, and Imre spread their arms in unison.

Upon returning to église Saint-Robert, they remained unaffected by the ritual, no longer within the world of the painting. They stayed grounded, and once the situation stabilized, they made their way to Salle de Bal Brise.

…

Quartier éraste, Sacred Heart Cloister.

Storms and lightning veiled the golden sun, but for now, they couldn't thwart the sunlight from piercing through.

This caused the entrance to Salle de Bal Brise to blur and tremble, yet it persisted. The painting world that had swapped with the surface gradually became ethereal, drawing nearer to returning to the rock wall.

After Magician and Justice escaped the onslaught of sunlight, they realized they had lost Lady Moon's trail.

The former's eyes sparkled with resplendent stars.

Soon, she "saw" Lady Moon's silhouette.

The evil god's Blessed didn't conceal herself as she forcefully entered the unstable darkness and the mysterious, illusory iron-colored door. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

With a flash of starlight, the Major Arcana card holders, Magician and Justice, arrived outside Salle de Bal Brise.

The two hesitated, uncertain whether to pursue her.

At that moment, Justice softly exclaimed, "I feel that the underground's allure and beckoning towards me have weakened…"

Their hesitance stemmed from the fact that delving deep underground into Fourth Epoch Trier would subject them to immense and abnormally terrifying corruption for demigods.

The heretics didn't mind. Essentially, they had gone mad. At most, their madness would be more intricate and thorough, but they had no choice but to consider this issue.

"The corruption has weakened?" Magician was surprised.

As far as she knew, only two individuals could cause this phenomenon:

One was Mr. Fool or The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. By temporarily bolstering the seal's power, They could curb the various corruptions in Fourth Epoch Trier and diminish them.

The other was the deity who had gained a rudimentary grasp of the greatest abnormality underground: "The Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord who reigns behind the curtain of shadows, the ruler of the mind world, and the degenerated nature of all living things."

Chapter 474 - Justice, adorned in a simple yet elegant dress, turned her head to glance at Magician, discerning her thoughts.

Justice, adorned in a simple yet elegant dress, turned her head to glance at Magician, discerning her thoughts.

Magician didn't hesitate. With a sigh and a chuckle, she stepped into the faltering darkness.

Justice followed closely behind.

As they vanished, sunlight flooded the sky from Saint Viève Cathedral on Trier's island area, coalescing into a miniature sun.

The sun's rays pierced the darkness of Salle de Bal Brise, illuminating a translucent woman in a white robe adorned with golden threads. She possessed a captivating beauty and emitted a holy aura, as if impervious to the touch of dust.

Trier's guardian angel paid no heed to the Sacred Heart Cloister as she passed through the illusory door with a crack.

Simultaneously, a whistle resonated from the patriarchal cathedral of the God of Steam and Machinery to the north of Trier.

As if part of a ritual, it emitted an iron-black chimney, serving as the building's spire.

A substantial amount of pale-white fog billowed into the air,

contorting and writhing to take on a discernible form.

The figure that materialized was tall and handsome, with long chestnut hair. Cloaked in a monk-like gray robe and a white apron,

He was Saint Bornova, recently assigned to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in Trier.

Unlike Saint Viève, the Angel didn't enter the seal; instead, He hovered in the air, vigilant against potential mishaps, including an attack from the Rose School of Thought's Abomination.

At that moment, a colossal hurricane erupted, enshrouding the golden sun above the Sacred Heart Cloister in dark clouds, lightning, and torrential rain.

With the advent of this apocalyptic phenomenon, the already unstable effects of the ritual, disrupted by various interferences, could no longer be sustained. The figures in the paintings lingering on the ground and the illusory illusions of surrounding buildings became instantly recognizable as fake.

This virtual reality-like scene seamlessly overlapped with the tangible market district once more.

Just as the surface and the underground were on the brink of switching, a figure materialized abruptly in front of the mirror-like darkness of Salle de Bal Brise.

This figure sported straight eyebrows and blue eyes, along with long chestnut hair cascading to the waist. Adorned in a white shirt with ribbons and flowers, a brown captain's coat with intricate patterns, beige pants, and dark brown leather boots, the ensemble exuded an eclectic charm.

In her left hand, she gripped a golden item engraved with mysterious patterns, resembling a miniature lamp.

Silently, the wick extending from the lamp's mouth spontaneously ignited, emitting a viscous, aqueous golden light.

Within the luminous glow, a distorted and indistinct pale-gold figure

materialized. In a dignified and majestic voice, it conveyed,

The woman holding the peculiar lamp scrutinized the pale-golden figure deeply before her body suddenly turned ethereal, disintegrating into countless symbols and words. Like a torrent, she surged through the iron-black door and the completely collapsed darkness.

Franca and Anthony Reid, emerging from the dark light, regained their vision to find themselves in a dimly lit mine.

A feeble light seeped into the mine from a distance, offering limited visibility.

Damn it, did I enter that special mirror world again? Did the anomaly in the market district cause the Primordial Demoness's figurine to resonate with the ancient mirror, triggering a chain reaction? Franca cursed inwardly.

What is this called? When it rains, it pours!

As a Spectator, Anthony Reid's immediate response upon confirming his condition was to observe his surroundings.

He noted that the mine wasn't overly expansive, with no other tunnels branching off. There was only one path ahead, leading toward the faint light.

Franca, in that moment, realized that this place differed from her previous visits. It felt like she had reached the end of a particular dead end. Granted, she and Lumian had never thoroughly explored this special mirror world, making it normal for them to be unfamiliar with uncharted areas.

"Where are we?" Anthony Reid inquired of Franca, who clearly held some knowledge, when he saw a figure emerge from a crevice in the rock wall beside him.

The figure curled up and hugged him, trembling.

The figure, dressed in military-green attire and sporting a light-yellow crew cut, was Anthony Reid himself!

As if sensing Anthony's gaze, the figure turned his head, his dark brown eyes filled with resentment and malice.

Unfazed, Franca sighed with familiarity. "Your mirror version isn't too aggressive."

The trembling Anthony Reid vanished.

Franca averted her gaze and briefly elucidated their location and the means of departure.

Upon checking her belongings, she realized that only the ancient silver mirror was missing. The Primordial Demoness's bone figurine remained securely in her possession.

Franca concluded, "The problem now is that the path out is guarded by a powerful monster. I relied on Ciel's uniqueness to divert it last time. I don't know what to do now.

"Let's find another exit first. Yes, we have to hurry. Staying in this mirror world for too long will cause problems."

"Alright." Anthony Reid, lacking experience in this area, chose to heed Franca's suggestion.

The two of them paid no mind to the faces lurking in the darkness on either side. They swiftly moved forward and entered the only tunnel.

As they progressed, the illumination increased, and visibility improved.

After walking for a while, Franca and Anthony Reid halted at a suspected exit.

It resembled a cave, sealed by pure light.

However, she received no response.

"Phew…" Franca exhaled and said to Anthony Reid, "Let's give it a try. If it's not right, we'll retreat. There's no other way."

"Okay." Anthony Reid nodded and placed his hand on the door of

light alongside Franca.

Their figures passed through.

…

Lumian and Jenna sprinted between towering, collapsed grayish-white stone pillars until they reached the edge of the area covered in pale-black stone bricks.

However, what awaited them was still the pitch-black and blood-red city, with the giant figure shrouded in violent winds, lightning, heavy rain, smoke, and flames.

The only change was their perspective, now positioned on the side instead of facing the giant and the turbulent weather.

Confused, Jenna muttered, “We were running in the opposite direction. Why did we circle back?”

Lumian glanced back and explained, “As a Hunter, it’s unlikely for me to get lost. The current situation suggests that there’s a problem with the directions of this space. Perhaps, no matter where we run, we’ll eventually return to this vicinity.”

Fortunately, the distance between them and the giant figure had barely increased, estimated to be two to three thousand meters.

Upon hearing Lumian’s explanation, Jenna cast her gaze forward.

Beyond the pale-black stone bricks, in the wilderness connected to the majestic city, mirror fragments were scattered. They weren’t large, but there were thousands of them.

Lumian surveyed the scene, contemplating an alternative plan.

A sudden realization struck him—a swift method to rapidly restore his spirituality.

In a space effective at weakening the influence of an evil god, he could execute a ritual, siphon the boon, and ascend to Sequence 6 Ascetic of the Inevitability pathway!

By destabilizing various states, the ritual would promptly restore and amplify Lumian's spirituality.

In essence, he could exchange the stability of his current state for the enhancement and replenishment of his spirituality.

Before initiating the ritual, Lumian needed to ascertain one crucial detail.

Would this place render Mr. Fool incapable of observation?

If that were the case, Termiboros might exploit the ritual to escape with the unintelligent seal itself. After all, the core of the ritual involved breaking the seal and drawing out the corresponding power of Inevitability!

Just as Lumian was about to instruct Jenna to keep a vigilant watch, a figure emerged from a shattered mirror in the wilderness.

Their pupils dilated, and instinctively, Lumian and Jenna sought cover behind the grayish-white stone pillar and the partially collapsed rubble.

The figure swiftly materialized, standing over 1.7 meters tall and clad in a black cloak.

Lumian stole a quick glance in that direction before retracting his gaze.

The figure seemed oddly familiar.

Before long, a familiar voice rang out from the side.

"You're not slow either."

Th-this is Gardner Martin! He's involved too? Lumian didn't dare to peek out.

Then, he recalled the identity of the cloaked figure.

The Carbonari member he had encountered, the one followed by Franca!

Shouldn't the Carbonari be causing chaos on the surface? Lumian wondered.

At that moment, Jenna produced a mirror and gestured if Lumian needed assistance.

She could use mirror magic, utilizing mirror-like items to display their reflections onto a designated mirror.

Numerous mirror fragments lay nearby at the edge of the wilderness.

Lumian shook his head slowly and mouthed and gestured to Jenna, signaling her to "Wait a moment."

He decided to act at a critical juncture. There was no need to take unnecessary risks at this point.

At that moment, a mellow, deep voice responded to Gardner Martin, "Where's the president of your Iron and Blood Cross Order?" The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"Headed there, of course," Gardner Martin replied with a smile. "It's the stage for important figures, and we have our own mission."

He paused a beat before continuing, "Why are you still wearing the cloak? Is it someone new beneath?"

"You're still as cautious as ever," the deep voice sighed.

Lumian and Jenna heard the rustling of clothes.

Lumian immediately signaled Jenna with his eyes.

Jenna took the hint and recited the incantation silently, her hand resting on the mirror.

The aqueous light on the mirror's surface flickered, revealing a figure.

The figure wore a cloak without the hood. His hair was thick and slightly curly, and his eyes were as sharp as an eagle's. His beard was neatly trimmed, and the bridge of his nose was slightly raised.

Wh— Lumian recognized the person.

Philip!

The deceased General Philip!

Chapter 475 - 475 Conspirer

475 Conspirer

Recognizing the black-cloaked man as the late General Philip, a surge of realization struck Lumian's mind, cutting through the darkness.

He connected various dots and reevaluated details he had previously deemed a stretch.

Earlier, Lumian had queried Gardner Martin about his support for Hugues Artois, the spokesperson of numerous evil gods. Martin asserted that he was well aware of Artois's nature and the sinister forces backing him. Martin endorsed Artois for parliament with the belief that he would repeatedly bring calamity to the market district, compelling citizens and workers to rally behind the Iron and Blood Cross Order, preparing for a future government overthrow.

Until today, Lumian had accepted this reasoning on the surface. Even if Martin hadn't disclosed the complete truth, he had unveiled a fraction of it. However, now it appeared that 90% of Martin's statement was a fabrication!

Hugues Artois had been groomed by the late General Philip and thrust into politics. Gardner Martin had clearly established a cooperative relationship with General Philip long ago. His backing of Hugues Artois wasn't merely an opportunistic exploit; rather, he had been intricately involved in the plan from the outset!

Similarly, General Philip, having feigned his death and diverged from his intended fate, utilized the Dreamseekers charity organization to finance Painters and other evil god-bestowed. Simultaneously, he joined the Carbonari, fomenting riots and rebellions. Lumian found this not entirely surprising, but the connection with Gardner Martin and the Iron and Blood Cross Order added an intriguing layer to the details.

By the time the Hostel ritual officially commenced, Lumian had already grasped the essence of this conspiracy. Yet, some explanations seemed a bit forced. For instance, how had Meyer Maipú, having left the Bliss Society in frustration and returned to the market district to prove himself, managed to contact the Painters or the evil gods' bestowed planning the Hostel ritual?

One plausible explanation was that Susanna—while still the high priestess of the Bliss Society—had established connections with other cults before her demise. As Maipú Meyer's lover and a crucial member of the Bliss Society, he should have had some contacts. However, upon closer scrutiny, it felt a tad contrived. Did Maipú Meyer truly maintain good relationships with believers of other evil gods? Would he naturally seek their aid when confronting challenges to prove himself?

Despite Maipú Meyer's knowledge of an Angel sealed within Lumian's body, he couldn't fathom exploiting this information beyond offering sacrifices. Unless the Mother Tree of Desire bestowed a revelation directly, why wouldn't the Recipient, potentially having received a divine revelation, flaunt it? Why face ostracism from other Bliss Society members?

Lumian found that all the details made more sense now that Gardner Martin and his connection to General Philip were revealed as part of the conspiracy.

Following the Tree of Shadow disaster, Gardner Martin tasked Lumian, Franca, and their subordinates in the market district with investigating the incident and Hugues Artois's assassination. However, he would undoubtedly gather information about the Bliss Society's actions, mistakes, and issues through General Philip.

In these circumstances, Maipú Meyer, seeking a return to the market district, naturally established a connection with General Philip, who had shown interest in such matters, and provided crucial information. Consequently, Gardner Martin had long been aware of what was sealed within Lumian.

The entire Hostel ritual might have been conceived by him, General Philip, and the Painters.

One of them harbored a longstanding desire for Fourth Epoch Trier and possessed extensive knowledge of secrets and mysticism. They understood the seal's operation and its past leaks. Salle de Bal Brise, owned by the Savoie Mob, and 13 Avenue du Marché served as a testing ground for the Iron and Blood Cross Order's new members.

The other had a deep connection to the domain of fate. Through the financial support of the Dreamseekers charity organization, he had united many cults, accumulating vast knowledge in various aspects.

The reason why Hugues Artois had numerous evil gods' bestowed protecting him wasn't merely due to his ability to interact with problematic individuals or the deeply ingrained "enlightened" perception he had on others. Instead, it was because his backer, General Philip, a veteran of large-scale wars, had long been dedicated to cooperating with heretics to achieve a crucial goal.

Lumian suspected that Gardner Martin hadn't officially tested him and allowed him to join the Iron and Blood Cross Order out of initial trust. Instead, he had finalized the Hostel plan and decided to keep Lumian under close watch, exerting various influences and manipulating him.

If the Tarot Club hadn't intervened and the ritual hadn't been hastily advanced, it was highly likely that Gardner Martin or a demigod of the Iron and Blood Cross Order would have been the one to ultimately confront Lumian and transport him into the painting world to activate the ritual!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian's understanding became clear.

Everything Gardner Martin had undertaken since the Tree of Shadow disaster was geared towards the Hostel ritual!

As expected of a former or current Conspirer… Lumian sighed sincerely.

Certainly, Gardner Martin might not have been aware of the residual aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor that Lumian carried, but he likely harbored suspicions. However, he couldn't fathom the core

issue. After all, he was aware that an Angel was sealed within Lumian Lee's body, a walking anomaly bound to attract attention.

Regarding whether Gardner Martin knew about another organization backing him and Franca, Lumian believed that Martin had sensed something awry, but the precise details remained elusive. Even Maipú Meyer, not present at the Tree of Shadow ritual, was unaware of the events during that time.

Lumian signaled Jenna to cease the mirror magic to evade detection by Gardner Martin and General Philip. Meanwhile, he pondered.

Why does the Iron and Blood Cross Order covet Fourth Epoch Trier so intensely, going to such lengths in preparation? What is their ultimate goal?

If I hadn't arrived in Trier, stayed at Auberge du Coq Doré, and attracted the Fallen Tree Spirit Susanna Mattise, what would have been the original plan of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and the various cults? How did they intend to bypass the seal and unlock the door to Fourth Epoch Trier?

As the latter question surfaced, Lumian recalled something.

Gardner Martin had once directed "Rat" Christo's smuggling caravan to transport an item into Trier through an underground tunnel. This item activated the special mirror world hidden underground. Later, Franca sensed that item while tracking the black-cloaked Carbonari member, General Philip, who had faked his death…

Now, General Philip had also entered this place, suspected to be Fourth Epoch Trier!

They had made extensive preparations, including orchestrating a massive riot. Their goal was to use that item and its connection to the mirror fragments in the wilderness to infiltrate this place through the seal leak that once appeared beneath Salle de Bal Brise. Later, they had a better choice—me…

Dammit! Gardner Martin's words about why he supported Hugues Artois's election as a member of parliament were mostly true! He did

need such a person to incite public anger in the market district, not to overthrow the government, but to satisfy the ritual!

Heh heh, pushing villains into power while posing as the leader of the resistance. He's both the antagonist and the protagonist. He's truly extracting the value from all the people in the market district dry… Lumian reacquainted himself with the Sequence name "Conspirer" through Gardner Martin.

At that moment, Jenna grasped Lumian's meaning and discontinued the mirror magic.

Gardner Martin smiled and said, "It's indeed you, Philip. Let's enter Fourth Epoch Trier."

Philip… Jenna, who had only a vague impression of General Philip's photo from the shadows, now realized that the cloaked man Franca had been trailing was General Philip, the one who had faked his death.

Philip's deep, mellow voice resounded.

"Aren't you going to find Lumian Lee? If he becomes your loyal subordinate and joins your team, you can immediately complete the ritual, consume the potion, and advance to a demigod."

Gardner Martin sighed and responded, "I find it a pity too. An Angel is sealed within him, and he alone is a team. I've given him many chances, but he never understood what loyalty meant. Now, I have an alternative. Let him perish naturally in Fourth Epoch Trier."

An Angel sealed within him? Jenna's eyes widened as she looked at Lumian.

Lumian smirked and scoffed at Gardner Martin's words.

I'd be a fool to believe you!

The person scheming to use me from the start talking about loyalty and pity?

Just as Gardner Martin and General Philip turned around to walk

toward the magnificent city, two figures emerged from a mirror fragment in the nearby wilderness.

It was Franca, dressed in a blouse, beige white breeches, a small dark brown coat, and black leather boots, along with Anthony Reid, clad in military green.

Franca scanned the surroundings and spotted Gardner Martin, encased in full-body silver armor with his visor raised.

Anthony Reid's gaze locked onto General Philip's face, featuring a prominent bulge on his nose.

The eight eyes met, and the air momentarily froze.

…

Count Poufer's figure materialized at the edge of the wilderness, in front of the pale-black stone bricks.

Gazing at the giant shrouded in storms, lightning, flames, and smoke, standing dozens of meters tall, he sprinted over with the fanatical expression of a sacrificial lamb.

It was Vermonda Sauron, who had lost control and gone underground.

The former Archangel, the Conqueror, who was very close to a deity's throne!Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Chapter 476 - 476 Calamity Giant

476 Calamity Giant

Count Poufer charged through the tempest, battling fierce winds, drenching rain, and bolts of lightning. Meanwhile, the Pixie in the distinctive blue beret—the overseer of the Hostel, positioned near the shroud of darkness around Salle de Bal Brise—took advantage of the moment and slipped through the enigmatic iron-colored door.

Fully aware of the peril awaiting her inside, she felt compelled by the will of a deity. Even the prospect of death didn't daunt her. It would only earn her the deity's favor and a return to the eternal realm of fantasy.

Regrettably, upon her arrival, she found herself suspended in the midst of the raging storm, amidst smoke and flames.

The colossal figure was clearly reflected in her eyes.

It resembled a horrifying charred giant, its once-fleshy exterior now absent. The charred metal skeleton, engulfed in blazing purple flames, formed what seemed like an intact body, but cracks riddled its structure. Continuously emanating illusory symbols—lightning, hail, fog—the majestic purple flames and the iron-black metal skeleton held inscrutable knowledge, representing countless real phenomena.

Drip, drip. Blood-hued, magma-like pus oozed from the cracks, transforming into black purple flames and various weather phenomena midair.

Witnessing this, the Pixie in the blue beret combusted from within.

Instinctive fear flashed in her eyes as she desperately reached into the void, entering an intangible state.

Yet, her physical form did not change for the better.

With a swift whoosh, every cell in the Pixie's being ignited, including the translucent dragonfly-like wings on her back.

After enduring agonizing contortions, she metamorphosed into a Pixie crafted from crimson flames. Lifeless eyes stared out from her now-empty gaze.

Within the fiery dragonfly wings, the altered Pixie danced around the giant's figure, as if escorting him.

Rumble!

Count Poufer was struck by bolts of lightning, and nearby, purple flames erupted.

Drenched in the relentless rain, enduring hailstones that battered him until he bled, he persevered through the thick smoke.

Perhaps due to the Sauron family's bloodline coursing through him, he remained unaffected by the surrounding chaos.

As the smoke cleared and the storm abated, Poufer eagerly gazed at the towering giant, dozens of meters tall.

Within the iron-black skull and amidst the purple flames, a distorted face of pain intermittently flickered.

The face bore some resemblance to Poufer, except its eyes, weathered and blood-black, were deathly still and vacant.

Upon spotting the giant, Count Poufer also ignited in flames.

Excruciating pain wracked him, yet his gaze remained fixed on the giant's face.

Amidst the encircling purple flames, faces filled with venom, hatred, and madness, as if cursing all living beings, alternated. Men and

women, bearing a resemblance to both the giant and Count Poufer, emerged on the surface of withered hearts floating in the flames.

Poufer glimpsed the family's forebears from the oil paintings. Despite the difficulty, his mouth curled up, his face contorted by the flames.

In the turmoil, he transformed into a flaming pixie as well. However, instead of circling the rampaging giant, he was drawn by his family's bloodline into the perilous purple flames on the iron-black head, into Vermonda's face that flickered in and out.

In an instant, the two fused.

Vermonda's mouth twitched, a hint of liveliness in his eyes.

He opened his mouth and let out a scream filled with destructive desire and madness.

With this scream, the ground, scorched by the purple flames, shook dramatically, and earth puppets crawled out.

These puppets—equally tall at three to four meters tall, charred with an iron hue—were speckled with dark-red blood.

Transforming as they squirmed, the earth puppets became soldiers, guarding the area with a semblance of life.

Almost simultaneously, a fiery meteor descended from the heavens.

Streaking across the sky, it plummeted towards the edge of the fog.

Bang!

A figure emerged amidst the meteorite-like crash and ensuing tremors, standing upright.

It was Snarner Einhorn, adorned in iron-black, blood-stained armor.

The 1.8-meter-tall Angel, with long dark-red hair and flamboyant earrings, didn't hesitate. His body expanded, unveiling a Mythical Creature form reminiscent of Vermonda Sauron's current state.

It was a giant, a representation of calamity, crafted from flames and various symbolic elements.

…

Under the silent blaze of invisible flames in the sky, across the wilderness, Pualis de Roquefort, draped in an elegant black dress and a veiled hat, fixed her gaze on the majestic city not far away.

She didn't get her husband, butler, and children to enter the Hostel. Instead, she arranged for them to temporarily depart Trier and reside in a suburban town beyond the city wall.

After a brief survey, Madame Pualis turned her attention to the man merely 20 to 30 meters away.

Despite appearing in his fifties, his dense blond hair showed only slight traces of gray, and his lake-blue eyes were clear.

Neatly encircling his mouth, the beard framed his unusually deep facial features. It was evident he had been a handsome man in his youth.

He was the Circle Inhabitant of the Sinners, Voisin Sanson!

Roche Louis Sanson's father.

Madame Pualis shifted her gaze back to the seemingly boundless city, sensing an inexplicable calling from somewhere. It was gradually contracting and expanding, akin to the embrace of a long-forgotten mother.

She took a step forward.

…

Franca hadn't anticipated encountering Gardner Martin immediately upon exiting the mirror world.

As an undercover agent for both the Tarot Club and the Demoness Sect, she felt a twinge of guilt instinctively. The urge to casually greet him with a "what a coincidence" surfaced subconsciously. However,

she was no longer the naive rookie from her initial transmigration. Her worldly and combat experiences ranked among the elite in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Swiftly reacting, she yelled at Anthony Reid, “Duck,” and, turning invisible, lunged to the side.

Almost simultaneously, dozens, perhaps hundreds, of blazing white fireballs materialized around Gardner Martin. His eyes were profound, body clad in silver armor, as the fireballs howled and erupted at the previous location of Franca and Anthony Reid.

Anthony, his gaze fixed on General Philip’s black-cloaked figure, heard Franca’s warning, “duck,” echoing in his ears.

Experienced, though unsure of what to expect, he followed his teammate’s advice. Adjusting his body mid-air, he kicked down with both feet, hurtling toward General Philip without picking a side.

Amidst the explosive chaos, General Philip was astonished to find a slightly greasy middle-aged man in military-green camouflage clothing glaring at him with hatred, launching towards him.

Does he hold a grudge against me? Philip wondered, his eyes darkening as focus slipped away.

He “saw” a myriad of intertwined fates and discerned the threads’ approximate origins.

So, you’re a survivor of the sacrificial company… Lucky enough to escape back then, and now you dare return for revenge? General Philip sneered with disdain.

As a Sequence 5 Reaper of the Hunter pathway, he made the decision to put his faith in the great Goddess of Fate and receive the corresponding boon. This choice stemmed from his firsthand recognition of the limitations and issues within his original pathway in the mysticism domain, along with the impending apocalypse he couldn’t avoid.

His aim was clear—to swiftly ascend to demigod status, securing the protection of a mighty existence to endure the impending apocalypse. Ordinary channels simply couldn’t provide him with what he needed.

Despite the initial weaknesses and constraints of the Goddess of Fate's pathway, he accepted it without hesitation.

It was worth noting that the boon corresponding to Sequence 9, Dreamless, merely granted him a dreamless state and the ability to sense the flow of fate. Consequently, he forfeited the potential of gaining revelations through his spirituality via dreams. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Sequence 8 Musicians were a slight improvement. In certain worlds, Musicians often blinded themselves to enhance their focus on the voice of fate before playing it like a symphony. However, this method demanded extensive preparation and sufficient time to orchestrate the tune in order to influence a target's fate.

As for Sequence 7 Fate Pryers, they shared essential similarities with Seers. However, unlike Seers, they didn't require a medium to directly perceive or hear the revelations of fate.

By Sequence 6, the bestowed of the Goddess of Fate finally acquired relatively potent abilities. Those who glimpsed fate could convey it and directly impact a target, but each usage came with a significant drawback—a self-imposed silence lasting for an extended period.

This Sequence was known as Mute.

Only after faking his death and breaking free from his original fate did the Sequence 5 Deceased no longer bear the previous restrictions. They could now function relatively normally.

As a dual Sequence 5, General Philip unraveled the threads of fate, discerning the origin of Anthony Reid's animosity. He chuckled, releasing a voice that seemed confined for an eternity.

"Fate can't be avoided. You'll ultimately end up as my sacrifice."

Amidst these words and the explosive tumult, Anthony Reid's mind replayed the harrowing scene of the camp attack, causing him to break out into a tremble.

Thud! He landed on the ground and clutched his head in fear.

Not far away, concealed behind a half-collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, Lumian and Jenna both heard Franca's urgent cry to "duck."

Franca has entered too? How did she do it? Lumian wondered, a sense of alarm coursing through him.

Chapter 477 - 477 Frenzy

477 Frenzy

Lumian felt a brief moment of surprise before taking a shot in the dark.

The why and what of it didn't matter now. Those questions could wait until after dealing with Gardner Martin and General Philip or finding a way to slip past them. There might be a chance to escape this place.

At the fringes of the wilderness, Gardner Martin's attempts to flush out Franca from her invisibility failed, even after a series of explosions.

His former lover had vanished to some unknown spot.

Being a Demoness of Pleasure, Franca relied on her Assassin abilities, leaving no footprints, masking her scent and spiritual aura. It made her a formidable challenge to track, countering a Hunter's knack for gathering environmental intel.

Gardner Martin, donned in silver-white full-body armor, kept on the move. Familiar with the Demoness pathway's traits and abilities, he knew that, having ascended to Pleasure, Franca didn't need blood, hair, or nails for her curses. Reflecting him into mirrors and enveloping him in black flames would do the trick. He couldn't stand still for more than three seconds, to prevent himself from being reflected in the mirror.

As he swiftly maneuvered, Gardner Martin glanced at Philip and Anthony, the information broker. He noticed the latter lying on the ground, clutching his head and trembling. Anthony sporadically used Placate on himself, resigning from resistance. Philip's black cloak expanded slightly, and crimson, nearly white flaming ravens

materialized beside him, as if preparing for a grand sacrifice.

Observing the scene, Gardner Martin paid no heed to the ongoing battle. He raised his right hand and lowered his visor. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

A broadsword, aglow with condensed light, materialized in Gardner Martin's grip, casting a radiant and holy Sunrise Gleam over a vast expanse. Its brilliance dispelled illusions, compelling shadows to retreat and revealing Franca's ponytailed form more than ten meters behind him.

This was the power of a Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin of the Warrior pathway.

The power emanated from Gardner Martin's silver armor, a numbered Sealed Artifact bestowed by the authorities. He had acquired it in an operation a few years back, slaying two Purifiers of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and claiming the armor from their fallen bodies.

"Number: 247.

"Name: Pride Armor.

"Danger Grade: 2. Dangerous. Use with care and moderation. It can only be applied for operations that require more than three people, or by deacons and diocesan bishops.

"Security classification: Official Purifiers and above.

"Sealing Method: Place it in a dark chamber and select physically strong humans to guard them with a rotation every three hours.

"Description: Late into the war between the Loen Kingdom and the Feysac Empire, a plethora of meteors descended from the sky, causing widespread catastrophes.

"This armor was discovered in a ruined building in the suburbs of Port LeSeur. The humans inside had met a brutal end.

"Through experimentation, it bestows upon the wearer the might of a

giant. It blankets an area of 48 meters in Sunrise Gleam. These rays dispel illusions, erase shadows, and nullify invisibility effects. They also affect Wraiths and Shadows, diminishing their peculiarities and even weakening evil spirits.

“It possesses decent defensive capabilities and can be damaged but regenerates slowly. Depending on the extent of the damage, recovery can range from half an hour to a day. For detailed data, refer to Appendix 2.

“The wearer’s combat skills see a significant boost, accompanied by heightened arrogance. They hold disdain for those standing behind them and targets concealed in the darkness or invisible.

“The criteria for determining one’s physique are inconsistent, sometimes very high, sometimes low. Initial findings suggest a correlation with the armor’s condition and the surrounding environment. Most humans with regular exercise or those who rely on potions to enhance their physique pass the assessment without incident. For exceptions, it was later discovered they suffered from undetected serious illnesses or indulged excessively in the past two days.

“No matter who you are, caution is warranted when positioned behind this armor, though attacks don’t always occur.

“Similarly, the wearer is vulnerable to its attacks when using other mystical items. Experimental results show heightened reactions when facing items from the Evernight pathway and the Earth pathway.

“The wearer of the armor eventually experiences varying degrees of betrayal, irrespective of whether they still wear the item.

“At night, this armor is very quiet, exhibiting minimal aggressiveness. However, under a moonlit sky, its demeanor becomes notably irritable, reaching maximal offensiveness.

“The highest level of experimental subjects is Sequence 5…

“Appendix 1: The wearer of the armor grows taller to varying degrees. Multiple wearings do not stack.

“Appendix 2…”

Under the influence of the Sealed Artifact, 2—247, Franca materialized.

Gardner Martin, wearing a visor, hesitated briefly before slashing with the radiant broadsword in his hand.

Simultaneously, a multitude of crimson, nearly white Fire Ravens condensed around him.

Surrounded by crimson Fire Ravens, General Philip locked eyes with the prone Anthony Reid. With a slight lift of his chin, he declared, “Accept your fate.”

Anthony sensed the imminent danger but found himself powerless to resist. Trembling, memories of that haunting night flooded his mind, making it difficult to put up any resistance.

However, as he recalled General Philip’s words about becoming a sacrifice, the tragic fate of his comrades, and the years of investigation, anger ignited within Anthony.

It’s him!

He’s the one responsible for harming my comrades, those rough but endearing individuals, and my companions who once had my back!

Suddenly, Lumian’s earlier question echoed in Anthony’s thoughts.

“Up to this day, do you still wrestle with the fear from that night, the sounds of sudden gunshots? Do you truly possess the courage and determination to press on?”

Anthony remembered his response:

“Perhaps I perished in that attack. What remains is an avenging spirit, relentless in its pursuit of truth and retribution.

“I can be destroyed, but I can’t give up…”

That’s right. I should have died long ago. My sole purpose in life is

revenge. And today, my true enemy stands before me!

Why should I be afraid? I'm not even afraid of death. Why fear gunshots, explosions, or being a sacrifice?

This time, I chose to stay in Trier, not to flee from potential catastrophe but to make amends for my regrets.

Now, the opportunity has presented itself!

The flames of revenge roared within Anthony Reid's heart. He lifted his gaze to meet General Philip's slightly reddened, hatred-filled dark-brown eyes—once his superior's superior's superior.

Go to hell! Anthony cursed inwardly as he unleashed a Psychiatrist's Frenzy.

This ability could manipulate the emotions or destabilize the mental state of the target, pushing them into a frenzied state and inflicting severe mental damage.

In some cases, it could even lead the target to lose control.

Just as General Philip prepared to unleash a swarm of Fire Ravens, a surge of Danger Premonition hit him. Before he could react, the intended sacrifice raised his head, locking eyes with him, bloodshot dark-brown eyes burning with intensity.

With a buzzing sound, Philip's head snapped back, his thoughts thrown into disarray.

Ever since embracing the Goddess of Fate, originally being a Sequence 5, he, armed with the corresponding knowledge, could keenly sense shifts in his personality and thoughts. His body had undergone gradual changes as the power of the boons increased.

For Philip, mentally prepared as he was, this was acceptable. One concern nagged at him—his mental state had become unpredictable. Sometimes rational, sometimes fanatical, sometimes cold, and sometimes calm. His behavior was capricious.

It mirrored those great existences.

General Philip's mind felt like a storm had been unleashed within it. His facial skin swelled, and his pale-white hair crinkled, resembling someone submerged in water for days.

Invisible threads materialized from each pore, tinged with a faint mercurial hue, giving Philip's flesh the appearance of being ablaze with flames.

General Philip briefly succumbed to Frenzy.

At that moment, a figure materialized behind him.

It was Lumian, dressed in a partially tucked white shirt, brown pants, and oil painting-like black leather shoes.

Recognizing Franca's voice and sensing the onset of the battle, Lumian didn't immediately rush out to provide assistance. Instead, he opted to wait for the right opportunity.

Aware that his current spirituality dictated a single optimal choice, Lumian needed to eliminate either Gardner Martin or General Philip swiftly. Franca, Jenna, and Anthony could then join forces to handle the remaining adversary.

Choosing a target was no easy decision for Lumian.

Gardner Martin, corrupted by 13 Avenue du Marché and the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, possessed numerous peculiarities. Lumian couldn't guarantee that a combination of punches would conclusively finish him. General Philip, with his boon involving fate, might sense danger ahead of time, making Lumian's surprise attack unlikely to succeed.

Both options carried substantial risks, forcing Lumian to exercise restraint and wait patiently.

As long as Franca and Anthony remained alive for the time being, Lumian would hold back.

Patience was a fundamental quality of a Hunter, equally crucial for a Conspirer.

However, Lumian's waiting wasn't blind. Relying on Jenna's mirror magic and the shattered mirrors in the wilderness, he observed the situation closely. Prepared to intervene and save Anthony, Lumian found the opportune moment when Anthony turned the tables on Philip with a Frenzy.

This was an opportunity!

Lumian gazed at General Philip, struggling in his frenzied state, and coldly exclaimed, "Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot out and struck Philip.

The Deceased's eyes lost focus suddenly, and his body swayed, on the brink of collapse.

Lumian had already raised his right hand, bent his pinky and ring finger, and aimed at the back of General Philip's head, mimicking a revolver.

Bang! With an added sound effect in his mind and a slight lean backward, a crimson fireball rapidly compressed and shot out from the tips of his index and middle fingers, hurtling towards the target like a bullet.

Chapter 478 - 478 The Mockery of Fate

478 The Mockery of Fate

Bang!

Philip's body disintegrated starting from the point of impact, as if a hammer had shattered a mirror reflecting his form.

Amidst the chaos concealed by the explosion, shards of glass scattered across the wilderness, joining the reflections of those already present.

Lumian's eyes widened as he observed the unexpected turn of events.

Does the Deceased pathway also possess Mirror Substitution?

Or does General Philip wield a mystical item from the Demoness pathway?

Such thoughts raced through Lumian's mind as he processed the scene. Philip's black-cloaked figure swiftly reappeared more than ten meters away. His eyes, once frenzied, now regained clarity.

Simultaneously, Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, materialized from invisibility behind General Philip. She aimed her revolver at the Deceased, who had narrowly escaped the fatal attack and negative state.

To be honest, Jenna found herself in a perplexing and shocking situation.

The revelation that General Philip possessed Mirror Substitution didn't catch her off guard. However, she hadn't processed the

implications before realizing he had “chosen” to position himself right before her, as if anticipating her to backstab him.

Originally, Jenna had devised a plan to exploit Lumian’s clash with General Philip. Her intention was to utilize Invisibility, slip away from her hiding spot, and reach the wilderness’s edge. Her goal: to assist Franca, cast a curse if Lumian’s strike fell short, or create a frosty hindrance on the ground. Unexpectedly, General Philip had “escaped” to a location directly in front of her.

Such a golden opportunity couldn’t be ignored!

Confused by the unfolding events, Jenna instinctively raised her right hand, aiming her revolver at the back of General Philip’s head.

Though unsure of the reasons behind this bizarre turn of events, she suspected it was connected to the lucky gold coin she had received from Will.

Bang!

Jenna squeezed the trigger, and a yellow bullet, wreathed in black flames, shot out from the muzzle, hurtling toward General Philip’s skull. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Meanwhile, Franca emerged from the radiant Sunrise Gleam, witnessing Anthony Reid overcoming his fear to employ his abilities on General Philip. Lumian had for some reason arrived in the vicinity, appearing mysteriously behind Philip.

Without time to dwell on her surprise, Franca swiftly raised her brass classic revolver and fired an iron-black bullet at Gardner Martin, who wielded his broadsword of light.

Her strategy was clear—unleash her full strength to stall Gardner Martin and deny him the opportunity to save General Philip!

Franca’s decision to use invisibility wasn’t about tapping into Assassin tactics to backstab her ex-lover. Drawing on her battle experience, she instinctively chose invisibility for a different purpose —to escape Gardner Martin and General Philip’s sight, gaining a brief moment of safety.

Finally, she withdrew the Cannon Gun from her underarm holster, clasping it firmly in her palm.

Bang!

As the iron-black bullet sped toward Gardner Martin, Franca's diamond necklace on her chest emitted a faint glow.

Simultaneously, Franca's eyes welled up, and her red lips parted slightly, amplifying the allure of a Demoness of Pleasure.

Gardner Martin's body suddenly heated up, feeling his blood rush to his nether regions.

Scenes of his past entanglement with Franca flooded his mind, captivated by the Demoness's uncanny demeanor amidst iron and blood.

His eyes reddened, breathing grew labored, and movements visibly slowed.

Lust!

From Beatrice's Necklace and the lust of the Mother Tree of Desire pathway, coupled with the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure, it had a synergistic effect greater than the sum of its parts.

Moreover, Gardner Martin wasn't a stranger to such experiences. He had always agreed with the words in Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles: "The taste of a Demoness ain't bad." In this situation, how could he control himself after tasting a Demoness?

Clang! The iron-black bullet struck Gardner Martin's chest, causing cracks in his silver armor.

Franca, not surprised that the attack hadn't worked, realized in her haste, she hadn't activated the Heavy Strike effect of the Cannon Gun.

The brass revolver, a mystical item purchased from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, wasn't particularly potent or mystical; it had two simple abilities. The first, a normal shot, equivalent to a

rifle, and the second, a Heavy Strike, akin to a small cannonball or a sniper rifle.

Franca always carried it to compensate for a Demoness's lack of offensive capabilities when she couldn't use a curse. The Cannon Gun's negative effects were minimal—if all six rounds were not fired in a day or maintained every other week, rare situations like chamber explosions or misfires could occur.

Observing Gardner Martin's infatuated gaze behind the visor, Franca hesitated before using her right thumb to pull back the Cannon Gun's hammer, signaling the activation of the Heavy Strike effect.

Bang!

As Franca moved, she pulled the trigger at Gardner Martin, who lunged at her as if seeking a mate.

The iron-black bullet collided with him, accompanied by blazing flames.

Almost simultaneously, Franca sensed an anomaly in the Primordial Demoness figurine casually stuffed into her pocket.

Not only did it turn cold again, like ice, but it also trembled slightly.

Dammit! Why is it you again? Are you done!? Franca, feeling both angry and cautious, pulled the trigger and threw the palm-sized bone figurine far away.

Simultaneously, on the other side, Jenna's bullet, fired from an ordinary revolver, pierced the back of General Philip's head with black flames. Unsurprisingly, the Deceased shattered like a mirror, his figure outlined at the edge of the Sunrise Gleam created by Gardner Martin.

At that moment, as Franca hurled the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine, General Philip's body froze.

Black flames erupted, silently igniting his Spirit Body. Cold frost swiftly condensed, enveloping him.

The mirror he carried appeared to have shattered.

He was clearly in a daze, as if he had been cursed.

Without hesitation, Lumian employed Spirit World Traversal once more, emerging from behind General Philip.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid had stood up, his expression no longer filled with fear but focused hatred.

As Philip was not far from him, on the edge of the clear Sunrise Gleam, he ran towards the general—his mortal enemy.

Philip's figure reflected in his eyes, and he couldn't help but smile.

His pupils turned vertical, tinged with a faint golden hue.

This time, he refrained from employing Frenzy, fearing it might cause General Philip to lose control and transform, giving Gardner Martin an opportunity to kill his team.

He chose Awe, also known as Dragon Might!

General Philip trembled.

Under normal circumstances, he wouldn't have succumbed to such a severe Awe. At most, he would have experienced temporary fear. However, he was in a dire state, influenced by an unknown force, betrayed by an item on him. Consequently, his entire being fell into a blank state.

Observing this, Lumian refrained from using the Spell of Harrumph. His right hand took the shape of a revolver again, aimed at the back of General Philip's head, and fired a crimson fireball that was nearly white from his fingertips.

Philip was jolted awake by a tangible premonition of danger, only to witness his impending demise.

A wave of indignation washed over him.

Despite being stronger, possessing lethal strikes, and an array of

mystical abilities, he suffered a relentless beating without a chance to retaliate. He didn't even have an opportunity to fight back before Death knocked on his door.

In his eyes, countless fates interwove into a net, constantly changing, as if mocking him.

This made him feel like a clown.

Bang!

General Philip's head exploded from Lumian's crimson, nearly white fireball. Numerous skull fragments splattered with charred marks, red blood, and milky-white brain matter.

The Deceased's lifeless body thudded to the ground, and an item rolled out of the hidden pocket of the black cloak.

It was a pitch-black figurine, palm-sized and resembling a beautiful woman. Long snake-like hair cascaded to its feet, and it had eyes of various forms at the top.

Wh— Lumian's gaze instinctively shifted to the Primordial Demoness figurine that Franca had thrown out.

Similar to the one on General Philip, one was pure white, while the other was pitch-black.

Suddenly, Lumian grasped why General Philip had Mirror Substitution and why he had appeared directly in front of Jenna, who was invisible.

With the special Primordial Demoness figurine, he naturally converged with Demonesses!

Subsequently, Franca's official Primordial Demoness figurine resonated with the pitch-black one, causing an abnormality that led to General Philip being "cursed" by the item at a critical moment.

The pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine was likely the item Gardner Martin had smuggled into Trier through "Rat" Christo's smuggling caravan!

Chapter 479 - 479 Matching Items

Chapter 479 Matching Items

Bang!

The jet-black bullet, ablaze with fiery fury, slammed into Gardner Martin, who was gripped by desire, dead center in his gleaming silver armor once again.

It hit him like a battering ram, sending shockwaves through his frame.

A web of fractures sprawled out from the impact zone, causing Gardner Martin's advance to stagger, forcing him to lean backward.

This abrupt jolt snapped him out of his reverie. He witnessed General Philip, wreathed in black flames and encased in frost, while Lumian materialized behind the Deceased. Lumian's right hand acted as a revolver, launching a crimson fireball straight at the back of Philip's head.

Behind Gardner Martin's mask, his pupils dilated, and a shiver raced down his spine, as if an icy cascade had been dumped over him.

This abrupt awakening effectively quelled his desires. Without hesitation, he dropped to one knee and drove the hefty broadsword into the wilderness.

The broadsword shattered, breaking into myriad fragments of light that swept toward Franca, Lumian, and the others, including the lifeless form of General Philip.

Amidst a resounding crack, Franca, constantly shifting positions,

remained enveloped by the Hurricane of Light, her body fracturing like a shattered mirror.

Lumian and Jenna met the same fate. Only Anthony Reid, lacking Mirror Substitution, instinctively lunged to the ground, curling up to shield his vital parts.

The luminous tempest rapidly dissipated before Lumian and his companions outlined themselves on the outskirts of the wilderness, facing the pale-black stone bricks.

They witnessed a brilliant white flaming spear hurtling towards the distant majestic city, covering more than a hundred meters in the blink of an eye.

As soon as the fiery-spear materialized upon impact with the ground, Gardner Martin, draped in silver armor, rose again, directing his focus towards the city veiled in a thin fog.

After several consecutive attempts, Gardner Martin distanced himself from Franca and the others, sprinting towards the dilapidated structures at the city's periphery.

Lumian chose not to pursue him. Instead, he sprinted to the edge of the Sunrise Gleam to check on Anthony Reid.

The Psychiatrist's body bore a multitude of bloody wounds, with the most severe on the left side of his back, revealing a glimpse of his beating heart.

Lying on his side, curled up and bloodied, Anthony Reid forced a smile upon seeing Lumian.

There was no fear of death in that smile—only relief, relaxation, and satisfaction.

The taste of revenge was indeed sweet.

Observing Anthony Reid's lips moving as if he intended to entrust something, Lumian scoffed and remarked, "Do you wish to utter your final words? Do you want us to dispatch your belongings to your home on the West Midseashire Coast?"

As he spoke, Lumian retrieved a silver earring, securing it to his left earlobe.

Squatting down, he pressed his left hand against the gaping wound on Anthony's back.

Abruptly, his palm slid upward, and the gruesome wound shifted to Anthony's shoulder.

In the blink of an eye, the most critical injury on Anthony's body vanished, leaving him as good as new. However, the initially minor wounds on his shoulder deepened, revealing white bones and causing blood to seep out.

This was Lie's Damage Transfer, capable of addressing one wound at a time.

Anthony was taken aback, feeling as if life had been restored to him.

Though the pain persisted, and his body weakened, at least the specter of imminent death had dissipated.

Then, Jenna approached, placing him in a supine position.

With a swift pfft, Jenna thrust an obsidian arrow into Anthony's chest.

The Arrow of the Bloodthirsty promptly absorbed the blood, turning Anthony's pupils red. The invisible flames in the sky seemed a bit blinding, and the scent of blood in the air proved enticing.

Simultaneously, the smaller wounds on his body swiftly healed, and the more severe ones showed significant improvement. In a matter of minutes, they should close up on their own, ceasing to impede his movements.

Anthony Reid, teetering on the edge of death, stood up, bewildered, examining his body with disbelief.

I've nearly recovered? I'm alright just like that? As a Spectator, his emotions visibly fluctuated. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Not a bad combination,” Franca praised. “As long as you don’t perish on the spot and refrain from losing control and transforming into a monster, there’s still a chance to save you. At most, you’ll become weakened.”

Lie’s Damage Transfer, coupled with the formidable self-healing abilities bestowed by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, produced such a remarkable effect.

Franca turned her gaze to Lumian, questioning, “I thought you’d intercept Gardner Martin.”

In that critical moment, the others couldn’t match Gardner Martin’s speed as he fled. Only Lumian, capable of Spirit World Traversal, had the potential to catch up and effectively hinder him.

“Do you think I didn’t want to?” Lumian retorted, a note of mockery in his tone.

However, he lacked the ability!

Had he not been affected by Voisin Sanson’s Circle Inhabitant during his first “teleportation” today, returning him to his original spot without expending his spirituality, Lumian wouldn’t have maintained a stable state. He wouldn’t even have been able to use Lie for Damage Transfer. He would have had to rely on Franca or Jenna. How could he possibly have caught up to Gardner Martin?

Franca instantly grasped Lumian’s meaning—he had engaged in battles before and after entering this place, and his spirituality was on the verge of depletion.

“Alright.” Franca shifted her attention to the two Primordial Demoness figurines, one black and one white, lying undisturbed on the ground, untouched by the Hurricane of Light. Frowning, she inquired, “Where should I toss these two?”

Them constantly causing abnormalities seemed like a scam!

“Take them with you.” Lumian considered for a moment before smiling. “If it weren’t for them, how could we have dispatched General Philip so effortlessly? We might need them to escape in the

future. Yes, we can't entrust both to one person. You take one, and Jenna will take the other."

After a brief pause, Franca responded, "I'll still take the white one."

As a member of the Demoness Sect, holding the orthodox Primordial Demoness figurine was only natural.

Observing Jenna pick up the pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine, Franca muttered in confusion, "Why is there such a figurine? According to the Purifiers' dossier and information from other secret organizations, members of the Demoness Sect only carry bone figurines. There's nothing that's so black."

While Franca spoke, she scrutinized the charred Primordial Demoness bone figurine, comparing it with her own.

Soon, she discerned differences in the details.

Aside from the stark white and pitch-black hues, the eyes at the tips of the Primordial Demoness's snake-like hair faced different directions. If one looked left, the other would undoubtedly look right.

"Like a mirror image, mirror… Is this the Primordial Demoness in the mirror?" Franca ventured a guess, amalgamating the abilities and traits of the Demoness pathway with her experience in the peculiar mirror world. "This shouldn't be possible under normal circumstances. It wouldn't be easy for the Iron and Blood Cross Order to find such a figurine…"

She now comprehended the reason behind their encounters with Gardner Martin and General Philip.

This was a manifestation of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence. Except for Anthony, an unwitting Psychiatrist brought in by his companion, everyone present was either a Hunter or a Demoness.

Furthermore, Franca and Anthony had entered through the same method as General Philip. They would inevitably emerge at the edge of this wilderness, teeming with mirror fragments.

Primordial Demoness in the mirror… Lumian found the description ominous.

Without delay, he addressed Franca and the others, “Search General Philip’s corpse and help me guard the surroundings. I’ll set up a ritual to restore my spirituality.”

Jenna expressed surprise. “There’s a ritual that can restore spirituality?”

Her gaze naturally swept over General Philip’s corpse, realizing it had been split into five or six pieces, each a gruesome mess.

The Beyonder characteristics had yet to emerge at that moment. The boon from the evil god couldn’t return to its source, slowly sinking back into the lifeless form.

Lumian entered a dimly lit area with grayish-white stone pillars, found cover, and swiftly set up the altar. Franca could surmise who he was praying to, so she joined him to guard against any unforeseen incidents.

Jenna contemplated for a few seconds before approaching the altar. Retrieving the lucky gold coin, she said to Lumian, “This is the lucky gold coin that the boy gave me. I don’t know if it’s useful when given to others, but there’s no harm in trying.”

She delegated the task of searching the corpse to Anthony Reid, who was rapidly recovering.

Franca observed in silence for a moment before affirming, “True.”

Lumian didn’t hesitate. After all, Will had a close connection to the Tarot Club. Even if the lucky gold coin couldn’t be lent to others, it wouldn’t bring about any negative effects.

Placing the Loen gold pound on the altar, Lumian conjured a wall of spirituality, ignited all the candles, and took two steps back.

Rather than proceeding with the boon-seeking ritual, he attempted to recite Mr. Fool’s honorific name.

“The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…”

As Hermes reverberated, the lucky gold coin on the altar illuminated. A thin gray fog emanated from the wall of spirituality, enveloping the wilderness’s periphery.

The fog in the distant majestic city appeared to thicken.

Before long, just as Lumian began praying for a boon, a frenzied and terrifying roar echoed from the area where the weather was chaotic and faint giant figures lingered.

Despite the thin gray fog, the four of them felt dizzy. The blood in their bodies raced, and their hearts pounded.

“It’s truly useful. It’s genuinely lucky…” Lumian gazed at the dazzling golden coin on the altar, sighing sincerely.

Had it not been for the ritual and Mr. Fool’s gray fog’s protection, the roar could have inflicted severe damage, especially considering Lumian’s nearly depleted spirituality. He might have lost control, putting Anthony Reid, still recovering from severe injuries, in jeopardy.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and continued to recite in a deep voice under the watchful eyes of Franca and Jenna, “Power of Inevitability!

“You are the past, the present, and the future;

“You are the cause, the effect, and the process…”

Chapter 480 - 480 Ascetic

Chapter 480 Ascetic

Amidst the frenzied and terrifying roars, a hurricane tore through the abnormally chaotic weather, shrouding the scene in smoke, flames, lightning, and hail. It spiraled into the sky, merging with the silent inferno.

Not far from the apocalypse-like hurricane, two figures felt the impact of the roar simultaneously. One's head tilted back slightly, as if punched, while the other's wrinkles quivered, and his eyes grew sharper.

The former was the man who had originally stood behind Olson, vice president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, Tony Twain. The latter was aged, donning a blue military suit with a sash and medals. His neatly combed back dark-red hair identified him as the mysterious president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, known as Diest.

Diest shifted his gaze from the hurricane to Tony Twain.

"The chance to become a Conqueror is before us. If I can seize it, I'll find a way to separate the Weather Warlock's Beyonder characteristic and bestow it upon you."

As Tony Twain observed the violent hurricane, lightning, and torrential rain, his light-blue eyes hinted at mockery.

"Can we really succeed? A Weather Warlock has already joined. Even if Vermonda Sauron loses control and transforms into a monster, he's still a Sequence 1 monster."

Tony Twain's words showed no respect for a Sequence 2 Weather Warlock or a Sequence 1 Conqueror, despite not being an Angel yet.

Diest's expression remained unchanged, and his aura surged.

With his military attire, he resembled the commander-in-chief of all armies.

"Elsewhere, we'll surely fail. Even without interference, we'll need to embark on a lengthy hunt to stand a chance against the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron. But here…" Diest spoke in a deep voice, "We can harness that power for a brief period."

As he finished speaking, the area between his brows turned red, as if something sought to emerge.

Simultaneously, Diest retrieved a coin pouch from his waist, concealed beneath his suit.

Filled with soybeans and a few palm-sized iron soldiers, Diest grabbed them and tossed them forward.

Amidst the howling wind, the iron soldiers sprang to life and expanded. The soybeans swelled rapidly, transforming into giants with blurred faces and yellowish skin, as if soaked in water.

Failing to bring his team here in time, Diest abruptly transformed into a blazing dark-red, nearly purple flame, engulfing the newly created soldiers.

A beam of light shot up, tearing through the sky and homing in on the giant figure within the hurricane.

…

At the edge of the magnificent city veiled in a thin gray fog, Gardner Martin removed his helmet. His breastplate bore web-like cracks, revealing blood-stained clothes beneath.

With one hand pressed against his head, he staggered forward, intermittently emitting crimson flames bordering on white.

The terrifying roar had clearly taken its toll.

Navigating through the ruins, Gardner Martin quickly approached the

thin gray fog. Half-collapsed asymmetrical buildings stood within, seemingly frozen in time, struck by a devastating blow and sunk into the ground.

Abruptly halting, Gardner Martin glanced to the side and asked in a deep voice, “Who is it?”

Amidst the sound of gravel tumbling, Olson, resembling a hungry bear, emerged from behind a collapsed black building, carrying a small brown suitcase.

The Supervisor, sporting a half top hat, yellow vest, and black suit, looked at Gardner Martin and said, “I didn’t know who was coming, so I hid for a while. Where’s Philip?”

Gardner Martin breathed a sigh of relief and replied, “We encountered Lumian Lee and his team. They killed Philip. I was injured and barely managed to escape.”

Olson, with his thick beard, didn’t delve into the details of the battle and sized up Gardner Martin. “You’re quite beaten up.”

Gardner Martin chuckled, saying,

“Fortunately, I had Pride Armor to shield me from most of the damage. Yeah, I blame it mainly on the angelic roar; it affected me to a certain extent. Fortunately, I was relatively far away, so the problem isn’t that serious. Look, even the Pride Armor hasn’t attacked me, indicating that I haven’t weakened.”

“That’s good. Let’s enter Fourth Epoch Trier now,” Supervisor Olson nodded with an indifferent expression.

Gardner Martin turned around, clutching the silver helmet with one arm, and walked towards the thin gray fog not far away.

Olson carried a small brown suitcase and trailed behind the Commanding Officer of the Iron and Blood Cross Order.

As the two advanced, Olson’s eyes suddenly turned fierce and vicious.

You’d used ‘fortunately’ twice… You’ve already taken off the Pride

Armor's helmet… Olson muttered silently to himself, his brownish-red eyes reflecting Gardner Martin's staggering figure in the silver armor.

…

At the edge of the wilderness, scattered with mirror fragments, Franca and Jenna couldn't hear the chants emanating from the wall of spirituality, but they observed the grayish-white stone pillar and two candles of the same color mysteriously softening. Fist-sized candle flames flickered in silver-white and black, while an illusory pewter-black liquid oozed from Lumian's chest, enveloping him.

As Lumian curled up on the ground, occasionally rolling, Franca sighed softly and remarked, "It looks painful…"

This likely marked Ciel's fourth encounter with such an ordeal.

"That's right." Despite standing outside the wall of spirituality, Jenna felt an inexplicable fear, goosebumps forming on her skin.

While she had witnessed Ciel's mental pain and confusion, this was her first time witnessing such intense physical suffering.

Franca spoke sincerely, "If Ciel were to switch to the Affliction potion now, he wouldn't have to worry about not reaching Sequence 4. It's too compatible!"

Sequence 5 of the Assassin pathway was known as Affliction or the Demoness of Affliction.

After another terrifying roar, the silver-black illusory liquid beads on Lumian's body seeped into him. His expression gradually relaxed, and his body ceased its curled-up state.

He lay sprawled beside the collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, reluctant to move for a few seconds.

While his spirituality had recovered and even increased, his body and mind were visibly exhausted. It was akin to the sensation one experienced after completing an exceptionally challenging task in their most focused state.

Lumian, aware of the urgency, forced himself to his feet.

He noticed that the silver-black candle flame had returned to normal, and the surrounding gray fog was gradually dissipating.

His plan to rely on the gray fog's protection against the terrifying roar had failed before implementation.

Mr. Fool's response had a time limit!

Furthermore, he had to consider the interference of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings.

As Lumian swiftly tidied up the altar, he scrutinized his transformation:

The improvement in spirituality was evident with the Ascetic boon. Lumian believed that even after using the Spell of Harrumph a few times, he could complete nearly eight Spirit World Traversals.

Ascetic had also enhanced his endurance, making him more adaptable to extreme weather. Even if he encountered frost, he wouldn't be frozen. Similarly, he found himself better at enduring emotions and desires. While he still felt them, he could endure many things.

This extended to an Ascetic's core ability, Compression. It could be used for the mind and also produced positive effects in the physical and mystic domains.

The former involved emotions and desires, which were mostly tolerated. They didn't completely disappear but were suppressed. At critical points, they needed to be vented or relieved, or psychological problems could arise. The Compression ability could accumulate these emotions and desires and erupt at critical moments for the desired effect. For Lumian, the negative effects of the Contractee's three abilities and the corresponding effects of mystical items on him were more bearable. However, he needed to regularly break an enemy's neck as a way to vent.

The latter aspect referred to spirituality, strength, and ritual steps. Through Compression, Lumian could compress and store spirituality

and strength beyond the average person when he had nothing to do, releasing them when needed. This allowed his spirituality to recover once and temporarily enlarge him. His strength, speed, and agility were sufficient to withstand a Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin of the Warrior pathway for a minute or two. Additionally, the accumulation of ritual steps enabled Lumian to use abilities like the Animal Creation Spell and the Exorcism Spell in actual combat.

Furthermore, after becoming an Ascetic, Lumian's previous boons had been enhanced. For instance, the number of contract abilities he could withstand had increased to three, although he didn't want to maximize them. He preferred choosing one or two suitable ones, as too many contracts brought too many negative effects. Even Ascetics would suffer because of them, as evidenced by negative examples like Guillaume Bénet and Bouvard.

Of course, this wasn't an immediate concern, as summoning creatures from the spirit world was impossible in this location.

Lumian swiftly stashed away the items and dispelled the wall of spirituality. Handing back the fortunate gold coin to Jenna, he spoke in a low, commanding tone, "Let's make our way to Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Huh?" Jenna was bewildered.

Ciel had warned them to steer clear of the giant and the grand city!

Franca looked back with contemplation and said, "Do you suspect that the fog shrouding the city belongs to Mr. Fool? Entering might provide some protection. We won't have to worry about getting taken out by that lunatic's roar or succumbing to the risk of transforming into a monster?"

"Yes, it's dangerous, but there's a chance for us to defend ourselves and await further developments." Lumian inferred that the same fog enshrouded Fourth Epoch Trier, drawing from the fog around the Samaritan Women's Spring and the lingering shadows of significant figures from the Fourth Epoch.

It emanated from Mr. Fool's powers! The source of this content

nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Franca wasted no time and nodded decisively. “Okay.”

Jenna chose to trust her two companions without delving into questions.

At that moment, Anthony Reid had finished clearing the battlefield and approached with the spoils.

Chapter 481 - 481 The Thing in the Suitcase

Chapter 481 The Thing in the Suitcase

“Found these…” he began to explain, but Lumian swiftly cut him off.

Clear and rapid, Lumian outlined their plan, “We’re heading to the outskirts of the city enveloped by the gray fog. Want to come with us?”

Anthony Reid’s eyelids twitched. “Okay.”

He knew going solo could mean a swift demise, especially if the terrifying roar echoed again.

Lumian wasn’t in a hurry to inquire about General Philip’s belongings. Gripping Jenna and Anthony, he signaled Franca to hold onto his collar.

A dark light emanated from the black mark on his shoulder as the quartet disappeared, seemingly teleporting to the periphery of the majestic yet crumbling city, just before the thin gray fog.

What they saw was where they arrived.

Lumian attempted to step into the gray fog, but the seal on his chest remained dormant.

Franca and the others could traverse it without his guidance.

…

Resembling a hungry bear, Olson fixed his gaze on Gardner Martin’s head, devoid of its helmet. His brownish-red eyes flickered with a sinister light, pinpointing Martin’s vulnerability.

In mere seconds, Olson identified Martin's weakest spot.

Even if he couldn't deal a fatal blow, inflicting damage to the party again meant a high chance that the Pride Armor would betray its wearer and kill him!

Silently, Olson reached into his pocket, retrieving a yellow bullet held between his thumb and index finger.

A crimson, nearly white fireball rapidly condensed in his palm, leading to a controlled explosion.

The violent shockwave propelled the bullet towards the back of Gardner Martin's head with a thunderous boom.

Gardner Martin staggered, narrowly avoiding the bullet.

Nearly simultaneously, the surroundings were bathed in the bright and holy Sunrise Gleam.

Black smoke billowed from Olson's body as if a long-dead zombie had been exposed to the sunlight created by the Purifiers.

Meanwhile, Gardner Martin, no longer feeble, donned his helmet with a cold expression and sharp eyes.

Despite Olson's formidable resistance to scorching flames, his skull suffered charring from the impact. As the flames dissipated, Gardner Martin's figure detached from the burning spear. Clenching his silver-armored fist, he swung it at Olson's head from midair.

As the flames dissipated, Gardner Martin's figure detached from the burning spear. Clenching his silver-armored fist, he swung it at Olson's head from midair.

Olson's neck snapped, and his head flew up, dragging along a bloody spine.

Gardner Martin's skull-crushing punch missed, and he landed on the ground once again.

However, a heavy and sharp broadsword of light materialized in his

other hand at some point, ready for the next phase of the battle.

Gardner Martin thrust the broadsword into the blackened soil, unleashing a terrifying storm. Countless light fragments filled the air, creating chaos in the vicinity.

The Pride Armor swiftly condensed the Sword of Dawn again, the Hurricane of Light forming with a much shorter interval than an ordinary Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin. Only a minute or two had passed since Gardner Martin last wielded this formidable power.

Olson, reduced to just his head with a brownish-red beard, showed focus in his eyes and attempted to merge with a burning-white spear for a hasty retreat.

However, the storm arrived, its light engulfing him completely.

As the Hurricane of Light subsided, Olson's body displayed severe damage, riddled with cracks, some piercing through his chest and tearing internal organs. His severed head, carried by a bloody spine, bore the marks of destruction—eyes and nose obliterated, skull cracked, and blackened brain exposed.

Gardner Martin, poised and composed, conjured ten to twenty crimson fireballs.

They darted toward Olson's nearly unconscious head, triggering a resounding explosion that shattered the head into fragments and liquid, splattering on the ground.

With a chuckle, Gardner Martin raised his visor, surveying Olson's headless corpse and the scattered skull. He remarked, "I've always found you a little odd. This was a good opportunity to test you. I didn't expect you to really attack me. That's good too. Not only have I eliminated a hidden danger, but I've also counteracted the traitorous curse of the Pride Armor."

Deliberately appearing fine while exposing some problems through the details was meant to bait Olson—simple acts of vulnerability could easily raise the other party's vigilance and suspicion.

With a sigh, Gardner approached the battered suitcase that had fallen

to the ground and lifted it, on the verge of shattering.

He had long been curious about its contents, as Olson had always evaded the question. Now, Gardner could finally open it himself.

Gardner Martin unlatched the suitcase and opened it in front of him.

Inside was a head.

The features were unmistakable—deep facial features, brownish-red eyes, slightly disheveled black hair, a few silver strands at the temples, and well-defined facial features. The head which wasn't considered thin was stained with blood.

It was Gardner Martin!

It was Gardner Martin's own head!

…

As they advanced, the looming, half-collapsed palace drew nearer. The city bore the brunt of colossal damage, as if a giant had delivered a devastating blow, unleashing shockwaves that wreaked havoc on the surroundings.

Details eluded Lumian's scrutiny. The lack of sufficient light and the considerable distance obscured the exact nature of the scene. Various houses obstructed their view, and only the excessively tall palace and surrounding structures, despite their partial collapse, allowed them a glimpse of the peripheral city.

"Let's find a nearby hiding spot," Franca suggested, her gaze scanning the area. She had no intention of venturing deeper into Fourth Epoch Trier.

The quartet found themselves on a narrow street, where the houses on both sides were so close that occupants could almost shake hands by extending their arms.

The structures, resembling victims of a violent earthquake, teetered but refused to collapse, adorned with ghastly cracks.

Jenna's attention fixated on a relatively intact house. Iron-black in color, it featured an arched window on the left and a square on the right. Dark-red graffiti adorned one side, while the other remained clean. Not a single weed grew between the rocks.

Apart from the two obvious pots, the house exhibited various asymmetrical details, with centipede-like cracks mainly concentrated on the lower left side.

"Should we go there?" Jenna inquired.

Lumian shook his head.

"The more intact, the higher the likelihood of abnormalities. The current state of Fourth Epoch Trier's citizens is unknown. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"Let's find a completely collapsed building to hide behind. At least, everything inside should be buried."

"Agreed," Franca concurred with Lumian's decision.

In Fourth Epoch Trier, she couldn't fully perform Magic Mirror Divination.

Lumian and his team swiftly reached the center of the dimly lit street. In a setting that could plunge into darkness at any given moment, they strategically maneuvered around the ruins of a dark-red building, seeking cover.

It wasn't until now that Anthony Reid seized an opportunity to extract the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty from his chest, returning it to Jenna.

With the dark-stained black cloak spread on the ground, he showcased his findings.

There were three items in total:

The first, a blackened ulna punctuated by dark-red holes, resembling a rough bone flute that had been kept in storage for ages.

The second, a small wooden box painted in dark hues. Compact enough to fit into a concealed pocket, it featured large holes on both sides veiled by swaying, leather-like “curtains.”

Lastly, a collection of gold, silver, and copper coins.

Anthony Reid gestured toward the “bone flute” and explained, “This formed from the convergence of light spots on Philip’s ulna. It seems something formless has settled on it.”

Conspirer or Reaper Beyonder characteristic combined with his ulna and the power of the Deceased boon? Lumian nodded indiscernibly.

Philip hadn’t had a chance to retaliate before, leaving him uncertain about the general’s Sequence—a Sequence 6 Conspirer or a Sequence 5 Reaper. What was clear, however, was the general’s affiliation with the Hunter pathway. This deduction was based on the creation of numerous crimson Fire Ravens, almost white in hue. Moreover, the general wasn’t just a Sequence 7.

If it were the latter, Lumian would have been pleased to obtain the main ingredient for his advancement. The issue lay in the mixture of the power with an evil god’s boon, rendering it unsuitable for direct use in potion concoction.

“What settled on it is the corruption of an evil god. It was a wise choice not to touch it directly,” Lumian informed Anthony.

Within the underground seal, the power of an evil god’s boon couldn’t return to its source.

“This was found on Philip’s body…” Anthony pointed at the dark wooden box. Before he could finish speaking, another frenzied and violent roar echoed from afar.

This time, the four of them, having entered the gray fog, only experienced a slight dizziness and remained unaffected.

Chapter 482 - 482 Bodies Chasing Heads

482 Bodies Chasing Heads

Franca shook off the dizziness induced by the terrifying roar and sighed from the bottom of her heart.

“As expected, the gray fog here provides protection.”

Without it, facing a roar that could harm their Spirit Body and affect their minds would result in losing control, turning into monsters, or immediate death.

“Praise The Fool!” Lumian openly expressed his faith.

He then reminded her in an icy tone, “But the hidden dangers here might be more terrifying than the previous roar.”

Franca fell silent for a few seconds before speaking in an encouraging tone, “Hidden dangers are preferable to those that have already surfaced. Let’s avoid triggering them. If nothing else occurs, we’ll stay in this corner and wait for help!”

While Jenna and Anthony Reid harbored doubts about the strategy of passivity, they hesitated to venture deep into Fourth Epoch Trier and reluctantly accepted the plan that wasn’t really a plan.

In the eerie silence, Anthony was the first to regain composure. He pointed at the dark wooden box and stated, “I’m not sure of its purpose. A simple, temporary touch doesn’t seem to have any obvious negative effects.”

As for the coins, their significance was apparent. A quick glance and rough calculation revealed a total of 312 verl d’or and 26 coppet.

Franca leaned against a collapsed pillar in the shadows, her eyes fixed on the mysterious dark wooden box. “What the hell is this thing?”

It was obviously no ordinary container; its appearance suggested it held some kind of mysterious power.

Lumian and Anthony turned their attention to the Demoness of Pleasure simultaneously.

Lumian chuckled, “I should be the one asking you that.”

Franca exclaimed, “There was nothing I could do. I couldn’t spare time for spirit channeling, and this place isn’t connected to the real spirit world. I can’t perform Magic Mirror Divination. To understand the abilities, effects, state, and potential drawbacks of these two items, I’ll have to experiment with them myself repeatedly.

“Of course, if we encounter an Artisan, many of our problems might be solved.”

She gestured towards Jenna, saying, “Just like the black Primordial Demoness figurine, it undoubtedly has other functions. For instance, it allows the holder to create Mirror Substitution. As for mine, apart from providing a certain anti-divination and early warning effect, it can only be used as a supplicant during rituals.

“They’re both figurines, differing only in color and orientation. Why such a significant disparity?”

Franca avoided mentioning why she didn’t employ various methods to gather information about the black Primordial Demoness figurine. The unspoken understanding among the group was clear—in their current situation, ensuring their safety took precedence over risking injury or adverse effects to test their spoils of war. Any mishap could lead to dire consequences, potentially even death in the experiment.

As a heavy silence settled among Jenna and the others, Franca sighed inwardly.

The black figurine clearly is problematic, and its mysterious origin is intriguing. It explains why the Demoness Sect wants me to investigate

what Gardner had smuggled in through the underground tunnels…

If I hand it over, will the Demoness Sect reward me with the Affliction potion and pledge assistance for my ritual, or will they choose to silence me?

Lumian stroked his chin, addressing Anthony Reid, “In that case, keep the verl d’or. We’ll distribute the remaining spoils of war when we return to the surface.”

Anthony inquired further, “Should we wrap it in a cloak and place it on the ground before taking it when we leave?”

Lumian smiled and gestured at the charred bone flute,

“Otherwise? You can also carry it with you. This way, we might witness the abilities of a Deceased. Philip died in a hurry and didn’t have time to show us.

“Of course, judging from his condition at the time of death, the holder of the item will most likely be the recipient of those abilities in the form of a curse.”

Anthony, unfazed by the mockery, pulled up the blood-stained and tattered black cloak, wrapping it around the bone flute and the small wooden box once more.

Lumian, with a thoughtful expression, poked his head out and looked at the abnormally narrow street.

“If we encounter an enemy we find challenging to handle later, we can consider throwing these two items to him. It might have a miraculous effect. General Philip will be very pleased to know that he would still be of use after death.”

It might bring about a curse of fate!

Despite the tense atmosphere, Lumian’s constant mockery of General Philip brought a slight amusement to Jenna.

“Dammit, General Philip is already dead. There’s no need to harp on about him.”

Before Lumian could respond to Jenna, two tragic screams pierced the air.

The cries emanated from the same location, filled with undisguised fear.

Soon after, two figures rushed into the narrow street, as if pursuing an unidentified flying object hovering in the air.

Franca, alongside Lumian, peered out of the shadows, her expression freezing at the sight.

The two figures, a man and a woman, were decapitated, their necks mangled, devoid of any signs of bones.

Chasing them were two heads, displaying pure fear and dragging bloody, tail-like spines behind them.

One head belonged to a man with puffed-up cheeks resembling a squirrel. He chewed on long, thick black hair that emerged from his dark brown eyes, nostrils, and ears. Similar hair grew from the headless body chasing him, denser and more exaggerated, resembling seaweed.

The other head belonged to a beautiful woman with black hair and brown eyes. She flew forward frantically, coughing and shaking out resplendent starlight. Gravel in the surroundings, sent flying by the pursuit, swayed as if in slow motion.

Suddenly, the two heads and bodies, about to climb over a collapsed building and exit the narrow street, froze.

The heads shook in confusion, attempting to dispel a discomfort. The headless corpses raised their hands, clutching their left chests.

In mere seconds, the two heads, with bloody spines trailing behind them, plummeted into the collapsed black house, their bodies crashing onto the stacked rocks.

A heavy silence fell upon Lumian and the others.

After a few seconds, Lumian scoffed, “See, this is what happens when

you venture deep into Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Do you suspect they're residents of the Hostel?" Jenna inquired thoughtfully.

Lumian replied with a smirk, "Otherwise? "Where else could you find such fresh heads and bodies in an ancient ruin that's been buried for a millennium or two?"

This brought back memories of Supervisor Olson. He had been in this state when he first appeared.

Now, Lumian was almost certain that Olson was a true monster, with a head and body that could be separated.

Franca also recalled Gardner Martin's servants. She withdrew her gaze and pondered for a moment before stating,

"Why do bodiless heads still cough, as if they're sick…? What happened to them at the end seems like a cerebral infarction. The two headless bodies show signs of cardiac arrest.

"Is this the work of the Sick Church's evil god's bestowed, or is there another murderer?

"Right, a Sequence 5 of the Demoness pathway is called Affliction. It can spread various illnesses, and I can enter this place with the Primordial Demoness figurine and the ancient silver mirror…

"This place clearly has a lot to do with the Demoness pathway. Could the high-level power leaking out cause monsters to fall ill and die?"

"Not bad. You still have some intelligence at critical moments," Lumian praised mockingly.

Jenna, on the other hand, rejoiced.

"Fortunately, we didn't venture too deep. Otherwise, who knows when we'd fall ill and die."

Lumian smiled at her.

“Why do you think we’re not currently surrounded by disease?”

“B-but we didn’t cough…” Jenna’s voice trailed off as she glanced at the hidden pocket of her clothes.

Inside was the pitch-black Primordial Demoness figurine.

Franca also peered into her pocket, as if she could discern the bone-carved Primordial Demoness figurine through the fabric.

Anthony turned to Lumian and sought confirmation,

“Are you suggesting that the Fourth Epoch’s Trier is plagued with illnesses, and we’re unharmed because we’re carrying the two figurines?”

Lumian spread his hands and said,

“I believe this explanation makes more sense.”

…

Beyond the gray fog, at the edge of the Fourth Epoch’s Trier ruins.

In the small brown suitcase, Gardner Martin’s blood-stained face suddenly opened, revealing Gardner Martin clad in silver armor, reflected in its eyes. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

It opened its mouth and expelled a blazing white fireball.

The distance between them was so close that Gardner Martin couldn’t dodge at all. All he could do was lean back, attempting to avoid the target’s initial attack.

Boom! Gardner Martin was sent flying by the massive explosion.

The spiderweb-like crack on the chest of the silver armor shattered, tearing through the skin and flesh below.

This strike was akin to hitting Gardner Martin’s vital points. Had it not been for the Pride Armor, which absorbed most of the damage, he would have perished on the spot.

However, this meant that the Pride Armor lost its protection over the chest for a period.

Gardner Martin's bloodied head flew up, dragging along a bloody spine.

On the other side, Olson's headless corpse stood up once more.

Gardner Martin's head aimed for the empty neck stump and inserted the ghastly white spine.

Amidst a cracking sound, this "Gardner Martin," seemingly from hell, twisted his neck and smiled sinisterly at Gardner Martin, who had already changed positions and condensed a large number of crimson Fire Ravens that were nearly white.

"Olson is long dead. I've been controlling his head and body.

"In the future, I'll replace you."

…

In the wilderness, the ground trembled violently, and blazing cracks slithered into the distance like fiery serpents.

The figures of Magician and Justice appeared.

Chapter 483 - 483 Hidden History

483 Hidden History

Dressed in a white shirt with a knot and a beige dress, Magician fixed her gaze upon the menacing hurricane that bridged the gap between sky and earth. Her eyes glittered, as if concealing the vast cosmos.

“Vermonda Sauron is indeed a Sequence 1 Conqueror. It’s no wonder He could influence generations of the Sauron family after losing control and going underground. It’s no wonder the Sauron family, once a royal lineage, swiftly declined,” Magician mused, sighing.

Justice, inquisitive, asked, “I wonder how the former leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, and Emperor Roselle played a role in Vermonda Sauron losing control and entering the Fourth Epoch Trier. The Sauron branch, wielding Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, obstinately believes that they harmed Vermonda, causing the Conqueror to lose control. The former even left a prophecy to mislead generations of Sauron family members.”

Magician chuckled and replied, “Based on the information Lumian gathered and my research into the seal, the issue deep within Red Swan Castle’s underground maze doesn’t seem like something Zaratul or Emperor Roselle could create. Only a Weather Warlock and a Conqueror can resonate abnormally with Fourth Epoch Trier day after day, creating dangerous changes in corresponding places. Zaratul and Emperor Roselle likely exploited the problems that Red Swan Castle and Vermonda Sauron already had.”

While she spoke, the Tarot Club’s Major Arcana card holder shifted her gaze away from the hurricane sweeping through the world and focused on Fourth Epoch Trier, veiled in a thin gray fog.

The starlight in her eyes remained, as if she sought something to pinpoint her next target. She didn't abruptly halt and engage in conversation at a crucial moment.

Justice nodded in agreement and remarked, "If it were me, I wouldn't venture further into Trier after becoming an Angel to minimize the abnormal influence the underground might have on me. Vermonda Sauron disregarded hidden dangers and stayed in Red Swan Castle for an extended period. He must have had a strong desire for something in Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Didn't the Sauron family construct the White Maple Palace outside Trier? Previously, Vermonda's royal family resided there and rarely returned to Trier." Magician brought up the fact that the Sauron family was aware of the issue before adding, "Zaratul likely played a significant role in Vermonda Sauron's situation. As you know, He is an Archangel of the Seer pathway. Without His 'assistance,' it wouldn't have been easy for Vermonda Sauron—even as a Conqueror—to create a leak in the seal. He entered Fourth Epoch Trier after losing control. Back then, the seal's effects weren't as potent as they were a few years ago. There was no need for modifications."

Justice pondered for a moment and said, "What I'm more curious about is who designed the Hostel ritual. Their use of mysticism similarities and loopholes resembles that of high-level Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder Beyonders. Or perhaps they have had long interactions with these high-level Beyonders and were adept at learning."

"Perhaps the corresponding pathway of the Deceased excels in this as well. Perhaps it's secretly influenced by that Celestial Worthy, or perhaps that entity wants to use the temporary opening of the seal to do something. As you know, the Iron and Blood Cross Order used to believe in Him. It's too easy for Him to mislead us," Magician mused, uncertain of the right answer.

Starlight flickered in her eyes; she found it challenging to observe and determine the situation in the thin gray fog. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

As Magician scrutinized Fourth Epoch Trier, she informed Justice,

“The level of the catacombs’ seal corresponds to this location.

“At its heart lies the Samaritan Women’s Spring, where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor met His end. The razed imperial palace and its surroundings harbor diverse dangers. The lingering divine power is unimpressive and consumable. Sigh, every time I bring up something of this sort, it feels like I should adopt a more vulgar vocabulary. Only then can I truly capture my sentiments about the Blood Emperor’s lunacy.

“Hence, you won’t unearth anything significant from here. Only upon approaching will you discern that Mr. Fool’s gray fog has grown denser, thicker, and more palpable.

“The catacombs’ fourth and third levels correspond to Fourth Epoch Trier, excluding that specific area. Corruption and divine power still linger abundantly. Navigating certain areas demands adherence to specific rules; otherwise, even Angels may meet Their demise.

“The two levels above the catacombs correlate with the wilderness beyond the gray fog. Humans can traverse them to a certain extent, but with Vermonda Sauron lingering, the danger rivals that of the Fourth Epoch Trier…”

Just as Magician concluded her words, a frenzied and terrifying roar echoed from the area where the weather had dramatically shifted.

The formless flames that illuminated the surroundings and shrouded the entire “sky” seemed to be influenced, coalescing into a massive vortex.

Within the vortex, shapeless and translucent flames descended from above, striking the wilderness like a colossal sword that pierced through heaven and earth.

Amidst this chaos, the ground quaked even more violently. Fiery crevices extended further towards Fourth Epoch Trier, concealed within the gray fog.

Magician remained unperturbed as she observed the splendid yet dilapidated city for a while.

Then, she said to Justice, “Let’s enter.”

Justice tersely acknowledged, offering no objections.

Both of them tacitly avoided mentioning Vermonda Sauron, an Archangel who had lost control—a Conqueror. They had no intention of joining the battle or seizing the Beyonder characteristic.

For them, the Tarot Club’s primary goal in this matter was to prevent the evil gods’ bestowed from approaching the innermost seal, ensuring they couldn’t leak the danger within which would affect Trier aboveground and the entire world.

Furthermore, they sought the lost Minor Arcana card holders to guide them out.

As for the Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, symbolizing an Archangel and Sequence 1, as long as it didn’t fall into the hands of heretics, obtaining it wasn’t a particularly grave issue for anyone. Magician didn’t mind observing and, if the opportunity arose, pilfering the gains. However, she wasn’t a high-level Beyonder of the Marauder pathway capable of dividing herself and participating in every battlefield.

Despite achieving a similar effect by moving back and forth, she had to respect Mr. Fool’s gray fog and the core seal of Fourth Epoch Trier. Corresponding restrictions were undoubtedly in place.

Starlight blossomed, and Magician and Justice vanished. The thin gray fog enshrouding Fourth Epoch Trier undulated.

…

As soon as Gardner Martin’s head—nestled over Olson’s headless corpse—finished speaking, a multitude of blazing white fireballs materialized around him, hurtling towards Gardner Martin, who had suffered a chest wound.

In the midst of the rumbling explosion, Gardner Martin’s figure in the silver armor suddenly vanished.

After the shockwave subsided, he reappeared in a corner of the ruins.

Then, he witnessed the other “him” merge with the blazing white flaming spear, which burrowed into the thin gray fog and disappeared into the randomly scattered buildings of Fourth Epoch Trier.

Gardner Martin’s pupils constricted, and he was about to give chase when a violent and furious roar echoed from afar.

His entire body froze. Blood vessels beneath the visor on his face appeared, dark red as if flowing with flames.

Instinctively, Gardner Martin turned and prepared to sprint towards the distant apocalypse-like hurricane.

The space between his eyebrows twitched, and a faint red dot appeared.

Gardner Martin finally regained control of himself. He took a deep breath and returned to normal.

He gazed in the direction the other “him” had fled and muttered in a self-deprecating tone, “Were those harsh words and all-out attacks meant to make it easier for him to escape? As expected of me. Do you realize that failing to assassinate me means staying here means I’ll inevitably kill you?”

As Gardner Martin muttered to himself, he produced a canister made of dark glass, its liquid a green hue reminiscent of grass.

He unscrewed the cap and downed half the canister. The wound on his chest began to heal at a visible rate.

It was a healing agent concocted by a Madame of the Nightstalkers, obtained by Gardner Martin through Philip.

Philip, who had united numerous evil god cults, had no shortage of similar items, but under the Hurricane of Light, the fragile canisters shattered.

After stowing away the remaining half canister of the agent, Gardner Martin, clad in silver-white full-body armor, ventured into the thin gray fog and Fourth Epoch Trier.

…

In the cover of a narrow street, behind a collapsed building, Franca hissed in agreement with Lumian's conjecture.

"That's right. This is a true relic from a divine war, and it's even more dangerous. It's entirely possible that the entire city is riddled with ailments."

She suspected that the closer she got to the place where Blood Emperor Alista Tudor had met his end, the more peculiar and horrifying the ailments became. Some seemed to have sprouted from the decaying corpses of deities. Ignoring Low-Sequence Beyonders whose bodies didn't fundamentally differ from ordinary humans, even Saints and Angels would likely succumb to the "disease" and perish.

Franca paused for a moment before suggesting to Jenna, "Why don't you give the black figurine to Anthony for safekeeping? It might be dangerous for you to hold it, and he can use that item to create his own Mirror Substitution, effectively increasing his chances of survival."

Franca couldn't shake the feeling that it wasn't a wise decision for a female Demoness like Jenna to possess a Primordial Demoness figurine, whether it was the genuine article or the mirrored version.

Without waiting for Jenna's response, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "It's better if Jenna holds it. She has the lucky gold coin."

"That's true…" Just as Franca finished speaking, she suddenly heard a chime not far away.

It resembled the bell of a bicycle, yet it was clearer and rang out for a longer duration.

Chapter 484 - 484 Mockery

484 Mockery

Franca wasn't surprised at all, even though she wondered why so many things were happening in this damn place.

This was Fourth Epoch Trier. Even if it wasn't a land of a fallen god, it wouldn't lack abnormalities!

Lumian and the others cautiously emerged from their concealment, peering from different vantage points toward the source of the chimes.

The location wasn't distant, yet the fog in that direction seemed unusually dense. The structures loomed faintly, as though just a fragment of history had materialized.

Within the fog's depths, a contraption reminiscent of a steam locomotive glided by without a fuss. It sported only two carriages, lacking a smokestack. Peculiar frames extended from the top, linking it to something suspended in midair.

Ding ding ding. The train ventured into a zone of even thicker fog, disappearing from view.

Although Franca and her companions couldn't discern the details clearly, an unexplained dread seized them, akin to standing on the precipice or treading on blades piercing their skin.

Before they could contemplate the ramifications of the fog's metamorphosis and the arrival of these peculiar objects, their surroundings plunged into a profound darkness. Dusk gave way, and night loomed.

A dense fog cloaked the area.

Lumian, sensing an unsettling disturbance, yearned to evade it, but the abnormal fog, tainted with a dark hue, obstructed any attempt to “teleport” to an unaffected area. Beyond the fog, the wilderness they came from eluded his senses.

The cold fog permeated their skin, prompting involuntary shivers from Franca and Jenna.

Almost simultaneously, the narrow street came alive with the flickering of candle flames and oil lamps. Laughter, cries, and voices erupted, transforming the once-silent surroundings.

Fourth Epoch Trier burst into vibrant life, resonating with clamor and the pulsations of existence.

Anthony, without conscious thought, surveyed the diverse houses and narrow streets, catching sight of an asymmetrical, pitch-black building. Candlesticks dangled from above, casting light upon the figure standing at the window.

The figure donned a black bonnet, with one side sunken and the other protruding. Dark clothes adorned him, with buttons haphazardly fastened, and a smooth wound diagonally sliced his body from shoulder to waist.

Evidently caused by a sharp broadsword. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

In that moment, the man’s diagonally cleaved body resembled a child’s stacked building blocks, not properly assembled.

He nonchalantly nibbled at a meat pie, chewed morsels falling from the wound to the ground, yet he remained oblivious.

Additional figures emerged in other habitable houses.

Some appeared like melted candles that had solidified once more, their flesh viscous and indistinct. Others had pale-white skin, and greasy white feathers sprouted from their pores, oozing yellowish pus. Some had tiny holes in their bodies, with black insects flying in and out. There were those reduced to white skeletons, with only a mismatched human-skinned mask covering their faces. Some had

degenerated into black shadows, as if burned…

On the narrow street, a yellow, blue, and red sphere, about half the height of an adult human, rolled forward. An inverted clown, dressed in exaggerated clothes, stood atop it.

The clown's ears were unlike those of a human, dog-like and slightly pointed. Dark gray hair covered his red-yellow-painted face.

These are the long-dead citizens of Fourth Epoch Trier? Lumian's eyelids twitched.

He, Franca, and the others also observed the bloodstained faces and cold expressions of these figures.

"Very similar, very similar to those Mirror People…" Franca muttered to herself before exclaiming in horror, "Could the gray fog's transformation have transported us to the Fourth Epoch Trier in the mirror? The citizens of Fourth Epoch Trier in reality are dead, but the ones in the mirror are still alive?"

Before she could finish, Lumian and Anthony's gazes turned toward her and Jenna.

"Could it be that it's the problem with those two things again?" Franca's scalp tingled as she said, "Did they cause us to be devoured by the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier after the gray fog transformed?"

"That's not it. I believe it's a universal abnormality. Apart from a few special individuals who enter this place, they all arrive in the mirror ruins after being enveloped by the expanding gray fog." Lumian observed the narrow street brimming with vitality, pondering for a moment. "The most likely possibility is that the two figurines triggered Fourth Epoch Trier, causing changes like the gray fog's expansion."

Jenna fell silent for a moment before frowning.

"But we've been here for a while. Why did something only happen now? We didn't do anything just now…"

"That's right!" Franca suddenly realized. "Those Hostel residents

must have triggered something while wandering around after their entry!”

As soon as Franca finished speaking, a hoarse and terrified shout echoed nearby.

“Help!

“Save me!”

Lumian and his companions turned their attention toward the voice and witnessed a man in a black formal suit, his hair neatly combed like a prominent figure’s secretary, sprinting down the narrow street.

His face was marred by abscesses, oozing mucus. Occasionally, he turned his head 180 degrees, his eyes filled with fear as if a formless and terrifying entity pursued him.

“Save me!”

Amidst his cries, the man’s body suddenly froze, and he involuntarily retreated. His retreat accelerated until he lifted off.

“Ah!”

Amidst intense screams, he plunged into the dense gray fog and the shadowy buildings.

In the next moment, the voice abruptly ceased, and silence enveloped that area.

Lumian and the others’ hearts pounded with a strong sense of danger.

Despite the man in the black suit not being an ordinary person, suspected to be the bestowed of an evil god from the Order of All Extinction or the Sick Church, and having been corrupted by this place to a certain extent, allowing him to turn his head 180o, Lumian, Anthony, and their companions still felt the terror lurking in the depths of the gray fog.

It was as if they could already envision themselves being “dragged” into the gray fog and vanishing.

However, at that moment, they had no idea what to do or how to hide. Dense black gray fog surrounded the suspected mirror ruins, and unknown dangers loomed in the shadows, quietly approaching.

At that moment, Termiboros's majestic voice resonated in Lumian's ears:

"Keep running until you reach that pillar. Don't stop on the way. Don't turn back. Don't teleport. Don't pull your companions."

Isn't… isn't that the direction where the monster was "devoured"? If we take the initiative to approach, wouldn't we be sending ourselves as food to its doorstep? Lumian grappled with uncertainty, unsure if Termiboros had sensed real danger and planned to intervene or if He was exploiting the opportunity to advance His own agenda.

"You can choose not to believe it," Termiboros's deep voice added.

Despite his suspicions, Lumian's gaze remained fixed on the spot where the evil god bestowed's figure had been "devoured."

Deep within the gray fog, amidst looming, collapsed, and towering buildings, a hazy black pillar stretched into the sky.

Suddenly, Lumian recalled something.

At the entrance of the fourth level of the catacombs—Krismona Night Pillar.

As for Krismona, she was a high-ranking Demoness who had perished during the War of the Four Emperors in Fourth Epoch Trier!

She was even a child of God, a true child of the Primordial Demoness… This place is suspected to be the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier… Lumian surveyed the surroundings and saw that the situation elsewhere was similar. He gritted his teeth and said, "Let's move forward! To the black pillar!"

The sense of danger intensified, pushing Lumian to make a decisive gamble.

Move forward? Franca, Jenna, and Anthony were brimming with

questions about Lumian's choice.

Everyone had witnessed the chilling fate of the man in the formal suit!

Lumian stood tall and declared in a commanding voice, "Jenna, carry the spoils of war. Don't stop, don't turn around, and don't pull any of our companions!"

Upon finishing his sentence, he darted out of his hiding spot.

Given the specificity of Lumian's instructions, Franca cast a glance at him and chose to trust his judgment.

Jenna tightened her grip on the lucky gold coin, hoisted the cloak containing the spoils of war, and followed suit. Anthony, having exacted his revenge, harbored no regrets or obsessions. Lumian had proven his correctness multiple times, so he didn't question him and trailed closely.

Thud! Thud! Thud! The quartet sprinted down the narrow street, passing by the inverted clown, who rolled forward on the ball at a deliberate pace. They plunged into the depths of the gray fog, heading towards the black pillar.

…

In a corner of Fourth Epoch Trier, in front of a black iron-like house adorned with a red pattern, a wilderness overgrown with weeds had been condensed to the size of an ordinary square.

Within a dark-red open carriage in the wilderness, Lady Moon, draped in a loose white robe and a light-colored veil, queried Madame Pualis, who stood beside her, "What's wrong?"

Madame Pualis, dressed in black with her head covered by her right hand, replied, "I can hear my child crying again…"

Lady Moon nodded gently and offered reassurance, "That's unavoidable. Rest here and catch up when you've recovered."

"Are you sure you can handle it alone?" Madame Pualis's facial

muscles twitched and distorted intermittently.

Lady Moon smiled and responded, “My child left me a gift. Don’t worry.”

She didn’t consider Madame Night to be of much help in this matter. Madame Night could enter because she needed to stay at the Sacred Heart Cloister to draw attention and couldn’t remain in the Hostel.

“Alright,” Madame Pualis said regretfully.

After Lady Moon’s carriage and the wilderness departed, Madame Night’s expression quickly returned to normal.

Lady Moon’s carriage, pulled by two Demon-like creatures, advanced for a while before the gray fog thickened and expanded.

Her eyes narrowed as a blood-stained umbilical cord materialized in her hand.

The umbilical cord emitted a brilliant golden sunlight, warding off all corrosion and influence.

Thus, Lady Moon successfully reached the periphery of the land of a fallen god. The gray fog here stood as dense as a wall.

Attempting to approach, she found herself blocked, akin to an ordinary person encountering an impenetrable barrier.

Lady Moon felt a compelling force but couldn’t proceed any further.

She whispered in surprise and confusion, “How could this be…”

As she pondered to herself, Lady Moon surveyed her surroundings.

Suddenly, her gaze froze.

On the surface of a nearby half-collapsed palace-like structure, a flamboyant red color seized the wall, outlined in a bloody state: “Didn’t anyone tell you that there’s another seal here?”

Chapter 485 - 485 Night Pillar

485 Night Pillar

The intensifying gray fog at the core that spread to every corner of Fourth Epoch Trier didn't faze Gardner Martin, wrapped in sleek silver-white full-body armor. Instead of alarm, delight surged within him. Since the invasion of the power from Building 13 on Avenue du Marché, and being able to hear the great voice, such scenes had frequented his dreams. It felt like returning home, the door wide open for him.

Without hesitation, Gardner Martin sprinted toward the heart of Fourth Epoch Trier, heading for the land of the fallen god.

…

Through a street so narrow that the residents in the houses on both sides could almost reach out and shake hands, Lumian and his companions sprinted forward.

After only a dozen steps, Lumian sensed an intangible force emanating from the pitch-black gray fog. It was like the countless arms of a terrifying entity, gently and methodically caressing every living being to determine its prey.

Lumian's scalp tingled. Even with his clothes providing cover, goosebumps erupted where the formless entity touched him.

Instinctively, he wanted to resist, but then he remembered Termiboros's words.

"Don't stop. Don't turn back. Don't teleport. Don't pull your companions!"

While this didn't explicitly mention resisting, defending, or attacking,

Lumian felt it wise to observe and wait for developments.

Suppressing the urge to incinerate the formless entities, he compelled himself to move forward.

Jenna, by his side, and Franca and Anthony behind him, closely monitored Lumian. If he didn't act, neither did they. If he did, they would quickly follow suit.

Observing Lumian refraining from confronting the formless entity in the dim gray fog, they braced themselves, enduring the intense and danger-filled caresses.

In the midst of this, Franca found the formless object somewhat familiar.

Recalling the suspicion that this place was the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier, closely linked to the Demoness pathway, she quickly had an answer.

It bore a striking resemblance to a Demoness of Pleasure's spider silk!

Could it be left behind by a high-level Demoness? Franca imagined a scene: a colossal pitch-black, half-human spider, nestled silently in the depths of the gray fog, extending spider silk that seemed to possess a life of its own, attempting to locate and capture its prey. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

After covering more than ten steps in a sprint, Lumian was pleasantly surprised to notice the formless entity slowly retracting. It no longer actively caressed him, but given their dense presence, occasional brushes or touches were inevitable.

This change appeared to be a response to his proactive approach towards the source of the formless entities.

These formless entities seemed to single out those attempting to escape!

Upon breaking free from the narrow street and delving into the thick gray fog, Lumian suddenly felt his hair stand on end, a chilling sensation running down his spine.

His intuition warned of immense danger ahead, a threat capable of obliterating them all. The consequences of getting closer were beyond imagination.

Franca and the others involuntarily slowed down. The horror felt palpable, like a loaded revolver pressed against their foreheads, poised to fire at any moment.

Lumian clenched his teeth and pressed on.

Having chosen to trust Termiboros's advice, he needed to endure until there was evidence to the contrary. Otherwise, he might as well do something else from the beginning!

He didn't halt, and Jenna and the others didn't dare to either. They resembled fools aware of an impending cliff, understanding their insignificance, yet choosing to rush forward, like an idiot.

At that moment, Lumian caught sight from the corner of his eye of black flames erupting over Jenna's body. Pain etched her face, fear mirrored in her eyes.

Crack! Jenna shattered like a mirror, only to reappear, still engulfed in black flames and frost.

Her eyes pleaded with Lumian.

Instinctively, Lumian raised his left hand, as if to aid Jenna. However, a brief moment of hesitation swept over him, and he withdrew his hand, fixing his gaze ahead.

Don't pull companions!

Despair, surprise, and resentment filled Jenna's eyes instantly.

She coughed and came to a standstill.

Swiftly ensnared by the formless entities, she was dragged deeper into the gray fog.

Franca, witnessing this, had an immediate change in expression, ready to offer assistance when Lumian's instructions flashed through

her mind.

She hesitated.

In that moment, Jenna's expression transformed into one of pure hatred, blood seeping from the pores on her face. A shrill scream escaped her lips, akin to a curse echoing towards everyone.

Seeing this, Lumian and the others experienced a strange sense of relief.

This Jenna seemed more like a Mirror Person!

Amidst the shrill scream, Jenna vanished into the depths of the gray fog, her voice abruptly silenced.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian caught Jenna in his peripheral vision, sprinting beside him with an anxious and nervous expression.

As expected! Lumian roughly comprehended why Termiboros had cautioned against pulling companions.

In this realm, a companion could seamlessly switch with their mirror counterpart at any moment. Assisting the "Mirror Person" risked harm to their true companion, leading to complete assimilation into this place, becoming "food" for the entity at the source of the formless objects.

Dammit! Couldn't you be more explicit? These reasons aren't particularly intricate. You insist on us experiencing them ourselves and overcoming them! Cursing Termiboros inwardly, Lumian pressed on with even more determination.

In the subsequent encounters, similar challenges arose multiple times. Yet, armed with experience, they refrained from resisting or attempting escape. They resisted the impulse to aid their companions.

Lumian and the others, focused on their path, ran straight using the black pillar as a guide. Occasionally, they bypassed obstacles.

Finally, the black pillar loomed not far ahead.

Simultaneously, Lumian, Anthony, and the rest were astonished to find that the imminent danger, on the verge of colliding with them, had mysteriously vanished.

No, it hadn't disappeared. It was now behind Lumian and the group —distant!

Running toward danger results in moving away from it? Just like the pale-black stone brick area in the wilderness, the direction here is twisted and chaotic? Amid Lumian's surprise, he didn't glance back, nor did he pause to celebrate. He persisted, sprinting toward the black pillar.

Had he not set a resolute example, Franca and Jenna might have turned around. Nonetheless, they pressed forward, a sense of relief mingling with lingering fear.

After covering dozens of meters, the quartet reached the square where the black pillar stood.

The ground was paved with pale-black stone bricks, and numerous grayish-white stone pillars lay in ruins, only a few remnants remaining.

Compared to the black pillars, these "surviving" grayish-white stone pillars were as inconspicuous as ants.

The colossal black pillar surpassed even the Krismona Night Pillar Lumian had witnessed on the third level of the catacombs. It stretched into the sky, seeming to burn with formless flames, its destination shrouded in mystery.

The scene brought to Lumian's mind the pale-black stone bricks in the wilderness outside and the numerous grayish-white stone pillars in the vicinity, but nothing akin to the black pillar.

Had the Night Pillar in the wilderness collapsed and been destroyed? Did that event lead to the old bones crawling out, causing the corruption in Building 13 on Avenue du Marché? Was it then mended by constructing the catacombs and relocating countless corpses? Lumian ventured a guess based on these thoughts.

Franca and Jenna surveyed the square ahead, observing that the area surrounding the black pillar had sunk into the ground. Below, there seemed to be white magma flowing, and faint black tentacles lurked.

Though there were no explicit warnings of danger, Lumian and the others sensed that this might be even more dangerous than the entity they had previously encountered.

Next to the black pillar stood a 1.78-meter-tall snowman. Its frosty face, cracked to form eyes, nose, and mouth, lacked ears.

As Lumian's gaze nonchalantly swept across the snowman, it abruptly froze.

He noticed a dark stain on the snowman's right eye, as if it wore a monocle.

Amon? Lumian startled, a desire to flee taking hold.

At that moment, Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in his ears.

"It's dead."

Dead… Lumian breathed a sigh of relief.

It made sense. Amon, a nobleman of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire, wouldn't be exempt from the casualties of the divine war. It was plausible that dozens, even hundreds of avatars perished back then. Retrieving them might not have been feasible in the circumstances.

For some reason, Lumian detected a trace of joy in Termiboros's concise words.

Observing the snowman, Anthony suddenly felt his forehead heat up, and his breath turned hot. His Spirit Body rapidly weakened.

"I'm infected," he calmly informed his companions.

Ailment… Lumian glanced at the black pillar again.

Could this be the true form of the Krismona Night Pillar?

Even the figurine of the Primordial Demoness can't stem the corruption of ailments in this place?

Franca's heart skipped a beat as she instructed Jenna, "Take out that figurine."

Simultaneously, she reached into her pocket and pulled out the Primordial Demoness figurine crafted from bone.

After Jenna handed her the black one, Franca motioned for Anthony to come closer and observed his expression.

"How do you feel now?"

"It seems better. I'm… I'm getting better." Anthony scrutinized his physical condition earnestly.

Franca smiled.

"I knew it. How could Jenna and I be fine, but you're sick?

"Looks like we have to maintain a certain distance from the figurines."

As soon as she finished speaking, blazing white Fire Ravens soared out from behind the black pillar, hurtling toward them.

Then, a figure emerged. It was Gardner Martin, attired in a black formal suit and yellow vest, an unusual sight.

His gaze fixed on the black figurine in Jenna's hand and the bone statue in Franca's, revealing a longing expression.

Chapter 486 - 486 The Mirror People's Conspiracy

486 The Mirror People's Conspiracy

As the blazing-white Fire Ravens erupted from behind the black pillar, Lumian's reflexes kicked in.

While Franca, engrossed in deciphering the cause of Anthony's ailment, Lumian seemingly engaged in the discussion. Yet, beneath the facade, he—a Hunter—maintained a vigilant stance, keenly aware of his surroundings.

In this dangerous and ominous setting, he couldn't afford to focus solely on conversation.

Lumian thrust his palms towards the oncoming blazing-white Fire Ravens. In a swift motion, a colossal crimson fireball materialized, hastily intercepting the impending assault.

However, before it could reach its target, the unstable structure caused it to detonate.

Amidst the explosive chaos, a shockwave, laced with flames, surged forward and sideways, engulfing nearly all the blazing-white Fire Ravens like a torrent.

Confronting the fiery wave head-on, the Fire Ravens staggered, losing stability in the storm. They prematurely blossomed, transforming into a dazzling display of fireworks.

The Fire Ravens circling from the side were also affected by the explosive waves, deviating from their intended trajectories or being partially extinguished.

Hunters, particularly those at higher Sequences like Pyromaniac and Conspirer, proved unparalleled in defending against the swarm attacks of Fire Ravens.

Thanks to this interference, Franca and Jenna, both Assassins, along with the Psychiatrist, Anthony Reid, effortlessly dodged the tracking-capable, blazing-white Fire Ravens. They observed as these dangerous projectiles landed on the ground, setting off fiery eruptions.

In the blink of an eye, Franca vanished, and Jenna swiftly moved toward the nearest grayish-white stone pillar. She scattered fluorescent powder and chanted the Invisibility incantation in Hermes.

Anthony, seemingly back in the fray, rolled and sprinted, encircling another relatively intact grayish-white stone pillar in an attempt to find cover.

Lumian maintained his position, hands poised to push forward. His golden-black hair swirled in the ordinary "gust of wind" that followed the massive fireball's explosion.

Looking at Gardner Martin, unusually tall and face marked with bloodstains, Lumian taunted, "Is this your way of greeting? Sending a swarm of Fire Ravens to welcome us? Hey, what's with the change in appearance and the missing armor? Are you the mirror's Gardner Martin?"

Gardner Martin, donned in a black formal suit and yellow vest, ceased his attack. Instead, he paused and sneered, "Sooner or later, I'll become the real Gardner Martin."

Observing the situation, Lumian didn't rush to "teleport" behind Gardner Martin. He chuckled and remarked, "So, you're admitting to being a counterfeit?"

His aim was to provoke and incite the other party, unraveling the motives of these Mirror People.

Surely, their purpose wasn't merely to replace genuine forms and

return to the real world for a serene life.

It had to be one of the objectives, but not the sole or primary one. The actions of a Mirror Person were too intricate for such a straightforward motive.

Mirror Gardner Martin scanned Lumian's surroundings, as if seeking the invisible Franca and Jenna.

In response to Lumian's mockery, he sneered and stated, "Counterfeit? We, the counterfeits, might be the only ones to secure victory and survive.

"Look at the Fourth Epoch Trier, destroyed and reduced to ruins. Yet, it persists within the mirror. All its citizens remain alive."

You call that living? Lumian Lumian refrained from interrupting the Mirror Gardner's resentful narrative.

The formidable Beyonder with a peculiar form chuckled.

"Counterfeit? Countless members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order you usually encounter are already on our side. They've emerged from the mirror, spawned since the unexpected seal incident decades ago and the ensuing power leak. We've been covertly engaging in similar activities.

"Otherwise, how would Gardner Martin, Tony Twain, and Diest have known about Vermonda Sauron's underground entrance into the seal? How would they have recognized it as a Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic? How could they have been so focused on exploring the underground and inadvertently influenced?"

"…" Lumian was taken aback.

So, this involves the plans of your Mirror People?

Damn it, how many factions are entangled in this, and how many conspiracies are woven together?

While Gardner's words in the mirror shed light on the murky situation, making many details more plausible, Lumian still found it

absurd.

Aren't there too many factions and conspiracies? And behind these conspiracies, even more conspiracies, as intricate as spiderwebs!

Mirror Gardner's expression returned to normal as he smiled and said,

"Ever wonder how the Iron and Blood Cross Order discovered the black figurine? How did they realize they could exploit the uniqueness of this mirror world to bypass the seal?

"Do you dare to keep carrying that figurine? It holds no practical value for you. Why not hand it over to me, and I'll let you leave this mirror world?

"Don't worry; you're not Gardner Martin. I can't replace you. I harbor no insurmountable malice towards you."

So, were the Fire Ravens from earlier merely a greeting? Lumian laughed and inquired, "Essentially, that figurine holds great value for you? What do you people intend to do with it?"

Lumian suspected that the Iron and Blood Cross Order's discovery or acquisition of the black Primordial Demoness figurine was orchestrated by these Mirror People. Their plan was undoubtedly intricate.

Mirror Gardner's lips curled as he replied, "Did you think I'd tell you?"

"Whom do you people serve?" Lumian interjected.

As the Mirror Gardner's mouth opened, his expression suddenly darkened, and his eyes brimmed with hatred.

"That's all the answers!"

Observing the Mirror Gardner's sudden shift, Lumian had a profound realization that these Mirror People could maintain normalcy most of the time and seamlessly replace the originals. However, when certain matters arose, they couldn't suppress their monstrous side.

Mirror Gardner seemed poised to convince Lumian and the others to surrender the black Primordial Demoness figurine when a figure materialized behind him.

Franca, lacking an Assassin suit, revealed a Hidden Blade from her left wrist. Enveloped in black flames, she thrust it into Mirror Gardner's back, causing the blood-stained figure to shatter like a mirror.

He reappeared on the other side of the black pillar, on the fringe of the collapsed area, wearing a sinister smile. He declared, "You're stalling for time and completing preparations. Me too!"

As he finished speaking, a man emerged from the debris of a crumbled grayish-white stone pillar outside the collapsed area, dripping with magma.

His face bore bloodstains too, and his short flaxen-colored hair, along with slightly thick brown eyebrows, framed aqua-blue eyes and thin lips. Despite his unremarkable appearance, he uncannily resembled Franca.

Witnessing this figure, a phrase flashed through Franca's mind: "It's over…"

It was her past self, her former identity as a man!

Ever since Franca began suspecting that this area represented the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier, she harbored concerns that her past self would surface, exposing his true identity to Jenna. Now, her fears materialized. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

It's over. Social death… Franca's mind raced as a woman emerged from behind another intact grayish-white stone pillar.

Adorned in a white shirt, a black vest, and dark pants, her pure black hair cascading over her shoulders, she exuded an imposing beauty. Despite her deep and delicate facial features, her blue eyes betrayed a sense of mockery.

Uh, t-this is eerily similar to Ciel… The mirror version of him is a woman? Franca swiftly scanned her surroundings, concealing herself

again.

Behind different grayish-white stone pillars, two more figures emerged. One donned mercenary attire, with handsomely styled flaxen-colored hair, reminiscent of Jenna. The other wore military-green tops and bottoms, exuding a mature charm with a slightly plump figure. Beautiful with eyes as deep as an ancient forest pond.

Dammit! A male version of Jenna and a female version of Anthony! Anthony looks even more handsome and charming! This is different from the mirror world outside! Franca felt puzzled yet relieved.

This could provide a plausible explanation for “his” former appearance to resurface!

Lumian, equally perplexed by his mirror counterpart having a different gender, and the others weren’t experiencing the same thing as Franca. Even if the mirror reflected their past selves, it shouldn’t manifest like this.

If this was a fusion of a Demoness’s mirror world, the stacking of feminization, and one’s past, Jenna should be a woman, no matter what!

As Lumian’s thoughts raced, he considered the Hunter pathway’s ability to transform women into men, which was adjacent to the Demoness pathway.

Could it be that this mirror world is influenced by the Blood Emperor’s corpse or residual divine power? Is it akin to Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings—a power controlling these two pathways leaked, forming a unique mirror world that causes an overall reversal? Lumian didn’t delve too deeply into it, as Mirror Gardner and his four helpers attacked.

The “Mirror Person” in a black formal suit and yellow vest didn’t conceal his hatred, excitement, and desire.

…

In the wilderness, the entire ground seemed to sink two to three meters.

Diest's massive iron soldiers and yellowish-skinned giant entourage stood at the edge of the hurricane. Occasionally, one of them would self-destruct, reducing to fragments.

Despite the wary standoff between the president of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Snarner Einhorn, They directed Their attention to the mildly intelligent monster that appeared to have lost control and was more challenging to deal with.

In the intense battle, They managed to restrain or knock Vermonda Sauron to the ground two or three times, but They themselves were also affected, in a dire state that hindered Them from seizing the opportunity.

In the current moment, They found themselves temporarily disabled.

Suddenly, a surge of knowledge materialized into a beautiful woman wearing a brown captain's coat, with long chestnut hair and eyes resembling the blue sea.

Snarner, Diest, and the others' hearts tightened, fearing that the newcomer would take the initiative and ultimately claim the Conqueror Beyonder characteristic.

They all recognized the woman:

The eldest daughter of the deceased Emperor Roselle, Bernadette Gustav!

She, too, was an Angel!

Holding a pale-golden lamp, Bernadette observed the Angels' battle without direct involvement. Transforming into a torrent of knowledge once again, she surged towards the gray fog-shrouded Fourth Epoch Trier.

It was as if She had casually glanced at them while passing by.

"…" Snarner and Diest were initially taken aback by Her actions, but They swiftly regained Their composure and resumed their battle.

Chapter 487 - 487 Self-Confrontation

487 Self-Confrontation

In Fourth Epoch Trier, shrouded in a dense gray fog, Voisin Sanson, with thick blond locks, a well-kept beard, and deep-set features, yielded to the whims of destiny. He threaded through the chaotic streets, drawing nearer to the faintly discernible grand palace.

Abruptly, the stone slab beneath his feet shattered, and with swift precision, a skeletal hand shot up, seizing his ankle.

At the same instant, a knight adorned in jet-black armor charged on horseback. Wielding a broadsword ablaze in ghostly white flames, he slashed diagonally at Voisin Sanson.

Voisin Sanson's form swiftly morphed into an ethereal state, resilient against the onslaught of the pitch-black knight. However, with the passage of time, it gradually faded until it dissipated entirely.

His true self materialized almost 20 meters distant, fixating on the adversary.

Beneath the black visor of the knight, two dark-red flames flickered like candlelight. A grotesque wound, with pale-white intestines protruding, adorned its chest and abdomen. Perched on a desiccated white horse resembling a skeletal corpse,

the knight presided over a vast square wilderness. Within this expanse, myriad figures roamed. Some draped in white linen, their faces pallid and vacant. Others reduced to mere skeletons, while some concealed their visages behind masks of white paper.

On the fringes of the wilderness, a dark-red cradle-shaped carriage

advanced, drawn by two abyssal, Demon-like creatures boasting goat horns.

Seated within the carriage was the regal Madame Pualis. Adorned with a flower crown and a green dress, her long brown hair was elegantly tied high. Bright brown eyes gazed forth as she held a small bowl crafted from green jade in one hand and an oak branch entwined with mistletoe in the other.

“What do you want?” Voisin Sanson inquired with a calm, resonant voice.

Madame Pualis responded, her smile unwavering, “Revenge, naturally.”

Her eyes, once warm, gradually turned cold, but the grin on her face endured.

“Revenge…” Voisin Sanson echoed the word, a note of confusion in his voice. After a brief pause, he furrowed his brow and questioned, “For Aurore?”

In that moment, the undead and several Death Knights scattered across the wilderness withheld their attacks on Voisin Sanson, as if anticipating the emotional release sought by the Madame they served.

Seated within the carriage, Madame Pualis offered a self-deprecating smile.

“For a Villain, one-sided love is destined to be fleeting. Passion inevitably wanes quickly. Yet, she met her end during that brief period, becoming a thorn lodged deep in my heart, unextractable. The mere thought of it is painful, fueling my anger and resentment.

“And all of this was caused by you!

“I desired to strike when we crossed paths earlier, but the circumstances weren’t conducive. Lady Moon had yet to make her entrance, and I couldn’t afford to delay the Great Mother’s affairs for a personal vendetta. But now, in this quiet moment…”

Voisin Sanson narrowed his eyes. “After receiving the Great Mother’s boon, shouldn’t these delicate and easily shattered emotions be eradicated? Aren’t you worried about undermining the grand objectives of the great entities?”

Madame Pualis chuckled and replied, “There are more fitting and potent individuals for that task. Like Lady Moon. As for me…”

Her expression softened, revealing a trace of wistfulness.

“In the past, I put my faith in the Great Mother to attain strength and break free from the constraints of the antiquated Churches. I didn’t have to concern myself with moral judgments or public opinion. No need to fear being attacked by some past victim at any moment, free to do as I pleased. Now, what I desire is vengeance!”

As Madame Pualis concluded her words, a pair of ethereal wings unfolded behind her, adorned with brown feathers of human size.

“Ah!”

A sharply discordant and anguished scream escaped her lips.

The remaining glass in the nearby structures shattered. Voisin Sanson’s mind reverberated, as if he could sense his Spirit Body wailing.

…

In the rundown square, suspected to be the whereabouts of Krismona Night Pillar, Lumian zeroed in on his feminine “mirror self.”

Only he comprehended the extent of the trouble he posed!

He might not be the most formidable presence among the gathering, but his unique skills and array of items could swiftly tip the scales in his favor. It was imperative to neutralize him in advance!

As for the mirror version of Gardner Martin, it was suspected that he possessed Mirror Substitution—proving challenging to dispatch swiftly. Lumian’s strategy was to eliminate the auxiliary threats first before zeroing in on him.

When the moment arrived, the combined effects of Psychiatrist's Frenzy, Flog's strikes, and the arousal triggered by Beatrice's Necklace would exploit the psychological vulnerabilities of the Mirror People. Their abundance of negative emotions and the potent desire to achieve and supplant made them susceptible.

A dark mark on Lumian's shoulder illuminated, and his form abruptly vanished, reappearing behind the heroic-looking female Lumian, similarly attired but with black hair.

Almost simultaneously, the blue eyes of the female Lumian gleamed with a mocking glint.

Then, she vanished.

Her figure materialized behind Anthony Reid, mostly concealed by the grayish-white stone pillar.

Spirit World Traversal!

She knew the technique as well!

Dammit! Lumian cursed inwardly. The dark mark on his right shoulder emitted another shadowy glow.

He had to hurry to his aid.

While he had considered the possibility of his mirror self possessing teleportation abilities, he had anticipated that the other party would target him, prioritizing his elimination—the most significant threat. At worst, they might exchange positions. However, he hadn't expected the female Lumian to focus on Anthony Reid.

In that critical moment, Lumian pieced together the rationale.

Primarily, the Mirror Person harbored an intense resentment toward the original counterpart, driven by a desire to supplant them. Given their profound psychological issues, these could be effectively countered by Psychiatrist's Frenzy and similar abilities. Secondly, Anthony Reid lacked proficiency in evasion and lacked diverse substitutes. His defense wasn't substantially superior to that of an ordinary person, rendering him susceptible to swift elimination,

thereby reducing their team's strength.

As Lumian engaged in discourse with the Mirror Gardner Martin, Anthony Reid remained concealed behind a nearby grayish-white stone pillar. He observed his surroundings and assessed the enemy's mental state, strategizing his actions for the impending battle.

He had noticed the appearance of his feminine version, as well as the Mirror Gardner, male Jenna, and male Franca to either hide in the shadows or vanish. The complexity of the situation intensified, and he instinctively sensed the impending challenge posed by these formidable adversaries.

As the figure of the female Lumian vanished, Anthony Reid, familiar with Lumian's Spirit World Traversal, quickly discerned the monster's intentions and thought process.

She was employing "teleportation," with him as her target. Her primary focus was dealing with the Psychiatrist!

As these realizations raced through his mind, Anthony didn't attempt to evade to either side.

Given the proximity and his limited physical abilities, escaping the danger zone before female Lumian unleashed her subsequent onslaught was an impossibility.

Instead, he opted for an offensive approach, intending to disrupt any forthcoming storm of attacks with his own strikes!

Anthony forcibly twisted his body, his eyes widening in silent determination, a faint golden hue tinting his gaze.

Then, he confronted the captivating and seemingly welcoming figure of female Lumian.

The other party harrumphed.

Spell of Harrumph!

Two beams of white light shot out from female Lumian's nostrils, striking Anthony.

As the white beams reflected in Anthony's eyes, he made no attempt to dodge or evade. Instead, he invoked Frenzy.

With a thud, he crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Female Lumian's facial muscles contorted, and dark-red blood vessels emerged beneath her skin, resembling tiny fire serpents coming to life.

Her blue eyes radiated violence and madness, while crimson flames bordering on white emanated from her body.

Lumian materialized beside her and the unconscious Anthony. Choosing not to employ the Spell of Harrumph, he clenched his right hand, enveloped in almost blazing-white flames, and delivered a punch to his "mirror self's" head.

With a cracking sound, female Lumian's body shattered like a mirror.

She, too, possessed Mirror Substitution!

Upon witnessing this, Lumian cursed inwardly once more.

Dogsh*t!

Despite anticipating that these Mirror People were closely related to mirrors and might have multiple Mirror Substitutions, thus opting for a flaming punch instead of the Spell of Harrumph to conserve spirituality, the confirmation left him frustrated and angered.

Only by facing it personally did he realize how repulsive abilities like Mirror Substitution and Paper Figurine Substitutes were!

Now, there were a total of five enemies with Mirror Substitution. Four of them had even replicated their team's abilities. How could they possibly prevail in such a situation?

In that moment, the flames dissipated from Lumian's fiery fist, precisely as expected, landing on Anthony Reid.

The scalding pain abruptly snapped the Psychiatrist out of his stupor. Reacting instinctively, he rolled to smother the flames.

Suddenly, Mirror Gardner Martin's cold, smiling voice echoed from an unseen location.

"How does it feel? Are my aides proving stronger than you expected?

"Unfortunately, they hail from profound mirror images, and their genders have been reversed. They can't replace you and return to the real world.

"What do you say? Surrender the figurine in exchange for my friendship and an opportunity to depart this place? It's of no use to you."

If you're so powerful, why don't you just kill us and take the figurine? Are you wary of something? For example, Termiboros's escape? Or are you deliberately using such words to weaken our resistance and ensure your own safety to the greatest extent? Or are you actually not strong and are stalling for time for some development? A series of guesses raced through Lumian's mind.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid, having extinguished the flames, rose to his feet and coughed. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian's throat itched as he heard that.

Soon, Franca and Jenna emerged from invisibility amid uncontrollable coughing, having intended to encircle the female Anthony.

The voice of the Mirror Gardner resonated, accompanied by evident laughter.

"I neglected to mention that the Fire Raven I initially employed carries an Affliction disease. Igniting and detonating them only aids the spread of the disease.

"Those two figurines can only suppress non-conscious diseases, but this—this is under my control!"

Chapter 488 - 488 Mutual Provocation

488 Mutual Provocation

Fire Raven fused with an Affliction disease? Is that even possible? Will I pull off something similar when I switch to the Hunter pathway? Is this the merging of different abilities through pathway switching? It's more unique and bizarre? As Franca coughed, surprise, solemnity, and a touch of anticipation painted her expression.

Even though she was compelled to break her invisibility, Franca found herself in close quarters with the female Anthony. Her left hand rose, directing the Ring of Punishment, snug around her thumb, at the Mirror Person.

Yet, Franca refrained from employing Psychic Piercing. It was a calculated move to confound the target and any hidden foes.

Having observed Lumian's skirmish, Franca suspected that female Anthony also possessed Mirror Substitution. Psychic Piercing wouldn't yield the desired effect.

In that case, why not afflict the opponent with a negative state that wouldn't trigger Mirror Substitution?

Beatrice's Necklace, dangling from Franca's chest, reflected the engulfing flames, stirring female Anthony's ambitions to life.

Franca had long discerned that these Mirror People harbored resentment and animosity toward their authentic selves. Their burning desire to prove themselves was their weakness.

The longing for success served as their greatest vulnerability.

As two coughs reached female Anthony's ears, she, being a Psychiatrist, mirrored the choice made by her male counterpart.

Unable to evade the ensuing assaults, she swiveled halfway around, locking eyes with Franca and Jenna, who had already materialized.

Her pupils turned vertical and shifted to a pale-golden hue.

Awe!

Unlike her male counterpart, female Anthony opted for Awe, considering the presence of two assailants. This ability had the potential to influence both targets.

The aura of a dragon—the pinnacle of the food chain—swiftly descended. Franca and Jenna couldn't help but tremble in fear.

One of them found themselves immobilized, while the other sought refuge behind the nearest grayish-white stone pillar.

Before female Anthony could unleash Awe, Jenna, still coughing, seized the moment. She flung a half-blood-stained cloak, causing the bone flute and wooden box to tumble toward the target's feet.

With her other hand, Jenna pulled the trigger of her revolver, propelling a yellow bullet engulfed in black flames towards female Anthony.

However, in that critical moment, Awe took effect. Jenna's right hand quivered, causing the bullet to veer off course.

Amidst the gunfire, the shadowed Mirror Gardner narrowly evaded the bullet's trajectory.

Swiftly moving, he leaped to the ground, dodging the projectile, and rolled into another shadow, vanishing from sight.

Unharmed, female Anthony's eyes seemed to blaze with flames. She abandoned the idea of casting Frenzy on Franca, who succumbed to the effects of Awe, redirecting her focus to the coughing and moving male version of herself.

Thud! Thud! Thud! She charged forward, determined to prove herself by defeating the male Anthony.

At that moment, figures materialized behind the frozen Franca and the fleeing Jenna. They were male Franca and male Jenna, who had previously concealed themselves with their abilities.

The former aimed his hidden blade at Franca's back and struck with all his might. The latter fixed a glare at Jenna's back and pulled the trigger.

With two cracking sounds, Franca and Jenna's bodies shattered like mirrors, allowing them to escape the effects of Awe. However, their throats remained irritated. They had no choice but to endure the discomfort and occasionally cough as they faced off against male Franca and Jenna.

Lumian's throat itched, and his head, accustomed to enduring high temperatures, still radiated warmth.

As an Ascetic, this level of illness couldn't challenge his endurance. He glanced at female Lumian, not far away, and crimson flames enveloped him, transforming into a fireball that shot forward.

Female Lumian, her face still marked by blood vessels, sneered and vanished from her spot once more.

Spirit World Traversal again!

Her figure reappeared behind the rapidly moving Anthony, as if she wouldn't stop until she had vanquished the Psychiatrist.

Just then, the fireball that had just shot out dissipated prematurely, morphing into a stream of light.

In the stream of light, Lumian's figure flashed as he "teleported" to Anthony's side.

He had been feigning an attack, anticipating female Lumian's use of Spirit World Traversal. He seized the opportunity to closely follow and block her!

To achieve this, Lumian not only destabilized the fireball's structure in advance but also utilized Lie's ability to strengthen his control over flames.

Appearing beside Anthony as swiftly as female Lumian, he promptly raised his iron-black boxing gloves and unleashed a flurry of chain punches!

Simultaneously, Lumian conjured the desire he longed to witness in his mind.

The desire to replace a real person!

This desire proved easier to trigger, and its detonation even better!

Having already adorned the Flog boxing gloves, Lumian aspired to exploit this state, potentially immune to Mirror Substitution, to impact the target and temporarily incapacitate his "mirror self" in combat.

With a resounding bang, Lumian's left and right punches met the resistance of female Lumian's raised hand. However, she lacked boxing gloves, and her forearm bore several bleeding punctures from Flog's short thorns.

Her eyes brimmed with escalating resentment and malice, as though she yearned for Lumian's demise in the very next second.

She had entirely forsaken her pursuit of Anthony Reid.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian unleashed a barrage of punches, incessantly thwarting his mirror self's attempts to employ other abilities.

He persisted in taunting his counterpart.

"Hey, no Flog boxing gloves? Are you so feeble that you can't even mirror a mystical item below the demigod level?"

On the one hand, Lumian sought an emotional release. On the other, he aimed to use Provocation to incense his female self, heightening the likelihood of the Flog boxing gloves triggering the other's desires and emotions.

Female Lumian didn't hide her anger. Blocking Lumian's punches, she taunted with Provocation, "Imbecile! If you had detected Aurore's anomaly earlier, the issue might have been resolved.

"Imbecile! If it were me, I would've undoubtedly handled it better than you!" New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Lumian's mind buzzed. Even as an Ascetic, he found himself affected by Provocation.

This frustration and guilt had long been buried deep in his heart, one of the root causes of all his pain.

His eyes turned bloodshot, a blend of embarrassment, anger, and a compelling urge to self-destruct surged from the depths of his being.

His attacks intensified as he sought to infuse the thought into his right hand. He wanted to witness the outcome if he unleashed the Blood Emperor's aura here in the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier.

When the time came, everyone present—Voisin Sanson and the other gods bestowed from different regions—would meet their demise together!

Just then, Lumian's thoughts abruptly cleared. His emotions and impulses felt as though caressed by a gentle breeze. The melodious melody his sister Aurore used to hum seemed to echo in his ears, swiftly calming him.

"Placate!"

Psychiatrist Anthony Reid's Placate.

Seizing the opportunity while Lumian relentlessly pounded female Lumian with punches, Anthony distanced himself. As he eluded the pursuit of his female self, he circled back to Lumian's vicinity. Sensing his companion's volatile mood, he promptly cast Placate.

Affected by Beatrice's Necklace, female Anthony only had eyes for her true self, indifferent to the fate of female Lumian.

Suppressing the urge to self-destruct, Lumian witnessed female

Lumian teetering on the verge of collapse under his relentless onslaught, her expression contorted. Franca and Jenna's coughing intensified, hindering the use of their abilities. Their male counterparts seized the moment, forcing them to employ Mirror Substitution once again.

Franca was still okay, but Jenna likely had only one Mirror Substitution remaining.

Observing this, Lumian, his forehead ablaze, felt a mix of concern, nervousness, and confusion.

Where was Mirror Gardner?

In such a chaotic scenario, any attack—whether directed at Franca, Jenna, himself, or Anthony—would prove highly effective. He might even succeed in eliminating them one by one. After all, he was a Reaper.

Yet, Mirror Gardner refrained from attacking. Only the echoing, mocking laughter signaled his continued presence. He persisted in persuading Lumian and the others to surrender the black figurine and cease resisting.

"Hmph!"

Seizing the opportunity when Lumian's assault momentarily slowed, female Lumian, pushed to her limits, invoked the Spell of Harrumph.

Two beams of white light struck Lumian's body. His vision darkened, and he experienced the same sensation as his previous adversaries.

Crack!

A mirror shattered on Franca's body, and Lumian materialized beside her.

As Lumian's thoughts returned, a flurry of ideas raced through his mind.

After spreading the disease with the sick ravens, Mirror Gardner refrained from employing any other offensive abilities. Instead, he

chose to hide in the shadows or conceal himself…

Wait, it didn't begin with the disease spread by the sick ravens. It began with the emergence of male Franca and the other Mirror People…

Why didn't he attack?

Considering my mirror self's lack of the Flog boxing gloves, she probably doesn't possess the Blood Emperor's aura, Mr. Fool's seal, or Termiboros… The Flog boxing gloves were crafted from the branch of the Tree of Shadow…

The mirror world, despite its apparent danger and terror, shouldn't be incapable of mirroring the Flog boxing gloves…

Suddenly, Lumian had an epiphany.

These four Mirror People weren't naturally formed in the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier. Mirror Gardner Martin had utilized his unique connection to this place to create them!

It was akin to an ability!

Mirror Gardner's decision not to attack stemmed from his concerted effort to sustain the four Mirror People. He couldn't engage in direct assault; his only recourse was to conceal himself and use words to interfere with the enemy, disrupting their combat will!

As these realizations coursed through his mind, Lumian couldn't help but smile.

Dodging male Franca's attack and anticipating the teleportation of female Lumian, he retrieved the Eye of Truth obtained from Bouvard. Lumian then adorned the peculiar monocle, seemingly fashioned from flesh and blood.

It had the ability to pierce through illusions, perceive reality, and discern the light of spirituality!

Chapter 489 - 489 Greed

489 Greed

Despite the severe corruption of the Eye of Truth, its ability to hear the voices of a hidden entity at any moment, and the risk of encountering uncontrollable negative effects, Lumian trusted that Fourth Epoch Trier, with its potent seal isolating external influences, provided a safeguard. Even the boons of evil gods couldn't trace back to their source, making it unlikely for him to hear the Hidden Sage's ravings.

In this realm, there should be no adverse effects when using the Eye of Truth, especially within the mirror's Fourth Epoch Trier.

However, Lumian acknowledged the potential presence of a fallen Angel from the Mystery Pryer pathway or remnants of corresponding divine power. Even with the Eye of Truth, there was a chance of hearing voices he shouldn't. Consequently, Lumian didn't plan to use it extensively. He intended to locate Mirror Gardner Martin and remove the mystical item when the opportunity presented itself.

Through the lens affixed to his eye, Lumian discerned nearly invisible spider silk swaying around Franca, subtly influencing male Jenna and the other Mirror People.

Similarly, male Franca had created a plethora of spider silks, utterly unaffected by the constraints of the term "Witch."

Lumian also took note of the fine snake-like black hair covering the area. They manifested and disappeared, delicately caressing every living being they touched. Their origin seemed to be the black pillar extending into the sky.

Concurrently, Lumian's left eye reflected Mirror Gardner Martin.

Concealed beside a grayish-white stone pillar, he seemed invisible.

Without hesitation, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder, the fifth time since becoming an Ascetic.

With the Eye of Truth in place, he instantaneously vanished, reappearing behind Mirror Gardner.

The corners of Lumian's mouth curled up as he swung his right fist at his exposed foe, who had just realized his concealment had been shattered and had no time to react.

His hands were encased in iron-black boxing gloves adorned with multiple short thorns.

Flog!

In the midst of Mirror Gardner's attempt to lunge forward and transform into a burning-white spear, flying to the opposite side to distance himself, Lumian landed a punch behind his ear.

In a haste, Mirror Gardner could only duck, abruptly contorting as if he were boneless, attempting to somersault away.

Bang!

Lumian's right fist connected with Mirror Gardner's right shoulder.

The impact distorted the other's shoulder, causing his body to stagger, nearly losing balance.

Mirror Gardner's combat prowess proved formidable. Despite tumbling to the ground, he seized the opportunity to pivot.

He was unfazed by the potential of the white beams or being shot in the head; he still possessed Mirror Substitution!

Confronting Lumian, who lunged at him with blood still dripping from his iron-black boxing gloves, Mirror Gardner smiled, his eyes reflecting blatant greed.

This time, Lumian opted to trigger Greed!

In an instant, Mirror Gardner ignited with blazing-white flames, morphing into a spear charging at Lumian.

At this range, he doubted that Lumian could evade the impending attack.

Having committed to close combat, he had to bear the consequences —rendered unable to fully utilize Spirit World Traversal!

Lumian didn't attempt to dodge, nor did he plan to. He swiftly adjusted his posture, watching as the blazing-white spear collided with his right chest.

His defense against flames was robust. The blazing-white spear took nearly two seconds to burn through his skin and flesh. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Yet, Lumian maintained a smile on his face. The pain only contorted his countenance, a testament to the resilience of an Ascetic.

Anthony Reid's Placate had indeed restored Lumian's composure, but the psychological issues brought to light lingered for the time being.

With two resounding bangs, Lumian seized the opportunity to deliver a left and right punch to the burning-white spear.

He exploited every chance to kindle Mirror Gardner's desires and emotions.

Ultimately, the blazing-white spear pierced Lumian's right chest, propelling him more than ten meters through the air.

Lumian's smile retained a touch of frenzy. Adorned with a silver earring, he withdrew his right palm, pressed against the grievous wound on his chest, and slid downward.

The injury swiftly spread to his abdomen, and almost-white crimson flames erupted from Lumian's palm, consuming his mangled flesh.

He willingly accepted increased risk in the future to mitigate the impact of his injuries.

With that, his figure melded into the void.

Just as Mirror Gardner emerged from the dissipating blazing-white flaming spear, Lumian materialized behind him.

Bang! Bang!

Lumian swung his fists again, targeting Mirror Gardner's arms, denying him a chance to catch his breath.

He opted not to strike vital points, fearing that excessive damage might trigger Mirror Substitution.

As Mirror Gardner transformed into a blazing-white spear to assail Lumian, female Lumian, intending to "teleport" over to assist, stood stunned, as if temporarily losing autonomy.

Likewise, both male Franca and male Jenna exhibited similar reactions, as if their resemblance to real people had momentarily waned.

Franca and Jenna, in dire straits, seized the opportunity to catch their breath.

Although they didn't immediately comprehend the reason, they keenly sensed that Mirror Gardner held the key to the problem.

Lumian's assault on the leader had brought about such a change!

Franca, relying on her experience, swiftly instructed Jenna, "Give me that… Cough! Arrow!"

She needed the potent self-healing abilities of the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty to withstand the infectious disease and recuperate to a relatively healthy state within a specific timeframe. Franca aimed to delay female Lumian and the other Mirror People, creating an optimal environment for Lumian to confront Mirror Gardner solo.

Her only hope rested on Lumian catalyzing positive changes before the infection and illness exacerbated, outpacing the effectiveness of her self-healing abilities.

Jenna had intended to use the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty herself. Despite having used it twice already—with another use risking a collapse of her body—she was willing to disregard the consequences in the current dire situation.

However, upon hearing Franca's request, she hesitated momentarily before tossing the obsidian arrow to Franca.

From Jenna's perspective, Franca, a Sequence 6 Demoness of Pleasure armed with numerous mystical items, possessed significantly more strength than herself. Thus, Franca's temporary recovery held greater benefit for the ongoing battle.

Franca caught the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty and plunged it into her chest.

Observing that female Lumian and the other Mirror People had regained their composure, becoming lively once again,

Franca's lake-blue eyes silently transformed to a fiery red. The rubber band securing her ponytail snapped as if corroded, allowing her flaxen-colored hair to billow in the air, enhancing her enchanting allure.

Her increasingly frequent coughs momentarily subsided, and the invisible "spider silk" surrounding her ceased its gradual, silent encroachment on male Franca, male Jenna, and female Lumian, no longer tightening and ensnaring them layer by layer.

Like mirror images, Franca and Jenna felt their bodies grow heavy, their limbs constricted.

From the outset, male Franca had been covertly using spider silk. Only when there was no way to further ensnare them layer by layer in secret did he reveal it.

In an instant, Franca and the others were immobilized. Female Lumian, who had just "teleported" over, was the least affected by the spider silk and was skilled in using flames. She swiftly activated Spirit World Traversal in a crimson light, heading towards Lumian and Mirror Gardner's battlefield.

Taking advantage of the momentary pause in female Anthony's actions, Anthony could finally counterattack.

Enduring the terrifying cough, dizziness, and fever, he raised the revolver purchased from the black market and pulled the trigger at the Mirror Person, clearly more charming than him.

At that moment, no one interrupted their "internecine attacks."

Amidst the gunshots, female Anthony shattered into numerous fragments.

Upon reappearing nearby, she didn't immediately rush to rescue Mirror Gardner. Instead, she continued pursuing Anthony amidst her soaring desire for achievement.

Amidst the sounds of flesh colliding, Lumian landed multiple punches on Mirror Gardner, sending waves of pain through the powerful Beyonder's head and stoking his anger.

His greed made him reluctant to abandon the other four Mirror People and the advantage his side enjoyed on other battlefields. However, if he didn't give up, he wouldn't be able to focus on dealing with Lumian. He found himself restricted in every way and faced a disadvantaged situation.

This was why Lumian had chosen to trigger his Greed!

Bang!

Lumian tightened his fists, delivering a powerful blow to Mirror Gardner.

Mirror Gardner crashed to the ground, instinctively summoning a swarm of crimson, almost white fireballs for protection.

This caught female Lumian off guard as she had just "teleported" over.

Unfazed by the nearly-white crimson fireballs, Lumian swiftly "teleported" toward Mirror Gardner.

The safest spot was, of course, where the caster stood!

Amidst the explosive chaos, Lumian gritted his teeth against the searing pain in his back and landed another punch on Mirror Gardner's face.

The short thorns on the iron-black boxing gloves pierced through skin and flesh.

Suddenly, Mirror Gardner Martin's gaze froze, blood streaming from his eyes, nose, and other wounds.

The intense greed within him erupted, not killing or knocking him out but weakening and disorienting him.

In this dazed state, whether it was female Lumian, male Franca, male Jenna, or female Anthony, they all froze in place. Their bodies rapidly faded, growing more translucent until they vanished.

Witnessing the scene, Lumian straightened up, removing the Flog boxing gloves. He tossed them to Franca and Jenna, ensuring each had one.

Franca noticed the residual blood and grasped Lumian's intent immediately.

Dipping her hand into the blood, she retrieved a mirror, ready to cast a curse.

Lumian had three reasons for opting for the Flog boxing gloves:

Firstly, the ability to stir desires wouldn't trigger Mirror Substitution. Secondly, as a mystical item, it could attract the attention of dangerous entities, causing unpredictable changes that might lead to opportunities amid the chaos.

Thirdly, it provided a chance to "collect" a curse's medium—the target's blood!

Even if his triggered greed couldn't be controlled, leading to Mirror Gardner's Mirror Substitution, Lumian planned to seize the moment when the other Mirror People were temporarily affected. He would

throw the Flog boxing gloves to Franca and Jenna, aiding them in intercepting the attacks.

Repeatedly cursing with the possession of the blood, Lumian aimed to challenge how many times Mirror Substitution could be used and find an opportunity to sever the connection.

Flames erupted around Lumian as he transformed into a fireball, distancing himself from Mirror Gardner.

Just as he was about to remove the Eye of Truth, a peculiar sound caught his attention.

Chapter 490 - 490 Sounds

490 Sounds

The strange sounds Lumian heard echoed from a far-off realm, an elusive destination beyond his grasp.

His heart tightened as he quickly removed the Eye of Truth, but the sounds remained.

Bam! Bam! Bam! The sounds reverberated as if two massive rocks collided. Lumian witnessed sparks flying, and dried leaves and branches catching fire. In the midst of the flames lay scattered bones. The cave, shrouded in darkness with an unknown depth, echoed with distant howls resembling wolves.

Thud! Thud! Thud! A leather drum's beats and ancient musical instruments resonated, creating a solemn, holy, and magnificent atmosphere for Lumian. The scene in his mind shifted to a vast wilderness with a towering altar. A figure, his face veiled with beaded coverings, a splendid headdress, and a flowing black robe, ascended to the highest point. Around him, people with demon-painted faces danced frenziedly to the drumbeat. Suddenly, the sky darkened, and a face appeared from the ominous clouds. The ritualist, with beads sliding aside, revealed a terrified expression.

A distant, haunting voice pierced the clouds, resonating through the desolate land. Lumian felt a profound shake in his mind and body. Before him stretched vast highlands, with withered trees, sparse grass, and yellow soil and rocks exposed. Gullies crisscrossed like wrinkles on an old man's face, separating silent towns. A massive river surged, majestic yet tainted with turbid yellow.

Ding. Dang. Ding. Dang. The sound, like pearls on a porcelain plate, was crisp and gentle, emanating from a peculiar wooden pavilion. The surrounding buildings burned fiercely, and shouts echoed from

the river. Amidst the pleasant melody, the pavilion collapsed in flames, yet the performer continued unabated.

In the midst of the gentle singing, a woman in a peculiar dress stood on the platform, captivatingly expressing herself. Below her, people sat at various tables, savoring drinks under dim lights. Gunshots, like firecrackers, echoed outside what seemed to be a bar's dance floor, as citizens collapsed on the street. Fierce soldiers rushed in, stabbing the struggling ones with bayonets attached to their guns. Distant buildings burned, and flames soared into the sky.

These voices and images surged into Lumian's mind like a torrent, causing his eyes to redden. His head felt unusually swollen, as if it were on the brink of exploding, and his thoughts became a chaotic jumble.

Franca and Jenna, engrossed in their battle against Mirror Gardner Martin, remained oblivious to Lumian's unsettling state.

Franca took the lead, pressing the black flames against the mirror stained with the target's blood. She successfully saw the enemy—weakened by the eruption of desire. He succumbed to the engulfing black flames, inflicting damage to his Spirit Body.

Crack!

Mirror Gardner shattered, and his figure materialized nearby, his dazed eyes now alert.

Seizing the opportunity, Jenna, moving with remarkable speed, adjusted her makeup mirror stained with Mirror Gardner's blood. Pressing the black flames in her hand against it, s

Mirror Gardner was once again ignited by the Demoness's black flames and subjected to another fatal curse.

He shattered anew, reappearing beside the black pillar.

His right hand reached into his pocket, as if he wanted to take out a mirror and use nails, hair, blood, and other media to sever the connection between the source of the curse and himself.

However, Franca, who was also moving at high speed, leaned back and raised the mirror in her hand. It made contact with her other hand, holding the Flog boxing glove ablaze with black flames.

The flames erupted within the mirror, thwarting Mirror Gardner's attempt at curse-evading mirror magic.

The duo, Franca and Jenna, continued their intricate dance—one advancing, one retreating, one cursing, and the other awaiting their turn. It was a mesmerizing duet, a choreography of combat.

After enduring six curses, Mirror Gardner froze in front of a grayish-white stone pillar, not shattering like before.

In the silence of the black flames, he rapidly weakened, teetering on the brink of unconsciousness.

Seeing this, Franca discarded the Flog boxing gloves, opting for her Cannon Gun. She drew the weapon, pulled back the hammer, and took aim at the target.

Bang!

The iron-black bullet tore through Mirror Gardner's skull, shattering it into fragments.

His nearly headless body swayed briefly before collapsing to the ground.

As the corpse faded away, it left behind a peculiar mirror fragment, its surface nearly lightless as if coated with black paint.

Meanwhile, Anthony Reid, ever proficient at observation, detected Lumian's abnormal state. Racing towards him, the Psychiatrist attempted to Placate him. However, Lumian remained unresponsive, his face contorting further, blood vessels on his forehead bulging ominously.

"There's a situation here!" Anthony, noting Mirror Gardner's demise from the corner of his eye, swiftly informed Franca and Jenna. He hoped that the two Demonesses could find a way to address Lumian's unsettling condition.

However, an instant later, the pitch-black mirror fragment emitted a faint light.

The surroundings plunged into instant darkness, transmuting into a bizarre transparency, as if the entire world had transformed into a mirrored container.

Within the dark and shadowy confines of this mirror container, an unseen force seethed with rage, materializing the air and exerting pressure from every direction.

Though Franca, Jenna, and Anthony witnessed no visible or audible phenomena, an overwhelming fear gripped them. Their bodies felt as if plunged into an icy cavern, freezing instantaneously.

A faint sigh, distinctly feminine, resonated suddenly.

Nearby, the black pillar radiated a dim light. The tiny snake-like black hairs concealed in the void retracted, coalescing into a massive black-haired sphere, forming a protective barrier around the square.

Franca and the others experienced an immediate sense of tranquility. Fear released its grip on their bodies and minds, allowing them to move freely.

Meanwhile, Lumian's consciousness wrestled with an onslaught of voices and scenes, his rationality gradually eroding.

Suddenly, he heard a voice.

It was a male sigh.

Then, he saw a face and a figure—a man seated cross-legged in a serene room, adorned with a headdress and a blue robe.

Though handsome, the man's eyes betrayed profound sorrow and pain, lending him a withered appearance.

His gaze fixed on Lumian, comprehending the scenes unfolding, and he picked up a brown rod adorned with numerous white silk strands at one end, resting beside him.

As the sigh persisted, the myriad sounds and images Lumian perceived vanished, replaced by overlapping shrill cries akin to curses.

While Lumian couldn't comprehend the language, the phrase echoed in his mind, infused with the purest knowledge, enabling him to grasp its meaning.

The voices converged into a torrent, laden with resentment and hatred.

"Celestial Master!"

…

At the base of the Deep Valley Quarry, the once busy hall now stood in partial ruins. The tumultuous activity had taken its toll, leaving many members of the Machinery Hivemind injured. Conscious of the need to avoid hindering their comrades' battles, these individuals strategically retreated.

Claude, the mechanical giant, abruptly halted his movements, his colossal ears resonating with overlapping roars.

Amidst the roars, a sigh descended from above, casting an eerie atmosphere upon the indistinct wilderness.

In that wild expanse, numerous ethereal figures lingered, occasionally gazing at the sky and emitting haunting screams.

Observing this mysterious transformation, Archbishop Horamick refrained from seizing the opportunity to attack Claude directly. Instead, he swiftly withdrew from the crumbling hall, leading the remaining members of the Machinery Hivemind away from the illusory wilderness.

The cybernetic eyes of the mechanical giant, with one resembling a ruby and the other an emerald, suddenly dimmed.

It appeared as if intelligence had deserted him. Slowly turning around, Claude stepped into the surreal "wilderness," seemingly intent on joining the lingering figures. The source of this content

nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Midway through, the mechanical giant turned to regard Archbishop Horamick and his companions, gears spinning loudly.

An indescribable smile graced the face comprising multiple metallic components.

In the next instant, the mechanical giant retracted his gaze, resuming his forward journey.

His figure gradually took on an illusionary quality, merging with the mysterious wilderness until both vanished into the unknown.

…

In the depths of the Fourth Epoch Trier, adjacent to the wall-like grayish-white fog, Magician and Justice materialized, their intense gazes fixed upon Lady Moon. She had lost her veil, revealing a vacant expression.

The bestowed of the Great Mother, the lady who had nurtured a deity, stood in front of the gray fog, her shadow tainted by char.

Magician and Justice were surprised to see this.

Almost simultaneously, the wall-like grayish-white fog expanded, pulsating like a beating heart.

Almost simultaneously, an imposing aura, one that seemed to look down upon all existence, permeated the surroundings. It quelled the earlier sigh that had echoed through the air.

The grayish-white fog in the vicinity heightened its intensity, spreading in all directions once more, thickening the gray fog throughout the entirety of Fourth Epoch Trier.

“Him?”

“So it’s Him?”

Justice and Magician exchanged silent whispers. Unaffected by the

adverse consequences targeting others, they persisted in their actions.

The dazed Lady Moon immediately found herself shrouded in resplendent starlight.

…

In the wilderness, Snarner Einhorn and Diest, the President of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, continued their struggle to restrain Vermonda Sauron—a Calamity Giant, an Angel who had lost control. Their efforts, however, were met with fierce counterattacks, forcing Them into a gradual retreat, unable to capitalize on the situation.

Amidst the chaos, the gray fog shrouding the ruins of Fourth Epoch Trier stirred violently, as if the very city had awakened.

The turbulent fog swiftly coalesced into a spear-like form, a weapon capable of shattering mountain peaks. It hurtled towards the captive Vermonda Sauron.

In an instant, the spear, crafted from the gray fog, erupted into violent flames, taking on a violet hue. It exuded an aura of supremacy, as if it aimed to conquer all in its path.

Witnessing this surreal phenomenon, whether it was Snarner Einhorn, Diest, Vermonda Sauron, or their allies, it was as though they beheld a city enshrouded in fog. A sense of awe overwhelmed their bodies and minds, dissuading any inclination to resist.

The majestic purple flaming spear traversed a significant distance, impaling Vermonda Sauron—the Calamity Giant yet to regain mobility. His chest rent open, the colossal being was pinned to the wilderness.

As the purple flames dissipated, a figure stood up from a genuflecting position.

Clad in blood-stained black armor, adorned with long red hair, the youth exuded a handsome yet haunting presence. Rotting wounds marred both sides of his face, and a vivid red mark resembling a banner flag adorned his forehead.

Chapter 491 - 491 Unexpected “Helper”

491 Unexpected “Helper”

The gray fog encircling Fourth Epoch Trier extended into the wilderness, as if intercepting and obstructing an unseen force.

Fighting the impulse to surrender while stepping back, Their eyes fixated on the figure of a young man clad in blood-stained black armor, adorned with long red hair and a conspicuous red mark between his brows.

Their nerves tensed as a name echoed in their minds:

Medici!

Red Angel Medici!

He was a king from ancient times. As early as the Fourth Epoch, or even during the catastrophic demise of the Third Epoch, he held the title of King of Angels.

Kings of Angels were Archangels beyond Sequence 1, yet They hadn’t attained the level of a Sequence 0 true god. Through the consumption of multiple Sequence 1 potions or the possession of the key to deity status, However, having something missing prevented Them from taking that crucial step.

The Red Angel was among the eight Kings of Angels who had once served the Ancient Sun God. Though He met his end at the hands of Alista Tudor during the Fourth Epoch, leading to the latter’s ascent as Blood Emperor, the King of Angels hadn’t completely perished. Transformed into an evil spirit in a hidden sanctuary, He survived and reemerged a few years ago, resuming His activities.

As Angels of the Hunter pathway, Snarner and Diest grew increasingly apprehensive about the situation. They suspected that Medici might have already acquired a Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, ascending once again to a Sequence 1 Archangel.

While devising a plan to obtain Vermonda Sauron's Conqueror Beyonder characteristic, Snarner and Diest remained cautious of the possible involvement of the ancient king. When Albus Medici disclosed his name, Their vigilance heightened, and They kept a constant watch on him. Only when the operation was unexpectedly hastened, and the Red Angel showed no signs of breaching the seal, nor did Albus Medici display any abnormal behavior, did they finally ease up.

But just at that critical juncture, Red Angel Medici appeared!

With a terror-inducing aura that subjugated everything, He soared majestically from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier. Seizing the opportunity, he dealt a severe blow to Vermonda Sauron with a single strike.

Medici's disdainful gaze swept across Snarner and Diest as He casually tossed an item to the struggling Calamity Giant, Vermonda Sauron.

It was a blood-stained umbilical cord.

The moment the umbilical cord left Medici's hand, it burst into flames, emitting a golden light resembling a miniature sun.

Above surface Trier, the sun, engulfed by hurricanes, lightning, and torrential rain, suddenly emitted a blinding light, tearing through the calamitous scene.

A chubby baby, seemingly crafted from pure sunlight, soared out of the tear, transforming into a golden sun hurtling towards Red Swan Castle in Quartier éraste.

The scorching sun tore through the sky, liquefying the spires, walls, and floor of the ancient castle. It plunged into the depths of the underground maze and into the bronze coffin.

Wherever it passed, darkness dissipated, and the withered hearts turned to ashes. Elros Einhorn, stationed outside the underground palace, instinctively shut her eyes, her body trembling uncontrollably.

High in the sky, The Hanged Man didn't pursue the self-destructing sun. Instead, he hovered above the storm, his gaze fixed on Red Swan Castle, which bore a massive wound. It remained unknown what he contemplated. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The people around him and the mutants shared a similar reaction.

The sun descended from the vortex, illuminating the entire wilderness and Fourth Epoch Trier as if it were daytime.

It caught up to the burning umbilical cord and enveloped the severely injured Archangel, Vermonda Sauron.

Sunlight erupted, and darkness vanished. The Calamity Giant, formed by a Conqueror's loss of control, emitted a tragic cry and swiftly dissipated, undergoing profound purification.

The infant that had transformed into a sun ceased to exist. Only the remnants of its power burned fiercely, emitting light and warmth.

Snarner, Diest, and the other powerhouses turned sideways, steeling themselves to withstand the impact of the sunlight.

…

In the brilliantly lit Fourth Epoch Trier,

Voisin Sanson and Madame Pualis, entangled in intense combat, simultaneously closed their eyes, as if unaccustomed to the direct sunlight.

Upon reopening their eyes, they found themselves separated, no longer able to see each other. One stood in a square adorned with stone pillars, while the other perched on a collapsed black building.

"Wh…" The two bestowed, who had already tasted the power of godhood, were momentarily taken aback before realizing that Fourth

Epoch Trier had undergone a transformation due to the impact of the golden sunlight, leading to a shift in direction and spatial disarray.

…

Gardner Martin, donned in a full-body silver armor, could already discern the dense grayish-white fog ahead, resembling an impenetrable wall. A surge of joy coursed through him.

What he desired, what he sought, was within reach.

Suddenly, sunlight pierced through, illuminating the nocturnal environment.

Instinctively, Gardner Martin shut his eyes and decelerated.

Then, a cracking sound reverberated.

It emanated from his neck.

In surprise, Gardner Martin lowered his head, acclimating to the sunlight.

Accompanied by an intense and peculiar pain, he witnessed the widening gap between his head and chest. Blood spurted from the stump of his neck, staining the area crimson.

He also beheld his white, bloody spine.

How could this be… This thought flashed through Gardner Martin's mind, a mix of shock and fear.

He had always believed himself to be the favored one, the special one. Hence, under the watchful eyes of the great will deep within Fourth Epoch Trier, even upon entering 13 Avenue du Marché, he assumed he would only suffer minor corruption. He could wield a certain power from Fourth Epoch Trier to a limited extent without transforming into a terrifying monster like Olson, whose head and body had been severed.

Yet now, his head had detached from his body, dragging along his spine. Just as he was on the verge of approaching the great will!

Lady Moon, adorned with brown wings and bird-like claws, crumpled amidst cascading silver lightning.

Initially, she descended into madness, morphing into a bewildered monster. This marked the onset of the Plague Storm from the Spectator pathway, succeeded by Magician's nine attacks from nine directions.

As sunlight bathed the scene, Magician instinctively closed her eyes. With a sweep of her right hand, the void contorted, shaping into a sealed dark sphere that encased her, Justice, and the swiftly fading Lady Moon. Together, they withstood the ensuing anomalies as a unified entity.

…

Within the sphere woven from thick black hair, Jenna, Franca, and Anthony felt the tumultuous storm and various catastrophes outside, causing the ground to quake and the sphere to sway.

In an instant, time slowed, and the snake-like black hair composing the dark sphere swiftly split open, revealing a beam of sunlight above.

In the sunlight, Jenna and Franca seemed to discern an ethereal female voice.

"Reconcile with your mirror self…"

With these words, the snake-like black hair disintegrated entirely, no longer coalescing into a sphere. It retreated into the void.

Franca and the others found themselves surrounded by a layer of dark glass, silently shattering and falling under the sunlight.

The lights and figures in the nearby buildings vanished, and Jenna and the others returned to the dead silence reminiscent of when they first entered the ruins.

After adjusting to the sunlight, Anthony immediately looked at Lumian and noticed that the blood vessels on his companion's face had faded. His contorted expression gradually eased.

“Are you alright?” Anthony inquired, employing Placate.

Upon hearing the roars, Lumian’s mind was filled by the man’s sighs in the dark room. The overwhelming knowledge that gripped him in corruption had subsided. He no longer felt like his head was about to burst or lose his rationality.

He quickly returned to normal, no longer hearing the sigh or seeing the withered man in strange attire.

“I survived,” Lumian replied to Anthony’s question.

Simultaneously, he thought, Is that the Celestial Master the Armored Shadow mentioned?

Using the Eye of Truth here is even more dangerous than the outside world.

Franca gathered the items, picked up Flog and other belongings, and threw out the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty.

“What happened to you just now?”

“The aftereffects of using the Eye of Truth.” Lumian took the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty and stabbed it into his chest. Surveying the area, he said, “Let’s quickly collect our items and relocate.”

Previously, he had used Flog, hoping to attract the attention of dangerous entities, thereby creating chaos to find an opportunity. Now that Mirror Gardner had been dealt with, it was crucial to move to avoid new threats.

Jenna, with no time to ponder the meaning of reconciling with her mirror self, placed the bone flute, wooden box, and other items in the blood-stained cloak. Following Lumian, Franca, and Anthony, she sprinted in a random direction around the black pillar.

…

Beneath the blistering sunlight, the purple flames constituting Vermonda Sauron’s flesh and blood flickered out one by one. The anguished faces representing the diverse Sauron family members

disappeared sequentially.

The Red Angel's form abruptly expanded, resembling a diminutive mountain peak.

Brandishing a broadsword condensed from purple flames, He advanced with a step and swung it at the dying Vermonda Sauron.

Having regained their composure, Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable beings were not inclined to yield. They acted in unison, intervening to impede Him.

Chapter 492 - 492 Pride

492 Pride

Red Angel Medici stood unfazed amidst the onslaught from Snarner, Diest, and the other formidable adversaries. His focus unwavering, He channeled His conquering will to subdue Vermonda Sauron, wielding a broadsword ablaze with purple flames, ready to cleave through the menacing foe.

Seizing the opportune moment, with the uncontrollable Calamity Giant at its weakest, Medici aimed to deliver the final, fatal blow!

Suddenly, a radiant light burst forth before the eyes of Snarner, Diest, and the rest. It was pure sunlight, banishing the darkness and cleansing the surroundings of filth and the stench of blood. The two Angels, now in their Mythical Creature forms, appeared as if exposed to the brilliance of the sun at close range.

From within the luminous glow emerged a holy and beautiful woman, draped in a white robe adorned with golden threads—Trier's guardian angel, Saint Viève!

She shielded the Red Angel from the relentless attacks of the other powerhouses.

Simultaneously, Medici, clad in blood-stained black armor, descended like a mountain. Plunging the purple broadsword into Vermonda Sauron's skull, which showed signs of melting under the intense sunlight, Medici marked the decisive moment in the battle.

Boom!

The implosion absorbed the surrounding flames, hurricanes, lightning, hail, and sunlight into the Calamity Giant's colossal form. The once tumultuous wilderness now stood cleansed, except for the

remnants of invisible flames in the sky and a vast golden vortex.

Boom!

Reaching its limit, the implosion rapidly expanded, unleashing a barrage of projectiles. A violent hurricane tore through Vermonda Sauron's charred skeleton, casting darkness upon the once brightly illuminated landscape.

A torrential downpour accompanied by countless bolts of lightning and thunderclaps ensued, marking the demise of an Angel—a Conqueror.

Snarner, Diest, and the other powerhouses, breaking through Saint Vièvе's obstruction, witnessed the scene unfold. Vermonda Sauron's body disintegrated, and Red Angel Medici, now in the form of a Mythical Creature, brandished His purple-flamed broadsword. He turned disdainfully, mocking those who dared challenge Him.

Snarner Einhorn narrowed His eyes, evaluating the situation. Swiftly transforming into a blaze, He ascended into the air, disappearing into the colossal vortex of formless flames.

Realizing that even with the support of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, victory against Red Angel and Saint Vièvе was unattainable, He chose to retreat.

The former was undoubtedly a Sequence 1 Conqueror. Moreover, in this unique setting, He appeared capable of tapping into the formidable power hidden within the Fourth Epoch Trier to some extent!

In that situation, He'd fall back and escape if needed; otherwise, He could meet His end right here!

Snarner dashed into the massive vortex in midair, while Diest morphed into a beam of light and shot into the sky. He raced out of the wilderness with Tony Twain, chasing after the Einhorn family's Weather Warlock.

As Angels of the Hunter pathway, Their judgments and choices were strikingly similar.

Red Angel Medici, observing Their departure, chuckled and muttered to Himself, “The heroic escape of your descendant is reminiscent of yours many years ago.”

His attention then turned to Saint Vièvе with a smile. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“Now, we can proceed to the final part of the plan and eliminate the bestowed of the Outer Deities.”

Saint Vièvе nodded in agreement, emitting a blazing light as She flew towards Fourth Epoch Trier, enveloped in a shroud of gray fog.

…

In the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier, alongside a wall-like grayish-white fog, Bernadette Gustav, the eldest daughter of Emperor Roselle, fixated Her gaze on a seal adorned with countless mysterious symbols.

In Her palm, a faint golden figure materialized once more through the viscous light emanating from a golden lamp that resembled a miniature lamp.

It said to Bernadette, “Take another step forward and find a monster to ‘replace’ your wish using the method I told you. I can use Under-the-table Transaction to help you obtain something from here to counterbalance the corruption affecting your father.”

Bernadette remained steadfast, not advancing. Calmly, she responded, “I entered this place to analyze the seal and understand how the various corruptions have intricately balanced themselves through years of mergers and confrontations. That sigh was merely an unexpected bonus.”

“Time is of the essence. If you don’t act more assertively, once the Mother Goddess of Depravity breaches the barrier, your father will truly transform into a monster,” warned the distorted, blurry, pale-golden figure.

Undeterred, Bernadette continued absorbing knowledge related to the seal, her focus unwavering.

The pale-golden figure fell silent and retreated into the peculiar lamp without making further persuasion.

…

Gardner Martin's head, donned with a silver-white helmet, soared into the air, carrying his blood-soaked spine with it.

Glancing down, he witnessed a broadsword of light materializing in his hand.

He—no, his body could use the Pride Armor's Hurricane of Light again!

However, this time, the target appeared to be him—specifically, his head!

Is this the traitorous curse? My own body turning against my head… Why another betrayal? Could it be linked to constant wearing of the Pride Armor? Gardner Martin's pupils dilated, fear gripping his heart.

In a desperate attempt to mitigate the impending impact of the Hurricane of Light, he condensed numerous crimson, almost white fireballs. The explosions around him aimed to lessen the force of the onslaught. Simultaneously, he sank his consciousness into his glabella, seeking a connection with the great will, praying for its protective intervention.

…

Beside the shattered corpse of Vermonda Sauron, Red Angel Medici extended His right hand, observing as a beam of light, reminiscent of iron and blood, emanated from the Conqueror's body. It landed on the damaged skull cradled in His palm.

In that moment, Gardner Martin's desperate shout and plea reached Him.

Red Angel chuckled dismissively, paying no heed to the pawn that had served its purpose and was now deemed expendable.

Gardner Martin had not submitted to the great will from the depths

of Fourth Epoch Trier but to Red Angel Himself!

Over the past few years, Red Angel Medici had lurked in the shadows, orchestrating a scheme to obtain the Sauron family's lost Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic. Leveraging His uniqueness and level, He assisted numerous members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order in maintaining their lucidity and rationality in the face of corruption at 13 Avenue du Marché. They did not transform into monsters but were only slightly affected.

Using His uniqueness, Medici disguised Himself as a great will from the depths of Fourth Epoch Trier, He manipulated the Iron and Blood Cross Order members to grasp the underground situation and pinpoint Vermonda Sauron's exact location.

During this process, He uncovered the issue with the Mirror People but refrained from interference, pushing the plan forward. His intention was to involve Trier's evil god bestowed and utilize them to divert the attention of other factions while extracting corresponding special value and uncovering hidden problems.

As the plan unfolded, Philip informed Gardner Martin about Lumian Lee, who had undoubtedly prayed to the great will.

Seizing this opportunity, Red Angel Medici refined the plan, bestowing Gardner Martin with a divine vision. This allowed him to acquire significant mysticism knowledge and "conceive" the Hostel ritual.

The ritual, designed to create minimal disturbance and increase the chances of success, aimed to "fool" Trier's most formidable evil god bestowed into Fourth Epoch Trier. The ultimate goal: capture them all and purify them in one fell swoop!

Observing the Beyonder characteristic rapidly condense in His hand, Red Angel Medici raised His gaze to the gradually shrinking golden vortex.

The smile on His face, adorned with decaying wounds, deepened.

Whether it was the Hostel plan or the original strategy involving the

special mirror world, both required the cooperation of a faction and the assistance of a true god.

Enter the Eternal Blazing Sun!

Indeed, how can the sun, intolerant of darkness, filth, and humbleness, genuinely collaborate with the Mother, the symbol of depravity and evil?

Having ascended to godhood and abandoned His original Lord in the past, He had chosen this path precisely because He refused to submit to another deity. Why would He now bow to the Mother Goddess of Depravity, an Outer Deity, a different entity altogether?

His needs and acknowledgments were reserved for a collaborator. And I willingly embraced this role. Even if I were to become a Great Old One in the future, I vowed to honor this agreement and stand together in defense as a collaborator.

With the Ruler of War's divine spot vacant and Cheek in dire straits, I emerged as the most likely candidate to ascend to true godhood and attain the status of a Great Old One in a short span.

The Sun didn't repent or return to the original Lord's side, nor did He submit to the Mother Goddess of Depravity who reigned above the gods. Instead, He chose the path of enduring pressure and facing the worst possible outcome to support a new Great Old One.

This decision may have seemed nearly the worst, yet He embraced it wholeheartedly.

Because He is the proud Sun.

Through the golden vortex, the Red Angel's gaze surveyed the gradually calming storm above Trier, noting a significant decrease in the frequency of lightning.

His smile grew even more smug.

As expected, Tyrant and the old dragon have grasped the entirety of the situation. They are no longer seizing the opportunity to confront the Sun, rendering the entity that had inherited most of the original

Lord's legacy effectively useless.

They, too, yearn for the emergence of a new Great Old One.

Red Angel Medici directed His gaze to His palm, where an iron-black object, resembling a blood-stained crown, was on the verge of taking shape.

Recollections of past events and the betrayal He had only comprehended a few years ago flooded His mind. It all stemmed from His unwavering loyalty to that Lord of 2,401 years.

His choice was unforgiving. He chose to collaborate with the Eternal Blazing Sun.

This was because He was also a proud King of Angels, once the most loyal Red Angel.

As the Sequence 1 Conqueror Beyonder characteristic fully condensed, Medici chuckled and declared, "The curse of your useless descendants can end now."

He pressed the blood-stained iron crown, formed by the broken skull in His hand, between His eyebrows and devoured it without concocting a potion.

Vermonda Sauron's blood and shattered corpse, scattered across the wilderness, seemed to come alive, pouring into the Red Angel's body like a torrent.

Chapter 493 - 493 Crimson Hell

493 Crimson Hell

Sprinting through the silent, desolate, and dilapidated Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian's abdominal injuries came under control, thanks to his potent self-healing abilities. It seemed they wouldn't worsen any time soon.

Fortunately, the four of them remained relatively close, avoiding the perils of getting "lost" or separated from the group.

As Lumian contemplated finding a place to hide, a large number of violent fragments of light materialized in front of them.

It was evident that the power emanating from the Fourth Epoch Trier had been transferred from a distance.

Lumian and the others were no strangers to this terrifying storm of light. They had encountered it once in the wilderness, courtesy of Gardner Martin's silver-white full-body armor.

Gardner Martin? Lumian halted in time, wisely refraining from rushing into the weakened but still perilous storm of light.

Franca's expression became complicated, uncertain whether this encounter was luck or misfortune.

As the light subsided, she witnessed Gardner Martin's head, a long, blood-stained spine trailing behind. His armor was incomplete, his face covered in charred and hideous wounds. The helmet had caved in, revealing his grayish-white brain faintly. His eyes appeared empty, unfocused, and filled with dizziness, as if he had experienced an exaggerated shock from the intense impact.

Gardner Martin's adversary stood as his silver-white armor-clad body,

lacking a head. The neck stump was drenched in blood.

Raising his hands, he condensed a massive axe made of light.

Though incapable of unleashing the Hurricane of Light, it proved sufficient for ordinary combat.

Franca gazed at the familiar yet unfamiliar tragic face and exhaled. She took out a mirror and reflected it.

In that moment, Gardner Martin's thoughts returned to normal. Aside from his headless body, he saw Franca's beautiful lake-colored eyes, appearing calm.

Franca placed her right hand, engulfed in black flames, on the mirror reflecting Gardner Martin's head and whispered, "I'll liberate you."

Gardner Martin, still reeling from the immense blow to his body, found himself instantly enveloped by black flames, his spirituality igniting from within.

Struggling to scream, he discovered his voice stifled. Desiring aid from the great will and attempting to utilize his uniqueness to summon Fourth Epoch Trier's bestowed power, he encountered only silence.

With a whoosh, the headless Gardner Martin wielded the radiant axe, striking the head's face. The missing visor shattered, and the axe cleaved into the skull.

Lumian, having taken a few steps to the side, raised his right hand, unleashing a crimson fireball, almost white, like a cannonball aimed at Gardner Martin's sunken skull.

The fireball landed on the crack, exploding and tearing apart the unprotected grayish-white brain.

Under the relentless assault from his body, lover, and subordinate, Gardner Martin's head and eyes bulged, filled with hatred and pain.

As the silver helmet landed, Gardner Martin, still clad in armor, spun around, raising the glowing axe and charging at Lumian and the

others.

With each step, his stature appeared to expand, and by the time he stood near the headless Gardner Martin, his clothes and pants strained against his growing form.

The power of an Ascetic!

During his time at the edge of Fourth Epoch Trier, Lumian had strategically “Compressed” some of his strength. Now, he was unleashing it.

Although the accumulated strength wasn’t overwhelming, it had visibly transformed him. Coupled with the enhanced speed, agility, and physique granted by the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, Lumian was confident in withstanding the impending attack from the silver armor-clad Gardner Martin.

Just as the collision became imminent, Lumian deftly sidestepped, allowing the axe of light to cleave through the air. He swiftly punched the headless Gardner’s wrist.

With a resounding bang, the headless Gardner discarded the radiant axe, clenched his metal-gloved fist, and delivered a forceful strike against Lumian.

Lumian’s body swayed slightly, while the headless Gardner stood like an unwavering mountain peak.

Retracting his left fist, Lumian released it, swinging it in the air to alleviate the pain as he prepared to strike with his right fist.

At that moment, Franca, having vanished while Lumian approached the headless Gardner, reappeared behind the enemy clad in silver armor.

Raising the iron-black ring on her left thumb, her eyes illuminated like lightning.

Unsure if the headless body could still be affected by Psychic Piercing, Franca believed it should be possible. As long as there was a spirit, Psychic Piercing could exert its influence.

In an instant, the headless Gardner froze. The exposed skin and flesh on his neck and chest twitched.

Jenna, who had been slower due to reciting incantations and using materials, arrived as well. Revealing herself at a distance from the headless Gardner, she caused black flames to condense and fly out, landing on the enemy's bloody neck, unprotected by the silver armor. This ignited the spirit in a state of pain.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Anthony Reid sprinted past Jenna, closing the gap between him and the headless Gardner.

Then, his pupils turned vertical, a faint golden hue coloring them. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Frenzy!

Suddenly, flames erupted from the headless body in the silver armor, scorching its flesh.

Upon witnessing this, Lumian leaned back, kicking the ground with his right foot to "fly" away from the headless Gardner. Simultaneously, he condensed crimson fireballs, nearly white, around him.

The fireballs whizzed through the unprotected neck and into the body, detonating from the inside out with a resounding rumble. The silver armor trembled violently as the headless body was reduced to charred flesh and blood, "painting" the inner layer of the armor.

Boom!

Lumian, propelled backward by the explosion's waves, landed on the ground.

Simultaneously, the silver-armored mountain collapsed to the ground.

Just as Lumian rose and prepared to commend Franca and the others for their coordinated effort, he suddenly sensed the sky transforming into a deep shade of blood-red.

However, it wasn't rain. It was flames—blazing-white flames.

Within this fiery deluge, droplets of blood accompanied the falling fire.

Franca swiftly rolled towards a nearby building, utilizing its extended roof as cover from the scorching-white fire rain. Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony followed suit.

White-hot flames and drops of bright red blood fell at an increasingly rapid pace, painting the surroundings in hues of red and setting buildings ablaze.

The burning structures melded into a sea of flames.

Contemplating whether to activate the Blood Emperor's aura for potential solutions to the unfolding horror, Lumian's eyes caught sight of Madam Magician, clad in a knot shirt and beige dress.

A sigh of relief escaped him.

Resplendent starlight illuminated the scene, and they vanished from the street, taking with them the Pride Armor, Gardner Martin's corpse, and various items scattered on the ground, all converging into the diminishing golden vortex in the sky.

…

Blazing-white flames, mixed with blood, cascaded down, but they passed through Bernadette Gustav's form, unable to ignite Her.

It was as if the Angel existed beyond their reach.

Her focus remained on the dense gray fog and the diverse corruptions within the city. After a moment, Her body transformed into transparency, eventually disintegrating into a pile of bubbles that mirrored the flames.

As the bubbles dispersed, so did Bernadette, departing from Fourth Epoch Trier.

…

Two elegant women with captivating eyes approached the wall-like grayish-white fog, only to realize that the sky above was tainted with blood, and dense white flames, resembling raindrops, descended.

Just as they considered seeking shelter, a golden sun suddenly reflected in their eyes.

In the blink of an eye, they were entirely purified.

Elsewhere in Fourth Epoch Trier, the Hostel residents who had ventured within were already undergoing abnormalities. Some perished, transformed into monsters, others were engulfed in incandescent white flames, and a few caught sight of the sun.

…

Madame Pualis discovered a relatively intact asymmetrical house amidst the chaos.

Observing distant sunlight and blazing-white flames setting nearby buildings ablaze, she hesitated to seek refuge within the door due to the deep, terrifying darkness within.

Suddenly, her head throbbed violently, and she heard an almost illusory cry of a baby.

It was the cry of her child, a fragment of memory echoing nearby.

Driven by the mystical sensation, Madame Pulias ventured into the infinite darkness beyond the door.

…

Amidst the incandescent white flames that descended, Voisin Sanson, positioned in the collapsed square, was set ablaze. However, he promptly reverted to his original state.

Soon after, he witnessed his impending purification by the sun.

In that moment, his peripheral vision captured a figure emerging from behind a grayish-white stone pillar at the square's edge.

It was a diaphanous, indistinct lizard-like creature.

The creature's cold eyes silently observed him.

…

In Fourth Epoch Trier, numerous buildings were engulfed by incandescent white flames, their facades now tainted red by rainwater transformed from blood and charred black by the inferno.

Red Angel Medici, donned in blood-stained black armor, emerged from the wilderness into the resplendent city, now permeated with the air of destruction.

He navigated through the charred and collapsed houses, moving amidst falling white flames and beneath blood-like raindrops, a visible smile gracing His face.

The two decaying wounds on His face, exposing the bones beneath, had already started to heal, leaving behind marks resembling a mouth.

Splash.

Flames and blood cascaded from the sky, casting a fiery glow upon Fourth Epoch Trier and shrouding the ruins, transforming it into a crimson hell.

After 2,081 years, Medici had once again ascended to the title of King of Angels.

Chapter 494 - 494 “Stolen” Information

494 “Stolen” Information

The looming dark clouds over Trier had vanished, replaced by the glow of the crimson moonlight that bathed every nook and cranny of the city, casting reflections in the calf-deep puddles below.

On the rooftop of an unknown building, Lumian and Franca materialized at the edge. Before them, Magician hovered in the void, accompanied by a stack of items. Jenna and Anthony, encased in what seemed like dark glass, fixated their gazes elsewhere.

Without prompting from Lumian, Magician let out a weary sigh and divulged, “Medici has ascended once again to King of Angels. Once hailed as the most formidable Conspirer, He has returned.”

“The Red Angel who once served the Ancient Sun God and met His demise at the hands of the Blood Emperor, Medici?” Lumian’s reaction was a mix of surprise and inevitability.

How could the Angel of the Hunter pathway not be entangled in the affairs of the Sauron family’s secrets and Fourth Epoch Trier?

The existence of Albus Medici was irrefutable proof!

Lumian, previously under the impression that the clandestine nature of the Hostel ritual and its premature commencement had prevented the Red Angel from exacting influence, now realized Medici was apparently the ultimate victor.

Madam Magician, in a relatively composed manner, chuckled and remarked, “No need for the latter half of that statement. It makes it sound like you’re provoking Him, especially with the Blood

Emperor's aura mark still imprinted on your right hand."

Franca, having heard Lumian's mention of the Medici family, inquired out of curiosity, "What did the Red Angel do?"

As she spoke, her eyes flitted towards Jenna and Anthony, only to realize they were oblivious to the conversation with Madam Magician, as if trapped in another dimension.

Behind Franca, the water that had pooled on the rooftop began its gradual retreat, the drain's sloshing sounds echoing.

Magician sighed.

"When the Einhorn family's Angel, the powerhouses of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, and the Sealed Artifacts, along with the unique powers of the Fourth Epoch Trier, were on the brink of killing the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron, He seized the moment to terminate the entire battle and acquire the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic.

"The blood-colored sky and the fiery rain you witnessed were the aftermath of His return as a King of Angels in Fourth Epoch Trier."

That explains it… Lumian, recalling the situation, gained a firsthand understanding of the dread and power wielded by a King of Angels.

At that moment, his feet were bare, lacking shoes and socks—the consequence of being transported to the painted world while asleep. The painted footwear he later wore was evidently short-lived.

Pondering the recent events, he inquired, "Was that roaring giant the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron?"

No wonder the roar had nearly rendered them unconscious. Thankfully, Mr. Fool's gray fog had provided protection.

"That's correct. Vermonda Sauron's loss of control and descent into the sealed underground marked the beginning of the Sauron family's downfall. While many details remain shrouded in mystery, the overall picture is becoming clearer."

Angel of the Einhorn family… Lumian connected the dots, realizing

that one of Elros Einhorn and the Iron and Blood Cross Order's primary objectives was to break the seal, hunt the out-of-control Vermonda Sauron, and obtain the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic. Lumian nodded thoughtfully and asked with uncertainty, "Did these powerhouses enter Fourth Epoch Trier through the Hostel ritual?"

"Most of them accessed it through the underground leakage of Salle de Bal Brise triggered by the Hostel ritual. The representative from the Einhorn family entered through the leakage deep within the underground palace of Red Swan Castle, but it's essentially a result of the chain reaction caused by the Hostel ritual. As for how the Red Angel entered, that remains unknown to me." Magician's expression turned serious. "However, there's reason to believe that the Hostel ritual was orchestrated by the Red Angel. He manipulated the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Gardner Martin. Truly befitting the entity that once guided and watched over Amon."

Lumian felt a surge of enlightenment, finding that many previously confusing details now made more sense.

Franca's emotions were a mix of complexity.

Madam Magician, glancing at them, offered consolation, "Regardless of the circumstances, our actions accelerated the Hostel ritual, mitigating the damage this plan inflicted on Trier. In the entire market district, only a handful of night duty personnel from places like Le Marché du Quartier du Gentleman and Rist Docks bore the brunt of the disaster. Some soldiers lost their lives in other areas. Overall, the impact was mainly financial. Our efforts were not in vain."

She smiled self-deprecatingly and gazed up at the sky.

"The only unexpected thing was that They chose to cooperate."

They… Lumian and Franca thought inwardly.

Eager to uncover who the Red Angel collaborated with, they realized that Madam Magician had no intention of revealing that information.

The lady's eyes traveled over the silver-white full-body armor, Gardner Martin's remains, and the items Jenna had discarded during the battle. She smiled and offered, "I'll assist you in handling the corresponding corruption and throw in specific usage information as a bonus for this mission.

"By the way, I recommend you temporarily overlook the corruption on the bone flute. It can produce peculiar effects. With Gardner Martin's Beyonder characteristics, you don't necessarily need Philip's. Plus, your unique attributes can effectively counteract the negative effects of the bone flute."

The last sentence was directed at Lumian.

Observing Lumian's nod, Magician continued, "This wooden box serves as an under-the-table transaction. It's not meant for combat, but it can resolve many issues that violence can't under specific circumstances. I'll jot down the details and have the messenger send them over.

"The mirror fragments left behind by Mirror Gardner are closely tied to the special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier. My intuition suggests it might be linked to the current state of the Primordial Demoness.

"As for this armor, it's quite special. Wearing it will lead to some fortuitous encounters. Heh heh, ever thought of transforming into a beautiful woman or a handsome lad four to five meters tall?"

After playfully providing basic information about the various items, Magician nodded slightly and added, "Once I'm done, I'll send them back along with the information, and you'll receive an official reward.

"Seven of Wands, it's time for you to leave Trier for a while. The Iron and Blood Cross Order's mission has concluded. Your only task is to inform that mister. I'm confident he'll comprehend and accept it."

Recalling his involvement in two consecutive catastrophes in Trier, Lumian concisely acknowledged and stated, "I share the same sentiment. I intend to track down the remaining April Fool's

members."

Magician shifted her attention to Franca.

"Your next steps will hinge on the Demoness Sect's reaction. Remember to report to your Major Arcana card holder when the time comes."

After Franca acknowledged, Magician glanced at Anthony and Jenna.

"When the aftershocks settle, inquire if they'd like to draw a Minor Arcana card and join the Tarot Club. If they decline, don't push it. I'll ensure they keep it a secret."

Franca asked cheerfully, "Will they become Minor Arcana card holders under you?"

Magician smiled. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Not necessarily. It's a matter of fate."

Addressing Lumian, she advised, "No need to rush your departure. You can lay low for a few days. Head back to Auberge du Coq Doré for now. I sense a fortuitous encounter of fate awaits you there."

Fortuitous encounter of fate? Lumian was puzzled, but it was evident that Madam Magician had no intention of providing specifics. Perhaps she had glimpsed something but not the full details.

In the next moment, Madam Magician and the objects around her dissolved into starlight and disappeared.

"How surreal…" Franca remarked genuinely.

Turning to Lumian with a pensive expression, she mused, "Do you think Madam Magician might be the Angel of Stars from the Church's Bible?"

"No way…" Lumian instinctively responded before sinking into contemplation.

…

Rue Anarchie, Auberge du Coq Doré.

As Lumian ascended to the second floor, he noticed a figure crouched outside his door.

It was a chubby, earnest-looking seven- or eight-year-old boy, toting a dark-red school bag.

Ludwig? Baron Brignais's monstrous adopted son? Lumian furrowed his brows and approached.

"What's the matter?"

Ludwig, with his yellow hair and brown eyes, stood up and implored, "Can you help me leave Trier? I don't want to stay in the Church of Knowledge any longer. I don't want to be under Brignais's control. I don't want to deal with homework or tests. I can reward you!"

"Reward?" Lumian arched an eyebrow.

Could this be the fortuitous encounter of fate Madam Magician mentioned?

Ludwig vigorously nodded.

"Yes."

Without hesitation, he unzipped the dark-red hard school bag, revealing a stack of papers.

"I stole this from the Church of Knowledge. No, I brought it here."

Lumian extended his hand, accepting the papers, and quickly scanned the front page.

"Number: 01."

"Name: Deity's Fallen Banner, Salinger's Blood Banner."

"Danger Grade: 0. Extremely Dangerous. It's of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. It is not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied."

Information on Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts? And it's 0-01! Lumian's forehead and eyelids twitched simultaneously.

He was aware that the Churches had sealed numerous mystical items with significant harmful and negative effects, categorized into four grades. "3" was the lowest, and "0" was the highest. A "1" often indicated a threat to Saints and the potential for a catastrophic event. The implications of "0" were evident.

Lumian's gaze shot up to Ludwig, realizing that the boy's face betrayed nothing out of the ordinary, only pleading.

He lowered his head, swiftly absorbing the rest of the content.

"Security Clearance: Only messengers of God."

"Sealed Method: Place it in an underground mausoleum with a large number of soldier mannequins. Construct a cemetery with more than a million corpses above it, supplemented by a real city with a population of more than 100,000. The exact execution and ritual arrangements are…"

"Description: This is a charred banner. The flagpole is iron-black metal, and there are a large number of dangerous blood spots on the banner.

"…Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching. Warning, Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching!

"…The experimentalist responsible for changing the soldier mannequins must be blindfolded and carry a lantern… If the lantern is extinguished, the experimentalist will vanish. Everyone who knows him will believe that he's long dead… If he's not blindfolded, the one who leaves the mausoleum will be a monster resembling him…

"…The City of Exiles, Morora, on the surface often encounters extreme weather, including but not limited to hurricanes, torrential rain, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions…

"…There were originally no volcanoes around Morora…

“…The inhabitants of Morora are unusually belligerent. There are numerous duels with fatal casualties every day, and protests and riots occur more than six times a year…

“…The residents of Morora have no intention of leaving this city. At any moment…”

“…According to ancient texts, it has witnessed the demise of at least two true gods…”

Dammit, can I even read this? The more Lumian read, the more alarmed he became.

He looked at Ludwig in bewilderment and questioned once more, “Did you really steal it?”

Could information of this gravity be stolen so easily?

Ludwig, looking like a child, wanted to retort, but he nodded sincerely.

“Yes.”

Frowning at the boy, Lumian fell into a profound silence.

(End of Volume—Conspirer)

Chapter 495 - 495 Distribution

495 Distribution

Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for the transgressions I've made.

Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony fell silent as they stared at the gleaming full-body silver armor before them.

Before delving into the details, they had already sensed the power emanating from the Sealed Artifact. The brief yet potent Hurricane of Light it unleashed was a deadly force. Even Gardner Martin, a Sequence 5 Reaper, was willing to trade other mystical items for its might. However, upon scrutinizing the information provided, their initial enthusiasm waned, and they instinctively distanced themselves from the armor named Pride.

Within the Sealed Artifact information was a stark warning in red ink:

"The curse of betrayal originates from a deity's intense aversion and hatred before Their demise. Even Angels can't fully escape its grasp, only mitigating the negative effects to a certain extent. The sole solution is to shatter the armor and restore it to a pure Beyonder characteristic. However, this means losing its uniqueness. For instance, the ability to use Hurricane of Light again in just two minutes without delay. Moreover, those Beyonders who advance by consuming a potion derived from that Beyonder characteristic will endure reasonable but not-too-severe betrayal for an extended period."

Recalling Gardner Martin's tragic end, Franca, initially skeptical, now felt an unexplained fear. The betrayal curse seemed more formidable than she had imagined.

Lumian observed the hesitancy in Franca, Anthony, and Jenna, realizing none were eager to claim the particular spoils of war.

With a smile, he declared, “I’ll go first.”

Pointing at Gardner Martin’s remains on the coffee table, he stated, “I choose Reaper.”

The Beyonder characteristic had fused into a finger, creating an unusually sharp, bone-blade emitting an icy glint. The holder needed to be cautious to avoid accidental injury.

Immediately afterward, Lumian shifted his gaze to the charred bone flute originating from General Philip.

“I’ll trade the Hypnotist Beyonder characteristics and the Decency brooch for this. You guys wouldn’t be able to handle it anyway.”

Per Madam Magician’s intel, while the bone flute held significant power and uniqueness, it carried the risk of bringing misfortune in the form of injuries, death, and other grisly calamities. Only Lumian possessed the resilience to withstand these negative effects and mitigate them without succumbing to excessive misfortune.

In truth, if General Philip’s grudges before his demise hadn’t been so potent, and if the curse of misfortune stemming from the Deceased pathway’s boon hadn’t been so exaggerated, Lumian might have struggled more to endure it. After all, enduring perpetual misfortune wasn’t anyone’s wish. Even if it wasn’t lethal, it would still lead to considerable trouble.

Experiencing excessive bad luck was akin to tempting the fate intertwined with Termiboros, a fate deeply connected to Lumian. The potency of the bone flute wasn’t sufficient to affect an Angel.

As per Madam Magician’s detailed description, Lumian, naming the bone flute the Symphony of Hatred, discovered it possessed three abilities:

“With a simple blow, it emits a sharp, ear-piercing sound. This not only damages the Spirit Body, inducing dizziness, nausea, and convulsions in the target, but it can also directly impact Beyonders

with weaker physiques—those equivalent to ordinary adults. They might suffer temporary blindness, paralysis, or internal organ damage.

“It appears that a symphony resonating from the depths of the river of fate inflicts a weakness on the enemy’s mind. Those with unstable minds may experience symptoms akin to madness. Those with psychological issues might have latent problems triggered. There’s even a chance that excessive desires could cause them to explode on the spot. Individuals with illnesses or old injuries will inevitably face severe consequences. Those less fortunate may find themselves extremely unlucky. Of course, the player needs some knowledge about musical instruments to play the bone flute effectively; otherwise, they’ll only create noise, similar to the effect of a simple blow.

“While this bone flute is brittle and can’t be used for blocking, wherever it stabs is equivalent to hitting a vital point. If it strikes a true vital point, the enemy will either be killed in a single blow or face the fate of social death for an extended period.”

Franca observed as Lumian placed the colorless colloid with numerous bubbles and the Decency brooch, crafted into a Scotch Broom, on the coffee table. She nodded imperceptibly.

Observing the lack of objections from Anthony and Jenna, Lumian produced a deep-black cloth bag resembling a coin pouch. He carefully placed the Reaper Beyonder characteristic and the Symphony of Hatred bone flute inside.

Crafted personally by Magician, it was a Beyonder item devoid of characteristics. At first glance, it seemed to hold only up to two hundred coins, but it concealed another dimension within, equivalent to the entire Apartment 601. It could accommodate a vast array of items, including the Pride Armor.

Magician had also placed a specific seal inside the item. While within the bag, Beyonder characteristics didn’t require regular relocation, and the negative effects of mystical items would significantly diminish.

The Traveler's Bag needed resealing and reinforcement every six months; otherwise, it would lose its mystical abilities and become ordinary. In such circumstances, if the items inside weren't retrieved promptly, they would be lost to the spirit world and nearly impossible to recover.

Similarly, Franca received a Traveler's Bag as her reward.

After claiming his share, Lumian turned his attention to Anthony Reid, indicating for the Psychiatrist to make his selection.

Anthony smiled wryly. "I contributed the least. I'll take this Hypnotist main ingredient. I feel that my psychological problems have been alleviated. I can contemplate advancing."

In his interactions with Lumian, Franca, and the others, he often heard words and sentences infused with mystic knowledge. Though he refrained from direct inquiries, over time, he vaguely grasped various patterns and the essence of things he wouldn't have considered before. It was as if a new world had unfolded before him.

"No problem," Franca replied, not insisting on Anthony choosing another item. She turned to Jenna and said, "I want the mirror fragment left behind by the fake Martin."

Madam Magician referred to this item as the "Mirror World Fragment." It served as a crucial clue for Franca's subsequent investigation into the state of the Primordial Demoness, and it possessed a unique quality: Using it to reflect a target allowed the user to create a corresponding "Mirror Person." However, they couldn't replicate entities with godhood, and the mirroring effect could only be maintained for a maximum of five minutes.

The fragment produced two types of Mirror People. The first was a shallow mirror image, replicable in ten seconds. The second was a deep conversion that took a minute to complete. The former retained the original body's state, as long as the body hadn't undergone a gender change—similar to those Franca and Lumian had encountered before. However, these Mirror People were relatively weak, equivalent to the original body at a certain past stage and lacked abilities like Mirror Substitution. The latter was a nearly perfect

replica, akin to the ones recently encountered, possessing special traits.

Of course, for a Demoness of Pleasure, this wasn't practical. If she could already capture the other party's figure with a mirror, why not directly cast a curse instead of creating a Mirror Person?

Lumian interjected, "You can take another one, Franca. No need to be modest. Your contributions in these battles are second only to mine."

"What do you mean second only to you?" Franca scoffed, pushing the Decency brooch in her direction.

The only remaining spoils of war were the small dark-painted wooden box, each side adorned with a membrane curtain, and the Pride Armor. Jenna swiftly made her choice and selected the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

According to Lumian, her lucky gold coin no longer carried any additional luck. Its usefulness was now limited to specific situations. Recognizing this, she didn't believe she could resist the betrayal curse of the Pride Armor. Jenna understood the importance of not being overly prideful and blindly relying on luck, taking Gardner Martin's fate as a sobering lesson.

The usage of Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction involved grasping valuable items with one's hand, inserting them into the dark wooden box through the side "curtain," handing it to the outstretched palm-like object, and stating one's requirements. This process simplified complex matters and eased difficult transactions. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

However, one needed to have a clear, achievable target—no vague requests were allowed. For example, directly stating a desire for a specific Beyonder characteristic or mystical item was useless. Users had to find the corresponding Beyonder characteristic or mystical item, fail to reach a deal, and then make their request. This approach involved changing the seller's mind, with a high chance of securing a steep discount.

The "Under-the-table Transaction" had various applications, even

allowing two individuals with deep grudges to reconcile by shaking hands inside the box—though the individual shaking hands wasn't actually the other party.

Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction was an active remnant of boon powers, and without Beyonder characteristics, it could only be used nine more times. The downside was that each use increased the likelihood of encountering evil creatures like Demons in future transactions.

As Jenna stowed away the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction, Franca smiled and said,

"I wish to use the Decency brooch to exchange for the black Primordial Demoness figurine, or would you prefer to zero your debt as an exchange?"

Following Madam Judgment's suggestion, Franca intended to use this unique figurine to gauge the Demoness Sect's reaction and potentially exchange it for their rewards.

"T-this is everyone's spoils of war," Jenna responded in confusion.

Jenna glanced at Lumian and Anthony, finding their nods of agreement. She muttered, "Dammit, you're making me feel embarrassed… I want the Decency brooch. Only by personally paying off a debt does it become meaningful."

As she spoke, Jenna handed the black Primordial Demoness figurine to Franca and stowed away the Decency brooch, carved into a Scotch Broom.

Finally, the group directed their attention to the silver-white Pride Armor, and a contemplative silence ensued once again.

After a lengthy pause, Franca exclaimed, "Ciel, keep it. Treat it as a communal item that anyone can use. Only the both of us can carry it conveniently now. Besides, you're about to head to Port Santa in Feynapotter's Gaia Province. You can't borrow my Mirror Substitution anymore. This armor will be very useful in critical moments."

Lumian had already made the decision to investigate the sea prayer ritual in Port Santa, Feynapotter Kingdom's Gaia Province, and search for traces of the April Fool's key members—Bard and Ultraman.

Chapter 496 - 496 Sin

496 Sin

Lumian commented nonchalantly towards Franca's suggestion, "That works too. In the future, if anyone wants to use this armor, I'll 'teleport' it to you. What's this called? It's called Ciel Postal Service. It'll be delivered immediately!"

After joking, he approached the Pride Armor standing beside the coffee table and began stuffing its silver-white glove into the opening of the Traveler's Bag.

With this motion, the towering full-body armor shrank into the small black cloth bag.

As long as one part of an item could enter a Traveler's Bag, it could pass through the opening regardless of its size, as long as it didn't exceed the space within. Typically, flesh and blood infused with vitality couldn't be stored in a Traveler's Bag.

Considering these factors, Lumian's initial thought upon obtaining the Beyonder item and its "explanation manual" was that it could be used to conceal a corpse.

"How magical…" Jenna watched the scene unfold with envy.

Despite attending numerous mysticism gatherings, she had never encountered such an item. The closest thing she knew was the world inside a painting.

Lumian concealed his Traveler's Bag beneath his clothes, a smile playing on his lips. Addressing Anthony and Jenna, he remarked, "After this incident, you ought to know Franca and I are backed by a secret organization. It's not the Iron and Blood Cross Order or the Demoness Sect. So, what do you say? Interested in joining? If not, I'll

need you to sign a confidentiality agreement or swear a binding oath of secrecy."

Having heard Lumian and Franca discuss the secret organization and knowing that they genuinely believed in Mr. Fool, Jenna was familiar with the tarot card code name. Having received The Fool's response, her decision was swift.

"I'm in."

Anthony Reid pondered in silence for a moment before inquiring, "Does your organization follow some hidden entity?"

"It's an orthodox god," Lumian responded, addressing Anthony's unspoken concerns. "If you doubt me, I can show you the cathedral."

Observing Lumian's expression, Anthony confirmed the sincerity.

The Psychiatrist let out a bitter laugh and admitted, "Then I don't have an issue. My past experiences and this incident have taught me that I'm still too feeble to prevent such a catastrophe. Even if it stands right beside me, I can only watch as myself and those around me plummet into the abyss."

For Anthony, joining a secret organization seemed like a pragmatic choice to strengthen himself—especially one that followed an orthodox god.

As a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, Anthony had carefully considered it. He realized that the Church's scriptures lacked any mention of animosity between orthodox gods, unlike the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, which perpetually preached hatred towards the Lord of Storms and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

In other words, his faith wouldn't hinder Anthony from joining such a secret organization.

Without waiting for Lumian and Franca's response, Anthony grinned self-deprecatingly and admitted, "I originally planned to head back to the West Midseashire Coast, live in the countryside, but now I'm worried I can't escape the looming catastrophe. Just like those in the market district, who'd willingly dance on the edge of life and death

amidst repeated abnormalities? Yet, their wills and desires are futile.

“From what I’ve seen, catastrophes are becoming more frequent.”

Lumian mocked his companion.

“You’ve turned into a nag after your mental illness got sorted.”

He continued, “We’ll hash out the details once you confirm your Major Arcana card and get your mission assignment.”

Jenna pursed her lips, a dark expression crossing her face.

“I actually kinda like living in the market district…”

It seemed like she needed to leave this place.

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips.

“This is, in fact, protection for the market district. Hunters and Demonesses always bring catastrophe.”

Always bring catastrophe, even if they don’t do anything? Jenna’s eyes narrowed as she sank into deep thought.

“F*ck off! You’re the only one like this!” Franca cursed, a mix of irritation and amusement.

In the past few months, most catastrophes in the market district had orbited around Ciel. What did it have to do with Jenna and me?

Wouldn’t that prove that 007 was right?

After discussing other matters, Lumian and Franca stepped out of 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches into the morning sun. One headed for Psychic’s headquarters on Rue Scheer in Avenue du Boulevard, while the other made her way to Trocadéro.

Lumian opted for a four-wheeled, two-seater rental carriage instead of the usual public carriage.

Outside the carriage window, street vendors hawked Whiskey Sour, meatloaf, freshwater fish, onion bread, spicy sauce, soybean paste,

and various other items. Passersby either paused to make a purchase or briskly moved on. Some were clad as clerks, others in an array of differently colored workers' uniforms.

After the riot of the previous night and the apocalyptic downpour, this place was once again alive with activity.

For Lumian, it was reminiscent of the market district of the past, but now, he was a wanted criminal again—in his identity as Ciel Dubois, a member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and a leader of the Savoie Mob.

Salle de Bal Brise and the other establishments had undoubtedly been seized by the police headquarters. The Iron and Blood Cross Order's grip on the market district had almost been eradicated.

Lumian found it regrettable as it meant losing a stable source of income.

However, after taking Ludwig in the previous night and informing Madam Magician about the information, he intentionally returned to Salle de Bal Brise before the chaos settled. He secured 30,000 verl d'or from the safe, bringing his total to 75,000 verl d'or and 1,000 gold.

Lumian's mind wandered as he observed the passersby and listened to the vendors' pitches.

After "reporting" the previous night's matters to Mr. K and obtaining the Aurora Order Oracle's approval, he planned to leave Trier for the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Before embarking on his journey, he had three priorities:

Firstly, he needed to locate Lugano Toscano, who had lost his job again, and inquire if he was willing to accompany him to the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa. This Sequence 8 Doctor, often journeying to the Feynapotter Kingdom, was fluent in highlander. Lumian, knowing only Intisian and ancient Feysac, risked communication challenges without him—having to resort to body language.

Secondly, he awaited Jenna and Anthony's Major Arcana card missions to see if they could collaborate and assist each other.

Thirdly, he planned to use the messenger-related spirit world creature information that came with the Reaper formula from Madam Magician to attempt gaining a messenger. This would make future communication with Franca and others more convenient. Additionally, he had to perform a ritual to acquire one or two more contractual abilities. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

…

On Avenue du Boulevard, at 19 Rue Scheer, beneath the luxurious beige house, Lumian met Mr. K once again in the basement.

The Oracle, his face concealed in hooded shadows, occupied a red armchair, his profound gaze fixed on Lumian.

"Last night, I entered Fourth Epoch's Trier," Lumian got straight to the point, hoping to capture Mr. K's attention.

Mr. K's hooded head nodded. "I know. Tell me the whole story."

You know? Lumian was surprised. He recounted capturing Bouvard Pont-Péro during his revenge, and the subsequent events of how he, Franca, and company defeated Mirror Gardner, using the special mirror world to escape Fourth Epoch Trier.

Throughout the entire narrative, he shared only his experiences, avoiding any mention of Jenna and the others' encounters or his speculations. For instance, he omitted details like the fortunate gold coin or Jenna's prayer to Mr. Fool, stating only that he had inexplicably entered the world in the painting.

Similarly, he left out many specifics.

Mr. K listened attentively without interrupting Lumian's account.

After Lumian mentioned the elimination of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's market division and his exposed identity, Mr. K stood up and spoke in a hoarse voice, "No problem. Feel free to seek my assistance at any time."

Without awaiting Lumian's response, the Aurora Order Oracle turned around, knelt, and prostrated himself on the ground.

Mr. K's face pressed tightly against the floor tiles as he muttered to himself, his thoughts incomprehensible.

Lumian waited in silence, refraining from interrupting Mr. K. The shadows around him deepened, as if unseen eyes were fixed on him, sending shivers down his spine.

Yet, he remained unfazed. It seemed normal for individuals from the Aurora Order to suddenly exhibit erratic behavior.

After an indeterminate period, Mr. K coughed violently, and blood spurted from the ground.

He looked up and spoke in a deep, frenzied voice, "Oh, merciful Father, I implore your mercy for my transgressions."

After repeating this three times, Mr. K's face pressed against the ground again, emitting sounds of chewing and devouring.

After performing these peculiar actions, he stood up and tapped four times—top, down, left, right—on his chest.

"What happened? Why the repentance?" Lumian asked curiously.

Mr. K rasped, "Our Aurora Order failed to react in time to last night's catastrophe. Failing to cooperate with you in destroying the ritual was my dereliction of duty."

"It's not your responsibility," Lumian replied, his lips twitching.

The Tarot Club's actions had primarily propelled the Hostel's plan forward. It was already commendable for the Aurora Order to swiftly discern what had occurred. There was no need for Mr. K to repent and shoulder the blame for the lapse.

Mr. K shook his head. "No matter the reason, failure to act is a sin."

Do you have to be so responsible… You're just a secret organization, not fanatical believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun… Lumian muttered

silently.

As if sensing Lumian's thoughts, Mr. K spread his arms wide and spoke with abnormal fanaticism, "Because our Aurora Order is born to bear all sin."

I think you're being too extreme… Lumian struggled to control his expression.

Chapter 497 - 497 The Fragment's Origins

497 The Fragment's Origins

Mr. K didn't impose any specific requests for Lumian's journey to Feynapotter. He merely reiterated that Lumian could utilize the finger anytime he faced challenges. As long as he wasn't in a unique environment, the Aurora Order Oracle could sense it through the blood connection and offer prompt assistance.

…

In Trocadéro Town, at the entrance of the manor surrounded by grapevines, Franca caught sight of Browns Sauron, her long orange-red hair cascading down like a waterfall. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

The Demoness smirked mockingly and said, "I heard your lover is dead?"

"Did you just drink the Provoker potion?" Franca retorted without backing down. "Could it be that members of the Sauron family carry a Provoker trait from birth?"

Without waiting for Browns's response, Franca walked past her, chuckling.

"Yes, Gardner Martin is indeed dead. I killed him myself."

Browns's pupils dilated as she turned her head in surprise to gaze upon Franca's side profile. She saw that the new Demoness had a faint smile on her face, but her eyes were deep and dark—a mix of pleasure and pain, solemn and ruthless.

Franca considered adding, “I was even present to hear your ancestor’s scream while being killed,” but that would expose her grasp of extensive secret intel and mysticism knowledge that she ought not to have at her level. It would arouse the Demoness Sect’s suspicion, so she abandoned the idea. As she advanced, she smiled and said, “Then, I found the item Gardner Martin and his collaborators smuggled into Trier through the catacombs.”

“You’ve found it. What is it?” Browns hadn’t expected Franca to complete this mission, a mix of surprise and a tinge of jealousy crossing her features.

Franca didn’t hide anything. This was her purpose in coming to Demoness of Black Clarice.

She produced the pitch-black figurine with its hair facing the opposite direction of the orthodox version and waved it in front of Browns.

Browns’s expression froze, as if she had seen something terrifying.

“W-why? How is it appearing here…?” The Demoness of Pleasure’s voice trailed off, her tone filled with unconcealable shock.

Franca seized the opportunity to ask, “You know what it is?”

Browns snapped out of her daze, her eyes flickering as she said, “My teacher will tell you.”

Franca didn’t press further and changed the subject with a smile.

“Why does your teacher call herself the Demoness of Black? Wouldn’t any ordinary person consider a Demoness a derogatory term?”

“Everyone has different aesthetic standards. Some like to call themselves Saintesses, while others find Demonesses cool. They have a unique and unorthodox flair.” Browns appeared more inclined to the latter.

Franca pondered seriously, Men retain their youthful spirit even in death. Is there such excessive self-awareness? Even if they were once men… She realized that if someone called her a Demoness of XX, she

would probably feel a strange sense of smugness despite her embarrassment. However, if it were Saintess, she would definitely have goosebumps—her toes cringing so bad that they could dig a hole and bury herself in it.

Clarice's dark gray eyes, tinged with melancholy, swept across Franca's face and the black Primordial Demoness figurine in her hand.

"Yes, I did." Franca took the initiative to recount the previous night's encounter.

She recounted from the moment she failed to tail the Carbonari member until how she and Anthony Reid mysteriously entered the sealed Fourth Epoch Trier under the influence of the Primordial Demoness figurine and the ancient silver mirror despite clearly being in Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches.

She didn't hide the existence of the ancient silver mirror anymore. She only said that she had accidentally obtained it underground a few months ago. This time, it had some effect but disappeared without a trace after they sank underground.

Everything she said was the truth—every word the truth.

Demoness of Black Clarice interrupted Franca's account and asked thoughtfully, "Did you run into Gardner Martin as soon as you entered?"

Although she hadn't seen it with her own eyes, she seemed to foresee the development.

"Yes, there was also that Carbonari member. He's General Philip, who faked his death. This strange figurine was found on him," Franca replied truthfully. "At that time, Anthony and I nearly died at Gardner and Philip's hands. Fortunately, Ciel and Jenna inexplicably entered and were hidden nearby."

She briefly recounted the battle and deliberately redirected Jenna's ability towards Vampires.

After listening for a while, the Demoness of Black raised her right

hand and gently stroked her face.

“You said that there was an area in the wilderness with chaotic weather in the distance, and there was a giant figure surrounded by hurricanes and thick fog?”

“Yes, we also heard his roar and nearly lost control. Fortunately, we entered the gray fog-shrouded city in time. The commotion outside became very muffled.” Franca hadn’t expected the Demoness of Black to be so concerned about the giant.

Clarice listened quietly and let out a soft sigh. She felt a mix of sorrow, disappointment, and indescribable relief, making her feel exceptionally pitiful.

Browns looked at her teacher with a puzzled expression, as if she didn’t understand why the Demoness of Black had such a reaction.

Franca was puzzled at first, but then her heart skipped a beat.

Browns belongs to the Sauron family. Could it be the same for the Demoness of Black?

Could they be a branch of the Sauron family that had pledged allegiance to the Demoness Sect?

However, the Demoness of Black’s hair and eyes don’t resemble those of a genuine Sauron family member…

If they are all from the Sauron family, could the Demoness of Black be Browns’s relative, or even her father or mother, leading to Browns’s current state?

Had the Demoness of Black heard about Vermonda Sauron’s current situation and understood the Iron and Blood Cross Order’s scheme? Is that why she’s so emotional?

As these thoughts raced through Franca’s mind, she continued to recount the battle between the four of them and Mirror Gardner. Finally, she took out the pitch-black Mirror World Fragment.

“Your Excellency Demoness of Black, what’s this? And what’s this

figurine?”

Demoness of Black Clarice gazed at the Mirror World Fragment and the black Primordial Demoness figurine and said, “In conventional mysticism, the mirror world isn’t a true world. It’s an amalgamation of the concept of doors, connected to mirrors and alternate spaces. However, many members of our Demoness Sect are aware that in certain special places, for specific reasons, there are a few mirror worlds with monsters. You encountered one of them, and this is a fragment of that world…”

She briefly recounted what Franca already knew about the Mirror World Fragment. Finally, she said, “This should have been handed over to me for a reward, but according to your description, many underground Mirror People have already infiltrated Trier. This fragment can help you track them, find them, and eliminate them. You can keep it for a while until the mission is completed.

The origins and effects are the same as what Madam Magician said. From the looks of it, Clarice wasn’t lying to me… Sigh, my next mission is in Trier. I can’t follow Ciel to Feynapotter to search for Bard and company… At critical moments, I can get him to ‘teleport’ me there to provide help… Franca sighed inwardly and said, “Yes, Your Excellency Demoness of Black.”

The Demoness of Black continued, “This figurine originates from one of the special mirror worlds.

“We believe in the Primordial One in reality. The Mirror People believe in the mirrored Primordial One, but it’s actually just a projection of the Primordial One in the mirror.”

Just as I suspected… The Primordial Demoness’s projection in the mirror underwent an abnormality and gained self-awareness, causing Her condition to worsen? Or is Clarice not telling the entire truth? Under the Demoness of Black’s instructions, Franca handed over the special figurine.

Clarice nodded slightly and said, “You completed the Iron and Blood Cross Order mission better than I expected by retrieving this special figurine. What reward do you want?”

Franca didn't hesitate and answered, "The potion formula for Affliction, or perhaps a mystical item that allows me to traverse the spirit world."

The Demoness of Black revealed an inconspicuous smile.

"This time, I'll give you the potion formula for Affliction. Once you complete your next mission, you can choose a mystical item with the Spirit World Traversal ability."

Does that mean I can't exchange my contributions for teleportation-type items this time, but they surpass the value of the Demoness of Affliction formula? I can save a portion and exchange them together when I make other contributions? Franca pondered for a moment and said, "Okay."

Demoness of Black Clarice raised her right hand and swiped at the void.

Franca immediately noticed numerous dark Hermes words outlined on the watery surface at the edge of the circular pavilion.

"Affliction potion formula:

"Sequence: 5;

"Main ingredient: Flower-Faced Bat's head, Two-Tailed Black Snake's gallbladder;

"Supplementary ingredients: 30 milliliters of Flower-Faced Bat blood, 50 milliliters of a seriously ill human's blood, tail tip of the Two-Tailed Black Snake, 10 drops of Enfinitas Eucalyptus essential oil;

"Ritual: Without substitutes, be burned at the stake for fifteen minutes and survive without going mad."

Hiss… Just reading the description hurts… Franca couldn't help but shrink back.

After memorizing the potion formula, she left the manor with Browns.

Demoness of Black Clarice watched her silently as she retrieved an item from a hidden pocket in her black court dress.

It was a pitch-black mirror fragment.

It bore a striking resemblance to Franca's Mirror World Fragment, albeit with an irregular fracture at the edge.

Chapter 498 - 498 Suspicious Attitude

498 Suspicious Attitude

Lugano Toscano, a burly man with brown hair, brown eyes, and sharp features, donned a budget-friendly black formal suit. He lowered his head as he navigated through the lively crowd, his top hat shading his face.

Upon waking that day, before having breakfast, his companion informed him of being wanted—due to his role as Ciel Dubois's trusted subordinate managing a dance hall.

Despite Lugano's confusion about the Savoie Mob's motives and his certainty of non-involvement, as a wild Beyonder, merely existing rendered him guilty. Reluctant to seek clarification from the Purifiers and Machinery Hivemind, he packed his bags and moved to the safe house without notifying his companions. His plan was to observe for a few more days before deciding on his next move.

During the factories' lunch break, making the market district bustling, Lugano descended and surveyed the area. True to his expectations, he discovered he was indeed wanted, with a bounty of 2,000 verl d'or.

Considering his perceived lack of importance, Lugano hoped to fade from the official Beyonders' attention in due time.

Entering the room, not much larger than an attic, Lugano used a brass key to open the dark-brown wooden door.

Amidst the creaks, a figure caught the Doctor's eye.

Seated at a simple wooden table, Ciel Dubois displayed golden-black

hair, a silver earring, a white shirt, a dark jacket, grayish-blue pants, and leather shoes.

How did he find this place? Besides me and the landlord residing in another quartier, no one knows about this safe house! Officially put to use for the first time today! Lugano's pupils dilated, as if he wanted to scrutinize the figure in the dim room.

At some point, the open curtains had been drawn.

Lumian grinned at Lugano and remarked, "Why? Am I not welcomed?"

Lugano instinctively forced a smile, replying, "It's an honor to have you here. I just didn't expect you to know about this doghouse of mine."

He spoke with humility but also subtly hinted at Lumian: I haven't forgotten that I'm your dog!

As Lugano spoke, he entered the room, closing the wooden door behind him.

The space darkened, and a snap echoed.

The candles on the simple wooden table suddenly ignited, casting a yellowish flame.

Lumian lowered his raised right palm and nodded slightly, asking, "Any questions?"

Lugano didn't delve into the crimes of the Savoie Mob's brass that had made him a wanted man. Instead, his concern was elsewhere.

"Monsieur Ciel, how did you know about this safe house of mine?"

Lumian chuckled. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Wh— Lugano's eyes narrowed, sensing the formidable confidence in the other party.

Of course, Lumian wouldn't tell Lugano that he had followed him

multiple times, determining the locations of his three safe houses.

As a Hunter, Lumian often roamed the market district during his free time, honing his tracking skills. He was well-acquainted with the area.

While he randomly chose targets for ordinary passersby and residents, Lugano Toscano, a Beyonder seeking to join his ranks, was a crucial subject of investigation to prevent betrayal. Lumian kept a close eye on him to avoid being blindsided by any potential treachery.

Without waiting for Lugano to delve into further inquiries, Lumian got straight to the point.

“I need your help with something.”

“It’s my honor.” Lugano didn’t seek details and acted as if he was unquestionably on board.

Isn’t this too toady? I’m now a wanted criminal. Without Salle de Bal Brise and other businesses, it’s impossible for me to provide any more resources… Lumian stroked his chin with his right hand.

“I need to make a trip to the Feynapotter Kingdom. I wish for you to be my translator.”

Lugano promptly responded, “No problem.”

Is that so? But I have a problem… Lumian, a Conspirer, grew suspicious of Lugano’s unquestioning loyalty, given the lack of inquiry or discussion about returns. He instantly became highly focused.

Could it be that this fellow, like Ludwig, has been “sent” by some faction to interact with me? Lumian raised his eyebrows and smiled.

“I thought you’d refuse. After all, you’ve already become a Doctor. Even without taking any risks, you can lead a very good life.”

Doctors could use superpowers to treat illnesses and injuries, easily sustaining themselves in any country or city.

Lugano said sheepishly, “I’m also wanted. I’m planning to find a place to hide before returning to Trier. Besides, I believe you’ll reward me handsomely.

“Although Doctors can treat illnesses, we can’t use Beyonder powers openly. That would attract the attention of official Beyonders unless we only dabble in the black market. The best choice is to forge a doctor’s license and open a clinic. Add on Beyonder powers while providing regular treatment. However, it will require a large sum of starting funds and sufficient medical knowledge. I already have the latter. As for the former, I’ve just exchanged all my savings for the main and supplementary ingredients for the Doctor potion.”

As he spoke, Lugano’s smile ingratiated.

“Once I become a renowned doctor in Trier, I’ll earn at least 200,000 verl d’or annually. That way, I won’t have to adventure anymore. Even if I don’t want to become too famous and attract the attention of official Beyonders, it’ll be easy for me to earn 40,000 to 50,000 verl d’or a year.”

You’re quite familiar with Trier’s doctor incomes… Lumian gazed at Lugano’s face, his doubts dissipating but still lingering.

He quickly made up his mind and stood up slowly.

“Excellent. Wait three days for me here. I’ll come to you after I’m done with other matters. When the time comes, I’ll pay you a 5,000 verl d’or advance. When I don’t need your translation services, I’ll give you another 5,000 verl d’or. If there’s a battle midway, you can divide the spoils of war according to rules between adventurers. I’ll provide further compensation later, no less than 5,000 verl d’or.”

“Alright, Monsieur Ciel.” Lugano escorted Lumian out of the room with a smile.

Throughout this process, Lumian observed Doctor’s expressions and actions from the corner of his eye, but he didn’t detect any abnormalities.

Is this really how he is? There’s nothing abnormal about him, or is

his acting skills good enough? Lumian looked ahead and descended the stairs steadily.

Jenna didn't linger in Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. She swiftly packed her belongings, intending to transfer to Franca's safe house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Despite being a leader of the Savoie Mob and Gardner Martin's mistress, Franca strangely hadn't become a wanted criminal. However, the Demoness of Pleasure anticipated that she might face arrest by official Beyonders at her residence soon. Therefore, Franca had prepared to move to Trocadéro Town, having packed her own belongings and Jenna's luggage into a Traveler's Bag for a quick escape.

Carrying a brown suitcase, Jenna entered Rue des Blouses Blanches and noticed peculiar symbols in a side alley, resembling child's graffiti—a sign of the Purifiers' request for a meeting.

Jenna hesitated as she walked forward.

Although she had discussed with Lumian, Franca, and Anthony what to say about the previous night's encounter, meeting official Beyonders still felt risky. The unease lingered.

After nearly ten minutes of contemplation, Jenna let out a soft sigh and turned onto Avenue du Marché, making her way towards the alley behind église Saint-Robert—the designated meeting venue.

Her brother Julien was still in Port LeSeur and would return to Trier in a few months. Jenna aimed to avoid implicating her remaining relative and wanted him to live free from hiding and fear. Her plan was to establish a positive relationship with the Purifiers and entrust them with her brother's safety.

I'm already a Witch who can bring about a catastrophe. I'll shoulder these dark and dangerous matters, Jenna silently muttered to herself, lowering her eyes and quickening her pace.

This time, Valentine and Imre weren't the only ones in the back alley of église Saint-Robert's cathedral. There was also a man with blond

hair, golden eyebrows, and a golden beard, dressed in a brown double-breasted coat.

“This is our deacon, Monsieur Angoulême,” Imre introduced. “He attaches great importance to last night’s catastrophe and wants to know what information you have.”

From their perspective, Celia Bello had close ties to Ciel and Franca. One of them was Gardner Martin’s subordinate in two aspects, while the other was his mistress. They were expected to be aware of the riots and anomalies in the market district.

Jenna’s role as an informant had prompted the Purifiers, on Angoulême’s suggestion, to hold off arresting Franca and Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches. For now, their focus was on making Ciel Dubois, confirmed as a “soldier” of the secret organization, a wanted man.

Jenna averted her gaze from Angoulême’s golden buttons and suddenly smiled.

“Are you referring to the catastrophe triggered by the unsealing of Fourth Epoch Trier last night?”

Imre and Valentine were initially dazzled by Jenna’s smile, but then their eyes widened in shock at the information she revealed.

Angoulême was taken aback and sighed inwardly, as if he had anticipated this.

Jenna tilted her head slightly and added with a smile, “Would you believe me if I said that I witnessed the beginning of the problem and the ritual’s process with my own eyes, and I entered Fourth Epoch Trier yet managed to escape?”

Valentine and Imre’s eyes widened as they remained silent, unsure of how to respond.

“Is it related to the Hostel you previously reported?” Angoulême asked in a deep voice.

Jenna tersely acknowledged and nodded.

“Where are Franca and Ciel?” Angoulême inquired.

Jenna replied truthfully, “They’ve left the market district. They probably won’t return.”

Angoulême breathed a sigh of relief and said,”Tell me more about your experiences.”

Chapter 499 - 499 Minor Arcana Card

499 Minor Arcana Card

Jenna briefed the three Purifiers about their investigation of Hostel, emphasizing the encounter with a cyborg monk from the Deep Valley Cloister underground, who carried a load of paints and brushes. As they subsequently investigated, Ciel and she stumbled upon a tunnel collapse during an earthquake-like upheaval, leading them to fall into the painting's world.

Seems too coincidental?

The coincidence seems so unreal that even best-selling authors wouldn't concoct such a plot twist!

Valentine muttered to himself, "Could it be a miracle from God?"

Jenna nodded, recalling her initial disbelief when she first laid eyes on the painting's market district. "Yes, it was hard to believe at first."

Angoulême, with a subtle gesture of his right hand, signaled Imre and Valentine not to press further, allowing Celia Bello to continue.

Jenna shifted her focus to Séraphine and Gabriel's detailed description of Hostel, delving into her and Ciel's harrowing escape, encounters with pixies, and the relentless attacks from the other "Rooms."

Upon grasping the significance of "Hostel" and "Rooms," Valentine's mind churned with contemplation, making a vital connection.

"Each room harbors a 'resident,' akin to concealing immense power within one's body, allowing a portion of it to leak out… Where have I

seen such a state before…”

As images and information flashed through Valentine’s mind, he looked up, interrupting Jenna’s narrative with a probing question.

“What’s Ciel’s true identity?”

When the Purifiers plastered the wanted posters across the city, they were onto Ciel Dubois and his fake identity cooked up by the Savoie Mob. The police headquarters had their hands full interrogating the captured Savoie Mob members, digging for any shreds of information about Ciel Dubois’s background.

Jenna understood that now that he was wanted, Ciel couldn’t conceal his true identity further. After some consideration, she smiled and said,

“Don’t you know?

“His real name is Lumian Lee—also a wanted criminal from Cordu in the south.”

Lumian Lee… Valentine’s eyelids twitched as he realized his suspicions were correct.

Jenna glanced at him and softly “explained,” “Ciel joined the Savoie Mob and the Iron and Blood Cross Order to enhance himself and seek revenge on the evil gods’ bestowed. He played a crucial role in this matter. Without his investigation, the Hostel ritual wouldn’t have been brought forward, and the catastrophe would have been even more severe. Though he claims it’s to finish off the bestowed of evil gods, deep down, he doesn’t want others to suffer the same fate after he experienced a disaster.”

Valentine’s expression eased, revealing a mix of regret and relief.

He sighed, acknowledging, “He is indeed a devout follower of God. Unfortunately, fate and those malevolent forces pushed him into the darkness.”

Jenna, muttering silently, A devout follower… I’m afraid you have some unnecessary misunderstandings about Ciel.

“I didn’t expect the one preventing the catastrophe from escalating last night to be a wanted criminal, a member of an evil organization. Even without standing in the light, one can still be a hero.”

She detailed the collapsed grayish-white stone pillar, the distant giant’s figure, General Philip’s feigned death, the black Primordial Demoness figurine, Mirror Gardner Martin, the terrifying roar, the descending sun, the reddened sky, and the rain of fire. However, she discreetly omitted the specifics of the ensuing battle.

Angoulême and the rest wisely held back from prying too much. Among wild Beyonders, certain intel could fetch a handsome sum, but the details of their abilities and combat techniques were strictly confidential.

“Finally, we obtained the figurine and the fragment left behind by Mirror Gardner, left the seal, and returned to the normal underground,” Jenna continued. Though the first half of her sentence wasn’t directly related to the second half, it created an impression of how they left Fourth Epoch Trier.

“The complexity of the matter is beyond imagination, and it involves a high-level power,” Angoulême sighed softly.

They had no idea what had happened for the sun to rise from the Sacred Heart Cloister last night, nor did they understand why it had fallen into the Fourth Epoch Trier’s seal. They felt that it had something to do with an Angel-level battle.

“Where is the figurine and the mirror fragment?” Valentine asked anxiously.

Jenna couldn’t be more honest. “It’s with Franca.”

Angoulême nodded gently.

“Where’s the full-body armor?”

This was linked to the deaths of his two former colleagues.

Of course, Gardner Martin’s death could be seen as a form of successful “revenge.”

“Magic Mirror Divination revealed a terrifying betrayal curse associated with it. Gardner Martin’s fate served as proof. None of us dared to take the risk. Ultimately, we left it with Ciel.” Jenna, even as a Witch, found the curse to be exaggerated and ridiculous.

After a brief silence, Angoulême addressed the issue, “If you encounter Ciel again, tell him he can sell us the armor.”

Jenna nodded in agreement, and the Purifier deacon got serious.

“The intel you provided is very important. What kind of compensation do you want?”

“The potion formula for Pleasure and all the ingredients,” Jenna replied, intending to set a high starting point for negotiation.

This came from years of bargaining experience.

Angoulême glanced at the Witch and said, “Are you planning to leave the market district too?”

“That’s right.” Jenna smiled sadly and self-deprecatingly. “Witches bring catastrophe. I don’t want to impact the people here. No wonder the Witches in stories always live in the dark forest, away from people. However, I’ll return occasionally and remain your informant. You can continue to contact me through the agreed method.”

Her slightly sad smile prompted an instinctive urge in Imre to look away, wary of falling for her.

“Once we verify the authenticity of your intel, we’ll help you apply for the formula and ingredients for Pleasure. I can’t guarantee its success. Items at this level require approval from the higher-ups,” Angoulême promised without entering into further negotiation.

After bidding farewell to the Purifiers, Jenna picked up her suitcase and took a carriage to Franca’s safe house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Once settled, she reflected for a moment and decided to express her gratitude at The Fool’s cathedral in Lavigny Docks. She felt compelled to thank this great entity for answering her prayers and enabling Ciel

to enter the painting world to provide assistance.

In the pristine cathedral with clear windows, Jenna sat at the edge of the last row of pews. She closed her eyes, clasped her hands, brought them to her chest, and bowed her head in prayer.

Amidst the tranquility of the religious space, it felt as if she had entered a deep slumber, her mind empty, and her words mere offerings of praise.

Vaguely, she sensed someone settling beside her.

Ignoring the newcomer, she continued with her prayer.

After a few minutes, she opened her eyes and noticed a petite lady praying beside her.

The lady had shoulder-length yellow hair and wore light pants, a masculine-looking shirt, and a small brown coat.

Although her eyes remained closed, the delicate contours of her brows, mouth, and nose were discernible from her side profile. Despite her lack of height, she exuded a calm and dignified aura.

Sensing Jenna's gaze, the woman opened her eyes and greeted her with a smile.

"Jenna?"

"Yes… Whom am I speaking to?" Jenna felt puzzled and vigilant, but she sensed no danger in Mr. Fool's cathedral.

The young lady introduced herself, "I'm the Major Arcana card holder of the Two of Cups, whom you might know as Franca, Judgment.

"I came to The Fool's cathedral to pray today, not expecting to meet you. Perhaps this is fate. How about it? Do you want to draw a Minor Arcana card?"

Feeling the friendliness in her tone, Jenna nodded and said, "I'd be delighted, Madam Judgment." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).

(com)

If it were any other Major Arcana card holder, Jenna might have been instinctively worried, but Franca and Lumian had already mentioned Judgment and Magician to her. She had a natural favorable impression and trust in them.

Judgment retrieved a stack of tarot cards from a small black bag hanging from her waist. She casually cut them a few times and handed them over with a smile.

“Draw one.”

Jenna felt inexplicably nervous. After contemplating for a moment, she reached out her right hand and drew a Minor Arcana card.

The card depicted seven cups floating in the clouds, with skulls and people looking at them below.

“Seven of Cups,” Madam Judgment chuckled. “This represents confusion, puzzlement, dreams, illusions, and choices. But what’s important is not that. Our Tarot Club’s two Demonesses drew a Cup card.”

She produced another tarot card, this one portraying an angel sounding a trumpet to guide the departed.

Major Arcana card, Judgment!

“Keep this card. When faced with unforeseen danger, take it out and recite ‘Rain Judgment’ in Hermes. As long as I’m in Trier, I can provide assistance. Of course, you have to be in Trier too when requesting. Except in places like Fourth Epoch Trier—I won’t be able to hear you,” Madam Judgment calmly explained.

“Thank you, Madam Judgment,” Jenna expressed her gratitude sincerely, accepting the Major Arcana card.

Judgment nodded and continued, “Now, cooperate with the Two of Cups to carry out the Demoness Sect’s mission, but with a different direction. Avoid the Demoness Sect and investigate the special mirror worlds. The Demoness of Catastrophe, Krismona, who perished in the

Fourth Epoch, is a starting point. She's a child of the Primordial Demoness, a natural-born woman—a pure female Demoness, just like you."

Chapter 500 - 500 “Nonexistent” City

500 “Nonexistent” City

The child of the Primordial Demoness must be born as a woman? Jenna pondered the Sequence name “Witch” and began to grasp its significance.

“Alright,” Jenna agreed.

Upon joining the Tarot Club, her initial mission didn’t require her to part ways with her companions or expose herself to unnecessary risks, bringing a sense of comfort.

Madam Judgment responded with a smile, saying, “Allow me to update you on the Tarot Club’s current situation…”

…

After Anthony Reid left Apartment 601 at 3 Rue des Blouses Blanches, the exhaustion of a sleepless night hit him hard.

As a Psychiatrist, his physical condition hadn’t improved much. Staying awake until dawn and enduring severe injuries took a toll. Surviving with the help of the blood-sucking obsidian arrow had left him weakened, having lost a significant amount of blood. Subsequent intense battles and relentless running had drained his stamina, leaving him naturally fatigued and yearning for a bed.

At times like these, he couldn’t help but envy the Hunters. Lumian, just one Sequence higher, hadn’t slept either. Despite being the main force in both battles, he showed no signs of weariness, appearing energetic enough to take on Gardner Martin once more.

Pressing on, Anthony Reid turned onto Rue Anarchie, entering a brownish-gray house and reaching a corner on the third floor.

This was his safe house, an apartment vacant for a long time.

He believed it unsafe to rent from a landlord or broker for a safe house. Any interaction risked betrayal and tracking. Leveraging his identity as an information broker, he identified unused or abandoned apartments in the market district. If things went awry, he could choose a random one to hide without making contact.

Dusty bed and moldy blanket didn't bother Anthony. He collapsed and quickly succumbed to sleep.

In the hazy dream, clarity and rationality returned suddenly.

Ahead, Avenue du Marché unfolded, a café bustling with patrons and thriving.

Following his peculiar intuition, Anthony Reid passed a golden retriever at the café's entrance and arrived at Booth D by the window.

A lady in a light-green and white dress sat there. Anthony sensed he should see her face clearly, one capable of leaving a stunning impression, but a clear mental image eluded him.

It was as if all the information had been gathered, but his brain or Body of Heart and Mind struggled to process it. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

"Good morning. I'm Justice," the lady introduced herself in a gentle voice, carrying a hint of briskness.

Justice… Anthony had already learned from Lumian and Franca that the secret organization they belonged to was the Tarot Club. Members used tarot cards as code names, with Major Arcana card holders representing key demigod members, and Minor Arcana card holders as peripheral members under the different Major Arcana cards.

Justice was undoubtedly a Major Arcana card.

Justice smiled.

“Of course, some entities don’t think so.”

The Major Arcana card opposite him was friendly, not imposing at all. She even initiated a joke, easing Anthony’s tense heart.

He exhaled quietly and said, “I can draw a card now.”

As he finished speaking, a stack of tarot cards appeared in front of him.

Anthony habitually selected one from the middle and placed it on the table.

The Minor Arcana card revealed: a man carrying a sword sitting beneath three hanging swords.

Four of Swords!

“You’ve already unburdened your heart. The remaining rest and preparation are for propelling yourself further into the future. As a Psychiatrist, this card signals you to be vigilant about your mind at all times. We can shoulder new burdens at any moment, and it’s crucial to know how to accept, accommodate, and resolve them,” Madam Justice interpreted the Minor Arcana card.

A stack of tarot cards appeared in front of her, noticeably less than before.

With casual ease, she drew a card and placed it at the center of the table.

The card portrayed an impartial goddess seated on a stone chair, wielding a sword and scales—the Justice card from the Major Arcana!

Pushing the Justice card toward Anthony, she smiled and said, “You have two missions now. First, collaborate with the Two of Cups to eliminate Mirror People and investigate the Demoness Sect’s predicament. Second, make contact with a covert organization known as the Psychology Alchemists…”

Psychology Alchemists… Anthony mulled over the name.

After laying out the missions, Justice inquired, “Did they brief you on the specifics of the great existence we’re following and the Tarot Club?”

“All I know is that you follow an orthodox god named The Fool and use tarot cards as code names, following His name,” Anthony honestly replied.

Before formally joining the Tarot Club, Lumian and Franca had kept details scarce.

Justice chuckled.

“Then allow me to introduce you to our beacon and savior, the great Mr. Fool…”

Her tone held a touch of joy.

…

After leaving Lugano Toscano’s secure hideout, Lumian took a carriage to Quartier du Jardin Botanique. He navigated the street named Rue des Pavés in the market district and entered the safe house he had leased earlier.

Ludwig sat on the sofa, engrossed in a novel and indulging in dessert. Lumian glanced at him, sneering, “Escaping the Church of Knowledge doesn’t mean you should stoop to reading novels only!”

Ludwig diverted the conversation. “Someone of ill temper sent you a letter. It’s in the bedroom.”

“The one in the golden dress, like a doll,” Ludwig replied, not bothering to look up. Midway, he paused to savor a bite of carrot cake, a specialty from the Loen Kingdom.

Madam Magician’s messenger… Lumian asked in puzzlement, “Why did she lose her temper at you?”

“I saw her and had a little spat with her,” Ludwig replied

nonchalantly.

Just an argument? She didn't string you up for a beating? Lumian muttered silently as he entered the bedroom and picked up the folded letter from the desk.

This letter differed from the one that had previously rewarded him. It primarily addressed Lumian's inquiries after acquiring the 0-01 information.

"This seems to be a hint from the Church of Knowledge.

"If you can attain a high position, they are willing to offer some assistance. They might even tacitly permit you to take possession of the Sealed Artifact.

"However, there are two prerequisites. Firstly, you must achieve the status of a Sequence 4 Saint at the very least, possessing godhood and the qualifications to step onto the chessboard. Secondly, you must have a method to transport that Sealed Artifact without causing harm to the surrounding humans and the environment.

"If you fail to meet these two conditions, the Church of Knowledge won't extend clear support.

"There's also a contradiction for becoming a demigod and how those more formidable than Sequence 5 are unable to approach 0-01. Perhaps there's a hidden message here, suggesting that after proving your ability to advance to Sequence 4, but before consuming the potion through a ritual, entering the City of Exiles, Morora, and approaching 0-01 is the next step. Leave a mark or achieve something to lay the groundwork for controlling it when you advance to a higher Sequence.

"As for their specific expectations, I cannot discern them at the moment.

"In simple terms, if you demonstrate and prove your potential, the Church of Knowledge is willing to support your bid for the Red Priest position, competing against Red Angel Medici. Does that surprise you? Are you excited?"

Surprise? More like shock! Lumian had never truly entertained the idea of becoming a true god.

Despite not being a devout believer, he had grown up in a society influenced by such beliefs. His exposure to the mystical world was relatively recent, making the notion of “I too can become a god; I also want to become a god” unlikely.

As for the terror and might of Red Angel Medici, Lumian had witnessed it in Fourth Epoch Trier.

The prospect of becoming enemies with such a formidable entity and vying for the Red Priest’s deity position instinctively struck him as absurd and meaningless.

What’s the fundamental difference between this and Aurore’s jest during combat class, claiming you’ve mastered basic combat techniques and can now slay a god?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly muttered to himself, If I become a true god, can I resurrect Aurore…

After a moment of silence, he smiled self-deprecatingly and said, “Even deities can perish, and may not be resurrected.”

Madam Magician mentioned that the betrayal curse of the Pride Armor stems from the aversion and hatred of a deity before Their demise… However, according to the information she provided, the Pride Armor first appeared at the end of the all-out war in the Northern Continent. Did a true god perish back then?

The abilities of the Pride Armor clearly belong to the Warrior pathway… The one who perished was the God of War? But in the Feysac Empire, the Church of the God of Combat is still fine. Uh, that’s what the newspapers, magazines, and merchants said…

Lumian pondered for a moment but couldn’t come to a conclusion. He shifted his gaze back to the letter.

“I never intended for you to pursue the Red Priest’s deity position, actually. I believed that with an Angel sealed within you and a changed fate, there was a chance for you to become a High-Sequence

Beyonder. Now, follow your heart's desires. Our Tarot Club is here to support you.

"However, there's something to be cautious about:

"I went to Lenburg and consulted a few local scholars known for their knowledge, but none of them have heard of the City of Exiles, Morora.

"In the eyes of ordinary people and even the lower- and middle-class clergymen of the Church of Knowledge, this city is nonexistent and unrecorded."

Chapter 501 - 501 Honorific Name

501 Honorific Name

City of Exiles, Morora, doesn't exist? When Lumian perused the information Ludwig had "stolen," he couldn't shake the sensation that Morora was vivid and right before him. This stemmed from the fact that the scribe had meticulously chronicled every folklore and characteristic of the city. Even those who hadn't set foot there could conjure a mental image.

I read it so intently, feeling so nervous and afraid. Finally, you tell me, 'I'm sorry, I made all this up?' As Lumian grappled with the absurdity, his gaze reverted to the letter, eager to uncover Madam Magician's speculations.

The Major Arcana card holder teased, "Perhaps the individual who penned this Sealed Artifact information had already lost their sanity, conjuring the City of Exiles, Morora.

"Maybe it's a colossal prison nestled in the mountains, patrolled by guards. They provide supplies unattainable independently and remain cut off from the outside world.

"Perhaps Morora is genuinely an imagined City of Exiles, yet, in a peculiar way, it already exists…

"Don't dismiss the first and third conjectures as absurd or hyperbolic, making them implausible. Let me enlighten you; when dealing with Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, numerous things defy common sense and intuition. Especially when we're talking about 0-01.

"Personally, I fancy the first conjecture. It emanates a fantastical beauty. A deranged Keeper jotting down information about a Sealed

Artifact, filled with ramblings and delusions, and treating it as reality. But what about the truth? Where did it vanish to? Is it no longer in place?"

At the sight of this, Lumian felt an inexplicable chill, and his hair stood on end. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Madam Magician had expounded terrifying possibilities. Moreover, she had employed seemingly casual strokes, brisk descriptions, and a barrage of questions to cultivate an atmosphere of composure and distortion, pushing one's nerves to the brink. Prolonged contemplation of it could drive one to the brink of insanity.

Isn't this superior to the narrative prowess of most current bestselling authors in crafting horror tales? Lumian critiqued his Major Arcana card holder.

Shaking his head, he relegated 0-01 and the City of Exiles to the recesses of his mind.

He feared that dwelling on it might tip him into madness.

It wasn't out of the realm of possibility. Lumian hadn't slept since perusing the information. While he leveraged the 6 a.m. reset of his body every morning to alleviate fatigue, he occasionally heard indescribable and spine-chilling voices resembling calls from the depths of the mountains.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and resumed reading the letter.

"Alright, I won't terrify you any longer. In essence, until you truly confront 0-01, don't summarily dismiss any conjecture or potentiality.

"I've verified the auditory hallucinations you mentioned. It's a mild corruption induced by delving into 0-01's information. Some entities can induce corruption merely by knowing their names instead of their code names. Fortunately, your destiny is entwined with that long-named fellow. To some extent, it's akin to having the status of an Angel. Furthermore, you bear Mr. Fool's seal, the Blood Emperor's aura, and other high-level paraphernalia. That's why you only

experienced a faint auditory hallucination and sensed the beckoning. You didn't suddenly descend into paranoia and extremism, harboring a desire to seek treasure in the mountains before vanishing one night."

Madam Magician revels in spinning horror stories. She insists on expanding concise explanations into potential scenarios for me… Lumian had been in correspondence with his Major Arcana card holder for quite some time, becoming well-acquainted with her choice of words and writing style.

"Let me remind you that you're akin to an Angel to some extent, yet you won't succumb to the corruption associated with higher Sequences. That's what sets you apart. It's why you can venture into many peculiar places. Hence, some entities seek to exploit this. Exercise caution and vigilance, continually scrutinizing yourself.

"By the way, Miss Justice and Judgment extend their gratitude. The revelation of 0-01 and Vermonda Sauron's whereabouts allowed them to fulfill a mission entrusted by Mr. Fool before his slumber. Hence, the rewards are particularly generous this time…

"Your concerns are valid. If you miss the initial trail, whether it's Bard, Mad Lady, or the traces left by other key members of April Fool's, it's more likely a trap than a clue. Of course, traps can yield certain information. As long as you can withstand the associated peril, you might uncover the architect of the trap.

"Remember, this is my name. It carries the power to conceal secrets from others.

The King of Yellow and Black is an alias for Mr. Fool… Cosmic Traveler and chronicling the world sounds amazing… Could she truly be the Angel of Stars from the Bible? As Lumian committed it to memory, he witnessed the honorific name gradually fading, as if erased and consumed by the void.

At the conclusion of the letter, Madam Magician added: "The Minor Arcana, Knight of Swords, subordinate to Ma'am Hermit, journeyed to Feynapotter a few months ago for a certain matter. When you arrive there, should you require assistance or information, you can

reach out to him.

“His messenger is:

“A peculiar creature wandering above the world, a half-fairy who fiddles with melodic strings, a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords.”

Half-fairy… Lumian had skimmed through information about such spirit world creatures, mainly to select a suitable contract partner. He hadn’t delved into the details, making it challenging to recall.

Simultaneously, he noted that the Knight of Swords’s messenger incantation deviated from the conventional format. Perhaps there was concern that foes could decipher the correct three-line description and summon the messenger to target him.

Regardless, with the limiting phrase “a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords,” the second sentence didn’t necessarily have to depict a creature friendly to humans. However, since it could serve as the messenger of the Knight of Swords, it could tacitly be considered as friendly to humans.

Lumian reread Madam Magician’s letter from start to finish, mindful not to overlook any crucial information embedded in her cryptic statements.

Suddenly, a knock echoed on the bedroom door.

Lumian glanced up, and the door creaked open. Ludwig stuck his chubby head out and, in a daze, uttered, “I’m hungry. It’s time for you to cook.”

“Didn’t you just eat plenty of cake and crackers?” Lumian’s lips twitched.

Ludwig replied seriously, “That’s dessert, not the main course.”

Subtly, he licked his lips.

“Moreover, your culinary skills are quite impressive, and those dishes are quite unique. With a chef around, I don’t want to settle for raw

beef, hard bread, and freshly bought potatoes."

The boy's expression turned pleading.

Lumian scoffed.

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"I can only cook by myself after I recover a little," Ludwig replied subconsciously before changing his tone. "I'm still a child. You're actually asking me to cook in the kitchen? Aren't you afraid that I'll be injured by a knife or burned?"

I'm just afraid you'll eat the knife… What does it mean to cook after recovering a little? Is Chef a higher rank than your current Sequence's strength? Can't you cook if you're not a chef? Lumian observed Ludwig leaning against the door frame, looking at him with expectant brown eyes, and suddenly found the scene familiar.

In the past, he had begged his sister Aurore in the same way.

Lumian sighed and stood up.

"I'm only responsible for three meals. The rest of the time, rely on dessert, bread, and cold dishes. Don't bother me."

As he spoke, he left the bedroom and entered the kitchen.

After pan-frying a steak, Lumian picked it up and casually tossed it out.

Ludwig deftly caught it, tore it in a few bites, and stuffed it down his abdomen.

Observing this, Lumian chuckled inwardly, feeling that this fellow was even more absurd than he had been back then.

…

In Underground Trier, within a quarry cave.

Lumian stood before the altar, encircled by the recently dismantled

wall of spirituality.

He had completed the Contractee summoning ritual and gained two new contracted abilities. Now, he awaited Franca and the others to witness who could successfully gain a messenger.

One of these abilities was Shadow Transformation. It allowed Lumian to authentically morph into a shadow, merging with it to conceal himself and move stealthily—a skill he currently lacked.

While such abilities existed in the mystical knowledge of Contractees, Lumian opted to acquire them from the spirit world creature information provided by Madam Magician. This prevented the bestowed of Inevitability from discerning the negative effects he might endure.

Ultimately, Lumian contracted a spirit world creature known as Long Shadow. He sacrificed six servings of fresh cow and sheep meat in exchange for this ability, making him more susceptible to sunlight than ordinary humans.

This wasn't as severe as the aversion Vampires had to sunlight. Lumian could endure it with his Ascetic endurance.

Another ability he had acquired was the Bottle of Fiction. He found the unique and practical ability demonstrated by the padre intriguing. It could effectively screen an enemy, creating a concealed space where the other party couldn't escape and could only exit through the bottle's opening; traps could be added.

Since no spirit world creature could provide this ability, Lumian summoned the creature called the Fantasy Face and completed the contract with a bottle of blood with strong spirituality.

The blood needed to come from a Beyonder above Sequence 7 or a corresponding Beyonder creature. Lumian, naturally, wouldn't use his own blood, as sacrificing it to the Fantasy Face could gradually transform him into a monster. Instead, he used the blood Madam Magician extracted from Gardner Martin's corpse—one of the supplementary ingredients for a Reaper. It was substantial, and there was plenty.

The corresponding downside was a trace of greed.

Before long, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony arrived at the quarry cave, one after another.

Chapter 502 - 502 Messenger Ritual

502 Messenger Ritual

Anthony stared at the altar, the flickering candlelight casting shadows on his face. He voiced his concerns and uncertainties about having their own messenger.

His knowledge of mysticism hinted that messengers were a rare occurrence. Only Beyonders of specific pathways at a certain Sequence or high-level Beyonders with godhood possessed these special contracted creatures, accessible at any time and summoned by others.

Franca, grinning, reassured him, “Other Beyonders might not cut it, but we still have a chance.

“There are three prerequisites for possessing a messenger. First, you need to understand spirit world creatures, knowing which ones can be used as messengers. You must grasp their characteristics and devise incantations for precise summoning. Second, the spirit world creature must be willing to respond to the summoning and not reject signing a contract to become your messenger. Third, you need a unique undead contract and a deity to bear witness, restraining both parties and clarifying their responsibilities.

“See, there aren’t any restrictions on pathways and Sequences among these three. There are only hidden restrictions, but there are ways to bypass them. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“For ordinary Beyonders, the first requirement is the toughest. Usually, they lack a deep understanding of spirit world creatures. Summoning one might make them tremble with fear, afraid the incantation could lead to a monster that could harm their family.

With time, they might rely on their predecessors' experiences to accumulate reliable summoning incantations, but most have nothing to do with a messenger.

"We're different. As members of the Tarot Club, we have Madam Magician, an expert in spirit world creatures. Ciel has a pile of information on them. Madam Magician selected 30 spirit world creatures suitable for being a messenger, some with a desire to serve as a Mid-Sequence Beyonder's messenger. This allows us to skip the greatest obstacle.

"Otherwise, consider the speed at which spirit world creatures traverse. Some messengers can cover the distance from southern Intis to Trier in just a few minutes. Others take ten minutes to half an hour, while some may take half a day or even a full day. Without knowledge, signing a messenger that takes half a year or one year to cover such a distance is pointless."

"My name isn't Ciel Dubois anymore," Lumian reminded Franca after she finished explaining a portion of the knowledge to Anthony and Jenna, who were novices in the mysticism world.

Franca let out a hollow laugh.

"Isn't it just a habit of the mouth? When I first met you, your name was Ciel. I've been calling you that for months."

She continued, "The second prerequisite is that we have a way to bypass it. Beyonders of pathways like Corpse Collector, affiliated with the undead and other creatures in the spirit world, can make them willing to be summoned. Then, it's possible to sign a messenger contract. At the Sequence of Spirit Guide, they can even semi-compulsively turn a target they fancy into their messenger. Without such specialties, one can often only rely on their status to suppress and intimidate them.

"As for us, we follow Mr. Fool. You've all heard the Church's bible, so you should know that Mr. Fool is the great ruler who controls the spirit world. Strictly speaking, those spirit world creatures are under his control. As members of the Tarot Club, summoning spirit world creatures and signing a messenger contract with them will definitely

be much easier. In particular, Lumian here has Mr. Fool's power. Have you ever seen him fail in summoning spirit world creatures? At most, it's vague. What comes isn't what he wants.

"The third prerequisite is that Madam Magician has already given Lumian a special undead contract, specially prepared for messengers. The witness should be Death, but they can be replaced by an Angel from the Underworld or the undead domain. And there's an Angel of Death by Mr. Fool's throne. He's the Consul of the Underworld!

"Actually, I don't think it's a problem to use Mr. Fool's honorific name directly. Would spirit world creatures not obey the orders of the great ruler who controls the spirit world?"

The information from Madam Magician contained a four-line description targeting the Underworld, suitable as a witness.

Jenna and Anthony absorbed the mysticism knowledge attentively, realizing its value in explaining many problems in ordinary summoning rituals.

Once Franca had concluded her instructional role, Lumian produced a carefully selected stack of information about spirit world creatures and directed his attention to Jenna.

"You first."

Jenna, pointing at herself in confusion and surprise, asked, "Me?"

Lumian let out a chuckle.

"My chances of success should be about the same as yours, but I have a lot of messy things on me. I'm afraid it'll cause an anomaly and ruin the rest of tonight's attempts, so I'll be the last."

Jenna considered Lumian's explanation and agreed.

Muttering under her breath, she took the document and flipped to the page she had chosen earlier.

It recorded a spirit world creature she was relatively familiar with: "Rabbit of Knowledge."

However, this wasn't an ordinary Rabbit of Knowledge; it had absorbed some specific knowledge and undergone a special mutation to become suitable as a messenger.

Jenna had a positive impression of the Rabbit of Knowledge. She found it friendly and willing to help humans, making it her preferred choice from the beginning.

Additionally, its silly appearance added to its charm.

Retrieving the page of information, Jenna entered the altar. Recalling Franca's teachings and the mystical knowledge from the Witch potion, she swiftly sanctified the ritual silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality.

Having completed all the preparations, Jenna took two steps back, focused on the candle flame, and uttered a concise and forceful word in ancient Hermes.

"I!"

Then, she switched to Hermes.

"I summon in my name:

"Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be communicated with, a runner who pursues knowledge."

In this modified incantation, the original "weakling" was replaced with "runner" to specifically denote the special Rabbit of Knowledge.

The candle flame abruptly shifted to a dark green hue, expanding to the size of a human head.

A translucent creature resembling a rabbit emerged from the dark-green candle flame.

Unlike other Rabbits of Knowledge, its eyes emitted a wise glint, and it held a blurry book with an orange-red cover in its hand.

Its legs were powerful, indicating its proficiency in running.

Jenna couldn't contain her joy at successfully summoning it on her first attempt.

Slightly perturbed, she addressed the creature in ancient Hermes, "Are you willing to become my messenger?"

The mutated Rabbit of Knowledge glanced at Jenna and asked in Intisian, "Have you ever called my kind fools or idiots before?"

"No," Jenna replied sincerely. "I curse occasionally, but it's not directed at anyone. It's just an expression of my emotions."

Occasionally? Lumian mocked Jenna inwardly.

However, this might have been more of a formality, as the answer of not having engaged in name-calling was sufficient. Whether it was entirely true or not seemed inconsequential.

The rabbit nodded and said, "You have to pay me. Every time you summon me, you have to give me a book or knowledge of equal value. You can give it to me directly or burden the person who's writing to you."

It agreed just like that? Having name-called it in the past, I can't summon this rabbit as a messenger? Well, I can't summon it now either. There should only be one special Rabbit of Knowledge that has evolved to be capable of being a messenger… Lumian knew it was generally easy to deal with, but he didn't expect it to be so amiable.

Jenna glanced at the information placed at the edge of the altar, noticing a notification: "The knowledge you feed the Rabbit of Knowledge determines what it will become in the future."

Will reading more postman-related books improve its awareness and abilities as a messenger? Jenna wondered to herself as she replied, "No problem. Let's sign a contract."

Following the template provided by Madam Magician, she used the dark-red fountain pen on the altar to swiftly write a contract on the yellowish-brown goatskin, outlining the agreed compensation.

The contract was composed in ancient Hermes, with every word seeming to resonate with the forces of nature and the spirit world. Jenna had utilized her usual studies and the knowledge from the Witch potion to quickly grasp this Beyonder language.

In addition to the contract, Jenna penned a description of the mysticism related to the Underworld.

“The home of all death, the hell hidden deep within the spirit world, the witness of the decay of all living things, one that solely belongs to the kingdom of Death.”

As she wrote, the ancient Hermes words burned with dark-green flames, including the original ones.

Remembering Lumian’s earlier advice, Jenna deliberately included a clause fixing the summoning incantation as “Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups.”

Still cautious about revealing her real name, Jenna refrained from using it. She worried that someone familiar with her messenger summoning incantation might uncover her true identity, potentially implicating her brother Julien in the future.

After scanning the contract and confirming its accuracy, Jenna signed her code name.

The goatskin floated up and flew toward the mutated Rabbit of Knowledge.

Picking up another fountain pen, the Rabbit of Knowledge wrote its name: “Chasel Sávio.”

“You have a name?” Lumian was a little surprised.

He was also within the wall of spirituality.

“I named it myself after reading a book. It’s my name now,” replied Rabbit Chasel as the ghastly green flames on the goatskin merged, incinerating the contract into ashes and transforming it into an invisible force.

Jenna breathed a sigh of relief and engaged in a brief conversation with Rabbit Chasel before concluding, “I! I end this summoning in my name.”

Rabbit Chasel returned to the spirit world, and Franca eagerly watched as the wall of spirituality dissipated before stepping into the altar.

Jenna’s ease had filled her with confidence.

However, she faced a shameful failure.

Chapter 503 - 503 Penitent

503 Penitent

Franca attempted summoning five different spirit world creatures. Despite her successful summonings, none of the spirit world creatures were willing to sign a contract and become her messenger.

The repeated failures struck her hard, and her disappointment and frustration were evident from her blank expression.

Nevertheless, she didn't let her emotions dictate her actions. Undeterred, she proceeded to summon the remaining 24 spirit world creatures.

The situation was becoming increasingly clear—success, if achievable, would happen in the first few attempts!

Jenna glanced at the disappointed Franca.

"Give it a try when your Sequence is higher."

Franca grumbled, "When I reach a higher Sequence, I might use a mirror and the mirror world to send messages. Why would I need a messenger? Why aren't there any spirit world creatures tempted by a Demoness's charm and willing to become a messenger?"

Lumian let out a chuckle.

"I've seen something similar in the information about spirit world creatures. Would you like to give it a try?"

Despite her reluctance to admit defeat, Franca remained pragmatic. She cursed, "Forget it, forget it. Such spirit world creatures are definitely dangerous. All they can think about is dragging a Demoness into the spirit world. Even delivering a letter will help me

turn my friend into an enemy."

Seeing that she had calmed down, Anthony Reid, a fellow novice in ritualistic magic, made his attempt.

Like Franca, he too faced a series of challenges. Five attempts were made, with two summoning failures and three unsuccessful contract formations.

"Looks like I can't have a messenger for the time being," Anthony sighed with a bitter smile.

Franca's emotions eased significantly.

She wasn't alone in facing difficulties.

"Which one do you want to summon?" she asked Lumian curiously.

"The coolest one." Lumian, maintaining an air of nonchalance, sanctified the ritual silver dagger and recreated the spiritual barrier.

Focusing on the burning candle flames, he took steps back, alternating between ancient Hermes and Hermes.

"I!

"I summon in my name:

"A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a friendly person corrupted by darkness."

This summoning incantation, unique information from Madam Magician, deviated from the norm. It wasn't just a spirit but a creature wandering above the world. The latter descriptions combined encounters and characteristics, adding an intriguing layer to the summoning.

Lumian found the temperament and style of this particular creature impressive and decided to make it his first attempt. He sought a messenger capable of delivering a letter and traversing the spirit world, indifferent to other considerations. Why not choose the coolest one?

As the incantation echoed, the candle flame expanded, acquiring a dark-green hue bordering on black.

With each intensifying flicker, a figure materialized.

It was a tall, human-like being dressed in deep-black robes reminiscent of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church clergy.

However, his exposed face and limbs bore the marks of prolonged incineration, leaving only bones and charred flesh. Empty eye sockets glowed with dark flames, while strange, viscous black flames lingered, causing perpetual pain to the spirit.

Lumian gazed at the Penitent and asked in ancient Hermes, “Are you willing to become my messenger?”

Responding in ancient Feysac, the source of several Northern Continent languages, the Penitent offered a condition,

“If you’re not concerned about being implicated by me and slowly slipping into the darkness, I can help you deliver letters.”

No compensation, but there’s latent danger? Since Madam Magician provided the Penitent’s information, it means I can bear it… Lumian, who had too much mysticism “debt” to worry about, smiled and said,

“That depends on whether you and darkness can win the tug-of-war. No problem. I was mentally prepared for this before summoning you.”

This time, he switched to ancient Feysac to communicate with the other party. After all, it was quite troublesome to use ancient Hermes, which could stir the power of nature, to say so much.

Soon, he drafted the contract and penned the four-line mysticism description representing the Underworld’s representative as witness.

Illuminated by ancient Hermes words engulfed in ghastly green flames, Lumian fixed the summoning incantation to: “A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee.”

Lumian didn't adopt a code name like Jenna and the Knight of Swords. After all, those who knew about his messenger might not know that he was a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club. This was the self-cultivation of a veteran spy, and it didn't matter if Lumian Lee's name and corresponding background were known.

With his name penned down, Lumian witnessed the yellowish-brown goatskin fly towards the black-robed Penitent.

The Penitent signed his name: Baynfel.

The ghastly green flames intertwined, consuming the contract and seamlessly merging with the spirit world.

Curious about his new messenger, Lumian queried Penitent Baynfel, "What are you penitent about?"

However, Baynfel remained silent, and a viscous black flame descended from his body, disappearing into the soil.

Despite Lumian's persistent questioning, Baynfel kept his silence.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Very good. All hairdressers should learn from you," before concluding the summoning.

After he dismantled the wall of spirituality, Franca looked at him with a resentful expression.

"You succeeded on the first try?"

"I succeeded on the first try." Lumian lacked any evident joy, as if he was talking about something ordinary.

Perplexed and unable to let go of her own failures, Franca questioned, "Why? Why aren't Anthony and I popular with the spirit world creatures? Why?"

It had to be said that the Demoness of Pleasure was quite charming. Seeing Franca like this, Ascetic Lumian wanted to walk up to her, raise his right hand, and flick her forehead.

It made him want to bully her!

He pondered for a moment.

“I roughly understand the reason. Being a Minor Arcana card holder of the Tarot Club increases our chances of successfully summoning special spirit world creatures. Even a Psychiatrist like Anthony succeeded several times during his first ritualistic magic. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“However, to gain their favor or obedience, you need a higher level, a special pathway, or something related to Mr. Fool. For example, Jenna’s lucky gold coin and Mr. Fool’s power on me.”

A sudden realization struck Lumian.

If that’s the reason, does the Knight of Swords, who also possesses a messenger, have something similar?

“I see!” Franca, buoyed by this insight, regained confidence.

It wasn’t that there was a problem with her; she simply lacked a “prop.”

She then looked at Jenna, contemplating whether to borrow the lucky gold coin to complete the messenger contract.

Franca eventually dismissed the idea. There was a significant mysticism difference between “ownership” and “loaning.” She was afraid that Jenna wouldn’t be able to handle it if she were to give it and take it back in the future without a unique opportunity.

Phew… Franca exhaled and was about to inquire when Lumian planned to leave Trier and how, when she noticed her companion’s inexplicable silence and a hint of dejection.

“What’s the matter?” Franca inquired, concerned.

“Nothing.” Lumian shook his head.

He suddenly remembered that Aurore had once yearned for a messenger.

Anthony glanced at Lumian, but no words were exchanged. Jenna

brought up the Purifiers' Deacon Angoulême's proposal to purchase the Pride Armor, prompting Lumian to fall into a brief silence before chuckling.

"I'll decide after some time."

Despite recognizing the danger of the Pride Armor, Lumian acknowledged its formidable power. It could pose a threat to all Beyonders below the demigod level. If wearing it was the key to defeating Loki and other key members of April Fool's, Lumian wouldn't hesitate to use it, prepared to face the consequences.

Lumian wouldn't give up on the Sealed Artifact just because it was dangerous, until he eliminated all those scoundrels or until he was too strong for Pride Armor.

"Alright," Franca inquired, "Are you leaving Trier tomorrow? Will you take a boat, a steam locomotive, or seek the spirit world's coordinates from Madam Magician and 'teleport' there?"

Lumian chuckled.

"All of them are possible. I'll decide tomorrow. Let's see what fate has in mind."

Franca muttered, "When did you learn to act all mysterious…"

…

After bidding farewell to his three companions, Lumian adorned the silver Lie earring and subtly altered his hair color and appearance. Making his way down Avenue du Marché into Rue Anarchie, he arrived at Auberge du Coq Doré's underground bar.

Seemingly unaffected by the previous night's catastrophe, the bar retained its lively atmosphere. Regular patrons occupied their usual spots—some singing loudly, others dancing around small round tables, and a few engaged in gambling with alcohol as stakes.

Charlie, now in a black coat, stood at a small round table, enthusiastically exclaiming, "You might not know this, but Ciel Dubois and I are friends. We've been through life and death together!

Look, look, his bounty has been updated to 60,000 verl d'or! What a substantial sum!"

You're quite proud of me… Lumian scoffed and settled at the bar, ordering a glass of absinthe.

In the midst of the commotion, he silently listened, savoring the bitter liquor.

Pavard Neeson, the proprietor wiping glasses, noticed the new face and smilingly inquired, "Have you just arrived in the market district?"

"Yes," Lumian responded in a deep voice.

Pavard Neeson said gently, "You seem to have a story."

Lumian sighed, taking a sip of the dreamy La Fée Verte. With a self-deprecating smile, he said, "I'm a nobody…"

Chapter 504 - 504 “Breakup”

504 “Breakup”

“In an instant, I found myself with no alternative but to depart. Staying put was not an option. Besides, lingering too long might jeopardize my friend and jeopardize the fortune he had tirelessly amassed.

Lumian raised the emerald-green absinthe to his lips once more.

Pavard Neeson, the proprietor of the bar, gently placed his glass on the counter and let out a sigh.

“That’s truly unfortunate.”

A sly grin played on Lumian’s lips.

“Alright, I’ve wrapped up my tale. How about a complimentary drink on the house?”

Pavard, his ponytail giving him a somewhat artistic appearance, was momentarily taken aback.

…

Minutes before the stroke of midnight, Charlie, clad in a black coat, exited the basement bar of Auberge du Coq Doré and retraced his steps to his rented apartment.

Under the gentle autumn night sky, a soothing breeze played, neither bone-chilling nor overly brisk. It seemed to cleanse both body and mind with each inhale. Charlie couldn’t resist taking a deep breath.

“Dogsh*t, which drunkard peed all over the place again?” The foul odor in the air soured Charlie’s mood.

At that very moment, a silhouette emerged from the shadows up ahead.

The figure boasted golden-black hair, piercing blue eyes, and a strikingly handsome face—none other than Ciel Dubois.

Haven't you left Trier? Charlie's heart surged with joy, ready to inquire further.

But almost instantly, he caught sight of the dark expression on Ciel's face, as if a tempest brewed within his eyes.

Charlie jumped in fright, his thoughts racing. Instinctively, he said, "I-I was going to let you know…"

Before he could finish, Lumian materialized before him, his right fist meeting Charlie's face with a solid impact.

The force sent golden specks dancing in Charlie's vision. He teetered backward, struggling to maintain his balance.

Lumian's countenance darkened as he spoke, "Considering our past friendship, I won't kill you this time."

With that, he pivoted in his dark jacket and strode towards a dimly lit alley, away from the glow of street lamps.

Clutching his throbbing face, Charlie watched Ciel vanish into the shadows. Anxious and incensed, he blurted out, "But I couldn't locate you! How was I supposed to inform you that you're wanted?"

Lumian offered no response, disappearing into the alley.

Rooted to the spot, Charlie couldn't suppress his curses.

Frustration and resentment welled up within him.

Why did he suddenly become so unreasonable?

It's not my fault you're wanted. I've done my utmost to help!

I'm just a clerk; there's a limit to what I can accomplish!

…

The next morning, Charlie had just settled into his subterranean office at église Saint-Robert, armed with a meatloaf. Before he could even start brewing a cup of coffee, he spotted Angoulême, the deacon clad in a brown double-breasted coat, heading his way.

“Morning, Deacon,” Charlie exclaimed, rising to his feet and greeting him with eager deference.

Angoulême glanced at the bruises on his left cheek.

“What happened? Did you get into a scuffle?”

“Oh, no, not at all! I, uh, collided—with a statue!” Charlie suddenly grew jittery and waved his hand dismissively. “It might sound unbelievable, but those lunatics get wild when they’re drunk. Some rant about toppling the government, others believe their vomit is gourmet cuisine, and a few decide to relocate hefty statues to random corners. I accidentally bumped into one.”

Angoulême maintained a steady gaze on the clerk and spoke with measured calmness,

“Your lies lack finesse. Do you recall the clause in the contract about not concealing crucial information?”

Charlie’s expression stiffened, his lips faltering before he stammered, “I-it’s Ciel. Ciel Dubois attacked me. Perhaps he’s resentful because I didn’t notify him beforehand about being wanted by us.”

Angoulême listened in silence. After a brief pause, he remarked, “Very well. That’s more like what a competent Purifier clerk should be. Where did you encounter him?”

“Right outside Auberge du Coq Doré, just past the first alley leading to Avenue du Marché,” Charlie responded, a blend of nervousness and concern coloring his voice.

Angoulême delved into further details and said to Charlie, “Given that Ciel Dubois’s true circumstances surpassed our expectations, we scrutinized all the files associated with him. It came to light that you

share a close bond with him and that he was implicated in Susanna Mattise's Beyonder case. Upon including him in that matter, it became apparent that you concealed numerous details."

Charlie, upon hearing the deacon's words, stiffened, beads of cold sweat forming on his forehead.

"I-I…" He faltered, unable to find words, as if the specter of his impending doom loomed large.

At that moment, Angoulême took the initiative to ask, "Did Ciel force you to hide these details?"

"No, it wasn't coercion," Charlie responded instinctively, quickly adding, "He requested it."

"As expected, a request," Angoulême nodded thoughtfully and probed into every nuance of the Susanna Mattise incident.

With his psychological defenses stripped away, Charlie laid bare every detail to the Purifier deacon.

Upon concluding his account, Angoulême spoke with gravity, "For someone in your position as a Purifier clerk, concealing vital case details would typically lead to immediate dismissal, if not imprisonment…"

Though Charlie had braced himself for such a repercussion, the actual words felt like a blow to the head. His body swayed, teetering on the brink of imbalance.

Before he could mount a plea, Angoulême shifted the conversation.

"However, your recent performance has been commendable. You've shown diligence, dedication, and commitment to your studies. Moreover, it appears you haven't leaked information to Ciel, caushing his resentment towards you.

"As the deacon of the market district's Inquisition, I'm inclined not to cast aside someone who has earnestly climbed out of the abyss and crush their last hope. Given your clean record after becoming a Purifier clerk and the authenticity of the Susanna Mattise incident,

I'm offering you another chance. I can't just push you out and wait for Ciel to kill you or the Mother Tree of Desire's bestowed to find you again, can I?

"You'll be terminated, but you can intern here. Your salary will revert to the intern level for six months. If you excel and avoid errors during this period, you may be rehired. Otherwise, you'll be asked to leave immediately.

"In simpler terms, your punishment is a six-month probation."

Charlie, upon hearing these words, felt a surge of relief, as if he had plummeted into hell only to be yanked back into heaven.

In a frenzy of gratitude, he slumped back into his seat, drained of strength.

As Angoulême departed, Charlie's mind reeled, scenes flashing before his eyes.

After a few seconds, he raised his right hand and delivered a self-inflicted slap.

Muttering in frustration and regret, he reflected,

"To think, last night at the bar, I boasted about Ciel and me being friends who had faced life and death together…"

…

Shortly after returning to his office, Angoulême received a telegram.

It originated from Saint Vièvе Cathedral's Plessy Descartes, overseeing the Trier diocese. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The Cardinal summoned Angoulême to Saint Vièvе Cathedral for a discussion.

Saint Vièvе Cathedral.

Ascending a dazzling staircase to an area near the dome, a small room awaited. It stood as one of the places in Trier closest to the sun.

Clad in a white robe adorned with golden threads, Cardinal Plessy spent his days here, bathed in holy light.

An elderly man with high cheekbones and grizzled blond hair, his demeanor lacked sternness, yet a radiant glow made direct eye contact impossible, rendering the room eerily devoid of shadows.

“While you faced challenges during the recent catastrophe due to unforeseen events and intel disruptions, your ability to grasp crucial information and manage subsequent arrangements was noteworthy. We haven’t overlooked your performance in the market district over the past year,” Plessy commended amicably.

“Praise the Sun!” Angoulême proclaimed, extending his arms in acknowledgment of the Lord’s glory.

Plessy’s satisfaction deepened.

“In light of the current circumstances and the foreseeable future, we intend to establish three Purifier teams directly under the Trier diocese. This will provide flexibility in handling various Beyonder incidents.”

At this point, the Cardinal offered a rare smile.

“You’ve been swamped with work for the past six months. Privately, you’ve voiced concerns about lacking leisure time. Do not blame yourself; it’s a common human experience. As a deacon in the Trier diocese, you should find more leisure time. Your role will involve addressing cases beyond the capacity or timeframe of the Purifiers in the districts.

“Of course, this also entails risk. You must comprehend this clearly.

“Fran?ois, Sequence 4 marks a qualitative transformation. Many within the Inquisition are aspiring to become Saints. If you wish to surpass them, you must make remarkable contributions. The first step is to become a deacon of a small team under a large diocese. The second step involves amassing contributions and wielding a Holy Artifact. The third step is to await an opportune moment.

“Do you aspire to be a deacon? I respect your desires.”

Flexibility… Addressing cases beyond the reach of Purifiers in various districts… I should typically have considerable freedom. How could there be so many significant matters… I don't know if Gandalf's apocalyptic prophecy holds true, but there's no harm in self-improvement… Angoulême pondered briefly and responded, "Your Eminence, thy will be done."

Plessy smiled and said, "As a deacon, you'll be tasked with selecting team members."

"Yes, Your Eminence." Angoulême extended his arms once more, praising the sun.

Upon returning to the underground confines of église Saint-Robert, he summoned the mixed-blood Imre to his office, apprising his subordinate of the Trier diocese team.

"Are you willing to follow me?" Angoulême inquired.

Imre smiled and replied, "Does this mean I can advance my Sequence and earn a higher salary? I have no issue with that!"

After agreeing, the mixed-blood inquired, "Who should we choose next?"

Angoulême fell into silence for over ten seconds before stating, "Don't consider individuals like Valentine, those with a wife and children. Approach those who are single.

"A team under direct command is both an honor and a risk."

Angoulême released a soft sigh and added, "Which Purifier with a happy family wouldn't want to witness their child grow and spend more time with their spouse? Let the single individuals among us bear this burden."

Chapter 505 - 505 Departure

505 Departure

Having apprehended everyone deserving of it in the market district and putting those who hadn't been arrested on the wanted list, Angoulême found a rare moment of leisure. He shifted his focus to selecting members for the Trier diocese team.

He swiftly concluded his work and returned to his rented apartment in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, promptly falling asleep.

Angoulême slept until the early hours of the morning, awakened by the growling of his stomach. He nibbled on a piece of white bread, complemented by his stockpiled jerky, butter, and red wine.

Observing the unwashed cutlery on the coffee table, he contentedly seated himself in front of the miniaturized analyzer and switched on the radio transceiver.

During this time, the telegraph group was most active.

After sending a telegram to announce his presence, Angoulême pulled over a pillow, placing it behind him as he leaned comfortably against the wall.

Soon, amidst the clicking sounds, the analyzer, powered by numerous components, spat out a telegram.

Angoulême's forehead twitched at the sight of the telegram's signature: Hidden Blade.

He picked up the telegram and quickly scanned its contents.

"007, you're finally here. I have something to tell you!

“I’ve just received news that the Mirror People we mentioned have been infiltrating Trier over the past decade, replacing the original ones. Countless Trier citizens are already Mirror People, and no one knows their ultimate goals, but it can’t be anything good.

“I’m investigating these Mirror People. I’ll give you new clues at any moment. Keep an eye out for such matters in advance.”

After reading it, Angoulême took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

…

The following morning, Lumian sat in a four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage. Ludwig, clad in a caramel coat and carrying a red school bag, occupied the seat beside him. On the opposite side sat Lugano Toscano, with thick eyebrows and large eyes, emanating a distinct protagonist aura.

Glancing out the window at Avenue du Marché, Lumian noticed little deviation from the usual scene.

Street vendors, public carriages, and rental carriages bustled about. The Suhit steam locomotive station welcomed numerous foreigners, waiters actively seeking customers, cafés doubling as beer houses, inexpensive restaurants, and card rooms, along with clerks and workers in a hurry.

While seemingly unchanged, subtle shifts had occurred. “Rat” Christo had fled, “Giant” Simon was apprehended, and Baron Brignais was nowhere to be found. He didn’t even commission information brokers to seek out his smuggled godson.

The Savoie Mob, once dominant, faced total annihilation, setting the market district on the brink of new mob conflicts.

The dark-brown rental carriage, marked with a yellow plate, gradually departed from the lively and somewhat chaotic surroundings.

“Should we travel by boat to Feynapotter, or perhaps get false identities and take the southbound steam locomotive to explore Riston Province first?”

“It’s in the hands of fate,” Lumian replied with a smile.

Producing three post-it notes, he scribbled various options with the black fountain pen he carried: “Boat,” “steam locomotive,” and “direct travel.”

Crumpling the notes into balls, he deftly shuffled their positions, presenting a dazzling display of sleight of hand.

“Your turn. Let’s see what fate has in store.” Lumian extended his right hand to Lugano.

Isn’t this too arbitrary? Lugano pondered, surprised by the randomness of selecting their travel method to the Feynapotter Kingdom through drawing lots. Despite the absurdity, he dutifully picked up a paper ball.

In any case, he had already received the 5,000 verl d’or advance payment!

Lugano unfolded the paper and read the word “ship.”

Lumian nodded and smiled.

“Very good. Then let’s take the steam locomotive.”

“…” Lugano’s expression became uncertain as he instinctively glanced at the wanted criminal worth 60,000 verl d’or sitting across from him. He wondered if Lumian was manipulating him to eliminate the wrong option or simply playing a prank.

Forcing another smile, Lugano suggested, “Shall we head back to the Suhit steam locomotive station?”

“No, to the Northern Train Station,” Lumian replied, turning to Ludwig, who had been quietly eating without uttering a word.

Northern Train Station? Lugano felt increasingly puzzled by his employer’s decision.

Trier had two main steam locomotive stations: Suhit, connecting the southern and central regions, and the Northern Train Station,

responsible for the northern provinces. If their destination was the Feynapotter Kingdom and Riston Province, the logical choice would be Suhit. Why, then, were they going north?

Recognizing that it wasn't his place to question his employer's decisions, Lugano instructed the carriage driver to alter their course.

As noon approached, the rental carriage arrived at the Northern Trier Train Station.

I have to disguise myself and find a broker to fake my identity to buy a ticket… As Lugano directed the carriage driver to a more remote area, he turned to look at Lumian, preparing to make a suggestion.

He was met with an unfamiliar face.

The short flaxen-colored hair, brown eyes, and other facial features combined to create the appearance of a stranger.

If not for the silver earring on his right ear and the familiar clothes, Lugano might have believed they were ambushed by official Beyonders, having quietly dealt with Lumian.

"Purchase a ticket to Port Gati in Upper Coastal Province," Lumian calmly instructed.

Upper Coastal Province, Port Gati… Lugano suddenly grasped Lumian's strategy.

While his employer did intend to take a boat to the Feynapotter Kingdom, he chose a less obvious route. Instead of departing from the nearest Port LeSeur in Paz Province, he opted for Upper Coastal Province to the north.

…

In the business carriage of the steam locomotive, divided into six cozy private rooms, Lumian's gaze swept across the slightly ajar carved wooden door, the table adorned with a vibrant, multi-colored tablecloth interwoven with golden threads, the plush sofa that doubled as a bed, and the slender wooden wall adorned with oil paintings. A satisfied nod escaped him.

A private room like this commanded a hefty price of 400 verl d'or, accommodating no more than four individuals.

The steam locomotive promised a 12-hour journey with an eight-hour night stop, totaling 20 hours. Travel costs were 30 verl d'or for a third-class seat, 45 verl d'or for second class, and 60 verl d'or for first class. The exclusive small private rooms in business class demanded 100 verl d'or per person, sold only in packages to maintain the privacy of business companions.

For a wanted fugitive like Lumian, this setup was perfect.

Equipped with the Lie earring and the Niese Face, Lumian had no real need for the privacy or luxury of the business carriage, but there was a compelling reason for his choice:

The business carriage provided two complimentary meals—dinner tonight and breakfast tomorrow.

A convenience that would spare Lumian from many hassles.

Sigh, a child has to eat something warm.

I just hope his appetite doesn't startle the attendants…

After catering to Ludwig for over two days, Lumian recognized the importance of his Traveler's Bag, capable of storing ample rations and desserts for long trips with the boy. The boy had to eat frequently!

Amidst the whistle, Lumian settled into his seat, absorbing the rhythmic clanging sounds as the scenery rapidly retreated on both sides.

In less than fifteen minutes, the colossal steam-spewing train departed from the bustling metropolis through the "cave door" carved into the high wall.

It left behind a metropolis pulsating with desires, immersed in both joy and pain.

Lumian half-closed his eyes, overhearing someone in the private

room ahead sigh, as if reciting a poem.

“Goodbye, Trier!”

At 8 p.m., under the cover of complete darkness, the steam locomotive came to a halt at its scheduled stop—Dardel Station.

Situated on the outskirts of the Upper Coastal Province’s Faust region, in Darder Town, the platform was already bustling with 20 to 30 men and women eagerly rushing to different carriages. Devoid of luggage, their faces radiated enthusiasm.

Knock! Knock! Knock! A middle-aged man, sporting thick black hair and a slightly hooked chin, rapped on the glass window corresponding to Lumian’s private room.

With interest, Lumian pushed open the window and greeted with a smile, “What can I do for you?”

“Monsieur, would you like a drink? Perhaps a cozy bed instead of a sofa?” the middle-aged man inquired in Intisian, his accent heavy.

“A bar with its own motel?” Lumian was enlightened.

It seemed like local merchants were soliciting customers right on the platform.

“That’s right, that’s right. Our bar boasts some charming little frogs,” the middle-aged man winked suggestively. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Little frogs?” Lugano, seated across from Lumian, asked, puzzled.

The middle-aged man pondered for a moment and explained, “That’s our slang here in Coastal. It means the same as your Trier pussies.”

In Trier, “pussies” often carried dual meanings, referring to both “female reproductive organs” and “prostitutes.”

Is that so… Lumian had suspected as much but wasn’t entirely certain.

Seated beside Lugano, Ludwig chimed in eagerly, “Anything good to eat?”

Without awaiting the middle-aged man’s response, Lumian teased Ludwig with a smile, “I thought you were going to ask if the meat was tender or chewy and if it tasted good.”

Initially unresponsive, Ludwig suddenly realized something and cursed, “Sick!”

Observing this, the middle-aged man swiftly introduced the local specialties.

Meanwhile, outside the station, dogs started barking in the town.

A lone bark triggered a chorus of canine voices, shattering the night’s silence.

The middle-aged man’s expression shifted, tainted with an indescribable sense of fear.

Chapter 506 - 506 Illness

506 Illness

Amidst the nighttime cacophony of the town's barking dogs, Lumian let out a low chuckle.

"Do you have that many dogs in Dardel?"

"Y-yes." The middle-aged man managed a hesitant smile.

Something is off as expected. Has something happened to this town? Lumian had intentionally inquired, keen on observing the reactions of the resident across from him.

Amidst the persisting dog chorus, he concentrated on gauging the other party's luck.

He had no plans to leave the steam locomotive and venture into Dardel for investigation. His only recourse was to probe into the luck of the town's residents, anticipating hidden problems before they could unexpectedly spread to the train station.

While Termiboros could influence his luck observation, there was always a chance of being misled. Lumian, lacking expertise in divination or prophecy, had limited options for gathering information without leaving the steam locomotive.

Factoring in various environmental details, he aimed to discern potential issues.

In Lumian's view, the middle-aged man's luck took on a ghastly green hue.

This indicated an impending illness—a rather peculiar one.

The specifics, such as when or what kind of illness, eluded Lumian's

current Sequence.

Dog barking inducing fear, future special illness—do Dardel's wild dogs cause calamities by biting and spreading diseases? That's a plausible explanation, and it's not a Beyonder incident, but that means there's a potential solution. The man outside seems to be grappling with a hint of despair… Lumian turned to the middle-aged man who was soliciting customers and said, "Can you bring over the food we ordered?"

"We can do so if the meal cost exceeds two verl d'or. You know, it's not easy for us to enter the platform," the middle-aged man, now smiling again, replied.

At that moment, the clamor of dozens of dogs subsided, no longer as intense as before.

"No problem," Lumian casually ordered a variety of dishes—apple liqueur, deep-fried potato pancakes, shrimp in gravy, Dardel meat sauce, stewed pork, saltmarsh mutton, buttered pancakes, and wick cheese. The total cost amounted to 10 verl d'or.

Ludwig couldn't help but gulp with each mention of a dish.

Four hours prior, an attendant had delivered a four-person standard dinner. Despite managing to finish two portions alone, Ludwig remained unsatisfied. He had also retrieved multiple pieces of jerky from Lumian's Traveler's Bag.

Two hours ago, he had his first supper, consisting of cheese, dessert, bread, jerky, and more.

Now, he was hungry again.

The middle-aged man, who had used simple words and symbols to record the dish names, couldn't resist asking,

"Is the food provided in a carriage of this level not tasty?"

Otherwise, why would Ludwig look as though he hadn't eaten dinner?

Lumian responded in turn, “That’s right. Don’t ever expect to eat tasty food on a steam locomotive.”

After noting down the dish names and receiving 5 verl d’or banknotes as a down payment, the middle-aged man with a slightly hooked chin moved to another private room.

“Wait,” Lumian suddenly called out.

“Is there anything else, Monsieur?” the middle-aged man turned around and inquired.

Lumian smiled and said, “You don’t look well. If you don’t want to get sick, you need more rest in the next few days.”

The middle-aged man froze, his expression struck by lightning.

After a momentary pause, panic and fear mixed on his face.

“A-alright. Thank you.” He turned around in a hurry and dashed out of the platform, forgetting to solicit other customers.

Dardel’s abnormality is indeed linked to illnesses… Lumian mused as he withdrew his gaze thoughtfully.

Lugano asked with curiosity, “Why can’t I tell that he’s sub-healthy and could fall ill at any moment?”

Being a Doctor, he possessed corresponding abilities. Even without activating his Spirit Vision, he could discern various external manifestations of a person’s body.

Recognizing a concealed illness and with Lumian’s warning, he activated his Spirit Vision to observe the person’s Ether Body.

“Sub-healthy” was a term coined by Emperor Roselle, but it had only gained popularity in Intis’s medical world in recent years.

He’s not currently in a sub-healthy state, but it’s very likely that he will contract a special illness… Lumian used Lugano’s questions to confirm that the townsfolk’s illness didn’t originate from him.

He smiled and responded to Lugano's question, "It's never wrong to care about others' health and encourage them to rest more."

Instinctively, Lugano revealed an expression that said, "I don't buy it." Then, he masked it with a smile.

"He seems to share that concern."

"That's right," Lumian replied patronizingly.

Dardel's barking subsided and resounded at times. Sometimes, it was just outside the platform, and at other times, it came from the edge of the town. Lumian listened quietly and sighed inwardly.

Why am I encountering something like this again?

Do I bring calamity, or does calamity lure me here?

From the looks of it, the problem in Dardel has been around for a while. It has nothing to do with my arrival… No matter how I avoid it or make choices via the use of others, I'll always be drawn to calamities and unknowingly approach them…

Is this why a Hunter with an angelic level and the Blood Emperor's remnant aura will inevitably encounter an abnormal situation despite their low Sequence?

In the future, will a novelist write about my experiences like Gehrman Sparrow's? Then, the line "he's always accompanied by calamity" would be included.

As time ticked by, the middle-aged man who had been soliciting customers arrived with a bar waiter, each carrying a food container.

"Is this what you want?" He and the waiter handed plates and glasses through the window.

Seeing the table covered in an exquisite tablecloth filled with tempting food, Lumian took a sip of the slightly sour apple liqueur and paid the remaining 5 verl d'or for the meal.

"We'll collect the cutlery in an hour. We won't be disturbing you, will

we?" the middle-aged man asked politely.

Lumian nodded, giving them permission.

After sidestepping with the waiter for a moment, the middle-aged man found himself returning to his original position. He couldn't resist the urge to inquire,

"Monsieur, how do you know I'm about to fall ill?"

Lumian, gesturing towards Lugano across the way, explained, "My friend is a renowned doctor in Trier."

The term "renowned" here applied to a wanted poster.

Without awaiting the middle-aged man's reply, Lumian casually inquired, "What's your name?"

"Just call me Pierre," the middle-aged man replied, hunched over as he observed Lumian in the snug private room on the steam locomotive.

Do you folks fancy that name around here too? Lumian grinned and asked, "Do you think you'll get sick too?"

Pierre's eyelids twitched, his expression momentarily freezing.

Instinctively, he replied, "No, no. Just a bit concerned."

"Well then, get some rest, drink more water, and perhaps seek out the clergyman at the cathedral for repentance," Lumian advised without pressing further.

Pierre moved towards the front of the locomotive in silence, hoping to drum up more business. However, his steps seemed burdened, as if his feet were encased in lead, each stride a struggle.

"Woof, woof, woof!"

The barking resumed near the platform.

Pierre's face contorted, overwhelmed with worry and fear. Suddenly,

he turned around, shaking off the waiter and rushing to the window of the small private room where Lumian and the others were situated.

“Save me, Doctor, save me!” he pleaded, pressing his hands against the glass with a desperate expression.

Lumian seized the moment, stating, “Unless you disclose the cause of the illness, my friend won’t be able to treat you.”

The commotion reached the passengers in the adjacent private rooms, but in their slumber, they were indifferent to the unfolding drama.

Pierre swallowed hard, stealing a glance at the equally terrified bar waiter.

“Yes, yes…”

Before he could complete his sentence, a figure materialized on the platform’s wall.

The figure stood firmly, legs apart, body contorted, but its head tilted upward, fixated on some distant point.

It was a man, clad in tweed garments, conspicuously marked by tears and frays. His facial muscles contorted dramatically, and his eyes were rolled back, leaving only a white patch visible.

Saliva dribbled from his open mouth as he attempted to speak.

“Woof! Woof! Woof!”

The barking harmonized with the other canine sounds in Dardel, forming a disconcerting chorus.

“It’s Derangement!” Pierre finally exclaimed.

“Derangement?” Lumian shifted his attention from the man barking on the wall to Lugano.

Lugano observed the abnormality for a moment before slowly shaking his head at Lumian.

His message was clear: this wasn't your typical case of rabies.

Pierre, mistakenly thinking Lumian was addressing him, was on the brink of emotional collapse.

"Yes, Derangement!

"I don't know when it started. People in our town began turning into barking lunatics. Initially, it was just one, but then two, three, ten… Many acquaintances of mine got infected, completely losing their minds. They only bark like dogs and are most active during the night!"

"Did they contract it from being bitten by these lunatics?" Lugano inquired with a furrowed brow.

"No, the ones I know weren't bitten, but they still went mad! I-I feel like I'm soon next!" Pierre exclaimed in despair.

"You didn't seek help from the government?" Lumian was puzzled, thinking that official Beyonders wouldn't allow such a situation to escalate.

"We heard about a village having a similar situation as Derangement; they reported it to the government, and then the whole village vanished. We… we didn't dare approach either the government or the Church!" Pierre explained frantically, with the bar waiter by his side equally terrified.

Lumian's eyes narrowed.

"Where are the people from the town's health department, police station, and the cathedral's padre?"

"They were the first to succumb to madness." Pierre, caught up in distress, didn't consider Lumian's intentions in asking. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The initial casualties were the padre, police, and health officials… Lumian raised an eyebrow and remarked, "So why haven't you tried escaping from Dardel?"

“Escape…” Pierre and the bar waiter were startled, staring blankly at Lumian.

Beneath the crimson moonlight, the whites of their eyes took on a bloodshot hue.

Chapter 507 - 507 Dead End

507 Dead End

Pierre and the bar waiter locked eyes with Lumian and the others, their bloodshot gaze shifting from vacant to sheer terror.

Abruptly, Pierre's face contorted, and he bellowed in hysteria, "None of you can leave!

"Once the outsiders catch wind of this, we're all done for!"

He swiftly maneuvered through the steam locomotive's open window, attempting to climb in and forcefully pull Lumian and the others out.

In response, Lugano rose to his feet, delivering a powerful blow with his right fist.

With a resounding thud, Pierre slumped, unconscious, hanging awkwardly from the window. The bar waiter, seemingly unhinged, trampled over the fallen man, attempting to leap into the carriage.

Lugano struck again, his punch rendering the bloodshot-eyed bar waiter unconscious. He slumped over Pierre, creating an unusual tableau.

They didn't abnormally transform into monsters… Lumian had previously speculated that the two town folks had succumbed suddenly to Derangement.

Turning to Lumian, Lugano inquired in a low voice, "What do we do?"

"What do we do?" Lumian echoed the Doctor's inquiry.

The unfolding events not only displayed an abnormality but also left him with a sense of inner conflict and displacement.

The peculiar Derangement, causing people to lose their sanity and transform into canine-like creatures, coupled with the consecutive onset of various illnesses, unmistakably hinted at supernatural forces at play. However, the mystery deepened as Pierre and the other townsfolk, who were evidently concerned about keeping Derangement a secret, freely disclosed the information to Lumian.

This apparent contradiction could be attributed to Pierre's overwhelming mental stress, pushed to the brink. Lumian's mention of future sickness served as the tipping point, prompting Pierre to instinctively guard the secret from leaking when reminded.

Yet, the lingering question persisted: Why not escape?

Faced with an infectious and unstoppable Derangement, wouldn't it be prudent for ordinary humans to flee Dardel and return once the plague had subsided?

Even if they feared attracting attention from the authorities by fleeing, a temporary escape into the nearby mountains after addressing those potentially afflicted could provide a solution.

Unless there was some force preventing the citizens of Dardel from escaping!

Lumian deduced this from various details.

The townsfolk were cognizant of similar Derangement cases elsewhere, resulting in entire villages being wiped out by the authorities. Normally, such incidents would be reported as a tragic disaster with everyone buried.

After the initial infection, key figures like the cathedral's clergyman, the police, and health department officials succumbed to madness, severing Dardel's connection with regional authorities from the start.

Why would this mastermind allow Pierre and others to divulge the situation to the Doctor on the steam locomotive?

Lumian, thinking from the mastermind's perspective, considered it illogical to choose a transportation hub regularly frequented by steam locomotives. Even without Lumian's inquiries, those choosing to

enter Dardel to sleep under a warm blanket and sample beautiful frogs would eventually notice the abnormality, raising suspicions. They couldn't all be made to stay behind, could they? This would lead to an investigation!

There are many contradictions, inconsistencies, and inexplicable aspects… He's smart yet foolish, cautious yet careless… Lumian, contemplating the intricacies, turned to Lugano and said, "What else can we do? Of course, we have to find a way to inform the authorities about this. Don't tell me you want to investigate the source of the Derangement and save the residents here, do you? I didn't expect you to be so noble."

Lugano smiled awkwardly. The latter possibility had never crossed his mind.

"How should we inform the authorities?" he asked sincerely, admitting his lack of experience in such matters.

"The simplest solution is to get the train police here and tell them what Pierre said. Have them use the train's radio to contact the relevant departments in the Faust area or the Upper Coastal Province," Lumian suggested casually.

However, Lugano hesitated, expressing concern, "B-but as witnesses, we'll be invited to assist in the investigation. O-our identities are fake, and even if we use your mystical item to change our appearances, it's easy to expose that we're Beyonders under the influence of some mysticism abilities."

Lumian pondered for a moment and offered an alternative with a smile, "Then find an empty room on the platform, pile dozens of bundles of explosives, and detonate them. The explosion will send the roof flying, destroying the house. This way, the conductor and the train police will report it quickly, and the officials in the Faust area will take notice. When they investigate further, they'll discover the hidden problem in Dardel. How about that? We won't need to personally show our faces in this plan, right?"

Lugano considered the proposal but raised another concern, "When the authorities investigate further, they'll discover that we've

interacted with Dardel's residents. They'll worry that we might also be in danger of contracting Derangement. When the time comes, we won't be able to pass the scrutiny."

Lumian felt a twinge of frustration, recalling how he and his sister had been trapped in Cordu after the abnormality. Everything they did had its cons.

He chuckled and said, "Then investigate the source of the Derangement personally and blast it into pieces!

"This will completely resolve the problem without attracting the officials' attention!"

Ludwig, who had consumed countless suppers, swallowed the deep-fried potato pie in his mouth and calmly said, "After informing the authorities about Derangement, why stay here and wait for them to investigate?

"Can't we just leave, change our identities, and take another steam locomotive to another port?"

Uh… Lumian was taken aback.

Why hadn't I thought of such a simple idea?

Just now, the more Lugano and I discussed, the deeper we delved into a dead end. We were entirely focused on finding a reason and excuse for entering Dardel to investigate the source of the Derangement…

A realization hit Lumian, and his heart skipped a beat.

Nonchalantly, he gazed at Lugano, assessing the Doctor's luck.

The other party's luck in the future would also be tainted with a ghastly green!

With a smile, Lumian said to Lugano, "You also have the possibility of contracting Derangement."

Lugano was taken aback for a moment before asking with a pale face,

“Really?”

“Think of it as a joke,” Lumian turned his head, seemingly relaxed, and said to Ludwig, “See, there are many benefits to studying more. In the past, you wouldn’t have thought of such a solution and only knew nothing but eating.”

Ignoring the Hunter, Ludwig forked a piece of mutton into his mouth.

Lumian interrupted him.

“No rush. There’s just a risk of contracting the illness. You just need to leave this place before you get truly infected.”

As he spoke, he stood up and walked out of the private room.

“W-where are you going?” Lugano blurted out.

Lumian slipped his hands into his pockets and responded with a smile. “Inform the authorities about Derangement.”

Lugano was momentarily at a loss for words and expressions. All he could do was watch in a daze as Lumian strolled out of the private room.

Reaching the train’s washroom, Lumian locked the door and activated the black mark representing Spirit World Traversal.

His figure swiftly vanished, reappearing in Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative in Trier. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

Neither Franca nor Jenna was asleep at this hour. One was engrossed in a novel, while the other contemplated what knowledge to impart to Rabbit Chasel.

“W-why are you back?” Franca jumped in fright.

She had the illusion that she had just dropped him off at school in the morning and found him at home, legs up, eating snacks, and watching television in the afternoon.

Lumian glanced at Franca and smiled. “We encountered a Beyonder incident and wish to inform the authorities through your channels to have them resolve it.”

Franca exclaimed in surprise and amusement, “Y-you encountered another Beyonder incident? What a mysticism catastrophe detector!?”

Jenna looked at Lumian and suddenly felt that it was a good thing for him to leave Trier.

“I didn’t want to either.” Lumian spread his hands sincerely.

Franca exhaled and said, “Where is it? What kind of incident?”

“In Dardel in Upper Coastal Province’s Faust region…” Lumian briefly recounted the situation.

Franca and Jenna were both surprised and terrified by the contagious Derangement.

Simultaneously, Franca muttered inwardly, I wonder how 007 will react to this “surprise”…

He’s always telling me to get out of the market district. If I really do, he’ll realize that not only will Beyonder cases in Trier’s other districts pile up on him, the mystical catastrophes of Intis’s other provinces will also descend upon him…

Ah, that’s right. What does it have to do with me? It’s all Lumian’s fault!

Thankfully, this fellow is heading to the Feynapotter Kingdom in the future. No matter what Beyonder incidents he encounters, it’s no longer 007’s problem. He can’t possibly collaborate across borders…

After explaining the situation in Dardel, Lumian didn’t linger. He “teleported” back to the washroom of the steam locomotive’s business carriage.

He turned on the tap and washed his hands without hesitation. Then, he left the washroom and returned to the small private room. He said to Lugano, “The authorities will react soon. Let’s prepare to leave.”

Lugano sprang to his feet.

At that moment, the unconscious Pierre slowly regained consciousness, shaking the bar waiter off his body and landing on the platform.

Lumian looked at him and smiled.

“We’ll stay and investigate the source of Derangement. Can you tell me who patient zero was?”

“Who was it…” Pierre didn’t lose his mind and attack Lumian and the others like before. Instead, he fell into deep thought.

Chapter 508 - 508 Patient Zero

508 Patient Zero

Lugano, who had been listening, shot Lumian a puzzled glance. He couldn't fathom why Lumian would strike up a casual conversation with Pierre just as they were on the verge of departing.

A few more moments, and the official Beyonders would make their entrance!

Besides, delving too deep into this matter could invite trouble down the road. They might end up under scrutiny, or worse, attract the attention of the Derangement's source, prompting immediate intervention!

Pierre pondered for more than ten seconds before uttering with uncertainty, "Patient Zero seemed to be a guest renting a room at our bar…"

"Foreigner?" Lumian inquired with composure.

Having already briefed the official Beyonders about the Derangement through Franca and resolved to find an opportunity to "teleport" away later, Lumian was no longer as tense as before. Thus, before leaving, he aimed to unravel more about Derangement and construct a plausible explanation for the inconsistencies.

This quest for information, problem analysis, and uncovering of clues and answers was all part of a Conspirer's acting. With some idle time on his hands, Lumian seized the chance to digest some of the potion.

Lumian wasn't overly concerned about the potential repercussions of being privy to this situation.

Could the information on Derangement hold a candle to 0-01's sealed

intel?

Moreover, as long as he didn't go berserk on the spot, he could later seek assistance from his superior to explore potential solutions!

Pierre contemplated for a few seconds, his expression reflecting confusion, and then he said, "Probably… I can't recall her name, and I have no idea where she came from. All I remember is that she suddenly lost her mind and dashed from the motel upstairs to the bar. She tried to bite people and barked like a dog."

The infected foreigner spreading Derangement to Dardel? Then why were the townsfolk displaying no inclination to escape this place? Is this also a manifestation of Derangement? Lumian asked thoughtfully, "Did she manage to bite anyone? What happened to her?"

"We took care of her before she could sink her teeth into anyone. We apprehended her and handed her over to the health department," Pierre recollected.

Sent to the health department? Lumian nodded slowly.

"Did the next person to succumb to madness come from the health department?"

"Yes, exactly!" Pierre affirmed this time.

Lumian pondered for a moment and inquired, "What did the resident look like?"

"A young woman. Her face was a bit pale, and her eyes were vacant. I-I can't recall her appearance…" Pierre couldn't help but raise his palm and rub his head.

Upon hearing this, Lumian's heart stirred.

If the root of all the abnormalities in Dardel indeed stemmed from a deranged individual, many contradictions could find an explanation!

Patient Zero was already in a state of madness; instinctively, she would spread Derangement to those around her in a supernatural

sense, regardless of whether it was an isolated village or a bustling town serving as a transportation hub.

Simultaneously, she would subconsciously employ her ability to disseminate the supernatural Derangement, dropping hints to the townsfolk that leaving wasn't an option. She would control all channels that might carry the news. However, due to her madness and lack of thorough consideration, she didn't explicitly order the townsfolk not to discuss Derangement with the steam locomotive passengers.

Certainly, it wasn't necessarily due to a lack of thorough consideration. Lumian believed it was more plausible that the lunatic's instincts desired to involve more people and infect them with Derangement. Consequently, people who were aware of this weren't permitted to leave or seek help from the authorities. On the other hand, the prohibition didn't prevent residents from discussing Derangement with passersby.

This was a limited and relatively safe method of contagion. Passengers who knew about Derangement were akin to approaching the source of the plague. For instance, Lugano's luck had turned, increasing the probability of contracting the disease. Lumian and he had forgotten the option of escaping. The more they communicated, the more desperate they became, ultimately reaching a dead end. They were resolute in entering Dardel to investigate.

This was a precursor to becoming infected with Derangement. Unbeknownst to them, they had inadvertently received a mental cue.

With this in mind, Lumian suspected that the young woman might be a survivor of the village that had previously been eradicated, a potential carrier who had escaped the authorities' purge.

She had intertwined these memories with Derangement and disseminated them. That was how the residents of Dardel learned about a similar plague in a village wiped out by the authorities.

Typically, they lacked the qualifications or means to know such things!

Having formulated this preliminary hypothesis, Lumian smiled and turned to Pierre and the bar waiter, asking, “Where is the village you mentioned that was destroyed by the authorities because of Derangement?” The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“I-I think it’s somewhere in the Haut-Hornacis Province…” Pierre recalled the rumors he had heard.

Haut-Hornacis Province… That’s quite a distance from Upper Coastal Province. Moreover, there’s no direct steam locomotive; it requires a transfer through a few provinces in the West Midseashire Coast or Trier. How could you folks, who rarely leave Dardel, have heard such a rumor? Did a bard or passenger from Haut-Hornacis Province pass by this transportation hub? The more Lumian pondered, the more he leaned toward his hypothesis.

He refrained from pressing further and probed Pierre, “This Derangement holds significant research value. We’ll venture into Dardel to investigate its source and try to find a cure.

“However, preparations will take some time. Moreover, it’s nighttime.

“At dawn, we will step into Dardel. We won’t depart until we resolve the problem.”

Lumian stressed the phrases “will enter Dardel” and “will not leave for the time being” to gauge Pierre and the bar waiter’s reactions.

Their expressions underwent several changes, and they were no longer as hysterical as before.

After a few moments, Pierre implored, “You must come to town tomorrow!”

“No problem,” Lumian replied with a reassuring smile.

He was now even more convinced that this was an instinctive infection and influence. There was no structured approach to handling the alterations. As long as he avoided triggering a crucial matter or even took the initiative to broach the topic of cooperation, he could effectively deceive the source of Derangement.

Observing Pierre and the bar waiter about to move toward the other windows of the steam locomotive, Lumian called out to them, “Wait a moment.”

After the two of them turned in surprise, Lumian gestured towards the table between the two sofas.

“You can take the cutlery away now.”

Pierre and the bar waiter glanced at the dining table in confusion, realizing that only remnants were left on the empty plates.

Had they finished eating already? The delivery men hadn’t even departed yet!

Pierre and the bar waiter were aware that they had spent a considerable amount of time discussing the Derangement issue, but it still felt surreal.

Won’t they eating too quickly?

Was he feeding three lions?

Burp… Ludwig wiped his mouth with a tablecloth, a content expression on his face.

After the two townsfolk cleared away the cutlery, gathered their food boxes, and departed from the platform, Lumian smiled at Lugano and remarked, “Continue watching. Chill.”

I can’t chill. How are we to escape when the official Beyonders arrive? Lugano’s heart felt like it was being grilled.

Observing his reaction, Lumian muttered silently, He’s indeed acting like a wild Beyonder with a low Sequence and little knowledge… He doesn’t show anything special like Ludwig… Is he really an ordinary wild Beyonder who only accepted a mission to follow me?

Simultaneously, Lumian focused his attention and checked Lugano’s luck. He realized that the ghastly green traces had vanished, and there was no grisly calamity in store.

This meant that the Doctor no longer had the potential to contract Derangement, and he likely wouldn't be embroiled in the officials' operations to deal with Dardel's abnormality later.

After a while, Lumian heard a loud noise and saw the night suddenly brighten outside.

Light streamed down from midair.

Lumian looked up and noticed two colossal objects floating in the night.

They were two airships clad in dark gray paint, frantically spinning their paddles.

They were much smaller than the one Lumian had seen in Trier. The condensed light shone from their front and lower positions, converging on the edge of Dardel.

Simultaneously, the town erupted in a cacophony of barking once more, as if movement was taking place everywhere.

The officials from the Faust region are here? Lumian averted his gaze, awaiting the outcome.

Shouts, cries, gunshots, and various beams of sunlight continued for nearly an hour before completely subsiding.

Before long, a team of police officers entered the private room, questioning the now disguised, fake identification-wielding Lumian and company's interactions with Dardel's residents.

Other than anything related to Derangement, Lumian told them everything honestly.

He was ready to "teleport" away with Ludwig and Lugano at any moment.

After recording and comparing tickets and identification, the police officers left the carriage.

Lumian patiently waited until dawn. The police officers returned,

presenting three contracts and requesting their signatures.

The contract explained that the disturbance from the previous night had resulted from a special military operation, and everyone was obligated to keep it confidential.

Does what I revealed before my signature count? Lumian chuckled inwardly and calmly signed with an alias.

His fake identity had just been activated, and it had minimal mystic connections.

After the police departed, Lumian, having intentionally gone through the official process firsthand, intended to grasp Lugano and Ludwig's shoulders and "teleport" away.

Uncertain if the contract signed with an alias would be discovered, he aimed to avoid potential risks.

At that moment, Lumian noticed a towering figure behind Lugano.

It was his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, draped in a dark clergyman's robe and surrounded by charred flames.

Baynfel sent a folded letter drifting towards Lumian.

Lugano was taken aback to see a piece of paper materialize. He instinctively glanced behind him, but Lumian opened the letter and perused its contents.

"Based on the feedback I received, this should be the escape of a Sealed Artifact.

"That Sealed Artifact resembles a young woman. It first surfaced during a catastrophe in Haut-Hornacis Province. Most of the time, she remains in her normal state, appearing lifeless, pale, and muddle-headed. However, once she enters a state of madness, she gradually infects the surrounding people with the same Derangement as her. There's no definite transmission pattern.

"She might not be in the same state every time she goes mad. The same goes for her Derangement symptoms.

“In her normal state, although she’s like an unintelligent ghost and acts on instinct, she possesses a power akin to the power of speech, where whatever she says comes true, and if she declares someone dead, they will die…”

Chapter 509 - 509 Ironclad Merchant Ship

509 Ironclad Merchant Ship

Also possesses the ability to turn spoken words into reality… Before the Derangement took hold, she acted on instinct, her pale face and lifeless eyes mirroring the description of Patient Zero by Pierre. Lumian delved into the catastrophe's details through Franca's letter, gaining a deeper understanding.

The divergence lay in Lumian's belief that the initial infected individual was a genuine lunatic that acted on instinct, while official information identified her as a humanoid Sealed Artifact, still governed by instinct, that lacked intelligence whether in her normal state or deranged state. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian's speculations, however, didn't rule out the possibility that the young woman had transformed into a true lunatic—one that instinctively spread Derangement—due to some form of corruption, necessitating her sealing.

As for why it was a seal and not a direct eradication, Lumian could roughly guess the reason.

The ability to kill anyone at will was still coveted, despite various restrictions. The power to eliminate anyone at will remained highly sought after, despite certain constraints. Whether it was the Inquisition, the Machinery Hivemind, or Bureau 8, they all prioritized sealing over destruction if a viable method existed. Lumian knew they might even depend on her to handle future crises.

His eyes moved down the letter's contents, absorbing the information.

“As for additional details, confidentiality prevents the source from providing more.”

“Keep a vigilant eye on individuals like her. If you uncover anything suspicious, immediately distance yourself and report it to the authorities.”

No specifics about her origins, the sealing technique, the manifestation of speech, or how to counteract Derangement were provided. No concrete seal level or number… Despite Dardel’s abnormality and prior descriptions, even if it isn’t a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, it holds significant and terrifying properties among Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts… Lumian pondered briefly, then stowed the letter in his Traveler’s Bag without incinerating it on the spot.

At that moment, Lugano was observing his back in bewilderment.

Despite activating his Spirit Vision, he found nothing.

Lumian’s messenger, Penitent Baynfel, had long departed.

“Let’s go,” Lumian sighed, reaching out to grasp Ludwig and Lugano’s shoulders.

His foremost regret was the wasted third of the 400 verl d’or fare.

He still needed to source different cafés for Ludwig’s breakfast; he couldn’t allow him to be satiated from one place to avoid raising suspicion.

In the next instant, Lugano felt as if he had crossed into the spirit world he’d just glimpsed. Instead of being a mere observer, he plunged deeper into layers of saturated colors, bathing in the light of seven different-colored brilliances overhead. Surrounded by indescribable faces and figures, he “sped” toward an unknown destination.

Dizziness overcame him, but in just over ten seconds, his feet met solid ground. Buildings in beige, brownish-red, and light yellow surrounded him.

Lumian hadn’t “teleported” too far and chose Faust, with Dardel

falling under its jurisdiction.

Under the dawn's light, Lumian adorned the Lie earring and retrieved a tweed coat from his Traveler's Bag, seamlessly altering his appearance, height, and attire in a secluded alley.

In less than a minute, he morphed into an entirely different person.

What a mystical item and formidable ability!

Lumian tossed the Lie earring to Lugano, casually stating, "Get three more sets of fake identities and buy steam locomotive tickets that will arrive in Port Gati today."

Am I a translator, guide, or your attendant? Lugano criticized as he caught the mystical silver earring.

He forced a smile and said, "I've never been to the Faust area, so I don't know who to find for fake identities."

"The principles are common. I trust your experience," Lumian replied with a smile.

Alright, since you're paying… Lugano muttered silently, retrieving a change of clothes from his suitcase.

At the Northern Trier Train Station, Lumian had already paid him 1,000 verl d'or for the fake identities and informed him that he would handle similar expenses in the future.

After Ludwig put on the Lie earring, Lugano left the alley with his suitcase.

Lumian activated the Niese Face, altering his appearance once more, and trailed Lugano from afar while holding Ludwig, who was adjusting his height and appearance.

He wanted to observe the Doctor's actions and reactions in an unfamiliar place to uncover potential issues.

To prevent Ludwig from protesting, Lumian held down his wide-brimmed hat and tossed him a few loaves of baguettes.

Ludwig, not clamoring for a hot meal, obediently nibbled on the food as Lumian pulled him along.

In the early morning, the bars were closed, so Lugano headed to the nearest market and approached a prowler suspected to be a mobster. Using money, he bought access and discovered where to obtain fake identities.

Throughout the process, Lugano appeared no different from an ordinary bounty hunter.

Lumian wasn't disappointed or displeased. He calmly followed Lugano until he secured a differently scheduled steam locomotive. Only then did he dispel the Niese Face and rendezvous with his companion.

…

In Port Gati, Upper Coastal Province, Lumian occupied a luxurious hotel room near the sea.

Standing before the expansive glass window, he observed the azure sky, seemingly washed in water, contrasting with the clear and pure sea below, resembling gems.

The clear and melodious calls of gurgling seabirds, accompanied by their graceful figures, traversed between white clouds, white beaches, and ship masts. Even without opening the window, Lumian could intuitively feel the refreshing sea breeze from the sea.

This port, a main entry point for products from industrial cities in the West Midseashire Coast into the Fog Sea, was famous for trade and shipbuilding, boasting prosperity.

Contrary to Trieriens' beliefs about scarce sunlight in the north, Port Gati remained perpetually bathed in sunlight, with autumn maintaining a mild temperature.

As Ludwig chewed, Lumian admired the seascape and distant harbor, awaiting Lugano's return with tickets to the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa.

At that moment, Penitent Baynfel, abnormally tall and clad in a black clergyman's robe, emerged from the void, silently handing Lumian a letter.

"Thank you," Lumian acknowledged out of habit before taking the letter and unfolding it.

"According to the information gathered at the scene, it appears she returned to normal a few days ago and left Dardel. Her current whereabouts are unknown. The spreading Derangement resulted from the severely corrupted sea of minds.

"The townsfolk's abnormal behavior—unwilling to leave Dardel yet keen on informing passersby about Derangement—likely stems from the corrupted sea of minds. Anthony's recently learned terminology describes it as a sea of collective subconscious forming a mind world with the island of consciousness and the spirituality sky.

"Be cautious in the future; there's a risk of being drawn to another mystical catastrophe caused by the Sealed Artifact."

They didn't catch the Sealed Artifact… Lumian clicked his tongue, sensing a brewing headache.

Honestly, there was nothing he could do. Upon arriving in Dardel, the other party had already departed, leaving the catastrophe still unfolding.

At 3 p.m., Lumian, accompanied by Lugano and Ludwig, boarded the Flying Bird, a merchant ship bound for the Feynapotter Kingdom's Port Santa.

Opting for a first-class cabin, they secured a suite featuring a master bedroom, a child's room, a servant's quarters, a living room, and a washroom. With specialized attendants at their service, they gained access to the most upscale dining room and the exclusive cigar room. The cost, a hefty 700 verl d'or, was nearly equivalent to Charlie's annual income as a hotel attendant.

Money was something Lumian cared about, yet not too much. Past experiences and his sister's guidance had made him instinctively

calculative, but the relatively “easy” acquisition of money, like the 30,000 verl d’or he obtained from the safe at Salle de Bal Brise, lessened the sting.

Besides, he already possessed the potion formula, main ingredients, and supplementary ingredients for his next Sequence, eliminating the immediate need for accumulating funds.

As a devoted reader of The Adventurer series, Lumian knew of the numerous human-shaped treasures at sea. If he needed money, he was willing to imitate his idol and cull them.

The Flying Bird, the latest steam-powered ship, was entirely made of steel, with no sails but smokestacks emitting fog and masts with watchtowers.

Iron-gray with intertwining red and gold colors, the ship boasted a wide deck, numerous gun emplacements, and surpassed classic sailboats in displacement, passenger capacity, speed, and sturdiness. When compared to those backward-era fellows, it was like an adult looking down on children.

Before the Cordu incident, Lumian had considered embarking on a maritime journey, inspired by the adventurer Gehrman Sparrow, to entice his sister. However, Aurore had deferred this plan until after his university graduation.

In the spacious, brightly lit living room of the first-class cabin, Lumian gazed out the window at the azure sea, lost in thought.

Ooo!

Amidst the whistle, mist billowed from the chimneys of the Flying Bird.

The massive iron-armored merchant ship slowly departed Port Gati, accompanied by the symphony of various machinery starting to operate, heading into the depths of the sea.

Squawk! Squawk! The cries of seabirds reverberated through the clouds.

Chapter 510 - 510 First Day at Sea

510 First Day at Sea

Amidst the billowing smoke, the Flying Bird cut through the Fog Sea, heading west towards the Intis colony in the Fog Sea Archipelago. They were the same islands in the saying, “never trust an Islander.” From there, it would journey south to Port Santa, northwest of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Though the Fog Sea was notorious for its heavy fog, the offshore areas were less affected. Lumian spent the next three hours under the bright sun, immersed in a book—an introductory textbook for the Feynapotter Kingdom’s Highlander language. While he had Lugano, his translator and guide, Lumian didn’t want to be completely reliant on him for information and communication. If anything happened to Lugano, or if he were to deliberately manipulate translations, Lumian would be vulnerable.

Mastering some basic Highlander phrases before reaching Port Santa would allow Lumian to verify the accuracy of translations and give him some independence.

Typically, learning Highlander in less than ten days was nearly impossible for Beyonders not from the Reader pathway. However, Lumian had a significant advantage: his knowledge of ancient Feysac, the original language from which Highlander evolved. The two languages shared many similarities in sentence structure, meaning, grammar, and word structure, allowing Lumian to learn Highlander much faster.

“When can dinner be delivered?” Ludwig paced restlessly in front of Lumian’s recliner, frustrated that the exclusive attendant hadn’t yet arrived with dinner, despite the darkening sky.

Lumian closed his book as the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows illuminated by the kerosene lamp. With a chuckle, he said, “Blame yourself for ordering so much. They need time to cook it all. Thankfully, the first-class cabin has an independent kitchen, otherwise they’d be overwhelmed…”

Before he could finish, the doorbell rang.

As the chimes reverberated, Lugano opened the thick vermilion door to find the young attendant pushing a dining cart into the room, its surface covered in a thick yellowish-brown carpet.

Under Ludwig’s eager gaze, the attendant calmly laid out the tablecloth and utensils.

“This is a local delicacy, Gati herring. It involves marinating smoked soft herring filets, onions, and carrot slices in olive oil, thyme, bay leaves, and other spices for 24 to 48 hours. It’s perfect with warm potato salad.”

“And these are deep-fried fries. In Upper Coastal Province, there’s a saying: without fries, there’s no heaven…

“There’s also raisin cream bread…

“These are fresh oysters and shellfish…

“This is Faust turkey, ham and mushroom burrito. This is Umu’s duck minced meat and coarse brown sugar vanilla waffle…

“This is traditional orange cheese… and there’s also a pungent gray cheese. Would you like to give it a try?

“This is Upper Coastal Province’s favorite apple cider[1]…”

Lumian listened with genuine interest as the attendant described each dish. He noticed that, despite his impatience, Ludwig didn’t immediately attack his food. Instead, he waited patiently until the attendant finished before sampling the pre-meal bread and savoring the pickled herring.

Did something awaken in him? Lumian glanced at the child in

confusion.

“Not bad,” Ludwig remarked with a professional air. “The smoky taste is just right. It blends perfectly with the fragrance and seasoning…”

Despite his praise, seven-year-old Lumian couldn’t help but find the whole scene with Ludwig’s chubby, youthful face and serious demeanor comical.

Port Gati, being near the sea, boasted excellent seafood. The oysters and other shellfish were not only tastier than most restaurants in Trier, but also considerably cheaper. Lumian sipped his brewed apple cider, enjoying the unique local flavors.

With Ludwig’s impressive appetite, the eight-person dinner soon ended, leaving only clean plates and bones behind.

Lumian and Lugano, despite not being small eaters themselves, found themselves dwarfed by Ludwig’s consumption despite eating two servings each. This was especially impressive considering he’d already devoured afternoon tea and dessert earlier.

I don’t see you visiting the washroom often… Where does all the food go? Do you have a bottomless pit for a stomach? Lumian mused, sizing Ludwig up. He stood up and turned to Lugano.

“I’m feeling for a drink. Want to join me at the ship’s bar?”

“I didn’t catch a wink last night. Planned to hit the hay early today.” Lugano couldn’t wrap his head around his employer’s boundless energy. Despite a sleepless night and a full day of travel, Lumian buzzed with life, ready to hit the bar.

Could it be because his Sequence is higher?

The kid with the odd appetite looks pretty charged too…

Lumian didn’t extend an invite to the translator. After leaving a late-night snack for Ludwig, he swapped into a plain dark brown jacket and left the room, heading for the first-class bar.

The bar oozed elegance, filled with the soft tunes of a small band. Sparse patrons scattered around, soaking in the quiet atmosphere.

Lumian scanned the scene for a moment from the entrance, then shook his head and exited.

He descended the stairs to the deck, slipping into the bar serving third-class cabins and the regular crew.

A chaos of noise—shouts, cheers, claps, and random singing—saturated the air, echoing around Lumian.

He instantly felt a sense of homecoming. A wave of ease washed over him, and every cell in his body kicked up a notch.

That's more like it… A seasoned regular at the Ol' Tavern from a young age, Lumian swayed a bit as he edged up to the bar counter.

"A glass of La Fée Verte." He thumped the wooden surface.

The bartender, a young man with Feynapotter features, greeted Lumian. His face was slim, adorned with black hair, eyes, and distinct contours. His slightly yellowish skin highlighted his appealing facial features.

"Alright, 10 licks," the bartender replied in Intisian, his foreign accent apparent.

The ship's prices trumps even those in Trier… As Lumian counted out the coins, he noticed the bartender divert his attention and engage with sincerity and enthusiasm.

"Madame, what would you like to drink?"

"A glass of cherry wine," a lady in a thick yellow dress responded, showcasing a pretty face and light green eyes.

"Alright!" The bartender, not seeking payment upfront, prepared to serve the lady.

"I was here first," Lumian reminded the bartender with a smile.

Without hesitation, the bartender replied, “This is such a beautiful and dazzling lady. My heart tells me to serve her first.”

Oh, he’s truly from Feynapotter… Lumian didn’t get upset. Instead, it felt like he was watching a circus act.

Feynapotterians, with their romantic nature and relentless pursuit of love, placed their faith in Earth Mother, emphasizing the importance of women. Men in this kingdom would praise any woman they encountered, openly pursuing those they fancied.

Aurore had once mentioned that Feynapotter’s men were masters of country romance. Despite their mushiness and overt sincerity, they didn’t come off as cheesy; rather, they exuded a different kind of elegance.

In comparison, the romantic Intisians seemed lacking.

However, influenced by tradition and faith, most Feynapotterians placed great importance on family, reproduction, and children, preferring settled family lives. Unless entering marriage without coercion, they were akin to the conservative Loenese, finding it challenging to accept extramarital affairs.

While exceptions existed, even in the most conservative Loen Kingdom, the prevalence of adultery wasn’t as exaggerated or common as in Intis. Many believed that love didn’t necessarily thrive within the confines of marriage.

After the lady settled her tab and departed with the cherry wine, the bartender served Lumian La Fée Verte, garnishing it with a mint leaf.

He remarked without a trace of guilt, “My grandmother always said to give special treatment to every lady, especially the beautiful ones.”

“I get it.” Lumian slipped back into his role as a regular at Ol’ Tavern. Sipping his absinthe, he concocted a tale. “I once had numerous beautiful companions, even more stunning than the last lady. Unfortunately, being just one person, I couldn’t marry them all simultaneously…”

The bartender suddenly felt a camaraderie.

“I often feel the same regrets. There are too many beautiful women in this world, and I’m just one person.”

“What’s your name?” The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“Louis, just call me Louis.” Lumian provided his alias.

His current identity was Louis Berry.

“I’m Francesco,” the bartender shared with Lumian.

The familiar setting, the customary boasting, and the vibrant ambiance left Lumian feeling a bit tipsy, despite not imbibing much.

If not for the mysticism catastrophe, if Aurore were still alive, if he’d already entered university with no other concerns, wouldn’t it be nice to just unwind at a bar?

Sea travelers couldn’t help but discuss pirates. Bartender Francesco informed Lumian, “With the widespread use of ironclad warship technology on merchant vessels, it’s become tough for pirates. Their sailboats can’t match these iron-skinned monsters cruising at 16 to 17 knots. They can’t plunder them even if they tried!”

Lowering his voice, Francesco continued, “Pirates’ go-to strategy now is sending individuals disguised as passengers to board ships from different ports. Once they hit a designated area in the sea, they create internal chaos, gaining initial control and allowing a nearby pirate ship to close in.”

“Is that so?” Lumian inquired with interest. “Any guesses on who might be an undercover pirate on this ship?”

Francesco was taken aback.

“It’s just the first day. How can I tell?”

Lumian smiled, teasing, “Ever been through something like this before?”

[1] From “Le Tour De France Gourmand”

Chapter 511 - 511 Warning

511 Warning

“Thank you, Earth Mother. They only ransacked the cabins one by one, and as long as we didn’t resist, they left us unharmed. Naturally, the beautiful ladies and gentlemen were excluded. You can’t expect pirates to have high moral standards.”

Lumian took a sip of mint-flavored absinthe, a smile playing on his lips.

“Aren’t they worried that there might be someone like the adventurer Gehrman Sparrow among the passengers? What if they encounter a powerhouse unwilling to part with their money and ready to use force?”

Francesco was caught off guard by Lumian’s question.

After a pause, he replied, “Being a pirate involves higher risks, doesn’t it?”

“That does make sense,” Lumian nodded in agreement.

Francesco went on, “Many merchant ships nowadays hire retired navy personnel, maritime adventurers, and professional mercenaries for protection. They’re tough and can handle onboard disturbances. Plus, they make pirates think twice, leaving room for negotiation.

“There was a similar incident on a merchant ship before. Pirates had the upper hand, took control, but hesitated to take on a sailor team led by adventurers. They opted for negotiations, demanded a protection fee, and withdrew without looting the cabins.”

Lumian chuckled.

“If I were a pirate, I’d start a security company in Port Gati, offering knowledgeable maritime mercenaries. If ships hire them, I’d earn some fees. If not, well, then it’s time for a good old-fashioned plunder. Either way, I’d make a profit.”

Francesco eyed the black-haired, green-eyed man in his twenties with surprise and muttered,

“Don’t tell me you’re an undercover pirate? The maritime factions are in chaos. Can your subordinates protect those who hire you from other pirates? Sigh, that’s why I’ve never liked the sea. Stepping on the ground gives me a greater sense of security.

“Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

A pure Feynapotterian who believes in Earth Mother… Lumian smiled and asked, “If you don’t like the sea, why are you still working as a bartender on the ship?”

Francesco’s expression gradually became animated.

“Don’t you find it romantic to have an independent kingdom, one that can hardly contact the outside world, floating out at sea? When you meet a beautiful lady here, you’ll feel that only the two of you are left in the entire world. You can only rely on each other.”

Your ultimate goal is to find a romantic encounter? Sometimes, Lumian found it hard to comprehend the Feynapotterians and some Trieriens who resembled them.

At that moment, Francesco gestured towards a round table.

“That’s Philip, the security supervisor of the Flying Bird. He claims to be a retired officer of the Fog Sea fleet. He destroyed numerous pirate ships with his cannons and personally captured many pirates with wanted posters.”

A group of men and women gathered around a round table to the side. In their midst was a middle-aged man with short light-gold hair, light-blue eyes, and a weathered face. Despite his appearance, he didn’t exude seriousness or formality.

“I’ll tell you this, if we ever encounter a formidable pirate, don’t fret. I know them, and I have a certain level of friendship with them. At the very least, I can negotiate…

“Haha, don’t ask why naval officers have ties to great pirates. There are many things at sea you don’t understand, and it’s best not to delve into them…”

The men and women surrounding Philip listened attentively, occasionally expressing surprise at the mention of influential figures or when he narrated thrilling adventure stories.

At some point, Philip’s left hand had wrapped around a girl’s waist, and she didn’t make any attempt to escape. Instead, she wore a shy expression.

Lumian averted his gaze and asked bartender Francesco, “Does he really know so many great pirates? Is he genuinely a retired officer of the Fog Sea fleet?”

Having finished wiping a cup, Francesco spread his hands and said, “Who knows? However, since he took over as the Flying Bird’s security supervisor, we haven’t faced any pirate attacks during our five trips out to sea in the past few months. I don’t know if it’s luck or if he truly knows many pirates and can spot spies at a glance, giving them an advanced warning.”

In the Five Seas, where pirates are a constant threat, the likelihood of avoiding encounters on five consecutive long-distance voyages is slim… Lumian turned his body again, scrutinizing Philip, whose skin bore the rough, red, and weathered marks of a seasoned mariner.

It was challenging to discern if this person was a Beyonder, let alone determine his Sequence. However, Lumian could deduce from the physical details that he had spent considerable time at sea.

Lumian focused and briefly observed Philip’s luck.

It carried a hint of blood.

There’s a possibility of combat and injuries in the future, but it won’t endanger his life… Lumian frowned, finishing the absinthe in his

hand and requesting another glass of Lanti Proof.

Before long, Philip left the bar with the girl still wrapped around his waist, his face flushed.

Lumian clicked his tongue and shook his head.

“You Intisians.”

After a while, rhythmic music filled the bar. Many customers stood up and rushed to the empty space in the middle to dance.

Lumian held the liquor, swaying gently to the rhythm, appearing lost in thought.

Since discovering that the evil god’s bestowed beings were up to no good, he hadn’t felt this relaxed in a long time.

The Hostel plan was now in the past. The investigation of April Fool’s key members could only commence upon reaching Port Santa.

This was a rare vacation.

Estimating that it was time for Ludwig’s second late-night snack, Lumian set down his glass and left the bar on the deck.

As Lumian made his way back to the first-class cabin, he suddenly whispered, “Temiboros, is there any way to identify Beyonders on the ship and the passengers disguised as pirates? I want to visit them one by one, warn them to behave, and not interfere with my enjoyment of the journey.”

If anyone refused to heed the warning, 007 could assist in collecting the bounty. The Beyonder characteristics they produced could also be exchanged for money!

Termiboros’s majestic voice echoed in Lumian’s ears.

Without waiting for Lumian’s response, the sealed Angel added, “With Alista Tudor’s lingering aura and the slight corruption of 0-01, there’s a high chance that you’ll trigger a calamity if you really warn those people.”

Does that mean I'm the greatest calamity and just need to take care of myself? Lumian, who had hoped to reorganize the Flying Bird's dark world and ensure a pleasant journey, understood Termiboros's meaning. He had no choice but to give up.

At that moment, the Flying Bird had fallen into a deep slumber. Lumian walked across the solid floor, the faint creaks and muffled cries echoing around him.

Somewhere within the ship, a woman wept in heartbreaking sobs.

Lumian was no stranger to such despair. He'd often heard Miss Ethans, the object of Charlie's admiration at Auberge du Coq Doré, cry in similar anguish.

There are people who suffer everywhere. Sad people… Lumian, influenced by his writer sister, possessed a touch of the artistic spirit.

Shaking his head, he returned to Room 5, his first-class cabin.

Lugano had already retired to the servants' quarters, while Ludwig, clad in pajamas and a nightcap, awaited his late-night snack.

Lumian sighed and retrieved the easily preserved food from his Traveler's Bag, grateful he'd restocked at Port Gati.

He calculated the cost of Ludwig's daily meals—100 verl d'or, translating to almost 40,000 verl d'or annually. A wave of vexation washed over him. At this rate, Ludwig would deplete his savings within two years.

He couldn't help but wonder if Baron Brignais had breathed a sigh of relief upon confirming Ludwig's "disappearance."

After settling the two midnight meals, Lumian quickly washed and settled into the master bedroom.

As the gentle sway of the ship lulled him, his mind drifted off to sleep.

Lumian woke up at 6 a.m., feeling refreshed.

The dining table was bare, Ludwig and Lugano still asleep. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

He pushed open the window and stretched, inhaling the crisp morning air.

Just before seven, the doorbell rang.

My breakfast was scheduled to arrive at 8:30 a.m…. Lumian opened the door and found Philip, the Flying Bird's security supervisor with his blond hair, blue eyes, and weathered face, standing before him.

Philip looked grim, a stark contrast to the jovial man he'd been at the bar the previous night.

"I've confirmed that your identification documents are fake."

How did he confirm it? Why did he specially check our identification? Lumian didn't feel that anything about them stood out after they boarded the ship.

Suppressing his confusion, he frowned and asked, "Are you attempting to extort us?"

Philip glanced at the living room and said solemnly, "I don't care who you were or what you plan to do. Just behave yourselves during your stay on the Flying Bird. Enjoy the journey, don't cause any trouble, and we'll all be fine."

He's really confirming if we are problematic… How did this guy do it? He's quite capable. He's not as frivolous and simple as he seems… Lumian replied calmly, not giving in, "I'm afraid I don't understand. Perhaps there's a misunderstanding?"

Philip locked eyes with him for a long moment.

"As long as you understand what I'm saying," he finally replied before turning and walking away.

Chapter 512 - 512 Strange Pirate Ship

512 Strange Pirate Ship

This guy was competent, he had to admit. Gone was the frivolous, greasy, and undisciplined facade he'd displayed at the bar the night before.

It was a common trait among many Intisian men, Lumian observed. When not engaged in demanding work and surrounded by attractive women, they turned into preening peacocks, desperate to display their prowess. Becoming a Beyonder didn't change that fundamental nature.

Demonesses thrived in Intis, especially in Trier. This wasn't just due to the city's underground allure; there was a deeper, more harmonious connection with the society at large.

Lumian wasn't offended by Philip's warning, nor did he take it personally.

He'd planned to enjoy the voyage over the next few days, even considered lending a hand in maintaining order on the ship, becoming a shadow inquisitor of sorts.

But now, his primary concern shifted to how Philip had unmasked their true identities. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian had meticulously combed through Aurore's grimoire, studying the abilities of Low-Sequence Beyonders across 22 pathways, and supplemented his knowledge with information gleaned from various sources over the past months. From this, he formed a preliminary hypothesis.

Philip is likely a Beyonder of one of three pathways—Spectator, Reader, or Arbiter.

One excels at observing minute details and reading people's true thoughts. Another is a master of deduction, their Sequence 7 even being called "Detective." They can detect abnormalities from the most subtle clues. The third, at Sequence 8 Public Security Officer, wields extraordinary control within their jurisdiction, allowing them to sense and trace anomalies…

Given that we haven't spoken directly with Philip before, I can eliminate the Spectator option. Besides, Spectators aren't typically chosen as security supervisors, it's not their forte…

After discovering that there was a problem with us through his abilities and that our origins were unclear, Philip likely checked copies of our identification and sent telegrams to the issuing authorities. And he received confirmation that these three people didn't exist?

This explains the delay in his warning. He'd waited for the investigation and response before making his move.

This also implies he has a network of helpers across different regions, receives information and feedback, and possesses extensive connections.

Doing this alone wouldn't be possible. He has an organization backing him, something more official, perhaps? He did claim to be a retired officer of the Fog Sea Fleet, after all…

Such a person is indeed well-suited to lead the security on a heavily armed merchant ship like this.

Lumian turned away and closed the door, a wave of relief washing over him.

With such a capable security supervisor at the helm, issuing discrete warnings to potential threats, the journey ahead promised to be relatively safe.

Lumian spent the morning in the comfort of his first-class cabin,

Cabin 5, indulging in a leisurely study of Highlander and breaking up his reading with bouts of exercise. Meanwhile, Ludwig, after breakfast, had begged Lugano to take him on a tour of the ship, spending over an hour on deck playing like a genuine child.

Lumian, however, suspected the true purpose of this excursion was to meticulously survey the location and condition of the ship's food reserves.

From the corner of his eye, he caught sight of Philip, back to his usual casual demeanor. He was now entangled with the girl from the previous night at the bow of the ship, whispering sweet nothings and laughing, the picture of a smitten couple.

After leaving Trier, he had adjusted his usual phrases to better reflect reality.

Philip and the girl continued their stroll along the deck, their laughter echoing through the air.

With the enhanced hearing of a Hunter, Lumian had no trouble making out the girl's name—Gozia. Though not conventionally beautiful, she exuded a youthful vibrancy that was undeniable.

Lumian watched as Philip's gaze darted beyond the ship's railing, his face hardening for a brief moment.

Following the security supervisor's line of sight, Lumian scanned the horizon, spotting a colossal shadow lurking beneath the undulating waves!

It disappeared as quickly as it appeared, swallowed by the surging sea.

Smaller than the Flying Bird, but far larger than any sea creature… Giant fish, or something more? Lumian mused, a spark of excitement igniting within him.

"My dear, what has captured your attention?" Gozia's voice broke through Philip's reverie.

"My sweetheart, just thinking about which first-class restaurant I'll

treat you to later," Philip replied nonchalantly.

Suddenly, a thin veil of fog crept upwards from the sea, obscuring the sun and dimming the surrounding environment.

The passengers and crew on deck remained unfazed, accustomed to such sudden weather changes in the Fog Sea. Although less intense than the Berserk Sea, the unpredictable nature of the region was ever-present.

As Gozia reveled in the first foggy day of their journey, Philip discreetly raised his right arm, gesturing towards the spot where the shadow had vanished.

He doesn't think it's a passing giant fish… Lumian admired the sea ahead with interest. He noticed several crew members ending their breaks and taking their positions, including the gunners.

The peaceful atmosphere was shattered by a loud splash as a monstrous iron-black behemoth surfaced from the depths.

It was a peculiar-looking "ship."

It was covered in a layer of metal, with only thin pipes resembling snail eyes protruding from its hull.

As seawater cascaded off its sides, the upper half of the strange vessel split open, revealing a fearsome array of cannons and masts rising from within, creating a wide deck.

Dozens, perhaps even hundreds of pirates armed with firearms and swords were on the deck, filling the air with their intimidating cries.

A white sail unfurled automatically, right to the top of the mast.

Wow… Lumian marveled inwardly.

He had never seen such a magical vessel before, a vessel that could disappear and reappear from the depths of the sea.

Philip's expression grew increasingly grave.

Beside him, Gozia froze, her eyes wide with terror as she instinctively huddled closer to her lover.

“Only one man commands such undersea vessels,” Philip replied, his voice devoid of its usual frivolity and heavy with grim certainty. “Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine. Judging by the size of this vessel, it’s not his flagship, the Newins. It’s the Black Octopus, commanded by his most trusted subordinate, Bone Splitter Basil.”

Gozia’s vision swam, and she nearly fainted.

The night before, during their conversation, Philip had mentioned the infamous maritime kings and pirate admirals who ruled the Five Seas. Among them, Howl Constantine, who had recently risen to the rank of Admiral, was shrouded in mystery.

Legend whispered of his monstrous heritage, claiming he possessed the blood of sea monsters. He had even ventured into the ruins of a sunken city, recovering the relics of ancient alchemists: two stealth boats capable of navigating the depths of the ocean unseen.

Inspired by these vessels, the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery had attempted to develop their own undersea fleet. However, they failed to mass produce them. Due to the reliance on higher Sequence Beyonders, only one or two of these vessels could be assigned to each Intisian fleet, each serving specialized functions.

Of Admiral Deep Sea’s two undersea vessels, the first, the Newins, was a behemoth rivaling the Flying Bird in size. Inspired by a renowned maritime treasure legend, it served as Howl Constantine’s flagship. The second, the Black Octopus, which had just emerged from the depths, was entrusted to his most trusted subordinate, Bone Splitter Basil.

He was an equally formidable figure, known for his cold-blooded brutality and ruthless tactics. He took pleasure in torturing his captives, and the bounty on his head, far exceeding that of most non-Admiral pirates, stood at a staggering 250,000 verl d’or.

The revelation of the Black Octopus and Bone Splitter Basil plunged Gozia into a pit of despair.

How could a mere armed merchant ship like the Flying Bird possibly stand against such notorious pirates from the Five Seas?

What horrors awaited them under Bone Splitter Basil's reign of terror?

Philip, however, had no time for his new lover's distress. His full attention was focused on the unfolding spectacle of the Black Octopus and its menacing cannons, ready to unleash their fury at any moment.

Standing a short distance away, Lumian felt a thrill coursing through his veins when he heard the name Bone Splitter Basil, the strongest subordinate to Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine. This was not nervousness, but the exhilarating feeling from catching a whiff of iron and blood.

This was one of the Hunters' belligerence.

Even after fully digesting the potions, a Beyonder would still be affected by them.

Lumian's emerald eyes, sharp as an eagle's, locked onto the bizarre iron-

black ship as he formulated his next move.

Once Bone Splitter Basil emerged and the two vessels closed the distance, Lumian planned to "teleport" behind the infamous pirate and unleash the Spell of Harrumph.

If the Spell of Harrumph's effect proved insufficient and failed to incapacitate Basil, Lumian would don his Flog boxing gloves, instill a specific desire within his opponent, and "teleport" again, creating greater distance before activating the Symphony of Hatred, amplifying the instilled desire to a maddening degree.

With Bone Splitter Basil severely wounded and momentarily incapacitated, Lumian would seize the opportunity to unleash his full Hunter arsenal, striking the enemy down with devastating blows.

To prevent interference from the surrounding pirates, he could

potentially create a Bottle of Fiction and isolate Bone Splitter Basil for a one-on-one duel…

A complex plan, complete with contingency measures, raced through Lumian's mind, causing a slight tremor in his body, as if anticipating the thrill of the coming battle.

Just as the tension reached a peak and a naval confrontation seemed imminent, the pirates aboard the Black Octopus turned as one, their eyes fixed in shock upon the stairs leading deeper into the vessel.

A few seconds later, the bizarre iron-black ship made an abrupt turn, altering its course and steering away from the Flying Bird.

With swift precision, the exposed sections of the Black Octopus retracted, sealing its interior once more.

In the eyes of Lumian and the others, the Black Octopus rapidly distanced itself, diving back into the depths of the foggy sea.

In the blink of an eye, it transformed into a mere shadow, disappearing completely.

"E-escaped?" Uttering the word after a long moment of dazed silence, Gozia turned to her lover, her voice filled with surprise and confusion.

Bone Splitter Basil and his Black Octopus were simply leaving?

Without a fight, without plundering?

Philip, himself bewildered, stared at the spot where the Black Octopus had vanished, forcing a smile onto his face.

"Didn't I tell you that I know many great pirates?"

Chapter 513 - 513 Worry

513 Worry

Have they escaped? Lumian's lips twitched. The Black Octopus's abrupt change of course and sudden dive left him speechless.

The maneuver caught him off guard, leaving him frozen for a critical moment.

This incredible underwater ship, commanded by a great pirate with a massive bounty, simply turned tail and fled without even firing a single cannon?

How could one be a pirate with such puny guts?

Bone Splitter Basil? With a bounty of 250,000 verl d'or and a fearsome reputation? Don't even think about showing your face on the high seas again!

Lumian cursed under his breath, then frowned thoughtfully. Why had Bone Splitter Basil fled without revealing himself?

I could understand if it was the Blood Emperor's aura I activated that made you run so fast, but why now?

It couldn't be that he targeted the wrong ship, did he? The Flying Bird isn't the merchant vessel he wanted to plunder, so he was rushing to corner his real prey?

Did he somehow sense that hijacking this ship would lead to disaster?

If he truly possessed the power of divination or prophecy, they would have known not to come. He wouldn't have had to embarrass himself in front of the crew and passengers, only to turn back and drift aimlessly…

Danger Premonition? A Hunter's danger intuition wouldn't react so strongly until it's face-to-face with the threat…

Then it hit him. A Sequence that had him wary for months: Sequence 6 Devil of the Criminal pathway!

Beyonders at this Sequence possessed a unique ability called "Malicious Perception."

If someone within their range intended to cause them lethal harm and acted on it within a specific timeframe, they could sense the source of the danger and identify their attacker.

Bone Splitter Basil… a Devil? His title and reputation certainly fit…

I had just formulated a hunting plan for him, intending to "teleport" over after confirming the situation. Did he sense my malice and confirm the extent of the danger before swiftly deciding to escape?

Hey, you're a Devil. Are you running away without a fight? I'm not even confident in defeating a Devil. Besides, you're on your alchemical boat with a large number of subordinates around you. You probably don't lack mystical items. Do you have to be so cowardly?

The plan I envisioned had a high success rate, so much so that Basil's ability to sense danger exceeded his endurance. Therefore, he didn't take the risk and chose the most effective and safest response—escape? The more Lumian pondered, the more he felt that this guess was close to the truth.

This amused him as well.

Hunters might not be the ones who charged forward to fight from the beginning. They might even be the last to appear and be responsible for harvesting.

Lumian suspected that Basil might not be able to sense the specific plan. It was only because he had the Angel of Inevitability, the Blood Emperor's aura, Mr. Fool's seal, and 0-01's mild corruption, regardless of whether they were powerful or not, that they combined with a feasible plan and clear malice. It strongly agitated the Bone

Splitter, making him feel that the impending danger was beyond his ability to handle. Hence, the scene just now.

Are all Devils so timid? Lumian cursed silently and left the deck in disappointment, returning to Room 5 of the first-class cabin.

At that moment, the exclusive attendant had arrived with lunch. Ludwig focused on the delicacies, while Lugano lingered by the window, his face filled with excitement.

Upon seeing Lumian's return, the Doctor exclaimed excitedly, "Just now, a great pirate appeared—Bone Splitter Basil, Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine's most formidable captain. He even operates the Black Octopus. H-have you heard of the Black Octopus? It's a mystical ship that can dive to the seabed!"

"I heard it from someone at the bar last night," Lumian replied honestly.

Prior to this, he didn't know much about Admiral Deep Sea and his pirate crew. All he knew was that there was such a pirate admiral. After all, Howl Constantine was quite mysterious and rarely appeared in newspapers and magazines that recorded sea stories. His only appearance in The Adventurer series was his title and name, giving him a background without any plot lines.

Lugano didn't hide his emotions.

"I witnessed the mystical pirate ship with my own eyes. It truly surfaced from the seabed and can bloom like a flower!

"I thought we'd clash with the Bone Splitter and use your teleportation abilities to escape. To my surprise, Black Octopus chose to leave after observing for just over ten seconds."

Over ten seconds? Aren't you looking down on Bone Splitters? It was a few seconds! Lumian retorted inwardly.

Lugano continued, "When I chatted with a few sailors this morning, they told me that the Flying Bird's security supervisor is a formidable retired officer who knows many great pirates. I thought they were boasting, but from the looks of it, that security supervisor isn't

simple. It's really possible that he has ties to many great pirates. That's why Bone Splitter Basil didn't plunder the Flying Bird!"

"That's right, that's right," Lumian echoed.

Rip… Ludwig tore off the oily skin and meat from a duck leg.

Lumian glanced at the boy, who was engrossed in his food, and suddenly had a new idea.

Could the malice and danger that Bone Splitter Basil sensed be more than one? Could it not be solely from me?

Ludwig might have swallowed hard upon hearing the word "bone dismantling"…

However, even though this walking bottomless stomach when compared to me appears high-ranking, he lacks the corresponding abilities…

…

To celebrate the fact that the Flying Bird hadn't been plundered by the Black Octopus, the captain hosted a party on the deck in the evening, featuring clowns, magicians, and beast tamers. He treated everyone to three glasses of beer.

Late at night, the third-class bar bustled with activity. Philip became the center of attention, surrounded by nearly all the patrons. They took turns praising him and treating him to drinks.

They were all grateful to the security supervisor for using his friendship with Bone Splitter Basil to persuade the great pirate to leave and prevent the passengers of the Flying Bird from suffering.

Lumian, seated at the bar counter and engaged in conversation with bartender Francesco, savored the Lanti Proof. His gaze casually swept across Philip's face, and he noticed a hint of seriousness and worry beneath the blond-haired, blue-eyed middle-aged man's frivolous smile.

In other words, he wasn't that happy.

After nearly an hour, Philip squeezed out of the drunken crowd and sat beside Lumian with his lover, Gozia.

He knocked on the table and ordered a glass of golden beer. Casually, he said, “You actually enjoy drinking in such a rowdy place.”

“The girls here are more enthusiastic than in first class.” Lumian could roughly guess Philip’s motive for coming, but he didn’t inquire further.

Philip chuckled. “That’s true.”

Casually, he inquired, “What did you do when the Black Octopus arrived?”

“Don’t you remember? I wasn’t far from you. Don’t you know what I did?” Lumian replied candidly.

Philip nodded slightly and didn’t press further.

Lumian took a sip of liquor and asked with a smile, “Do you think there’s a huge problem on the ship that scared off that little troublemaker?”

Philip turned his head and glanced at Lumian, not too surprised that he had made such a connection.

“What are you two talking about?” The tipsy Gozia couldn’t quite grasp the conversation between the two men.

It was as if they were speaking in riddles.

“That’s the most logical explanation I can come up with,” Philip replied, ignoring his lover’s question.

Lumian asked with interest, “Who do you think is suspicious?”

From yesterday afternoon to noon today, the security supervisor must have warned many people.

Philip set down his beer mug and massaged his temples.

After some thought, he smiled. “I wanted to tell you, but I don’t think that’s necessary now.”

“Why?” Lumian inquired curiously.

Philip took another sip of his beer and chuckled.

“As long as that huge problem doesn’t erupt on the ship, it won’t be a problem for me.

“As you can see, it hasn’t revealed itself and is quietly hiding. This means that it might just want to reach the archipelago or Port Santa without a hitch.”

At this point, Philip sighed and said with experience, “Many times, when you see an abnormality, there’s no need to care or figure out the truth. Pretending not to notice and patiently waiting for the abnormality to leave is the best choice.

“The abnormality that didn’t erupt isn’t abnormal. Your investigation and investigation might agitate it, escalating the problem and causing the catastrophe to truly descend.

“As long as that abnormality doesn’t truly harm us, try your best to maintain reverence and avoid stimulation. That’s one of the key reasons why I’ve been able to survive at sea until now.”

Lumian nodded gently and said, “A relative of mine once mentioned that in certain events, those who can’t see, hear, speak, or smell are more likely to survive.”

Philip smiled and extended his right hand.

“I’m glad you share that understanding.”

This was his true motive for coming to talk to Lumian. He wanted Lumian, who was using a fake identity, not to be curious and try to figure out the hidden trouble on the ship.

That might implicate the entire ship!

Understanding Philip’s meaning, Lumian couldn’t help but raise his

eyebrows. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Does this mean there are other troubles on the ship?

Chapter 514 - 514 Huge Wave

514 Huge Wave

Lumian took a moment to consider. He didn't think there was any real danger.

Philip's concern was based on Bone Splitter Basil's reaction, which only hinted at a potential problem on the ship. While Philip knew which passengers and crew members were suspicious, he couldn't pinpoint the real source of the trouble. He wasn't even sure if he was right, and wouldn't dare to be certain. Therefore, his suspect might not be the actual issue.

In other words, it was more likely that the real problem was actually sitting right beside him: Lumian and his new godson, Ludwig. However, Philip wasn't aware of this, and by excluding them, would mistakenly focus on other suspects.

Apart from Ludwig and me, whether there are other serious problems or not, Philip is right, Lumian thought, letting out a soft sigh. Before any major troubles surface, it's best not to investigate or provoke them. We'll pretend not to see, hear, or speak, and wait for them to reach their destination and leave the Flying Bird…

Of course, this depends on the situation remaining stable. If any abnormalities arise, we'd have to find a way to resolve them immediately. Sometimes, pretending not to see things doesn't prevent them from worsening. The Cordu catastrophe is a gruesome reminder of that… Lumian thought and sighed softly.

He turned around and extended his hand, briefly shaking Philip's with a smile.

"I'm glad we reached an agreement."

Philip breathed a sigh of relief, retracted his right hand, and downed his golden malt beer.

He had been worried that someone like Louis Berry, who used a fake identity and was suspected of being a criminal, would be stubborn and adventurous. He was concerned that Louis wouldn't listen to reason and would insist on uncovering the "huge problem" that scared off the Black Octopus.

Philip felt no sympathy for someone who might die because of their own foolishness, but he didn't want them to endanger everyone else.

Thankfully, Louis Berry seemed like someone who could be reasoned with.

As Philip drained his beer, he kept assuring himself:

The Fog Sea Archipelago wasn't far from the Republic. In fact, its proximity was why Intis had chosen it as its first overseas colony. The Flying Bird wouldn't need to stop at other ports for supplies on its journey, allowing it to arrive directly.

Assuming the weather remained calm, the Flying Bird should dock in Farim, the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, by the following evening. If they encountered bad weather, they might need to slow down, change course, or seek refuge in another port. The latest they could arrive would be noon the day after tomorrow.

Perhaps that troublesome problem would disembark in Port Farim?

Even if something was brewing beneath the surface, it wouldn't fully erupt in just a day or two.

Endure, and it would be over!

Reassured, Philip—hugging his lover, Gozia—rose from his barstool and left the bustling bar.

Lumian continued sipping his Lanti Proof, seemingly unfazed.

With a smile, he turned to the bartender, Francesco, and remarked, "I've heard that many Feynapotterians are homesick. Even when they

have to leave for work, they often return home, write letters, or send telegrams. You, however, chose to work overseas, on a ship that makes it difficult to stay in touch with the outside world."

Francesco raised his hand and gestured. "While I love my family dearly, families like ours, with generations living together, often face various problems and conflicts. My grandmother, a wise woman, manages us well, but it can be stifling for the younger generation. There are too many elders eager to share their life experiences.

"Furthermore, my home is in Port Santa. The Flying Bird docks there almost every month. So, for me, this job is both work and a trip home."

It's just like the book that described Feynapotterian customs. Feynapotterians enjoy living in large families spanning multiple generations. And in such families, the most senior woman who has given birth becomes the natural matriarch, controlling the entire family's affairs, regardless of whether her husband is alive. In a religious sense, such a woman is considered the embodiment of Earth Mother within the family… His chat with Bartender Francesco wasn't purely for relaxation. He had two goals: Firstly, he wanted to understand the passengers better through Francesco's eyes. His final destination was Port Santa, which was five to six days away. Paying attention to the various details of life on the Flying Bird was crucial. Secondly, he wanted to verify the information in his books and gain a grasp of local customs in the Feynapotter Kingdom. Missing out on important knowledge could lead him to misinterpret situations in Port Santa.

…

The night passed peacefully, save for a child waking up twice to eat, the rhythmic chewing noises hardly disturbing Lumian's sleep. The gentle rocking of the ship and the waves outside his window created a lulling atmosphere.

Just when he thought the Flying Bird would smoothly reach Port Farim, the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, by evening, the weather took a sudden turn.

The sea, previously veiled in a thin fog, began to seethe. Giant waves, like towering mountains, rose and fell in rapid succession.

The Flying Bird bobbed precariously on the waves, its air of colossal power replaced by vulnerability.

Now, it was a mere leaf tossed between the sky and the sea, a toy in the hands of a giant. Tiny and fragile, it seemed ready to capsize at any moment.

Oddly, the massive waves were not accompanied by darkness or torrential rain. Instead, the howling wind dispersed the fog above, revealing a clear azure sky.

A sailor scrambled down from the observation deck and, holding his telescope to Philip, shouted, “Boss, this wave isn’t right!

“Only our area has waves this big! Everywhere else is calm!

“There’s no rain here either!”

Philip, holding onto Gozia who trembled pale from the force of the elements, instinctively furrowed his brow.

Abnormal waves? New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Had that “major problem” caused them?

No sooner had the thought crossed his mind than the Flying Bird was flung into the air by a monstrous wave, only to be slammed onto another.

Terrifying jolts and tremors reverberated through the air, eliciting screams of fear from many passengers.

They sensed the Flying Bird teetering on the brink of capsizing, a shipwreck imminent.

In first-class cabin number 5, Lugano stared calmly out the window, gripping the frame as the dining table slid across the room with the force of the storm.

He knew that if the Flying Bird couldn't withstand the tempest, Lumian Lee would undoubtedly "teleport" him and Ludwig to safety in Port Farim.

Lumian, gazing at the strangely calm azure sea beyond the monstrous waves, sensed something amiss.

He wasted no time, retrieving the Mystery Prying Glasses from his Traveler's Bag, hoping to uncover the hidden cause of this disaster.

As the brown, gold-rimmed glasses settled on the bridge of his nose, a familiar dizziness washed over him. He saw a chaotic montage of scenes around him unfold.

On deck, a tidal wave surged, tossing Philip. Clutching a rope in desperation, he descended rapidly with Gozia. He instinctively positioned himself below her, shielding his new lover from the fall. He landed with a heavy thud, the rope burning a gash into his palm, drawing blood.

Chaos reigned in the dining hall as plates, knives, and forks flew through the air; customers were flung around.

In one room, a blurry figure of a woman sat by the window, sobbing uncontrollably.

The boiler chamber was a scene of disarray, scattered coal littering the floor. Beneath it crawled a horrifying horde of creatures resembling seashells.

And beneath the deceptively calm azure surface, a peculiar fish gazed up at the beleaguered Flying Bird!

Its size rivaled that of a shark, its grayish-black body devoid of scales, replaced instead by numerous, pulsing meatballs. These strange orbs shimmered with an interconnected, faint starlight, forming cryptic symbols. It sported a pair of eyes on each side of its head, and its gaping maw was as sharp as a flagpole.

Surrounding this strange fish and numerous similar fish seemed to form a school.

With a sharp gasp, Lumian ripped off the Mystery Prying Glasses and stuffed them back into his Traveler's Bag, his chest heaving.

He suspected the strange fish were behind the violent waves, though it was unclear if the wind was a consequence of the upheaval or a separate cause.

Knowing the strange fish were submerged, Lumian discarded the idea of using a massive fireball to guide the Flying Bird's cannons towards them.

Instead, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder and "teleported" himself to the nearby patch of sea he had just witnessed.

As he did so, he retrieved the blackened bone flute adorned with dark-red holes.

General Philip's Symphony of Hatred!

Lumian materialized mid-air and, while descending, brought the bone flute to his lips.

He had learned the flute from shepherds during his time in Cordu, and over the past few days, he had been diligently practicing and refining his skills. Now, he began to play a melodious tune, one filled with a longing for home.

It was a favorite melody among the wandering shepherds.

The muffled explosions of fireballs churned the water, slowing Lumian's descent. But amidst his melody, a new tune, one that seemed to emanate from the depths of destiny itself, pierced through the seawater and reached the "ears" of the strange fish and their kind below.

Suddenly, the strange fish froze. A mountain-like wave descended, but no new ones followed.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The smaller fish surrounding the strange fish exploded from their heads, turning on their own kind in a frenzy. Others simply died and floated to the surface.

Lumian's descent accelerated as his feet, legs, and body submerged into the icy sea.

He continued playing the shepherds' longing melody, feeling the seawater reach his neck and threatening to engulf his mouth.

The next moment, dark-red blood oozed from the four eyes and multiple bumps on the shark-sized fish.

The terrifying waves subsided rapidly.

With only half his head above water, Lumian lowered the bone flute and smiled. He activated Spirit World Traversal once more.

Cough, cough, cough! As he materialized back in Room 5 of the first-class cabin, salty seawater spewed from his mouth.

In his eagerness to ensure the effectiveness of the music, he had stopped playing too late, ending up swallowing a mouthful of seawater. Additionally, fearing that too much commotion would disrupt the "teleportation," he had held his breath until returning before choking.

Is this a form of unluckiness? Lumian mused.

Lugano, startled by Lumian's drenched state, asked, "Is it resolved?"

"Seems like it," Lumian replied with a smile.

His shoes and trouser legs bore the marks of wear and tear, scorched and dripping seawater.

At that moment, cheers erupted across the Flying Bird as passengers and crew noticed the receding waves.

"Praise the Sun!"

"By steam!"

"Thank you, Mother of All Things!"

"…"

Chapter 515 - 515 Strange Fish

515 Strange Fish

Philip, unlike the other jubilant crew and passengers, pushed Gozia away whilst ignoring the pain in his back and palms and dashed to the ship's side, eyes scanning the vast expanse of the sea.

He shifted relentlessly, searching for anything unusual, anything out of place.

Then, a muffled cry pierced the air.

Stunned, he pinpointed the source and sprinted towards the Flying Bird's bow.

The cry grew louder, more desperate. Philip saw a crimson stain blossoming on the distant blue, a large shadow shifting beneath.

The shadow rapidly materialized into a monstrous fish with four eyes —grayish-blue orbs replacing scales and a terrifyingly sharp mouth.

This wasn't a small fish. It writhed and thrashed, frantic flicks of its tail sending water droplets flying.

Waves surged around it, reaching heights of five to six meters even without the wind's aid, crashing down with thunderous force.

The shrill cries subsided momentarily, and the four-eyed monster, gripped by palpable fear, plunged back into the depths, swimming away with a speed that belied its size.

Its remaining brethren followed close behind.

In the first-class cabin 5 by the window, Lumian changed into dry clothes with the casual indifference of someone unobserved.

He knew the Symphony of Hatred had ignited the four-eyed fish's terror, which is why he opted for a swift "teleport" back instead of leaping into the air and unleashing another devastating attack while the creature surfaced.

Fear would drive the monster away and prevent it from unleashing its full fury and raising further havoc.

"Phew," Philip breathed, relief washing over him as the four-eyed fish disappeared from sight.

"Thank goodness, thank goodness," he muttered, his voice filled with gratitude. He spread his arms wide and exclaimed, "Praise the Sun!"

"Do you know that fish?"

A voice suddenly broke the silence beside Philip.

He turned in surprise to see Louis Berry, with his black hair, green eyes, and sharp features, standing beside him.

His lover, Gozia, stood hesitantly at the cabin entrance, wanting to approach but afraid of approaching the shipboard.

"It's the Mutated Bannerfish. Heh heh, that's what scholars call it. At sea, they have another name for it—Death Navigators," Philip answered Lumian's question, pressing his hand against the shipboard for support.

"Death Navigators? Why haven't I heard of it?" Lumian asked, genuinely curious.

To be honest, his knowledge of Beyonder creatures was limited. His previous experiences mainly involved dealing with Beyonders, heretics, and Rampagers.

Philip glanced at him, exhaled, and smiled faintly.

"These fish-like creatures have only appeared in recent years. Many sailors call them the sea's demons."

Only appeared in recent years… Lumian frowned thoughtfully.

Such descriptions often pointed towards the corruption of evil gods, environmental anomalies, or natural disasters.

“Has it only recently appeared in the Fog Sea, or was there no legend of such a fish in the Five Seas?” Lumian interrupted Philip’s explanation, eager to clarify his doubts.

Philip pondered for a moment before speaking.

“I used to serve in the Fog Sea fleet. Apart from the Fog Sea, I’ve only traveled the North Sea. I don’t know much about the Berserk Sea, the Sonia Sea, or the Polar Sea, but until a few years ago, I never heard any mention of such a strange fish from the crew, pirates, or colleagues from other fleets.”

Could they be fish corrupted by an evil god? Lumian suddenly felt grateful that he hadn’t impulsively tried to eliminate the Mutated Bannerfish.

Not only would it have exposed his Beyonder powers to the many crew members and passengers, but it could have also led to unforeseen dangers. And for what?

A pile of trash that would only be good enough to feed Ludwig!

Seeing that Louis Berry was no longer fixated on the detail, Philip continued, “Mutated Bannerfish appear on fog-free nights, hovering upright as if silently observing the cosmos. Many sailors and pirates have witnessed this sight, believing the fish are summoning an evil entity.

“Think about it. The night sea is pitch black, the crimson moon barely visible, and only starlight illuminates the terrifying, distorted fish heads silently emerging from the water, motionless and arranged in strange patterns… It’s enough to scare anyone!”

Gazing at the cosmos… Could they have been corrupted by an evil god’s power for some reason? Lumian pondered for a few seconds before asking, “Why are they called Death Navigators?”

Philip rubbed his cheeks.

“After surveying the cosmos, the Mutated Bannerfish remain on the surface, forming two lines like an arrowhead that points towards a specific spot in the sea, as if guiding some unknown creature.

“Some pirates, adventurers, and treasure hunters believe this points to valuable items or hidden treasures, so they try to follow the Mutated Bannerfish to see where they lead.

“But none of the ships that attempted this ever returned, and the crew vanished.

“That’s why we call them Death Navigators.”

Philip sighed and continued, “I once heard from sailors that the Death Navigators can control the waves. Judging by what we just saw, this rumor seems very likely, and it’s much worse than I imagined.

“Right, that Mutated Bannerfish must have been relatively powerful even among Death Navigators.

“However, no Death Navigator has ever attacked a human ship before…”

A soft chuckle escaped Lumian’s lips.

“Perhaps they attacked, but no one survived to spread the news.”

Philip was taken aback.

“That’s true. In such a tidal wave, once a ship capsizes or shatters, only those with special abilities would stand a chance.”

He paused and muttered to himself, “Did that troublesome figure provoke the Death Navigators’ attack?” The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“It’s possible,” Lumian replied sincerely.

After confirming that the Death Navigators hadn’t returned, Philip turned to the passengers and crew huddled by the window and cabin entrance.

“The danger has passed! The weather has returned to normal!”

The humans, who had cheered earlier, erupted in relieved cries, praising their deities.

Philip looked away and pondered, “Did the Death Navigator ultimately succumb to that unknown threat? I could feel its immense fear.”

“It’s possible,” Lumian replied with the same sincerity.

With this interlude, the Flying Bird increased its speed and arrived at Port Farim, the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, before nightfall.

The sun set behind Saint Tick Island, casting a crimson glow over the distant sea, vast forests, and the dormant brown volcano. The sight was magnificent and breathtaking.

Farim, in the native language of the Fog Sea Archipelago, meant “having fragrance and sweetness.” Saint Tick Island was rich in cloves, nutmeg, pepper, and sugarcane. Fruits were mainly bananas and grapes, while the rest of the land was planted with cotton.

Looking at the white-walled, red-roofed buildings lining the coastline, the masts, sails, and smokestacks emitting fog, Lumian chuckled and said, “Emperor Roselle, who named this city back then, probably didn’t expect Farim to become the last bastion of the indigenous language.”

Under generations of cultural genocide, the current Islanders could only speak Intisian. Their native language had been lost long ago.

There might be elders in the primitive tribes living deep within the forest who still understood the indigenous language, but in all the colonial cities and surrounding plantations, one language reigned supreme—Intisian.

Of course, the Fog Sea Archipelago had its own unique dialects, a blend of Intisian and indigenous languages, rarely used by Intisians outside this region.

“Are you disembarking?” Lugano inquired of Lumian.

The Flying Bird wouldn't be leaving the port until the next afternoon.

"Of course," Lumian replied with a hint of excitement. "Now that we're here in Farim, I can't miss the chance to try their famous Golden Somme! Would you like to lead the way, bringing me and Ludwig around, or would you prefer to stay here and keep an eye on him?"

The Fog Sea Archipelago was known for its superior sugarcane, and the sugar liquor produced from its syrup, called "Golden Somme," was legendary.

Lugano's first instinct was to accompany his employer, as he felt safer around Lumian's capable and decisive presence. However, after a moment of reflection, the Doctor decided it would be wiser to stay on board.

While Lumian was undeniably formidable, his talent for attracting trouble was equally impressive!

Leaving Ludwig with enough food for dinner and two rounds of late-night snacks, Lumian disembarked from the Flying Bird, dressed in a white shirt, a black vest, a dark jacket, and matching pants.

In Trier, it was already early autumn, and the air was crisp with chill. However, the Fog Sea Archipelago seemed to be enjoying the tail end of summer. Though the air was warm, it was quickly dispersed by the refreshing sea breeze.

As Lumian strolled out of the port, he spotted a brown-skinned, wrinkled old woman with black features selling golden straw hats across the street.

These hats were woven from a local plant called Golden Leaves, which was favored by the believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun religion. Wearing one supposedly gave the illusion of having the sun shining directly overhead.

Intrigued by the idea, Lumian purchased a hat for 5 licks and placed it on his head. He then continued his leisurely stroll towards the nearby square.

In the heart of the square stood a Sun Obelisk, surrounded by numerous notices adorned with wanted posters.

Lumian stopped, his hands instinctively slipping into his pockets. Before the sun dipped below the horizon, he scanned the wanted posters and committed the bounties to memory.

“Queen Mystic, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 100 million verl d’or.

“King of the Five Seas Nast, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 20 million verl d’or.

“Queen of Stars Cattleya, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 11 million verl d’or.

“King of Immortality Agalito, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 4 million verl d’or.

“Queen of Ailment Tracy, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 3 million verl d’or.

“King of Dusk Bulatov Ivan, one of the maritime kings… Bounty of 2.6 million verl d’or…”

Observing Lumian’s intense scrutiny of the six maritime kings’ wanted posters, an adventurer standing beside him couldn’t resist cracking a joke.

“Looking to hunt the maritime kings, eh?”

Chapter 516 - 516 Questioning Method

516 Questioning Method

Lumian whirled back to face the teasing man.

“Doesn’t every adventurer who comes to sea dream of following in Gehrman Sparrow’s great footsteps?”

The joking adventurer wasn’t past his twenties. Curly brown hair topped a gaunt face, his Intis-blue eyes sparkling with amusement. Despite the unkempt stubble adorning his chin, he emanated a middle-class Trier air, refined in his details.

His attire: a thin blue coat, white pants, and brown boots. A large-caliber revolver and an exquisite rapier balanced his waist.

Lumian’s retort and lofty aspirations seemed to surprise the adventurer. He chuckled after a moment, “Even Sparrow didn’t manage to hunt down any pirate kings.”

“Wasn’t Gehrman Sparrow the one who supposedly killed Barros Hopkins, the vanished King of Black Throne, one of the original Four Kings of the Sea?” Although The Adventurer series hadn’t touched upon it yet, Lumian was a dedicated reader of maritime tales in newspapers and magazines.

The adventurer scoffed, “Unconfirmed. Only when it’s inked into The Adventurer series is it truth. They say Fors Wall was specially hired by the Church of The Fool to promote Sparrow’s exploits.”

Just as I suspected, the famous author, Fors Wall, operates under the protection of The Fool Church, allowing her to write without fear about the secrets of the great pirates… Lumian asked with interest,

“So, the relationship between Gehrman Sparrow, the former Vice Admiral Ailment, and the current Queen of Ailment is real?” Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

“I’d bet on it. The Queen of Ailment herself has never denied it,” the adventurer replied, clearly enjoying the conversation.

After their chat, the adventurer, with his playful demeanor, found Lumian even more appealing. He smiled and asked, “How should I address you? After learning your name and you becoming a legend like Gehrman Sparrow, I can brag to other adventurers that I knew you before you became famous.”

His last sentence was laced with good-natured jest.

“Louis Berry,” Lumian offered his alias. “What about you? Perhaps you’ll be the next Gehrman Sparrow.”

“Batna Comté.” The adventurer with the wide-aperture revolver and exquisite rapier chuckled and said, “I don’t expect to end up like Gehrman Sparrow. I wouldn’t mind becoming the next Blazing Danitz or even the former Strongest Hunter of the Fog Sea, Anderson. That would be quite satisfying.”

Quite ambitious… He doesn’t seem like a newbie to the seas… Lumian quickly assessed Batna, unconsciously slipping into a Conspirer’s mindset. He still believes achieving power like Blazing Danitz is possible after everything he’s seen. That suggests a strong sense of self-belief… Could he be a Beyonder as well?

Adjusting his golden straw hat, Lumian smiled at Batna Comté. “Drink’s on me. How about it?”

Stepping into Port Farim, the bustling capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago, Saint Tick Island, Lumian carried a double purpose: to unearth more pirate intel and acquire the remaining supplementary ingredients for the Reaper potion.

This mission demanded contact with Beyonders and local information brokers.

As his thoughts raced, Madam Magician’s reward flickered across his

mind:

“Reaper potion formula:

“Sequence: 5;

“Main ingredients: Gray Demonic Wolf’s front claws, Forest Hunter’s tongue;

“Supplementary ingredients: 80 milliliters of Gray Demonic Wolf’s blood, two Forest Hunter’s fangs, 10 drops of Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard venom, and 10 drops of hornbeam essential oil;

“Ritual: Plan and execute a successful capture of a target with a Sequence higher than your own. Flaunt the completed conspiracy before them, and consume the potion as they witness your victory, filled with fear and despair.

“Note 1: The increased number and higher Sequence the captured targets and the greater their fear, regret, and anger, the more potent the ritual’s effect.

“Note 2: The two main ingredients can be substituted with Gardner Martin’s Beyonder characteristic. His blood and two teeth can also replace the Gray Demonic Wolf’s blood and Forest Hunter’s fangs, respectively.

In other words, Lumian only had one sole missing ingredient: the venom of the Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard. This ingredient hinted at a rare creature. Fortunately, hornbeam essential oil, a common ingredient among mysticism enthusiasts, was already in his possession before he left Trier.

“Alright.” Batna Comté didn’t reject Lumian’s invitation.

The two walked towards a side street off the square, where a bustling open- air market unfolded.

Towering piles of fruits lined the roadside, while stalls brimmed with Golden Leaves straw hats, juicy sugarcane, sweet scones, savory roasted meat, native cigarettes, and fried banana slices. Brownish-black Islanders, foreign sailors, curious tourists, and seasoned

adventurers mingled around barbecue stalls, sharing drinks and laughter.

Two nearby bars, their doors flung open, offered round tables spilling onto the sidewalk, inviting passersby to linger and enjoy a drink.

Batna surveyed the lively scene and cautioned Lumian, “Seems like this is your first visit to the archipelago. Remember, never trust an Islander.

“Their outward deference and meekness mask their true intentions. They dream of swindling our money and selling us for a hefty price. If you lack the strength and intelligence to put them in their place, their evil thoughts will surely be put into action.”

Lumian met Batna’s gaze and chuckled.

“Did they take advantage of you when you first arrived?”

Batna fell silent, avoiding the question.

Lumian didn’t press further. He spent two licks for a small bag of freshly fried banana slices. The crisp exterior gave way to a soft, sweet interior, bursting with flavor.

As he chewed, Batna muttered, “Those are just for children and women.”

How could a grown man, determined to follow in Gehrman Sparrow’s great footsteps, be indulging in fried banana slices?

In theory, at least, I’m still a minor… Lumian mentally dismissed the matter. As they continued through the market, he turned to Batna and asked, “Do pirates often enter Port Farim in disguise?”

“Yes, frequently,” Batna replied without hesitation. “But hunting them here is hardly worth the trouble.”

“Why not?” Lumian raised an eyebrow. “It would be easier to collect the bounty on their heads.”

Batna chuckled and lowered his voice.

“Port Farim’s officials tacitly allow pirates to come here, selling their plundered goods and buying supplies and pleasures in return.

“The pirate trade is a major economic force in Port Farim. Many, including the governor, the local fleet commander, and the garrison head, have amassed wealth through it.”

“As long as the pirates keep a low profile, going after them in Farim is like challenging the local power players. If that happens, you and the pirates risk getting caught, but the pirates might find a way to ‘jailbreak.’”

“Does Trier not have any objections?” Lumian asked, amused.

Outside Trier, people often referred to the Intis government as Trier.

“Who knows? Maybe those who know about the pirate trade are swimming in wealth from corruption. If they don’t, they won’t bother figuring it out,” Batna chuckled. “Either way, pirates are pretty chill in Port Farim and prefer avoiding trouble.”

“Is that so…” Lumian pondered for a moment and said, “If a pirate attacks me, don’t I have the right to defend myself?”

“Yes, but why would they initiate an attack on you?” Batna could sense this guy was trying to provoke the pirates.

“Perhaps they think I’m an easy target?” Lumian replied as he and Batna Comté turned to a nearby bar.

They entered it, choosing to sit inside instead of on the street.

It was equally lively inside, with a mixed-race woman dancing provocatively on the wooden stage at the hall’s center. Her moves synchronized with the music, frequently lifting her legs and following the rhythm. Gradually, she shed her jacket and various layers, revealing ample areas of healthy skin and gentle curves.

As she placed her hand on her undergarment, the surrounding patrons responded with whistles and loud cheers, the atmosphere reaching its climax.

“How about this? In some ways, isn’t Farim more open-minded than Trier? Not only can you see it, but you can also take it away with a sum of money,” Batna remarked with a smile.

Lumian raised his right hand and declared, “This only means that Farim is far enough from the reach of both the Churches and the Trier Avenue du Boulevard.”

“What do you mean?” Batna was momentarily taken aback.

Lumian adopted a pious tone, mimicking a devout believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun. “It’s too far from justice to be bound by the law!”

Seeing Batna’s expression freeze, Lumian smiled again.

“Just kidding! Out at sea, who cares about the law? Might makes right!”

Batna chuckled, relieved. “For a second there, I thought you were about to purify the place in the name of God.”

Taking their seats, they ordered the Fog Sea Archipelago’s famous sugar liquor, Golden Somme.

Eight licks per glass was much cheaper than a Trier.

As the caramel-sweet liquor warmed his throat, Lumian launched into an enthusiastic conversation about Gehrman Sparrow, acting like a devoted follower. He chatted with Batna and even the bartender, drawing them into his passionate discourse.

After a while, Lumian finished his Golden Somme and stood up, drawn towards the central wooden platform where a new stripper had taken the stage.

Batna watched with a knowing smile. He assumed the lad couldn’t resist the allure.

Lumian approached the platform, grabbed two patrons who were blocking his way, and effortlessly tossed them aside. With a powerful push against the platform’s edge, he leaped onto the stage.

Under everyone's bewildered gaze, Lumian drew his revolver, aimed it at the bar's ceiling, and fired.

Bang!

Dust rained down, startling the stripper into a crouch. Patrons panicked, scrambling for cover. Some stood frozen in shock, others glared indignantly or frowned, and a few even sported expectant grins.

What is he thinking? What is he doing? Batna was dumbfounded.

Lumian blew on the revolver's muzzle and flashed a grin at the patrons.

"Everyone, may I have your attention. I have something to ask you."

Chapter 517 - 517 Prominent Merchant

517 Prominent Merchant

Lumian ignored the stunned silence that followed his question. A smirk played on his lips as he addressed the group,

“So, where can a fellow find some mystical trinkets around here?”

Upon hearing this question, Batna Comté couldn’t help but raise his right hand and finish his remaining Golden Somme.

Where did this punk come from?

How could he ask such a question in public?

Even if nobody reported him, they’d only see him as a fool!

For a moment, Batna regretted accepting Louis Berry’s invitation. This fellow would tarnish his reputation by association.

Noticing the odd expressions around the bar, Lumian gave a nonchalant shrug. He holstered his revolver and announced,

“Looks like you’re all just ordinary folk, then.”

With that, he leaped off the wooden platform, navigating through the startled crowd back to the counter.

The two drunkards he’d thrown out, along with the others who had been frightened by him, measured his strength and weapons, choosing not to retaliate.

Back on his barstool, Lumian ordered a Lanti Proof with a grin at Batna.

“Port Farim is certainly more open than Trier.”

Batna studied Louis Berry with an “are you serious?” expression, forcing a smile.

“We must follow Gehrman Sparrow’s career, not his actions.”

Is this fellow so obsessed with Gehrman Sparrow that he mimics his cold, reckless demeanor?

Gehrman Sparrow, at least, had the strength to back up his madness. What about you?

Furthermore, Gehrman Sparrow exudes a cold and indifferent madness, while you are reckless, foolish, and brainless. How can the two be equal?

Lumian ignored Batna’s jab and turned the conversation to the recent surge in pirate activity in the Fog Sea.

After finishing his Lanti Proof, he bid farewell to Batna and headed out. Walking through the bustling open-air market, he made his way towards the harbor.

Just as Lumian returned to the square plastered with announcements, a sudden jolt sent him whirling around.

A male Islander, sporting a half-top hat and a dusty black jacket, approached hesitantly, a strained smile plastered on his face.

“I saw you at the bar earlier.”

“Cut to the chase,” Lumian urged impatiently.

The Islander, his brownish-black skin stretched over a lean face, leaned in and lowered his voice.

“Looking for mystical items, are we? I know just the place.”

“Really?” Lumian asked in disbelief.

“Can’t promise anything, but it’s worth a shot. Just don’t buy

anything if they turn out unsuitable." The Islander's gaze flicked to Lumian's left armpit. "Besides, you're armed and dangerous. Not exactly an easy target for robbery, right?"

"That's true." Lumian contemplated this for a moment, then gave a slow nod. "What's your name?"

"Carmel." The Islander gestured towards a narrow street branching off the square. "Follow me. It's close."

Lumian trailed nonchalantly behind Carmel, their path crossing two streets before they arrived in a district eerily reminiscent of Rue Anarchie.

Crumbling buildings huddled close, new construction jostling for space amidst the narrow road.

Carmel led Lumian into a dimly lit laundry shop, its interior draped with damp clothes. They navigated the maze of hanging garments, arriving finally deep inside the dark room.

There was a door there.

"Disguise yourself first," Carmel instructed, retrieving two hooded black robes from a hook nearby. "Those who dabble in such things prefer to keep their identities secret."

Lumian donned the robe, pulling the hood low over his face. Carmel then rapped on the door in a specific rhythm.

It creaked open, revealing a makeshift living room furnished with an old sofa, threadbare armchairs, and a mismatched assortment of furniture.

Six figures, cloaked in identical robes, sat in various positions, their faces obscured by the shadows.

Lumian politely closed the door behind him as Carmel made a brief introduction.

After the two pulled up a stool and sat down, a man with his hood pulled low leaned forward and whispered,

“I need a Royal Jellyfish’s venom crystal. I can offer 5,000 verl d’or.”

Silence.

The next participant sold a Strange Sea Eagle eyeball he had procured.

Seeing that their discussion was on point, Lumian stood up and surveyed the gathering.

“I need a Sphinx’s brain. Name your price.”

The man seeking the Crown Jellyfish’s venom crystal’s voice was carefully controlled as he replied, “I happen to have one. If you pay me 30,000 verl d’or, it’s yours.”

“How can I be sure of its authenticity?” Lumian asked him directly.

The Strange Sea Eagle eyeball seller interjected in a raspy voice, “I can notarize it for you.”

“Excellent. Let me take a look at the goods first,” Lumian smiled, approaching the seller.

The man replied calmly, “Such a valuable mystical item, you wouldn’t expect me to carry it around, would you?

“I’ll only bring it to you if you pay a 50% deposit first. It’s upstairs. You can follow me and make sure I don’t escape. You can even put the deposit with the Notary for safekeeping.”

“Very reasonable.” Just as Lumian finished speaking, he suddenly lunged at the trader with the speed of a cheetah, a right hook swinging through the air.

Bang!

The man crumpled to the ground, his teeth flying in a spray of blood.

The other participants, including the Notary and Carmel, were momentarily stunned before scrambling for the door.

None of them challenged Lumian's assault, nor attempted to use their powers. Their sole focus was on escape.

Carmel, closest to the exit, flung open the door and bolted.

In an instant, his vision blurred, and he found himself back in the simple living room, alongside two others who had suffered the same fate.

They all looked bewildered, as if witnessing a folktale come alive.

Bang!

A yellow bullet slammed into the exit door.

The hooded figures huddled down, covering their heads with practiced movements.

Lumian spun around, pulled back the trader's hood, and pressed the revolver's muzzle against his forehead.

"Not a bad scam," Lumian said with a smile.

He had orchestrated an impromptu conspiracy, drawing attention with a gunshot in the bar and publicly expressing his need for a mystical item. This allowed him to identify any greedy pirates or local swindlers who might possess knowledge beyond the reach of ordinary citizens, including black market information.

It was also a way to digest the potion.

The seller was a typical Islander, with brownish-black skin, a long face, gentle features, and dark amber eyes.

"I wasn't lying to you!" he insisted anxiously and angrily.

"Really?" Lumian cocked the revolver's hammer.

Before closing the door, Lumian had created a Bottle of Fiction, setting a condition that only Beyonders could enter.

None of the participants had successfully "escaped," which confirmed

the absence of Beyonders.

If you're not a Beyonder, why mention the main ingredient of the Conspirer potion? Just for fun?

The seller trembled and stammered, "I-I'm sorry. We just wanted to scam some money. We-we can't survive otherwise!"

Lumian wasn't interested in their motives. He glanced at the neatly lined-up accomplices and tapped the trader's forehead with the gun's muzzle.

"What's your name?"

"Roddy," the seller replied, swallowing hard.

Another tap to the forehead.

"Where did you hear about the Sphinx brain, Crown Jellyfish's venom crystal, and Notary?"

This information was inaccessible to ordinary people.

"I-I can't say." A sheen of cold sweat appeared on Roddy's forehead.

Confidentiality agreement or other restrictions? Lumian studied Roddy for a few seconds and smiled.

"Then tell me who your master is."

Roddy froze, his eyes widening in fear.

He hadn't expected the other party to be so certain he had a master, that he was someone else's servant.

"Three, two…" Lumian began the countdown.

"It's Sir Morgalla," Roddy blurted out.

"Then take me there," Lumian calmly requested.

Roddy's sweating intensified.

“No, no, I’m Monsieur Fidel’s attendant. The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

“He’s the vice president of the Port Farim Joint Chamber of Commerce.”

Participating in numerous mysticism gatherings organized by Fidel as an attendant? Although he can’t divulge the corresponding information to others, he can use the information he obtained to swindle adventurers? Lumian stood up thoughtfully, dismantled the Bottle of Fiction, and led Carmel and his swindler accomplices out. He interrogated them one by one and confirmed that Roddy was indeed Fidel Guerra’s attendant.

One of the vice president of the Port Farim Joint Chamber of Commerce’s primary tasks was to assist pirates in handling sensitive and illegal cargo.

…

Port Farim, Quartier des Black Pearls, Governor-General’s Office, 16 Rue Coreas.

Lumian patted Roddy, now donned in his red attendant’s attire with gold trimmings and crisp white pants. A smile played on Lumian’s lips as he spoke.

“Tell Monsieur Fidel that I’m interested in purchasing some mystical ingredients and would appreciate the opportunity to discuss it further.”

“Alright.” Roddy yearned to utter a single plea: “If you could kindly remove the revolver from my back, I would be eternally grateful.”

Leaning against the weathered wall of a nearby house, Lumian watched as the swindler nervously entered Unit 16, the four-story gray-roofed building adorned with numerous statues.

The moment Roddy stepped inside, escaping the revolver’s direct aim, his first instinct was to bury the whole incident and forget it ever happened.

But then he remembered the chilling warning delivered by the man who fired without hesitation: a ten-minute silence from Fidel, and Roddy's true colors as a swindler would be painted loudly across the street.

Should I lie and claim Monsieur Fidel is unavailable? But he doesn't seem easily duped. A drastic reaction could be worse… Roddy, caught in a dilemma, clenched his teeth and rapped on the study door.

Fidel Guerra, a man descended from both Intis and Feynapotter blood, possessed curly black hair that had started to show signs of age, dark brown eyes, and skin darkened by the sun. Though once known for his refined demeanor, time had etched its mark on his face, leaving behind a mane of mottled white hair and prominent wrinkles.

Dressed in a crisp white shirt and a brown vest, he quietly sipped his wine as Roddy, trembling with fear, stammered out their confession. He spoke of their ill intentions, of their attempt to swindle the new adventurer.

As soon as Roddy mentioned Lumian leaping onto the wooden platform, firing a shot to attract attention, and boldly inquiring about obtaining a mystical item, the merchant sighed and interrupted his flustered attendant.

"There's no need to elaborate further. Does he wish to see me now?"

Chapter 518 - 518 Merchant's Entrustment

518 Merchant's Entrustment

518 Merchant's Entrustment

Twirling the brim of his golden straw hat, Lumian stopped just outside the office door and met Fidel Guerra's gaze across the desk. Lumian's grin was anything but friendly.

"Made a decision, have you? Faster than I expected."

Fidel Guerra, with his partially Feynapotterian features, turned to Roddy and let out a soft sigh.

"Didn't expect my attendant to be the ringleader of a scam syndicate."

"Maybe the paychecks he receives from you don't quite match the lifestyle he sees on a daily basis," Lumian shot back habitually.

Fidel ignored the jab. He studied Lumian, eyes narrowed.

"So that bar act was all for show? To dupe fools like him?"

"Let's say I'm grateful for their thousand verl d'or donation. Looks like Port Farim's got a bright future for con artists." No shame in his banditry, not a flicker.

Roddy felt a swarm of regret gnaw at his insides.

Fidel nodded and inquired, "What's on your shopping list?"

Lumian, affecting an air of indifference, responded, "I'm in the market for a bottle of Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard's venom."

Isn't it the Sphinx's brain? Roddy, who was listening, was taken aback.

For a moment, he couldn't help but wonder if he was the swindler or the man opposite him.

Clad in a white shirt and brown vest, Fidel contemplated for a moment before offering, "I don't have it in stock, but I can procure it for you. It might take two to three days. As for the price, it varies, usually between 3,000 to 4,000 verl d'or, depending on the seller. Need my assistance in acquiring it?"

"No problem." Lumian, arms slightly spread, replied, "Praise the Sun. You're a gem."

Fidel, suspecting mockery, frowned slightly.

He maintained his composure, stating, "I'm not charitable; I'm a businessman. Why not make a profitable deal? Besides, I find forming connections with adventurers like you beneficial. Given money and resources, certain matters are easier for you to handle."

Fidel, smiling, questioned, "Aren't you concerned about counterfeit goods? How do you confirm authenticity on the spot?"

Lumian, with an approving smile, quipped, "I know you live here. That's assurance enough. The famous merchant Fidel? Gunned down six times in a row for pulling a fast one in a deal worth a few thousand verl d'or. Not the kind of rep you'd call respectable news."

Fidel maintained his impassive gaze on Lumian before a smirk crossed his face.

"Interested in knowing what fate befell those who did?"

"Curious if I've got the nerve to make a move now?" Lumian's gaze narrowed a touch. His smile remained, but it chilled the room in an instant.

He met Fidel's gaze without hesitation.

After a while, Fidel sighed without anger and remarked, "Your

approach reminds me of someone—the legendary adventurer, Gehrman Sparrow.” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Yes, I’m mimicking him,” Lumian admitted candidly.

Fidel chuckled.

“Imitating his madness, then? So, underneath the act, you’re a calm, rational, and cunning individual?”

Lumian shook his head, smiling, and replied, “No. If I don’t imitate him, I’d be even crazier.”

The atmosphere in the study became tense once more.

Fidel, picking up and sipping fragrant black tea from a bone porcelain cup, acknowledged, “You’re quite the young firebrand. Your vigor even makes an old man like me a bit envious.

“How about taking on a commission? It can fetch you a hefty sum and earn you fame at sea, akin to Gehrman Sparrow.”

Lumian, adjusting his golden straw hat, inquired, “What’s the job?”

“Eliminate a pirate, Baronet Black, Class Khizi, captain of the Golden Nepos. The bounty is 65,000 verl d’or,” Fidel stated calmly. “He used to be the third mate of the King of Dusk, Bulatov. Left the fleet, turned to plundering on his own. Four months back, he stole a batch of my goods on Saint Tick Island. It’s likely sold by now. I don’t expect to recover it. I just want him dead. Let everyone know that anyone who touches my goods meets their end.”

Lumian, teasingly, asked, “What if it was the King of Dusk who did it?”

Fidel fell into silence.

After a brief pause, Fidel brushed off Lumian’s question and continued, “I’ll provide you with regular updates on Khizi—his characteristics, strength, ship location, and onshore whereabouts. As a bonus, I’ll throw in an extra 25,000 verl d’or as a reward.

“If you manage to take down Khizi, I’ll expedite the process to secure the full bounty through my connections and help spread your reputation. Everything Khizi owns will be yours.

“So, what do you say? Eliminate Khizi, and you’ll become one of the most renowned adventurers at sea.”

25,000 additional reward and intel support… Lumian thought for a moment and asked with a smile, “How many adventurers have you pitched this to?”

“Seven or eight, all of whom I hold in high regard,” Fidel replied candidly. “There’s no penalty for failure, as long as you survive.”

Inwardly, Lumian mused, So, it doesn’t matter whether I accept the mission or not? He nodded.

“Hunting pirates is the duty of every adventurer.”

With a verbal agreement established, Fidel reached into a drawer, producing a brown paper envelope, which he tossed to Lumian.

Abruptly, he looked up at Fidel.

“Has Khizi been seen in Port Farim recently?”

“Yes, I’m certain of this intel, though his exact hiding spot is unknown,” Fidel replied with a slight nod.

Agreeing to return in two days for updates on both the Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard venom and Baronet Black, Lumian left 16 Rue Coreas and made his way towards the harbor.

Roddy, fearing severe punishment, was surprised when Fidel merely waved him off, instructing, “Go back to your room and reflect.”

“Yes, Monsieur Guerra.” Roddy, relieved, left the study and ascended the dimly lit stairs to the second floor.

Yet, as he walked, a chill overcame him, and he shivered.

The darkness around him deepened, and in the dim light, something

emerged from behind his shadow.

Attempting to cry out for help, Roddy, gripped by terror, found himself forever voiceless.

…

Meanwhile, Lumian didn't head directly back to the Flying Bird. Instead, under the cooling night sky, he strolled towards a street he had recently passed.

There stood a modest cathedral—The Fool's Cathedral.

Having previously spotted The Fool's Sacred Emblem on the bell tower, Lumian had decided to offer a prayer upon his return.

As expected, Mr. Fool's faith seems prevalent at sea. Port Farim, being an Intis colony, boasts several cathedrals. Lumian gazed at the warm light emanating from the cathedral, removed his golden straw hat, and entered.

Inside, Lumian noticed around 20 to 30 individuals, likely homeless, resting at the edge of the wide hall. Some had tattered blankets, while others relied solely on their clothes for warmth.

The Fog Sea Archipelago wouldn't turn these tramps into ice statues this season, but rain lurked, ready to pour at any time. Finding shelter was a coveted haven for these tramps, and The Fool's cathedral offered solace.

Back in my vagabond days, when brutal weather hit or days without food wore me down, I'd roll the dice in the cathedrals of the two Churches. If the bishop or padre was decent, they'd toss a meal my way and a spot to crash for the night. But come dawn, I had to vanish, or I'd end up in those rotten relief centers… Lumian reminisced, found a seat, and started praying.

The Fool's cathedral embraced silence at night. Now and then, folks strolled in, muttered their prayers, and exited. Some wore merchant garb, others rocked a sailor's look, and a few even emitted a faint pirate vibe, but none disturbed the peaceful aura.

Lumian wasn't sure what to pray for. Back when he'd occasionally drop by the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral, he'd just echo bits of scripture in his mind, tossing wishes like coins and hoping for corresponding blessings. What if they actually came true?

Now, he knew such rituals were futile, and he had few desires.

Most importantly, Lumian had only heard clerical teachings about The Fool a few times. He couldn't remember much from the Bible except for the eight Angels and Mr. Fool's authority. But did that matter now?

Recounting his journey from leaving Trier to arriving at Port Farim, Lumian's emotions gradually settled into a sense of tranquility.

"May Mr. Fool bless me. May all catastrophes be resolved. May Aurore be resurrected…"

After about fifteen minutes, Lumian concluded his prayer with a simple wish.

As he stood up, a distant rumble echoed. The cathedral's windows rattled, and the building creaked and swayed.

Lumian raised his eyebrows. Amidst the startled tramps, he walked to the door and gazed towards the source of the noise.

Near the governor-general's office, billowing smoke and flames rose into the sky, casting an eerie glow on the surroundings.

Lumian couldn't help but raise his right hand and stroke his chin. He muttered to himself, This shouldn't have anything to do with my arrival, right?

It seemed something significant had occurred in Port Farim.

Chapter 519 - 519 One Event A Day

519 One Event A Day

The flames of Quartier des Black Pearls danced in Lumian's eyes, pulling him deep into thought. As a Conspirer, his mind instinctively dissected the possibilities.

The Resistance and civil independence factions were easily ruled out —they had no presence in this archipelago, Intis's first far-flung colony. The religious and cultural genocide, along with the assimilation efforts of successive governments, they had tirelessly worked to make it happen. Emperor Roselle's policies had transformed this place into something akin to Intis's overseas province—loose laws and weak security. The Islanders, having abandoned their original faith, now saw themselves as discriminated citizens in the Intis border regions. This discrimination mirrored the plight of Reemians in the south of Intis and Savoyards in the east. Regardless, Trier's citizens held a universal disdain for all foreigners. However, their vigilance heightened against Islanders notorious for scams and thuggery.

Did the pirate trade spark internal strife, or were Southern Continent organizations, seeking to overthrow colonial rule, deliberately causing trouble in the Fog Sea Archipelago? Perhaps some ambitious individual is following the lead of an evil god. Lumian's thoughts raced as he noticed a 2.5-meter-tall half-giant emerging from a room beside the cathedral, dressed in a black trench coat and silk top hat.

Addressing the bewildered supplicants and tramps, he assured them, "Don't worry. The Lord will protect everyone.

"Stay here and don't go out. Wait for the riot to subside. There won't be any danger."

“Praise The Fool!” The believers of The Fool Church found solace, pressing their hands to their chests and bowing.

Their expressions softened, conveying a sense of security.

The tramps exchanged glances, but none dared to leave.

In the minds of most Intisians, a cathedral was a safer haven than any government, regardless of the Church it belonged to.

At that moment, golden sunlight descended into the area where the explosion had occurred, accompanied by a series of dense explosions, though not as deafening as before.

It was evident that the governor-general’s office and the Beyonders of the two Churches were addressing the anomaly.

Simultaneously, Lumian observed the sky, once illuminated by moonlight and starlight, darkening. Despite no change in the weather, the street outside seemed cloaked in a thin, dark fog.

Ignoring the half-giant bishop’s shouts after a moment of contemplation, Lumian opened the cathedral door of The Fool and stepped out.

The temperature outside had notably dropped, akin to Trier’s autumn.

Beneath the gas street lamps’ glow, Lumian retraced his steps back to the port.

Suddenly, a swaying figure emerged from a nearby alley.

The figure, clad in a thin shirt and pants with bare feet, had a pale, wrinkled face.

His eyes were more white than brown, and livor mortis covered his exposed skin.

Zombie? Lumian raised his eyebrows.

As the suspected zombie—an old man—staggered towards Quartier

des Black Pearls, it seemed to detect a hint of spirituality and blood, abruptly turning to Lumian and emitting an inhuman sound.

Lumian promptly condensed a crimson fireball, nearly white, and sent it hurtling towards the zombie.

Amidst the rumbling explosion, the zombie's head shattered, and its body disintegrated. It met its demise once more.

No more movement.

Is that all you've got? Lumian had originally wondered if he had encountered a more dangerous undead creature.

Pressing on, he formed ten to twenty crimson fireballs above his head, behind him, on his shoulders, and at his sides, allowing them to follow his movements and maintain a relative suspension.

As Lumian rounded a corner, he spotted a young couple screaming in terror and fleeing.

Behind them, a zombie pursued, its dark-red heart and white intestines faintly discernible from numerous gunshot wounds.

A nearly white crimson fireball, unleashed by Lumian, flew past the couple and exploded on the pursuing zombie. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Rumble. The charred corpse scattered in all directions, accompanied by residual flames.

The young couple, halted in surprise, stared at Lumian surrounded by ten to twenty crimson, nearly white fireballs. Confusion and disbelief filled their eyes.

"Are you waiting for death?" Lumian cursed as he advanced. "Take the back street and enter The Fool's cathedral."

"Alright, alright!" The young man and woman responded instinctively, as if facing armed police officers or adventurers.

The fireball was clearly more powerful than a gun!

As the couple entered the street where The Fool's cathedral was located, Lumian, resembling an envoy of flames, continued towards the port at a moderate pace.

Along the way, he encountered a few more waves of people emerging from bars, open-air markets, and other places, who had encountered zombies.

Lumian didn't say a word. He directed the crimson, nearly white fireballs around him to help them eliminate the revived corpses. Then, he instructed them to hide in the nearest cathedral.

The zombies' pursuit and the intimidation of the fireballs made his words persuasive. No one insisted on finding their own way.

If there were any, Lumian couldn't be bothered.

After several similar encounters, Lumian began to discern a pattern.

These zombies weren't reanimated from the living; they were originally deceased. The entirety of Port Farim's deceased had risen without any discernible cause.

These zombies instinctively headed towards the explosion site, but if they encountered the living on the way, they'd be drawn by both flesh and spirituality, leading them to pursue, kill, and gnaw.

With this understanding, Lumian no longer advised passersby to seek refuge in distant cathedrals. Instead, he directed them to avoid hospitals, graveyards, and similar places, urging them to stay for two to three hours in bustling bars, dance halls, or houses where no recent deaths had occurred.

After a series of halts and advances, Lumian returned to the port and reboarded the Flying Bird. He continued unleashing the crimson, almost white fireballs until only two remained.

Philip, leaning against the ship's rail, kept his eyes fixed on the governor-general's office.

"What happened?" he inquired of Lumian.

“How would I know?” Lumian replied, amused.

Philip swiftly changed the topic.

“Did you come across any anomalies?”

Only then did Lumian briefly recount the explosion near the governor-

general’s office and the sudden reanimation of the corpses.

“Zombie summoning?” Philip muttered to himself, a frown creasing his brow.

Without awaiting Lumian’s response, he sighed and said, “It was smooth only on the first day of this voyage. On the second day, we encountered Bone Splitter. On the third day, Death Navigators attacked us at noon. By night, or rather in the early hours of the fourth day, another zombie calamity struck in Port Farim… We still have six days until we reach Port Santa…”

Lumian felt a pang of guilt.

In theory, his attraction to or attraction by calamities shouldn’t be so frequent. When he was in Trier, he didn’t encounter mystical incidents every day. If that were the case, 007 would have died from overwork.

Encountering one or two calamities throughout the journey would be understandable, but considering Dardel’s Derangement, it’s truly a daily affair… Could it be that some unclean entity is tailing me? Could it be the cause, the trigger, or the convergence? And is there essentially only one calamity I’ve encountered? The more Lumian pondered, the more he felt the urge to correspond with Madam Magician to investigate if there was an underlying issue behind such frequent calamities.

“Perhaps the zombie calamity was triggered by the initial trouble on the ship. Once we leave the Flying Bird, our subsequent journey might become peaceful,” Lumian casually consoled Philip.

He didn’t hold much confidence in his words.

“Hope so.” Philip spread his arms slightly and prayed devoutly. “Praise the Sun!”

Lumian took his time before heading back to the first-class cabin. He lingered by the shipboard, surveying Port Farim.

The authorities’ silent endorsement of pirate activities in the Fog Sea Archipelago had resulted in a certain level of chaos and misconduct. However, it had also led to a notable increase in the number of Beyonders compared to regular Intisian cities. Swiftly organizing a resistance, they cleared the streets of zombies, minimizing the casualties among citizens and tourists.

Whether pirates and adventurers exploited the turmoil to commit crimes or settle scores remained uncertain.

In less than half an hour, the turmoil near the explosion site subsided. Official Beyonders dispersed, addressing disturbances on other streets.

“Very good. Nothing major happened. They managed to control it in time,” Philip remarked, relieved.

You can say that, but I can’t… Lumian laughed self-deprecatingly.

Only then did Philip feel at ease enough for casual conversation.

“Did you go into Farim for a drink?”

“That’s right,” Lumian replied with a smile. “I happened to receive a commission.”

“What commission?” Philip asked casually.

“Hunting a pirate—Baronet Black.” Lumian didn’t withhold any details.

Philip’s eyes narrowed as he inquired with a frown, “Are you sure you’re stronger than Baronet Black? He has a ship and over a hundred subordinates! Besides, even if you find an opportunity to assassinate him, aren’t you afraid of the King of Dusk’s retaliation? He’s one of the maritime kings!”

“Just because I accepted a commission doesn’t mean I’ll definitely do it. I don’t even know where to find Black Baronet Class Khizi. That’s his name, right?” Lumian didn’t mind the potential repercussions from the King of Dusk.

There were more than one Saint who wanted to deal with him!

Philip observed Louis Berry’s nonchalant demeanor, realizing he had accepted a mission but would reconsider only if there was a chance to complete it. Thus, he didn’t press further on the matter.

The next morning.

As the security supervisor finished breakfast, a subordinate sailor informed him: The governor-general’s office had ordered the port to be temporarily closed, and all ships were prohibited from leaving!

Philip suppressed the urge to stand up and asked in a deep voice, “What are the soldiers at the port doing?”

“Searching ship by ship,” the sailor replied truthfully.

In Room 5 of the first-class cabin, Lumian observed the chaotic harbor where the army had entered and continued writing a letter to Jenna and Franca.

“Something seems to have happened to Port Farim on Saint Tick Island in the Fog Sea Archipelago. Ask that person and see if he knows the exact situation.”

At this point, Lumian raised his right hand and tapped his chest four times—up, down, left, right—like Mr. K. He whispered sympathetically, “Poor 007.”

Chapter 520 - 520 Demon Warlock

520 Demon Warlock

Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 9 Rue Orosai, Apartment 702.

Franca awoke naturally, rising lazily from her bed. Her plans were simple—grabbing a piece of toast, anticipating a heavy lunch.

Lately, the absence of Mirror People leads had made her days relaxed.

Thank the Heavens, thank the Earth, thank Mr. Fool. Lumian, the jinx, has left Trier… Franca muttered in her pre-meal prayer.

As she sipped her milk, Jenna returned and pointed to the coffee table.

“Rabbit Chasel delivered a letter this morning. It’s from Lumian.”

“Letter?” Franca’s eyes narrowed as her relaxed body tensed.

The source of Dardel’s Derangement was still at large. What had happened this time?

“He mentioned an incident in the capital of the Fog Sea Archipelago. He wishes to gather details and hopes you can inquire with your contact among the authorities. I refrained from waking you since you only reach out to that contact late at night, so I opted to read the letter immediately. It seems you can only make inquiries during the night,” Jenna explained concisely.

“How considerate. Lumian, that rascal, would undoubtedly knock on

the door and jolt me awake!" Franca, who had experienced Lumian's disruptive wake-

up calls countless times, felt unusually touched.

She chuckled. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Did something happen to Port Farim once he arrived? Even though it seems unrelated to him, but…"

Franca leaned back slightly and remarked, "What's up with the walking mysticism catastrophe detector?"

Since it wasn't urgent, she planned to ask about 007 in the telegram group later at night. After all, he was an official Beyonder of Trier. It was unlikely he would have immediate information about the events in the Fog Sea Archipelago's capital. If she didn't initiate the inquiry, he might remain unaware.

Franca, with her penchant for instant messaging, set down the bottle of milk and wrote Lumian a teasing reply.

"If you want to know what's happening, investigate it yourself. A walking mysticism catastrophe detector like yourself doesn't need clues or information. Stroll through the streets of Port Farim aimlessly, and who knows, you might bump into the person involved!

"Hey, let's not turn letter-writing into work-related communication, using it only to discuss issues or ask for help. Can't you share the interesting sea tales and details of pirates' bounties?

"Heh heh, ever since you left Trier, everything's been calm and quiet. I can enjoy sleeping in again. Enjoy your sweet revenge. No need to rush back. Give us a heads up if you need assistance…"

Jenna observed Franca thoughtfully as she gleefully filled nearly two pages of the letter.

…

Inside Room 5 of the Flying Bird's first-class cabin in Port Farim, Lumian, confined to his quarters, sneered as he finished reading

Franca's reply.

How many complaints has this fellow received from 007? She's blaming me for the frequent mysticism catastrophes.

Folding the letter, he brought it to Ludwig's lips.

The boy, who had just finished dessert, looked at Lumian and remarked, "I'm not a shredder."

"I thought you eat everything," Lumian replied casually as he lit the letter, watching it turn to ashes in the sea breeze blowing through the window.

Shortly after lunch, Philip knocked on the door, accompanied by four soldiers in blue military uniforms adorned with golden threads.

The officer, holding copies of Lumian and the others' identification documents, compared their faces to black-and-white photos.

"Like you, they came from Port Gati and only arrived last night?" the officer inquired, having confirmed Philip's reliability.

"Yes, I watched them board the ship. We met frequently in the past two days," Philip replied, wisely choosing not to expose the fact that Lumian and the others' identities and information were fake.

Very wise… Otherwise, you'll witness true trouble… Lumian joked inwardly.

If his disguise were to be exposed, he would choose to "teleport" away with Lugano and Ludwig rather than make a scene and reveal the adventurer Louis Berry to the world. Lumian's only devotion to Gehrman Sparrow, ready to hunt pirates when the opportunity arose. In truth, Lumian had no intention of becoming a true adventurer. His purpose for venturing out to sea was revenge!

After confirming Lumian and the others' situation, the officer led the soldiers to the next room, with Philip accompanying them.

Lumian observed that the investigation of the Flying Bird was thorough, yet not overly intense. The officers followed procedures

meticulously without delving into further inquiries.

It made sense. The explosion in Quartier des Black Pearls and the abnormality of the corpses couldn't have occurred overnight. Even if it was an accident, it had been brewing for a while. The extensive impact suggested a prolonged development. Unless the person involved was a demigod, it was nearly impossible for ordinary authorities to trace any demigod-related traces.

This meant the Flying Bird, having arrived in Port Farim only the previous night, likely had no connection to the incident. The focus was on confirming the passengers' identities.

The possibility of a demigod being injured and unable to escape Port Farim was considered, warranting a comprehensive investigation, but there were no suspicious casualties on the Flying Bird.

The officers disembarked after nearly two hours, accompanied by 20 to 30 soldiers. Lumian, now on the deck, approached Philip and inquired, "What happened last night?"

Philip glanced around and lowered his voice.

"I heard from my former colleague that they're searching for Demon Warlock Burman."

"Burman?" Lumian expressed his ignorance.

Having only read a portion of the wanted posters the previous night, Lumian was not familiar with Demon Warlock Burman. His attention had been on maritime kings, pirate admirals, and other significant pirates. Then, he had shared a drink with Batna Comté.

"He's a wanted adventurer," Philip explained with a sigh. "Before I left the Fog Sea fleet, he was still normal. He chased bounties and treasures and met his wife, Helen, a female adventurer. Later, Helen died in an accident, causing Burman to go crazy. He wanted to revive his wife and did many things—both good and bad attempts.

"He mercilessly orchestrated the destruction of a 300-person town to fulfill the conditions for a resurrection ritual. He organized gatherings of evil Warlocks, aiming to use the lives of others, especially

newborns, for cruel and bloody witchcraft to revive Helen. These events pushed his bounty to surpass Bone Splitter Basil, reaching 600,000 verl d'or."

In his quest to resurrect his wife, he was driven to become a cruel and cold Demon Warlock? Lumian suddenly sighed.

If Madam Magician hadn't found him back then, if Mr. Fool hadn't offered a glimmer of hope, and if the Tarot Club hadn't arranged for two formidable Psychiatrists to provide treatment, would he now resemble Burman and carry a Demon-prefixed moniker?

Moreover, simply treading the path of boons would expedite his growth. With Termiboros's aid, he could reach Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator within a few months. The obliteration of a 300-person town held the potential to elevate him to a Circle Inhabitant.

"600,000 verl d'or is nearly on par with Vice Admiral Black Tide Holle Sassen, who has the lowest bounty among pirate admirals," Lumian remarked, drawing a comparison.

Vice Admiral Black Tide was a great pirate who had only gained fame in recent years. His bounty was 700,000 verl d'or.

Philip fell silent for a moment before adding, "Burman might not be weaker than Holle Sassen, but he doesn't have his own fleet. He's always alone and occasionally collaborates with those evil Warlocks. This allows him to escape authorities' encirclements and successfully infiltrate towns adorned with his wanted posters."

From Philip's description, Lumian gathered that Demon Warlock Burman possessed diverse abilities, excelling at disguises.

With the elegance of a true Warlock, Burman combined it with mastery over the power of the dead, whether acquired through resurrection research or inherent in his original Sequence's contradictory description of both "comprehensive" and "specialty skills."

…

The port blockade left the Flying Bird stranded in Farim, delayed

from its scheduled departure.

At 4 p.m., Lumian found himself with nothing to do. Sporting his new golden straw hat, he disembarked from the ship, where passengers and sailors could now freely move. Once more, he stepped into Port Farim.

He planned to investigate the scene of last night's explosion. Perhaps he could unearth some clues.

What lay in ruins was a hospital. Nearly half of it crumbled, unveiling a massive pit leading underground. Corpses littered the remaining structures, amidst fresh blood and humanoid shadows charred by the blast.

With the ban lifted, numerous adventurers flocked to the site, seeking answers. Lumian blended into the crowd, discreetly observing.

"Louis, you're here too?" Suddenly, Lumian recognized a familiar voice.

It was Batna Comté, armed with a substantial revolver and an exquisite rapier. Meticulously groomed, he looked sharp and sophisticated.

"That's right," Lumian replied with a smile. "As an adventurer, how can I miss the grand occasion of pursuing the Demon Warlock?"

Our main goal is to gather clues for a reward… Batna muttered under his breath.

As he investigated the battle remnants for leads, he casually inquired, "Did you come across those resurrected corpses last night?"

"I did. Besides being a bit eerie, there's nothing noteworthy about them," Lumian boasted.

Batna glanced at him and suddenly smiled.

"Anything unusual happened to you after leaving the bar last night?"

Lumian replied nonchalantly, "I ran into a few swindlers and walked

away with a small fortune."

A small fortune… Batna was taken aback.

He suddenly recalled Louis Berry's actions at the bar and his words: "Perhaps they think I'm an easy target?

Chapter 521 - 521 Guidance of Fate?

When Batna turned his gaze back to Lumian, there was a discernible shift in his eyes.

The mimicry of Gehrman Sparrow and the apparent recklessness that characterized this guy seemed all too contrived. Beneath the facade lurked cunning and a hint of sinister intent!

Anyone falling for his act was in for a world of trouble!

Lumian chose not to dwell on how he'd managed to swindle a small fortune out of the swindlers. Instead, together with Batna, he meticulously surveyed the aftermath of the explosion, scrutinizing every detail.

Regrettably, even the official Beyonders, armed with their diverse Sequences and synergistic combinations, were at a loss, let alone the duo lacking any proficiency in divination or prophecy.

Batna absentmindedly ran his fingers over the finely crafted rapier hanging diagonally at his waist, letting out a sigh.

"I know it's a long shot, but I can't resist coming here, wasting my time. It's not about the bounty. What adventurer doesn't dream of overnight fame?"

Hunting down the Demon Warlock Burman wasn't the only route to fame. Assisting official Beyonders in tracking this wanted criminal, whose bounty rivaled that of a pirate admiral, was a noteworthy feat in itself.

"Wasn't your primary motivation to gather clues for the money?"

Lumian inquired, a playful smile on his face.

“Uh, well, that’s a secondary motive,” Batna awkwardly defended himself.

Suddenly, he had a realization.

He never explicitly mentioned that his investigation aimed at accumulating clues for monetary gain. He merely thought about it!

Can he read my thoughts, or is he just bluffing? Batna scrutinized Lumian with a perplexed expression.

Lumian chuckled.

“Don’t let your thoughts betray you. If you cross paths with a Spectator, your secrets won’t stay hidden.”

Batna instinctively lifted his right hand and touched his face.

Is my expression management that bad?

He vented his frustration with a muttered curse, “With the scene in this level of chaos and no traces left on the nearby streets, unless a deity blesses me, or I’m imbued with luck, finding any clues is like searching for a needle in a haystack… How about we grab a drink instead?”

Luck… Finding clues doesn’t necessarily hinge on good luck; bad luck could work just as well… Lumian’s heart stirred as he pulled a bandage from his pocket and calmly wrapped it around his eyes.

Batna Comté, utterly bewildered, couldn’t help but ask, “What on earth are you doing?”

“Blindfolding. Relying solely on instinct to navigate the nearby streets eliminates external influences and unleashes the full force of luck,” Lumian explained with a chuckle. “Perhaps today, luck is truly on my side?”

According to Franca, a mystical catastrophe detector like him didn’t need conventional clues or intel; he might just stumble upon the

person involved while strolling around.

In that case, Lumian decided to follow the whims of fate this time.

If he succeeded, he could use the Demon Warlock or related clues to claim a handsome bounty. If he failed, it would prove Franca's words to be nothing but baseless slander.

Batna couldn't help but wonder if Louis Berry had lost his mind. "Can you really do that?"

"There's no harm in trying," Lumian replied confidently, blindfolded and ready to step onto the street.

After a few paces, he abruptly halted.

Blindfolding, he realized, was useless for Hunters.

The path he had taken and the scenes he had observed while searching for clues were vividly etched in his mind, meticulously arranged according to their real-world locations.

Essentially, he possessed a high-definition mental map of the surrounding streets, allowing him to reach shops and buildings with uncanny precision.

With a Hunter's exceptional control over their body and direction, even without sight, coupled with heightened senses of smell and hearing, Lumian couldn't help but conclude that relying on the whims of fate was redundant.

After a moment of contemplation, he began to ponder his next move freely.

Demon Warlock Burman's elusive escapes hints at special abilities or possessions granting him such freedom…

Can he "teleport" away like me, alter his appearance and height at will, or perhaps even disguise himself as someone of a different gender?

Despite numerous bloody and cruel experiments, Burman has evaded

capture, suggesting conventional methods and thinking wouldn't suffice…

Can I change my mindset and let him take the initiative to appear?

Yes, if we can't find him, we can make him come to us…

His primary concern is resurrecting his wife, Helen. If I can fabricate a few cases of resurrection or discuss resurrection at certain mysticism gatherings and provide verifiable mysticism knowledge in related domains, this Demon Warlock might very well follow the clues I left behind…

However, this plan faces two challenges. The official Beyonders might have attempted similar schemes, and Burman, being cautious, could see through them. Additionally, the time needed for setup and waiting could be weeks or even months, a luxury I lack in Port Farim… I can only weave the plan gradually into mysticism gatherings and bar conversations, occasionally revealing "secrets" to make it more realistic and my motives less apparent…

Lost in his thoughts, Lumian relied on Batna Comté for occasional support, preventing mishaps during their walk. When Lumian had a complete albeit time-consuming plan, he stopped, removed the bandage covering his eyes, and smiled at Batna.

"Where are we? My intuition says there might be clues about the Demon Warlock hidden here."

"It's a regular street with regular houses. The residents seem wealthy and powerful," Batna replied helplessly.

Lumian finally caught sight of the evening sun.

As Lumian adjusted to the evening sun, his eyes narrowed, and his heart quickened.

Although unfamiliar with many streets in Port Farim, his instinctive journey guided by fate had led him to a familiar place: 16 Rue Coreas!

The adjacent grayish-brown building, adorned with a sculpted outer

wall, belonged to Fidel Guerra, the prominent merchant. Lumian had reserved Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard venom here last night and accepted a commission to hunt down Black Baronet Class Khizi!

“Temiboros, are you behind this?” Lumian’s immediate instinct was to question the Inevitability Angel sealed within him.

Termiboros remained silent, leaving Batna, standing beside Lumian, puzzled. He couldn’t fathom who Louis Berry was addressing.

If Termiboros didn’t intentionally lead me here, then something in Fidel Guerra’s house is aligning with my fate. Is it an item related to the Hunter pathway or connected to an evil god? Or could the clues to Demon Warlock Burman’s whereabouts truly be found at Fidel’s residence? Lumian’s mind raced as he rapidly considered a series of possibilities.

Staring at Fidel’s building, he evaluated the likelihood of the Demon Warlock’s presence.

Burman, engaged in numerous resurrection experiments, likely struggled to complete his preparations alone. Snatching various resources would draw the attention of both official Beyonders and pirates who sought his capture. Only the assistance of other evil Warlocks could provide him with the necessary help.

If a well-connected merchant like Fidel supported him in secret, Burman wouldn’t face difficulties obtaining experimental materials…

For Fidel, with a Sequence possibly not high enough, having a Demon Warlock reliant on him for covert protection is undoubtedly advantageous.

Considering Fidel’s clandestine business, vulnerable to attacks from powerful pirates or adventurers, having a Demon Warlock at his disposal makes sense.

In case of future conflicts with authorities, the Warlock could shield him, enabling a change of identity and a fresh start in another city or country. According to Aurore’s insights, such individuals often maintain fake identities and reserve assets in multiple places…

Last night, soon after I met Fidel, a mishap occurred involving the Demon Warlock's failed experiment…

Lumian averted his gaze. Lumian increasingly suspected that the merchant, Fidel Guerra, had motives to shield Demon Warlock Burman.

Of course, if Termiboros intentionally guided him here, the situation would only become more complex and serious.

"What are you looking at?" Batna inquired, following Lumian's gaze to 16 Rue Coreas.

"I met Fidel Guerra, a prominent merchant, here last night and received a commission from him," Lumian replied candidly.

"What commission?" Batna asked with curiosity.

Lumian responded with a smile, "Hunt the captain of the Golden Nepos, Black Baronet Class Khizi."

"Is the rumor true that Black Baronet Class hijacked Fidel's shipment? Fidel hired numerous adventurers to deal with Black Baronet…" Batna enlightened before lowering his voice. "Don't tell anyone about this."

"Why?" Lumian inquired with a smile.

Batna, stroking his neatly trimmed stubble, whispered, "These bounties and commissions don't necessitate actual acceptance, nor do they require success."

"Yes, if word gets out that an adventurer plans to hunt a pirate, and they're not too far apart, revenge from said pirate is inevitable. It's both a punishment and a warning.

"Baronet Black is a notorious pirate. If he catches wind that a newcomer like you is taking on a mission to hunt him and is spreading the news, do you think he'll take offense? He might track you down and use your demise as a lesson for other adventurers and Fidel."

Baronet Black is indeed in Port Farim… Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

“That’s a smart approach.”

Smart? Batna was momentarily taken aback.

In the evening, at a bar, Lumian, Batna, and the others had been reveling for nearly two hours, filled with joy and excitement.

Suddenly, Lumian lifted his glass and descended from the barstool to the floor. Addressing the adventurers and ordinary patrons around him, he declared, “Everyone, remember my name, Louis Berry!

“I’m on the brink of fame. I’ve accepted a commission from the prominent merchant, Fidel. My objective is to track down Black Baronet Class Khizi!

“When I succeed, the name Louis Berry will echo across the Five Seas!

“When that time comes, you’ll proudly say you shared a drink with me!”

Ah… Batna froze on the barstool.

It felt like witnessing Louis Berry once again leaping onto the wooden platform and firing his gun the night before.

The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Chapter 522 - 522 Excellent Scheme

Amid the bustling scene, Lumian relished his drink until the clock neared midnight. Exiting the bar with Batna, they stepped onto the street, where the once-warm sea breeze had turned chilly.

Batna hesitated before asking, “Do you seriously plan to go after Baronet Black?”

Hadn’t Louis Berry’s performance been a repeat of the previous night’s scheme, expecting Black Baronet Class Khizi to come looking for him?

Lumian turned his head, his green eyes devoid of any signs of intoxication. “Otherwise? If he doesn’t seek me out, where am I supposed to find him? Sneak onto the Golden Nepos and take on their entire ship solo?”

Fair point… Batna conceded that Louis Berry’s logic had merit.

Once Black Baronet made land, he would likely disguise himself, making him hard to track. At sea or on his own boat, a lone adventurer would find it nearly impossible to take him down. Even lions feared a wolf pack. Moreover, among the wolves, aside from Class Khizi, there were a few heads with Beyonder powers.

Batna had to admit that every head was no less formidable than himself.

After a brief pause, Batna sensed something amiss and blurted out, “Are you sure you can handle Baronet Black and the two or three helpers he might have?”

Lumian's lips curled into a smile.

"Every adventurer who comes to sea dreams of following in Gehrman Sparrow's great footsteps."

It wasn't the first time he said this, but the tone was different. This time, Batna detected a calm and serious demeanor.

Is he for real?

Is he sly and cunning or just plain reckless?

At that moment, Batna had to reconsider his understanding of Louis Berry.

There was a method to his madness, a trap meticulously laid out, but the aspirations and strategies were impractical. What struck Batna most was that Louis knew it was unrealistic, yet he calmly and persistently pressed on to realize his grand dream.

How to describe this guy? Batna couldn't find the right words.

At that moment, Lumian had already reached the open-air market stalls. He dropped 5 verl d'or on fried banana slices, scones, roasted meat, roasted oysters, grilled fish, roasted shrimp, and sugarcane.

"You're still hungry?" Batna asked, surprised.

During their drinking session, they had already ordered fries, fish, meatloaf, and more.

Lumian smiled and replied, "Getting supper for my godson."

Godson? At your age? Batna couldn't quite fathom this guy with a Savoie Province accent.

Maybe it's a trend in the mountainous province for young men to become godfathers?

After Lumian picked up the brown paper bags, Batna exhaled and remarked, "Your plan might not be effective. Adventurers boasting about their exploits are a dime a dozen. They might not consider

your declaration a joke to spread it to others. It's too common."

Lumian smiled and said, "No, they'll spread it like wildfire. In a few days, the entire Port Farim will know that a new adventurer has taken a commission to hunt down Baronet Black."

"How's that possible? You can't control their mouths," Batna retorted subconsciously.

Suddenly, he was taken aback.

"You can't really… control their thoughts, can you…"

Lumian scoffed and tapped his head with the paper bags.

"Use your brain and think carefully.

"They won't want to spread it. Someone will help me spread it."

Batna had an epiphany.

"You want to secretly hire a group of people to help you publicize this matter…"

He paused for a few seconds before continuing, "There's no need for you to hire them. The merchant, Fidel, will help you achieve your goal once he finds out about your act. He has ample resources. But what if he doesn't know…"

"I'll pay him a visit tomorrow," Lumian replied calmly.

It's meticulous and feasible. It's like iron chains, all interconnected… The more Batna thought about it, the more he realized that every detail of this plan had been considered, but overall, it exuded a sense of madness.

After a while, he instinctively assessed, "If Baronet Black leaves the Fog Sea, it might take months for him to hear the news. If he happens to be in Port Farim, perhaps he'll find out in two or three days."

Port Farim had a population of just over 100,000, including tourists. It might not even be comparable to a quartier in Trier. More people

were scattered across Saint Tick Island's plantations and the Andatna Volcano Mines.

"I hope he's in Port Farim," Lumian said with a satisfied expression as he strolled through the night.

Batna fell silent, unsure of what to say.

Returning to the Flying Bird, Lumian entered Room 5 of the first-class cabin and found Ludwig enjoying the supper he had left for him. He placed the brown paper bags on the dining table.

The aroma of fried ingredients and barbecue filled the air.

Ludwig looked up in surprise before quickly devouring the food Lumian had brought back.

Lumian settled into a nearby recliner, rocking gently.

Finally, Ludwig let out a contented sigh and said, "You get tired of always eating cheese, bread, cakes, and crackers for supper."

A person who can even eat live rats raw doesn't have the right to say that… Lumian criticized and smiled.

"This proves that I haven't forgotten you, my godson.

"By the way, how long do you plan to follow me? I've already helped you escape the Church of Knowledge."

Ludwig pondered seriously.

"I'll follow you until I can earn my own living. N-now, I'm still a child!"

That's true. If this fellow doesn't have the money to buy food, something terrifying might happen… Also, before I go to the City of Exiles, the Church of Knowledge probably won't allow Ludwig to leave me… Lumian laughed self-

deprecatingly.

“I, an unmarried underage man, have to support a child like you for a long time.”

Ludwig muttered under his breath, “Not necessarily very long…”

Does that mean you can recover to the point of supporting yourself within this year or next? Lumian pretended not to hear Ludwig’s muttering and gestured towards the servants’ quarters with his chin.

“Has that guy been acting okay?”

Ludwig, acting as a spy, asked in confusion, “For Intisians, is flirting with women on the deck and in the bar under the pretext of attending to patients considered okay?”

“Yes.” Lumian sighed helplessly.

You Intisians.

…

The next afternoon, amid rumors of the port closure possibly ending the following morning, Lumian disembarked from the Flying Bird and headed straight to Rue Coreas in Quartier des Black Pearls to pay an early visit to the prominent merchant, Fidel Guerra. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

The previous evening, Lumian had received a letter from Franca, delivered by Jenna’s Rabbit Chasel. The explosion in Port Farim matched Philip’s intel, but there were more details.

By the time official Beyonders reached the scene, Demon Warlock Burman had already vanished.

Facing an undead monster made of limbs and corpse fragments, capable of awakening the deceased in Port Farim, official Beyonders had their hands full.

The hospital suffered casualties—patients fell victim to the monstrous horror…

In Fidel Guerra's study, Lumian met the man—a blend of Intis and Feynapotter blood, smoking a cigar with a grin.

"Did you come here because of the smell? I just received the Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard venom."

Just obtained? I'm afraid it's been here all along. Considering my earnest efforts to draw out Baronet Black and fulfill your request, you're not suggesting you haven't secured the goods… Lumian ventured a guess, a smile playing on his lips.

"Seems luck's smiling upon me. How much?"

"3,800 verl d'or. My cut isn't much," Fidel replied sincerely.

Lumian didn't negotiate. He produced a stack of banknotes and tallied out 3,800 verl d'or.

Observing this, Fidel signaled an attendant and gave instructions.

Soon after, the attendant returned, carrying a brown glass bottle.

Fidel directed the attendant to take the money and hand over the goods while he kept a distance of roughly ten meters from Lumian. "Metal containers won't do. The venom's potency can be affected by corrosion."

Lumian nodded subtly, casting a glance at the brown glass bottle before stashing it away in his pocket.

After the attendant departed, Fidel grinned once more.

"I heard you replicated your act from the night before at the bar last night?"

This influential merchant showcased his well-informed nature.

"Indeed, we must employ effective strategies repeatedly," Lumian tacitly concurred.

Fidel nodded.

“I appreciate a sharp young man like you. I’ll help disseminate your message and ensure Class Khizi hears it promptly.

“Heh heh, the adventurers I assigned to this task previously were far too risk-

averse.”

“No problem. That’s precisely why I’m here today,” Lumian mentioned before making his way to leave.

After a few steps, he abruptly halted, turned around, and spoke thoughtfully, “Do you think Demon Warlock Burman is hiding here?”

Fidel was taken aback.

“What are you talking about?

“What does the Demon Warlock have to do with me?”

“Not much. Just a wild guess,” Lumian replied with a smile. “Rue Coreas is very close to where the explosion occurred last night, and your establishment is quite suitable for hiding.”

Without waiting for Fidel’s response, he took another step and casually exited the building.

Fidel observed Lumian’s departure, furrowing his brow in confusion. He couldn’t fathom why Lumian had uttered those words.

…

In the deep of night, the sound of waves echoed in the distance, and the Flying Bird swayed gently.

Lumian reclined on the bed in Room 5 of the first-class cabin, enveloped in a velvet blanket. His eyes shut tight, breathing deep, he was sound asleep.

Suddenly, a dark cloud materialized outside the window, obscuring the crimson moon and stars in the sky.

The room, draped in curtains, plunged into darkness. Even looking at one’s hands, one could barely discern five fingers.

Within the shadows, something seemed to stir to life.

Chapter 523 - 523 Eye of Illusory

523 Eye of Illusory

A lanky shadow emerged from the shadows in translucent form. Swiftly, it lunged at Lumian, as if eager to claim a new host.

Resembling the possession of Wraiths and evil spirits, this entity sought control but lacked the speed to complete the process in a mere blink.

In an instant, Lumian, previously dormant, transformed into a shadowy figure, melding seamlessly with the darkness, leaving the bed bereft of his presence.

This marked the manifestation of his newly contracted skill—Shadow Transformation!

An eerie hush enveloped the room, dominated by the tall, translucent shadow, erasing any trace of Lumian or his unseen assailant.

Suddenly, the darkness rifted, revealing a decaying, skeletal python oozing yellowish-green pus.

Empty-eyed, its fangless mouth resembled a vortex, emitting a hurried, piercing sound. A suction force tugged at the surrounding shadows, drawing them in.

It seemed like an undead creature, a specialist in consuming shadows and shadowy creatures.

Room 5 of the Flying Bird's first-class cabin's master bedroom assumed an otherworldly tableau. Despite the lingering dim light, shadows dissipated, leaving everything cloaked in pure darkness.

In due time, Lumian emerged from the shadows, resuming his human form against the backdrop of a lush carpet and an exquisite wardrobe.

Simultaneously, a towering figure materialized—a knight adorned in tattered black armor. Pale flames flickered in its eye sockets, putrid liquid seeping from the armor's crevices, with only sticky flesh clinging to its exposed skin.

With a broadsword raised, the dead knight advanced, slashing at Lumian, as if poised to shatter both bed and wardrobe.

Lumian's agile form shifted, maneuvering from facing the Death Knight, the Shadow-Swallowing Python, and the looming tall, thin shadow to flank them all.

Crash!

The broadsword of the Death Knight cleaved through the wardrobe, sending fragments flying. Lumian, reacting swiftly, crouched down, clenched his fists, and struck the heavy brownish-yellow carpet.

From the center, a multitude of crimson, nearly white flames burst forth, consuming every inch of the room. The inferno devoured the three undead entities suspected to be from the spirit world.

Rumble!

Within the roaring flames, fireballs materialized and shot out from Lumian's form.

They homed in on the Death Knight, the Shadow-Swallowing Python, and the lanky black shadow, or recklessly engulfed the sizable bedroom.

Rumble!

The crimson, nearly white fireballs detonated consecutively, tearing apart the three undead beings, pulverizing the bed, desk, and other furnishings. Pungent smoke billowed from the scorched carpet.

In this explosive turmoil, any entity lacking pure ethereality or

possessing partial corporeality faced inevitable destruction in the confined space. The once steel-clad armor of the Death Knight crumbled instantly, and the Shadow-Swallowing Python fractured into a multitude of burning remains.

Though the lanky shadow fared relatively better, it too succumbed to the engulfing flames, dwindling in substance.

Rumble!

Although the Flying Bird boasted a steel structure, the impact of such force—

reminiscent of multiple cannons targeting a confined space—inevitably took its toll on Room 5 of the first-class cabin. Strangely, only cracks marred the inner wall, with neither the wall nor the door fully giving way.

However, the formless barrier enveloping the area shuddered violently, on the verge of disintegration.

As shockwaves rebounded from the walls, doors, and ceiling, Lumian, the catalyst of the explosion, suffered as well. It was akin to being struck repeatedly by a massive hammer, with his vision clouded by golden specks and a metallic taste of blood in his throat. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The air, instantly devoured by flames, left him with a suffocating sensation.

Amidst the tumultuous flames, a figure emerged from the darkness, standing near the window, adorned in a black robe with a loose hood. Numerous wounds marked his body, testament to the explosive waves and engulfing flames, leaving charred imprints.

Lumian observed that the man's once fine hairs had transformed into pale- white, nearly indistinguishable feathers. Some were charred, emitting a dark dense fog instead of thick smoke.

Rather than the usual red blood, a thick yellowish-green hue oozed from the wounds.

Under the raised hood, Lumian discerned a pale-white face and a few ulcers reaching down to the bone. Vague traces of pale-white fur adorned the wounds.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian locked eyes with his opponent, who sported cold flaxen-colored irises. Between the brows of the hooded figure, a crack swiftly widened, revealing an illusory vertical eye with a deep purple border that almost verged on black. Devoid of eyelashes or pupils, it seemed to harbor countless pale-white patterns.

This peculiar vertical eye instantly mirrored Lumian's figure.

His initial intention to "teleport" behind the hooded man and employ the Spell of Harrumph met an abrupt freeze.

The impact resonated at the spiritual level.

It was akin to Lumian's Soul Body losing the protective shield of his physical form and standing exposed to scorching sunlight. Instinctively, fear, stiffness, and lethargy gripped him.

Ordinarily, humans explored the spirit world through Astral Projection, rarely detaching their Soul Body—the core of their soul—from their physical being, always shrouded in protection.

The Arbiter pathway's Psychic Piercing bypassed the physical body, Ether Body, Astral Projection, and Body of Heart and Mind, directly influencing the Soul Body. It carried an almost undefendable reputation, affecting individuals to varying degrees.

Lumian suspected that the Spell of Harrumph shared these characteristics.

Within the assailant's dark-purple, nearly black vertical eye, pale-white patterns silently spun, as if seeking the essence of Lumian's Spirit Body.

The sensation resembled being scrutinized by penetrating rays of light, causing Lumian's Spirit Body to quiver slightly, impeding intricate thoughts.

Just as he was about to take the simplest action of sinking his consciousness into the Blood Emperor mark on his right hand, the hooded man emitted a sudden pained groan.

His head snapped back as if struck by a bullet, the once illusory, dark-purple vertical eye now blurry, oozing dark-red blood mixed with yellowish-green pus.

With a pained groan, the hooded figure swiftly turned and soared out of the window, dragged by an unseen force.

Observing this, Lumian didn't hasten to block the escape with Spirit World Traversal. Instead, he raised his right hand and snapped his fingers.

Boom!

At the window, a crimson, almost blinding light erupted, and a violent explosion engulfed the hooded man.

Lumian had set this as a trap.

Before entering a state of "sleep," he had concealed the master bedroom within the Bottle of Fiction. There were two entrances, one by the window and the other by the door, accessible only to beings with superpowers. Both exits harbored delayed explosion fireballs.

Any trigger would unleash devastation.

Amidst the fiery explosion, the hooded man was propelled off his feet, crashing against the window frame. His limbs seemed on the brink of tearing from his body.

Without a moment's hesitation, Lumian "teleported" to the severely injured and unconscious man, harrumphing at his foe.

Two beams of white light shot forth, striking the target and rendering him completely unconscious.

As Lumian prepared for his next move, pairs of arms suddenly emerged from the darkness at the shattered exit of the Bottle of Fiction.

Some were covered in warts, some decayed to the point of pus overflowing, and some only displayed blackened bones…

These arms seized the hooded man's clothes and dragged him into the shadows, disappearing without a trace.

Observing this, Lumian refrained from an immediate transformation into a shadow creature to pursue them. Instead, he stood his ground, a slight frown creasing his brows.

The assailant shared an uncanny resemblance to Demon Warlock Burman as depicted on the wanted posters, but the non-human feeling was even more pronounced. The details suggested an undying monster rather than a human.

Lumian wasn't caught off guard by Demon Warlock Burman's appearance. It was one of the anticipated outcomes.

He had deliberately voiced suspicions about Fidel's connection with the Demon Warlock in front of him without providing clarity, fostering the illusion that Louis Berry, a bold adventurer with a penchant for conspiracies, was attempting to extort money from the prominent merchant.

Under normal circumstances, even if Fidel had something to hide, he wouldn't act so swiftly. He would likely observe closely for a few days to confirm the situation. Lumian, however, had "offered" him an opportunity this time.

Louis Berry, the adventurer, had made public the commission he accepted to lure out Baronet Black!

In such a scenario, it wouldn't raise eyebrows if he were killed by Class Khizi.

The death of an overconfident individual in Port Farim wouldn't spark trouble or suspicion.

So, why not nip the danger in the bud?

Even if Louis Berry's suspicions lacked evidence, they would still draw the attention of official Beyonders.

Lumian's "performance" at the bar the previous night seemed to bait Black Baronet Class Khizi, but in reality, it was bait for the merchant, Fidel Guerra!

If Fidel had no ties to the Demon Warlock, it wouldn't trigger an additional reaction. Lumian merely needed to pursue the superficial purpose of hunting Black Baronet. If there was a connection, he would promptly receive a "response."

To Lumian's surprise, the abilities exhibited by Demon Warlock Burman shared similarities with the few divine pathways he knew, but there were also notable differences!

Chapter 524 - 524 Infighting

524 Infighting

The illusory eye between the Demon Warlock's brows bore a remarkable resemblance to the Eye of Mystery Prying from the Warlock pathway. However, this entity took a unique form, manifesting as a vertical eye rather than the typical manifestation within the eye itself. Lumian had never encountered or heard of such a phenomenon before.

While a Mystery Pryer might experience similar abnormalities as a High-

Sequence Beyonder, it was clear that Burman hadn't reached the Saint level. Otherwise, Lumian would have been the one fleeing, not him. In such a scenario, Lumian might not have been able to escape even if he desired; his only hope would be that the residual aura of the Blood Emperor could momentarily distract Burman, enabling him to "teleport" away.

Considering the authorities' wanted poster, information from 007, and details gathered from Philip and others, Lumian had long concluded that a Demon Warlock like Burman couldn't be a Sequence 4—he certainly wasn't audacious enough to hunt a demigod.

Based on the illusory vertical eye and Burman's diverse, comprehensive abilities, Lumian sensed a true alignment with the characteristics of a Warlock. However, no Warlock's Eye of Mystery Prying resembled this. Not only did it grow between the brows and become a vertical eye, marked with pale-white patterns against a nearly black background, but it also possessed the ability to intimidate others' Spirit Bodies, revealing a perceived "truth."

In that moment, Lumian felt as if he had been stripped of all externalities, leaving only his Spirit Body to resist Burman's. Yielding

or failing would result in fainting or enslavement.

Fortunately, the “truth” on him was beyond the perception of Low- to Mid-

Sequence Beyonders, and Burman was no exception. Before Lumian could activate the Blood Emperor’s residual aura, the Demon Warlock suffered a backlash, nearly incapacitating him. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Moreover, Burman’s command over the undead and the protection he received after fainting surpassed typical Warlock capabilities. Even if others could achieve similar effects with learned or invented spells, it wouldn’t be to that extent, let alone so effortlessly.

Which evil god’s pathway is this? Or has Burman, a Warlock, been corrupted and acquired abnormal traits? That would explain the non-human details on him. After conducting so many resurrection experiments, he wouldn’t lack the kind that sacrifices to evil gods…

The illusory vertical eye was undeniably powerful and bizarre. I couldn’t withstand it head-on. Were it not for the protection of Mr. Fool’s seal, Termiboros, and the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor —all surpassing my current level—I might have met my demise at Burman’s hands. Lumian’s thoughts raced as he quickly made a guess.

Seizing this moment to counteract the impact of the explosion, he retrieved the golden straw hat from his Traveler’s Bag and placed it on his head before disappearing.

Lumian “teleported” to 16 Rue Coreas, the entrance of Fidel Guerra’s opulent residence.

While Demon Warlock Burman had the means to escape, the same couldn’t be said for this prominent merchant!

If Burman had been in good condition when he fled, Lumian worried that he might return out of professional courtesy and rescue his employer. However, since Burman had been rendered unconscious and taken away by some undead creature, he wouldn’t be returning to 16 Rue Coreas. He wouldn’t even after waking up either. The more

time passed, the more likely Fidel Guerra's house would become a trap for the Demon Warlock.

Hence, Lumian still had time to ponder Burman's Sequence and the non-

human issues he exhibited.

His deliberate delay served a purpose.

If Demon Warlock Burman were to wake up promptly and flee with his employer, Lumian's calculated delay of a minute or two would ensnare both of them.

Standing at the entrance of 16 Rue Coreas, Lumian's brow furrowed slightly.

As a Hunter, he detected a faint scent of blood emanating from inside the house.

After a moment of consideration, Lumian gently pushed open the dark-blue door.

It was unlocked.

The door bore splatters of fresh blood that hadn't fully congealed. It seemed as though someone in a panic had sought refuge here, unlocking the door just before being pursued and torn to pieces.

However, there were no remnants of the corpse to be found.

Lumian halted at the doorway, listening intently. The entire house remained eerily silent.

Did Fidel act swiftly, eliminating those in the know and relocating to safety before Burman could strike me down?

In such a scenario, if Burman's operation proved successful and he uncovered the reasons for my suspicions and if there were others privy to the information, Fidel could use the pretext of a late-night attack by Black Baronet and other pirates, where he nearly lost his life. Escaping wouldn't have been easy before returning here.

Alternatively, he might vanish forever, adopting a new identity to embark on a fresh business venture… Lumian pondered this mystery as he navigated past the blood-stained area at the entrance, intending to search the house for clues. His goal was to uncover the exact relationship between Fidel Guerra and Demon Warlock Burman.

Leaving the door slightly ajar, he proceeded towards the staircase, the scent of blood lingering in the air.

Perhaps sensing his approach, heavy footsteps suddenly echoed.

Amidst the rhythmic sounds of footsteps, a figure emerged from the basement, coming into Lumian's line of sight.

It wasn't human, or rather, it couldn't be deemed human any longer.

Standing three to four meters tall, its body comprised fragments from various human corpses. It possessed a mix of feminine curves and masculine traits, sewn together by linen threads, with blood-stained mucus dripping from the joints.

This "person" featured a relatively intact head, with only one source —Fidel Guerra, a mixed-blood Intis and Feynapotter.

The merchant's head didn't align with the body; it was as if a child's head had been placed on a half-giant's neck. Dark brown eyes, vacant yet still filled with fear and confusion, stared out.

Dead? Fidel is dead? Did he turn himself into a monster? Lumian pondered. Just as this thought crossed his mind, the stitched corpse lunged forward, dragging three human leg bones that seemed fused together.

A pale-white flame ignited on the colossal "bone sword."

Lumian's eyes narrowed, and his body abruptly vanished, reappearing instantly behind the massive stitched corpse.

"Ha!"

He opened his mouth and emitted a pale-yellow light.

However, the light struck Fidel's head, failing to disorient him, let alone render him unconscious.

It became apparent that the undead creature was immune to the Spell of Harrumph!

Almost simultaneously, the rapidly running sutured corpse forcefully pivoted, emitting a muffled sound from its throat—a language Lumian didn't understand or a word carrying magical effects.

Lumian's soul trembled, as if cowed by evil and death.

He momentarily froze.

The sutured corpse turned around, advancing with purpose. It raised the colossal "bone sword," burning with pale-white flames, and slashed at Lumian's head.

Lumian, experienced in such situations, mostly stemming from encounters with high-level entities, found the current threat less severe than the consequences of the Demon Warlock's illusory vertical eye.

Just in time, Lumian "woke up," activating the black mark on his right shoulder.

Amidst the howling wind, the colossal "bone sword," engulfed in pale-white flames, struck the afterimage left behind.

This time, Lumian materialized close to the stitched corpse's back, stabbing the Symphony of Hatred retrieved from his Traveler's Bag into it.

With a pfft, the pitch-black bone flute, seemingly fragile, plunged into the stitched corpse's flesh.

The flaxen threads burst open, and chunks of flesh and blood peeled off, revealing a dark-red heart emitting pale-white flames.

Lumian extended his left hand, pressing it against the near-fatal wound. The crimson fireball, nearly white, compressed layer by layer as it was pushed in.

Utilizing the reactive force, Lumian abruptly flew backward, dodging the massive “bone sword” that slashed at him.

Rumble!

In midair, he witnessed crimson, nearly white flames erupt from the sutured corpse, tearing apart the beating heart.

Rumble!

The sutured corpse disintegrated, and the flesh and blood of various humans scattered on the ground.

Bang! Fidel’s head landed in a pile of flesh and blood, the blankness giving way to a pained expression.

“Who turned you into this?” Lumian inquired, glancing out the window, sensing that the explosion would likely draw the attention of the patrolling police.

Fidel’s head opened its mouth, words muffled and filled with hatred.

“It’s—it’s Burman!”

“Burman?” Lumian was taken aback. “Were you infighting?”

Fidel’s head throbbed with pain as his voice trailed off.

“I thought you were testing me. I wanted to observe for a few more days, b-

but he couldn’t wait. He w-wanted to kill you tonight. I didn’t agree, and he killed everyone in the house…

“H-he’s a true lunatic!”

At this point, Fidel’s head lolled, his eyes closed, and he fell silent.

Demon Warlock Burman’s mental state is quite problematic… Lumian thought. Is that why he killed his employer’s entire household? If he really wanted to kill me, he could have acted alone… Lumian had previously considered whether Fidel would think he was baiting him.

For this reason, he deliberately created the illusion that he was baiting Black Baronet to lull Fidel. As for the effect, Lumian didn't care too much. If Fidel didn't take the bait, he would use another method. "Fishing" wasn't the only method in his arsenal.

Unexpectedly, this triggered infighting between Fidel and Burman.

Lumian believed even he couldn't bring himself to do such a thing when his psychological problems were at their worst. That was unless Fidel provoked him, such as pointing out that only a lunatic would believe in resurrection.

Observing the corpse fragments for a while, Lumian noticed no signs of a Beyonder characteristic emerging.

Curse my luck. Burman must have taken it. He shook his head and walked towards the room where the safe might be.

Chapter 525 - 525 Repair Fee

525 Repair Fee

Lumian wasn't sure if he should attribute the misfortune of Demon Warlock Burman taking the banknotes, coins, and gold from the safe to the Symphony of Hatred. After all, he hadn't arrived at 16 Rue Coreas and hadn't utilized General Philip's blackened bone flute. Its abilities likely weren't potent enough to rewind the past.

However, Fidel, living up to his title as a prominent merchant, had numerous wallets stashed in various clothes. Lumian conducted a quick search, revealing a total of 30,000 verl d'or.

This provided a modicum of relief for his "psychological injury."

Upon hearing the arrival of a carriage outside, Lumian left Fidel's bedroom and turned to the adjacent room. He suspected it was the patrolling constables here to investigate the recent explosion.

The room was clean and tidy, yet a faint, uncomfortable smell lingered—the stench of decaying corpses.

Entering the room felt like stepping into a catacomb, surrounded by the marks of his own kind and their deaths, creating an uneasy atmosphere.

This should be Demon Warlock Burman's room. It allows him to protect Fidel in the shortest time possible, heh heh, but he ultimately killed him… This story tells us that the most important condition for choosing a bodyguard is mental stability… Lumian mused as he surveyed every corner of the room.

At that moment, the constables had already pushed open the house's door, revealing spilled blood and scattered flesh.

One of them swiftly drew his revolver, while the other blew a whistle, producing a piercing sound.

Lumian's gaze focused on the blackened marks in the room. The blood, suspected to be old, emitted a sinister aura.

"Burman once killed a special creature in this room to complete a resurrection experiment?" Lumian muttered to himself.

He didn't assume it was Demon Warlock Burman's blood because he believed that the other party wouldn't leave behind such a crucial item when he had enough time.

If a Beyonder skilled in curses obtained it, Burman would be in grave danger unless he had a way to sever the connection in advance.

In contrast, Burman's blood and flesh were more likely to be found in the master bedroom of Room 5 of the Flying Bird's first-class cabin. The Demon Warlock had suffered severe injuries from the explosion and the flames.

Of course, the blanket explosion and subsequent intense combustion might have rendered the ingredients for cursing inactive.

Lumian crouched down and retrieved a glass bottle from his Traveler's Bag. He scraped away the black marks on the wall and stored them inside.

After completing his task, Lumian cleared any potential traces—hair, skin, and other items. He activated the black mark on his right shoulder and vanished from 16 Rue Coreas before more constables and official Beyonders arrived.

Upon returning to the Flying Bird, he immediately inspected the previous battlefield, now reduced to ruins, scattered with charred and shattered remnants. Metal walls bore marks of distortions and minor cracks, remnants of the intense encounter.

The lingering gasses from the burning carpet and items slowly dissipated through the open window.

After Burman triggered the trap at the exit, the Bottle of Fiction had

dissipated.

Lumian focused on examining the windowsill, finding charred remnants.

Phew… Exhaling deeply, he departed Room 5 of the first-class cabin, descending to the deck.

Philip, the security supervisor, leaned against the shipboard, gazing at the night view.

Where's your lover?" Lumian approached Philip, resting his hands on the shipboard. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Philip sighed and replied, "Her destination is Port Farim. Apparently, she was heading to a relative's plantation to assist them."

"Something to celebrate. This means you'll have a new lover," Lumian said, adopting the tone of a Dandyism believer.

"Please allow me to be downcast for another two days," Philip responded, not objecting to Lumian's words but emphasizing his invested feelings.

Of course, it was just a little.

"Did you just return from the port? Why didn't I see you board the ship?" Philip inquired, following his professional instincts.

"I've been in my room the whole time. There was a minor accident at the party just now that set the master bedroom ablaze. Many things were burned. Get someone to fix it promptly tomorrow," Lumian explained, seeking Philip's assistance in resolving the situation. Despite the possibility of staying in the fire-damaged room, Lumian preferred to take action to rectify the situation.

Philip appeared confused. "Party… Ablaze… What did you do in the room? I didn't hear anything…"

Lumian grinned and responded, "A passionate guest made an appearance. Their actions were a bit extreme."

“Really?” Philip inquired subconsciously.

“No,” Lumian admitted straightforwardly. “Do you want to hear the real reason?”

Philip fell silent. After a few seconds, he said, “There’s a need for compensation for such damage. We’ll charge you the repair fee.

“Fortunately, we’re still in Port Farim. We can replenish various items immediately. Otherwise, it would have been quite troublesome.”

Lumian handed over a stack of banknotes.

“This is the repair fee. I hope it can be completed by tomorrow. If it’s too much, consider it a tip. If it’s too little, ask me for more.”

Philip took the money, frowning as he weighed the stack of banknotes.

“What did you do to the bedroom?”

Why is he giving so much for the repairs?

Is this hush money?

Lumian smiled, turned around, and returned to Room 5 of the first-class cabin.

Observing him disappear through the cabin entrance, Philip counted the stack of banknotes under the crimson moonlight and the gas street lamps at the port.

“2,000 verl d’or? Did he blow up that room?” Philip was shocked and suspicious.

But I didn’t hear anything…

That night, Lumian slept in a recliner in the living room.

Initially planning to summon Jenna’s Rabbit Chasel and write Franca a letter about the Demon Warlock, seeking her help with Magic

Mirror Divination to identify the source of the old blood in Burman's room. However, he remembered that Franca might still be awake while Jenna was already asleep.

Patiently waiting until the morning, Lumian set up the ritual using "Rabbit-

shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups" to summon the book-holding transparent creature resembling a rabbit with powerful legs.

Today's Rabbit Chasel, unlike the last time, wore a pair of indistinct gold-

rimmed glasses.

Handing the letter and the glass bottle containing the blood and powder to Rabbit Chasel, Lumian asked curiously, "Why are you suddenly wearing glasses? Is this the downside of knowledge?"

Behind the gold-rimmed glasses, Rabbit Chasel's eyes glinted sharply.

"No, I learned this from a novel given by the Seven of Cups."

"What novel did she give you?" Lumian inquired, having a hunch.

"The last time I helped you deliver a letter to her, she didn't have any other books with her, so she could only lend me one of her newly purchased collections." Rabbit Chasel adjusted its gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of its nose. "That novel is called 'The Adventurer 1: First Show of Strength.'"

As expected, Lumian thought. So, that's why you learned to wear glasses? He didn't know how to comment on this matter.

After Rabbit Chasel left, Ludwig and Lugano woke up one after another,

with the former casting a glance at Lumian's bedroom before eating his pre-

breakfast snacks. Lugano, however, seemed puzzled.

“Was there a fire last night?”

Why don’t I know?

Lumian chuckled.

“It happened while you were engrossed with a certain lady. I quickly resolved it.”

“Is that so…” Lugano reined in his disbelief.

Choosing to explore local delicacies in Port Farim rather than enjoying the ship’s breakfast, Lumian disembarked.

Shortly after, Philip, the security supervisor, arrived with a dining cart.

Standing in the doorway of the charred bedroom, Philip was stunned.

You call this a minor accident?

Even if it was blasted by cannons, it couldn’t be in a worse state, right?

Was he planning to dismantle the entire ship?

Uh, such destructive power actually didn’t affect the room’s exterior. Even the damage to the walls is within repairable limits… I didn’t hear anything either…

What had Louis Berry done in the room last night?

No wonder he gave 2,000 verl d’or!

At that instant, Philip’s blood surged into his brain.

…

In the Sun Square open-air market of Port Farim, Lumian enjoyed a tortilla filled with various fruit cubes and sipped a peculiar coffee laced with salt as he leisurely strolled through the stalls.

Occasionally, he treated himself to a roasted sausage, relishing the sizzling, oily delicacy.

Approaching the end of the open-air market, he encountered Batna Comté.

The well-dressed adventurer's eyes lit up as he approached Lumian and whispered, "Something happened to your employer!"

Curious, Lumian inquired, "What happened?"

He wanted to know how the official Beyonders had publicized this matter.

"It's that Demon Warlock. He killed Fidel's family and all his servants!" Batna's relief was evident; he hadn't been present yesterday and was glad to have avoided potential danger.

The evidence does seem to point toward the Demon Warlock… The authorities must have shared all the details… Lumian smiled at Batna and remarked, "So, everyone at 16 Rue Coreas fell victim to the Demon Warlock?"

"Yes," Batna confirmed with a solemn nod.

Lumian glanced at him and joked, "Remember how I blindfolded myself yesterday, hoping fate would guide me to uncover clues left behind by a Demon Warlock? Do you recall where we ended up?"

Batna was momentarily taken aback before muttering, "16 Rue Coreas…"

Suddenly, he looked up at Lumian in shock and fear.

Chapter 526 - 526 Resolution

526 Resolution

526 Resolution

The destination was Demon Warlock Burman's next target!

Without waiting for Lumian's response, the adventurer mumbled to himself in puzzlement, "Are you a Blessed of luck?"

No, a Blessed of calamity… Lumian replied inwardly.

As thoughts raced, Batna suddenly formulated a new hypothesis.

Could this be Demon Warlock Burman himself?

He had investigated the explosion scene, returning to flaunt his prowess at the crime scene and blindfolded himself to randomly choose the next victim!

Such an explanation seemed far more plausible than being blessed with luck!

Lumian glanced at Batna's Batna's tense expression and smiled.

"Don't tell me you think I'm Burman? How long have I been in Port Farim?"

That's exactly it. Something happened the night you first arrived in Port Farim… Batna didn't dare vocalize it.

"When the Quartier des Black Pearls exploded, I was still praying in the cathedral," Lumian said with amusement, providing an alibi.

Batna pondered for a moment and relaxed, but confusion still lingered on his face.

Lumian sighed and inquired, “Yesterday, I didn’t expect to encounter anything related to the Demon Warlock while walking blindfolded. I just found it fun.”

He spoke the truth.

However, he couldn’t shake the suspicion that the corruption caused by 0-01 might be more severe than he had imagined.

Of course, he couldn’t rule out the possibility that Trier, a seal from the Fourth Epoch, had effectively suppressed the preexisting issues within him.

The excuse of finding it “fun” barely convinced Batna. He felt that Louis Berry was undoubtedly such a person.

Yet, the other party would sporadically set traps just for the amusement of it. Anyone treating him as an idiot would end up becoming one!

“Perhaps I was truly blessed by luck yesterday,” Lumian concluded.

Lumian’s reasoning convinced Batna that Demon Warlock Burman’s continuous evasion and access to resources stemmed from his close symbiotic relationship with Fidel, a prominent merchant. The subsequent tragedy likely resulted from the pressure exerted by the official Beyonders’ investigation, leading to internal strife.

“What a shame…” Batna sighed. “If I had sold the clues about the Demon Warlock’s close connection to Fidel to the authorities beforehand, I could’ve bagged a hefty bounty.”

It would’ve been at least 5,000 verl d’or!

Batna shook his head.

“No, without evidence, the authorities won’t buy it. Can’t tell them we stumbled on clues blindfolded, blessed by luck. They’d just cuff us for being fraudsters.”

A chuckle slipped from Lumian’s lips.

“Can’t you fabricate some evidence to back the clues?

“Say you spotted someone suspicious at Fidel’s back door, maybe the Demon Warlock. Let the official Beyonders confirm it themselves. They’ll uncover the truth in due time.”

“T-That’d work?” Batna’s mouth hung slightly agape.

“Why not?” Lumian grinned. “If you truly found the Demon Warlock, tell them not to sweat the details. Just ask if the clues are legit and if they helped capture the Demon Warlock. If they miss Burman, it’s a small scam at worst. Few days of hard labor for you.”

“Official Beyonders can take tips from adventurers without solid certainty, right? They’d miss genuine info otherwise.”

Lumian’s words left Batna silent momentarily before he blurted out, “Don’t tell me you’ve got Islander blood?”

Deception seemed to be his forte.

Lumian casually replied, “Knew an Islander in Trier, quite the con artist with rich experience and techniques.” New n***o***vel chapters are published on

With a flicker of interest, Lumian raised his left hand, pinching his left eye socket.

Glancing at Batna, he asked, “How long have you been adventuring? Why still so green?”

“Over a year,” Batna defended himself. “It’s just that I stick to the rules with authorities. I’m more adaptable when dealing with pirates and others.”

“Adventurers slipping clues to authorities also dabble in deceit, right?” Lumian grinned. “They scam if they can.”

He suspected Batna’s strict adherence to rules came from a well-bred background, a notion confirmed by the other party’s attire and appearance.

Observing Batna's silence, Lumian finished his remaining salted coffee and glanced back at the lively open-air market.

"Try not to go to the morgue, cemetery, or other places for the time being."

Just as Batna was about to ask why, he instantly grasped the advice's true meaning.

Without Fidel to provide resources, the Demon Warlock might feel compelled to take action!

…

Before long, his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, emerged from the void and handed him a letter.

Franca:

"Based on your latest account and my discussion with 007 last night, I suspect that Demon Warlock Burman had been compelled to switch Sequences.

"He was originally a Warlock, but to revive his wife, he switched to the neighboring Death pathway. He went half-mad, becoming half-human and half-monster.

"Though this could be explained as a Warlock receiving an evil god's boon, your situation doesn't align. No cases of Beyonder powers from two pathways fusing and mutating have been documented. This was evident in your clash with Burman. The Eye of Illusory you mentioned has the Eye of Mystery Prying, revealing the side of reality, but it also displays the Death pathway's suppression of the Spirit Body or even enslavement.

"As far as I know, the Death pathway gains an Eye of Death ability at Sequence 8 Gravedigger. Did it fuse with the Eye of Mystery Prying, forming that distinctive Eye of Illusory?"

As Lumian read, he suddenly recalled the appearance of the Eye of Illusory.

Embedded vertically in his forehead, illusory and blurry, a deep purple bordering on black, with numerous pale-white patterns—undeniably a fusion of the Eye of Mystery Prying and the Death pathway's abilities.

Lumian's gaze shifted downward as he continued reading.

"White feather-like fur, decaying wounds, control over various undead creatures, unstable emotional states, and extreme actions—all indirectly confirming my hypothesis…

"The origins of the old blood are rather peculiar. I've conducted Magic Mirror Divination several times and consulted various entities, but all I've gleaned is that it stems from the depths of the spirit world. No further information. It seems the irreversible half-mad Burman had some other fortuitous encounter."

Unstable emotions… Extreme actions… irreversible half-madness… Lumian mulled over the descriptions and let out an inaudible sigh.

How determined and desperate must Burman have been when he chose to consume the Death pathway potion?

Wild Beyonders didn't know they could switch to neighboring pathways at a specific Sequence. They believed once a divine pathway was chosen, it couldn't be altered. Forced consumption of potions from other pathways led to madness or death.

Moreover, Mystery Pryer and Death weren't adjacent pathways that allowed switching.

Burman wouldn't have drunk the Death pathway potion without a resolve bordering on death, all to revive his wife, even at the cost of his sanity.

Lumian sensed he might have made the same choice in such a situation, hence his conflicting emotions.

Franca's letter ended with reassurance: "Don't fret over the aftermath. Burman's mental state will soon cause him to resurface without Fidel's support and restraint. He might succeed once or twice in gathering materials for experiments, but it won't last. Official

Beyonders will eliminate him within weeks or even days."

Lumian glanced at Penitent Baynfel, yet to depart.

"Help me deliver my reply to the sender."

Swiftly, he penned a line: "I'll kill Burman as soon as possible."

Before long, Penitent Baynfel returned with Franca's reply: "Why?"

Lumian wrote on the same piece of paper: "I wish to punish him for his crimes…"

He paused for a moment before continuing, "And end his pain."

Folding the letter into a square, Lumian handed it to Baynfel and glanced at the messenger.

"Don't you find it troublesome to send letters back and forth?"

It wasn't concern but puzzlement.

After delivering the letter, Penitent Baynfel didn't leave immediately. Instead, he waited for a potential reply.

This time, Baynfel didn't remain silent. He replied in a deep voice, "Being busy makes me feel better. It's better to have something to do than always watch the darkness."

Lumian listened quietly without responding, watching Penitent Baynfel turn and walk into the void.

He empathized with those words.

Franca didn't stop Lumian. Her reply was concise and forceful: "Be careful!"

Phew… Lumian exhaled and walked to the living room window, casting his gaze at Port Farim bathed in the blazing sunlight and the distant Andatna volcano.

Chapter 527 - 527 Immersion

527 Immersion

527 Immersion

Under the sunlight, Port Farim appeared to be tinged with a golden hue, and the air seemed to carry the sweetness of cane sugar.

Lumian lingered by the window, contemplating the whereabouts of the Demon Warlock.

During his rescue the previous night, Burman had slipped into a deep coma, unable to direct the undead creature he controlled. Therefore, the undead being must have relied on its instincts and routines to transport Burman to a safe haven he frequented.

Ordinarily, Fidel's residence would be his top choice. Yet, when Lumian scoured the premises, there were no traces indicating Burman's return.

His initial assumption was that Burman had employed the undead creatures to eliminate Fidel's family, attendants, and servants. Recognizing 16 Rue Coreas as a battlefield and unsafe, they likely sought an alternate hideout.

Where could that be?

From his Traveler's Bag, Lumian retrieved the information Franca had provided about Burman and the rest of the details gathered from Philip, Batna, and the others. He read through it again, attempting to immerse himself in the mindset of the Demon Warlock, simulating his thoughts, actions, and motivations.

Burman hailed from Fog Province, also known as Winter Province, situated in the northern part of Intis. Bordering the Feysac Empire,

the region had relatively rustic folk customs, with a penchant for strong liquor.

His wife, Helen, a Port Farim native without Islander heritage, had a grandfather who worked as a cane sugar merchant traveling between Port Farim and Port LeSeur. Unfortunately, he encountered pirates, losing most of his business and relying on a plantation he had previously acquired.

Born and raised on that plantation, Helen witnessed its sale due to conflicts among her father's generation after her grandfather's death. Her family received a portion of the money and relocated to Port Farim. After her father's passing and her mother falling ill, she became an adventurer and crossed paths with Burman.

Both had experienced fortuitous encounters during their adventures, gaining superpowers. They even acquired property in Port Farim, planning a future away from the adventurous life as they grew older.

Several years ago, they, along with a group of fellow adventurers, rented a boat to explore the seas for treasure. Unfortunately, they encountered sea monsters, and only Burman and two others survived.

Following this tragic incident, Burman's attempts to revive his wife took a progressively desperate turn.

"Treasure hunting at sea? Are there really that many treasures at sea?" Lumian mumbled, convinced that it was highly likely Burman was still in Port Farim.

This place held his dearest memories, remnants of the years spent with his wife, Helen. When selecting a hiding spot, he would instinctively lean towards this area.

With this in mind, Lumian continued reading the latter part of the intel.

As anticipated, Burman's past dangerous experiments had unfolded near the Fog Sea Archipelago, encompassing other islands and the villages and towns along the Northern Continent's coast. If he connected them into irregular concentric circles, the center would be

in Port Farim on Saint Tick Island.

Burman uses Port Farim as a base for resurrection attempts in various places… Lumian pondered. He hasn't stirred trouble in Port Farim before, so why the exception this time? If I were Burman in his half-mad state, I'd treat Port Farim as my spiritual home, a haven of beautiful memories. Typically, I wouldn't disrupt the order here. I might even secretly maintain it and handle some audacious pirates and adventurers on the sly… Lumian analyzed thoughtfully.

He had substituted Port Farim with Cordu. Believing that if his sister's death had no connection to Cordu and the peace remained, anyone daring to disturb Cordu's daily life and alter the situation would be his enemy!

Frowning slightly, he sensed there might be crucial details unclear about the previous night's explosion. There could be a reason why Burman killed Fidel and his family beyond a mere disagreement. Fidel, having collaborated with Burman for years, should have known about his unstable mental state. How could such a shrewd merchant not consider the potential repercussions of his words on the Demon Warlock?

Moreover, Burman aimed to eliminate the adventurer Louis Berry to conceal his collaboration with Fidel. If Fidel was already dead, why silence Lumian?

Perhaps, Fidel had assumed he could persuade Burman to wait a few days before acting, only to find Burman already in a deranged state, driven by instinct.

After careful consideration, Lumian decided to re-enter Port Farim and visit Burman and Helen's former residence.

Even though Burman had sold it long ago to fund his resurrection experiments and it was under official Beyonder scrutiny, there remained a possibility of discovering crucial clues.

What if the mad Burman insisted on returning to his previous abode?

Instructing Lugano to keep an eye on Ludwig, Lumian descended to

the deck and encountered Philip.

The Flying Bird's security supervisor regarded Lumian with a mixed expression. Without mentioning the room that seemed to have been bombarded by cannons, he stated, "I'll distribute the remaining repair fees to the participating workers and attendants."

The implication was clear: "I've already compensated those who need to be silenced."

"You can take a share yourself," Lumian replied with a smile. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Philip shook his head and sighed.

"Not having any more incidents like that on the way from Port Farim to Port Santa would be the best reward for me."

"I'll do my best," Lumian sincerely assured him.

He refrained from making promises, acknowledging factors beyond his control.

He also looked forward to reaching Port Santa without trouble and beginning the hunt for the key members of April Fool's—Bard and Ultraman.

Philip gazed at Lumian for a few seconds, as if contemplating whether to report him in advance.

He sighed again.

"The port lockdown will be lifted tonight. The Flying Bird will set sail again tomorrow morning. Don't miss it."

Lumian nodded and asked curiously, "The Demon Warlock has been apprehended?"

"No, but it's pretty much confirmed that it has nothing to do with the ships at the port. Nor is he hiding here," Philip replied nonchalantly. "Burman even killed the prominent merchant Fidel's family last night. They seemed to be in a cooperative relationship. Perhaps Fidel

wanted to betray him…”

At this point, Philip gave Lumian a sharp glance.

“Last night, the battle in your room—could it be related to this?”

“What kind of connection do you think there will be?” Lumian asked, amused.

Philip pondered for a moment and couldn’t make the connection.

Observing this, Lumian waved his hand and donned his golden straw hat. He descended the gangway to the docks and left the port district.

As Lumian reached Sun Square, adorned with numerous wanted posters, he was approached by an Islander man with brownish-black skin, sunken eyes, and a deep-set gaze. The man handed him a folded book with a plethora of words and crude patterns printed on it.

“Traveler, this is Port Farim’s travel guide. It lists scenic spots, unique delicacies, and sexual entertainment venues,” the Islander introduced with zeal. “It’ll make your stay here more enjoyable.”

Lumian played along and asked, “How much?”

“It’s free! I’ll give it to you for free!” the Islander exclaimed in a high-pitched voice. “The government prints these for tourists, hoping for a positive impression of Port Farim.”

“Awesome.” Lumian accepted the guidebook with an expression of “pleasant surprise” and unfolded it.

The guide detailed scenic views and recommendations from various shops—sugar cane outlets, sexual entertainment venues, renowned eateries, and more.

Suddenly, Lumian swiftly drew his revolver and pressed it against the Islander’s forehead.

The Islander froze, stunned. After a few seconds, he stammered, “No, no charge. I’m not lying!”

Was this minor situation worth a gun being drawn?

I'm going to call the police!

Lumian smiled and inquired, "What's the connection between these recommended shops and you?"

"No…" The Islander felt the chill of the gun and carefully changed his words. "Th-they paid us to recommend them. Some of them are owned by our partners."

"How many are legitimate shops?" Lumian pressed, undeterred.

"90%." Just as the Islander finished speaking, Lumian cocked the revolver's hammer, sending a clear message.

He hastily added, "90% of them are connected to us."

Lumian chuckled, continuing with another question, "What about the scenery?"

"50%. Only the plantations and primitive tribes are connected to us." The Islander trembled in fear.

Lumian shook the travel guide and smiled at the Islander.

"Show me the real ones."

The Islander quickly pointed out different parts, worried that the gun might misfire.

Only then did Lumian stow away his revolver and take the guidebook to the open-air market on the other side of Sun Square.

He had engaged the Islander partly to frighten the swindler and partly because a new idea had struck him.

For Burman, who had resided in Port Farim for many years, were some of the delicacies and scenery here also part of his cherished memories?

During setbacks, when he killed his best partner and faced defeat in

battle, would he, driven by madness and paranoia, seek out places with beautiful memories to draw strength and recharge?

Lumian believed if he were in Burman's shoes, he would have done the same.

Reason might suggest that he could be tracked and discovered, but half-mad individuals often ignored reason.

Therefore, whether it was the moonlit scenery of the lighthouse, the setting sun behind the volcano, Reptow minced pork, Gasparo seafood rice, or Saint Tick chocolate ice cream, all could attract the covert patronage of the Demon Warlock.

In his current state, there was a high chance that he wouldn't meticulously erase his tracks.

Adjusting his golden straw hat, Lumian made his way through the open-air market, heading toward the cliff mountain outside Farim, where Port Farim's lighthouse stood.

Chapter 528 - 528 Treasure Legend

528 Treasure Legend

The crash of azure waves echoed against the cliff's base, creating a cascade of white flowers in their wake.

Approaching the lighthouse, Lumian pondered its rumored history, a relic left behind by the Intisians upon their arrival at Saint Tick Island, his gaze fixating on the distant sea.

The night's crimson moonlight, still hours away, refrained from casting its dreamy glow, rendering the scene quiet and undisturbed by tourists.

Circling the lighthouse reminiscent of Roselle's era, Lumian observed for nearly fifteen minutes, fruitlessly searching for any sign of the Demon Warlock.

He didn't anticipate a direct encounter with Burman; it wasn't yet the time to admire the moon. Lumian simply sought to discern if Burman would visit to reminisce about the past and his wife after waking up last night—a moment of solace to steady his heart and find the strength to persevere.

The lighthouse guardian, with a pipe emitting the aroma of roasted tobacco leaves, offered a friendly reminder, "Kid, there's nothing much to see here during the day. It's a whole different story at night."

Lumian smiled and inquired, "Do people come in the middle of the night?"

"Indeed," the 50-year-old guardian boasted. "Those Trier playboys

love bringing their dates here to bask in the moonlight."

"Any mysterious figures, perhaps someone donning a hood and pretending to be a Warlock?" Lumian pressed on.

The lighthouse guardian's face betrayed a nostalgic expression.

"Sometimes. Thought it was a ghostly silhouette a few times."

"Did such a figure visit late last night?" Lumian queried, a subtle curl forming on his lips.

There was nothing wrong with his speculation from his immersion!

Perhaps his similar experiences allowed him to better understand Burman's mental state and paranoid thoughts.

The guardian replied, "Can't say for sure. I didn't see anything."

Lumian didn't press further. He decided to return in the early morning hours, the enchanting few hours beneath the moonlight.

Over the next three hours, he explored the truly renowned gourmet restaurants in Port Farim. Despite asking similar questions, Lumian obtained no valuable information.

It became apparent that Demon Warlock Burman exercised restraint under normal circumstances, avoiding impulsive actions. He seldom frequented crowded places, and when he did, his disguise was impeccable.

By 4 p.m., Lumian reached Port Farim's modest steam locomotive station. He spent 3 verl d'or for a ticket bound for the Andatna volcano mine.

If he aimed to witness the sunset there, the journey had to commence now.

Woosh! Clunk! Clunk! Clunk! The iron-black carriage belched thick smoke as it lumbered along the railway sleepers.

Gradually, it gained momentum, akin to a colossal giant overcoming

inertia and mobilizing its components.

Seated by the window, Lumian held a golden straw hat, quietly admiring the vanishing plantations.

Shortly before 6 p.m., the train halted outside Andatna's volcanic mine.

Adorning his straw hat, Lumian bypassed the mine entrance, opting for a nearby trail leading to the volcano's summit.

As the greenery dwindled, grayish-black hues prevailed. Occasional red rocks punctuated the landscape.

Approaching the mountaintop, desolation intensified. Grayish-black gravel lay dormant in the hushed wind.

Without the shelter of foliage, Lumian's vision expanded. The peculiar grandeur of this place seemed to embody the vastness of desolation and silence.

Following the tourist-worn grayish-black path, Lumian advanced step by step toward the volcano's mouth, revealing coal-black surfaces with reddish depressions.

The temperature inside was notably warmer.

Unbridled winds stirred, sending grayish-black gravel airborne, causing human forms to sway.

In this spectacle, the nearly setting sun bathed the desolate surroundings in a golden-red glow, intensifying the sunken redness.

Pressing down on his straw hat, Lumian ventured two to three hundred meters along the volcano's crater.

Abruptly, the mountaintop wind subsided, and the suspended gravel settled in eerie silence.

Lumian immediately spotted a figure standing silently on the grayish-black diagonal wall outside the volcano's crater, bathed in the last radiant sunlight.

Cloaked in black robes and a deep hood, the figure attentively watched the gradual descent of the golden-red sun.

Lumian's expression remained unchanged as he advanced step by step, refraining from initiating an attack.

Sensing Lumian's approach, the hooded figure turned around, unveiling a pale-white face marked by decaying wounds and a wide swath of fur.

It was none other than Demon Warlock Burman!

Perhaps influenced by the serene scenery and haunting memories, Burman, known for his madness, spoke wearily, "You've actually found this place."

Lumian, who had been securing his golden straw hat against the strong wind, chuckled self-deprecatingly and responded,

"If not for my illusions and hope, and if I didn't have numerous enemies awaiting my discovery, I would frequently return to Cordu and the nearest high mountain pasture. The grass there is vividly green, vast and expansive, with pale-yellow flowers in full bloom. Countless sheep roam about. The sky mirrors the brilliance of gems, and the occasional drifting white clouds resemble sheep grazing on the ground. At night, the stars emerge, densely packed like diamond gravel at the bottom of a clear river…"

Standing amidst the blazing sunlight and the vast, silent grayish-black surroundings, Lumian couldn't help but reminisce about Cordu Village and the alpine pasture.

Burman didn't interrupt. After Lumian finished speaking, he wore a dazed expression and uttered with a smile more pained than joyful,

"Helen and I thought we could come here to watch the sunset whenever we pleased since it's just a ticket away. But she never came again…"

And you don't even need to take the steam locomotive… Lumian sighed slowly and said, "What happened back then?"

Burman's face contorted in distortion, the agony evident in his expression.

"We were deceived. Something was wrong with the treasure map. We encountered real sea monsters!

"Damn the Islanders. Helen always believed they resorted to deceit and thuggery out of necessity. All the respectable positions were held by pure Intisians, but we treated them well and placed our trust in them. Yet, they colluded with others to betray us for money!

"I'll kill him, those deceivers, and every Islander!"

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Some of the self-proclaimed noble Trieriens are swindlers, while others sell their bodies. I don't generalize against Islanders, but I remain cautious of specific individuals."

Suddenly, Lumian felt inspired.

"Was the Islander who betrayed you from the Marauder pathway?"

"Yes." Burman's face twitched with unrestrained anger.

Was it a Swindler acting? Lumian asked cautiously, "Did he have a tendency to wear monocles or pinch his eye socket?"

He pointed at his right eye.

"No." Burman seemed perplexed by Lumian's question.

Lumian heaved a sigh of relief.

"What's his name? Did you manage to kill him?"

Burman's pale face suddenly flushed, and decaying liquid dripped down.

"His name is Mark Benito! After that incident, he vanished. I never found him!"

Lumian chose not to provoke Burman further and inquired, "Which

treasure were you seeking back then?"

"In the depths of the Fog Sea, there's an island. The inhabitants there don't age or truly die," Burman recalled the treasure rumors he had gathered. "There's reason to believe that something incredibly precious is hidden on that island. We didn't want to become enemies with the islanders. Our only hope was to infiltrate the island and steal some ageless medicine."

His words were somewhat disorganized, skipping over details.

"It bears a striking resemblance to the legend of the Fountain of Unaging," Lumian remarked after pondering. "The Adventurer series has already hinted that the Fountain of Unaging is a falsehood."

Ignoring him, Burman continued, "We found some evidence and obtained a treasure map to the island. To our surprise, the map was a forgery!

"The sea monsters wrecked our ship. In order to allow me to utilize that special witchcraft, Helen stood in front of me… I witnessed her torn into two by the sea monsters. I saw despair in her eyes…"

Burman panted heavily, unable to continue.

"And then, you switched to the Death pathway?" Lumian changed the topic.

Burman's icy flaxen-colored eyes gleamed.

"That's correct. Only Death, who controls the Death domain, can bring Helen back!

"In the treasure legend, many details suggest that only Death can achieve eternal life. Understanding the mysteries of death is the key to true resurrection! It's not that the islanders won't die; they can be revived!"

"Do you genuinely believe in that treasure?" Lumian already had an answer in mind after posing the question.

The partially unhinged Burman clung to every lifeline, trusting every

rumor that promised to bring Helen back to life.

“I do.” Burman nodded and spoke with a deep voice, “That’s because I encountered people from that island some time ago. There really is such an island. There are truly islanders who don’t age or truly die!”

“Really?” Lumian blurted out.

Burman’s eyes burned with fanaticism as he declared, “I wanted to capture him, but he defeated me. Instead of killing me, he sympathized with my plight and imparted some knowledge about the Death domain. There’s a way to bring Helen back to life!

“That cursed swindler. Fidel’s attendant is nothing but a swindler. I didn’t intend to rush the resurrection ritual. I wasn’t fully prepared, but since he’s a swindler, I’ll kill him! All Islanders are swindlers! They all deserve to die!”

Is he truly from that island? Or could he be another swindler? Lumian realized that the incident with the swindler, Roddy, had triggered Burman. There was also the influence of that islander… Lumian narrowed his eyes and inquired, “What’s the islander’s name, and what does he look like?”

Burman suddenly became cautious, scrutinizing Lumian.

“What brings you here?”

Observing Burman’s reaction, Lumian sighed and, with abnormal composure, said, “I’m here to kill you.”

Burman was taken aback before bursting into laughter.

“For what? A bounty?” Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Discarding the golden straw hat in his hand, Lumian lowered his body slightly and replied in a deep voice, “Punish your sins and put an end to your suffering.”

Burman ceased his laughter and raised his hands with a cold expression.

“Bring it on, then.”

Chapter 529 - 529 Irrational

529 Irrational

529 Irrational

His body began to fade, growing more transparent, as if he had transformed into a being from the spirit world—difficult for ordinary people to perceive.

In the blink of an eye, the Demon Warlock vanished.

Lumian made no move to intervene or evade potential attacks. Calmly, he retrieved the Flog boxing gloves adorned with iron-black spikes from his Traveler's Bag and wore them.

Completing this preparation, he suddenly knelt on one knee, pressing his hands to the ground.

Crimson flames erupted in all directions from Lumian's body, accompanied by a series of explosions.

Amidst the rumbling, flames surged, dominating the grayish-black wilderness. Burman's black-robed figure materialized in midair.

He slowly floated towards Lumian, narrowing the distance between them.

Lumian's figure abruptly vanished, reappearing behind Burman.

Spirit World Traversal!

Without hesitation, Lumian, holding a crimson fireball in his left hand, harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot out from his nose, targeting Burman.

Floating in midair, Burman didn't lose consciousness as before. His body swayed, forcefully turning around to observe Lumian descending into the sea of flames on the ground.

An illusory vertical eye, dark purple and nearly black, materialized between Burman's brows, reflecting Lumian's figure amid pale-white patterns.

Almost simultaneously, a lanky black shadow emerged from within Burman's body. Nearby, arms made of bones or decayed flesh and pus extended from the void, encircling Burman's transparent and thin form.

He hadn't used witchcraft to quietly approach Lumian and strike. Instead, he had clandestinely swapped his spirit with the undead under his command, setting a trap to entice the enemy into deploying that peculiar spell to attack his body.

In such a scenario, the absence of one's Spirit Body meant immunity to abilities targeting the Soul Body!

Burman could then seize the opportunity to use the Eye of the Spirit to intimidate the enemy and create an opening for the manipulated undead.

This time, he refrained from delving deeper into the secret of the other party's Spirit Body. His goal was to uncover its vulnerabilities, strike with a lethal blow, and absorb the corresponding mystical knowledge!

Having suffered greatly from the Spell of Harrumph the previous night, he had used this ability as a breakthrough from the beginning.

Simultaneously, Lumian experienced once again the sensation of his spirit being intimidated and suppressed, as if frozen. Terrifying arms covered in festering warts or with eyes extended from the void, reaching out for his body. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Boom!

The explosion's force was mostly mitigated by the Flog boxing gloves, but since they weren't fully covered, the exposed part of Lumian's left

palm was turned into a bloody mess.

An intense and familiar pain shot through his brain and Spirit Body, bringing him back to awareness.

Seizing this moment of clarity, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder again, vanishing above the sea of flames and disappearing from the strange undead arms extending from the void.

Likewise, he remained vigilant against Burman's Eye of Illusory.

The crimson, nearly white fireball in his left hand was structurally unstable. He had to divert his attention to maintain it, and he couldn't sustain it when affected by the Eye of Illusory, leading to its natural disintegration and a self-

inflicted awakening.

If this failed to disrupt the Eye of Illusory's intimidation, the sea of flames below served as Lumian's second preparation. The residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right hand was his last resort.

Upon vanishing, Lumian reappeared behind Burman once more.

Prepared, Burman raised his hands and scattered a tree-like powder.

Crackling sounds followed as silver-white lightning struck Lumian's head, as though a storm ruler had unleashed divine retribution from the sky.

For most Beyonders, this would be enough to paralyze and make them tremble incessantly. Yet, Lumian showed no such signs. Instead, he appeared like a reflection in the water, shattered by the lightning.

The real Lumian was curled up at the bottom of the figure. Burman had struck the phantom created using the Niese Face!

The Niese Face was essentially an illusion, but it couldn't be cast on others or items. Lumian had to rely on himself, pretending to be a root system with branches and flowers above, forming a derived illusion.

There was no fundamental difference between this and using the Niese Face to make himself taller and bulkier.

Amidst the crackling lightning, two crimson fireballs materialized beneath Lumian's feet and behind him.

Rumble!

The fireball exploded, propelling Lumian towards the levitating Burman.

Burman, being close proximity, couldn't dodge the swift Lumian in time. He could only slightly turn his body as a bone spear sprouted from his shoulder, its tip unusually sharp.

A grin spread across Lumian's face. He didn't evade, allowing the bone spear to pierce his right chest.

With a resounding thud, he swung his left fist, delivering a powerful blow to the side of Burman's face. The Demon Warlock's head twisted, revealing deep blood-stained, pus-filled holes on his face. His eyes burned with rage, as if he were witnessing the murderer of his wife!

The black mark on Lumian's right shoulder emitted a dim light once more.

His figure vanished beside Burman, dissolving into the encircling lanky black shadows and other undead creatures, leaving behind the bone spear stained with his blood.

The wound on his right chest was grotesque, blood dripping from it. In his hand appeared a dark-red bone flute with a hole in it.

Symphony of Hatred!

Lumian brought the bone flute to his lips. As he retreated, he played a mournful and haunting melody.

Once again invoking the Eye of Illusory, Burman, who was on the verge of catching up, was frozen in astonishment. Even the undead ceased their movements.

Suddenly, blood and pus seeped from Burman's eyes, nose, mouth, and ears, as if a muffled and invisible explosion had occurred within him.

His anger, paranoia, and thirst for revenge were fueled by the Symphony of Hatred.

This inflicted a severe blow on him.

Lumian refrained from playing the Symphony of Hatred from the outset because Burman differed from other Beyonders. Others needed to identify the problem, but with Burman, there were too many uncertainties.

His mental state was extremely unstable, burdened by severe psychological issues. His overwhelming desire to revive his wife and seek revenge on the Islander swindler was palpable. His body had undergone modifications from the Death domain, and Lumian had inflicted significant injuries on him the previous night. There were substantial hidden dangers…

Faced with such an adversary, Lumian himself was uncertain about the outcome if he were to unleash the Symphony of Hatred through the shepherd's flute. It might be manageable if it only triggered desires and emotions, but if Burman's mental state lost even the most basic restraints, the Demon Warlock could potentially lose control on the spot, transforming into a monstrous entity with mixed abilities.

Such a monster would likely be even more challenging to deal with than Burman!

Hence, after the Spell of Harrumph failed, Lumian promptly shifted to using Flog boxing gloves to kindle Burman's corresponding desires and emotions. This strategic approach increased the likelihood that when Lumian eventually used the Symphony of Hatred, it would exploit the target's emotions and desires, inflicting severe harm.

Observing Burman descend into the sea of flames amid the eruption of emotions and desires, Lumian executed another Spirit World Traversal, appearing in front of him in an instant.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He extended his arms, unleashing a relentless barrage of attacks on Burman's body.

On the surface of his Flog fists, a crimson fireball, almost white, compressed layer by layer.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Flog tore at Burman's flesh like a two-headed python.

Rumble!

Crimson fireballs erupted around Lumian, with no concern for waste. They formed a barrier, preventing the lanky figure, strange arms, and other undead from interfering.

One punch, two punches, three punches. Lumian's eyes were fixed on the mangled Burman.

At that moment, he reflected on the village destroyed by Burman and the innocent lives lost because of him.

How many were beloved wives, waiting husbands, dependent parents, and cherished children?

Cordu had been annihilated due to the ambitions of the evil gods. What about the innocent?

Lumian's eyes gradually turned crimson as he clenched his fists.

This time, he didn't empathize with Burman. Instead, he placed himself in the village he had destroyed and the lives he had taken.

Wasn't Cordu like this back then?

The ambitions of these evil gods are to blame!

In just a few seconds, Burman snapped out of his pain and emitted an evil, cold, and incomprehensible voice.

The sound seemed to peel away Lumian's flesh, exposing his Spirit

Body to the perilous sunlight and the grayish-black gravel.

Lumian's movements slowed, and the grotesque arms finally reached in, dragging Burman away from the area.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and recovered.

He didn't pursue. Instead, he gazed silently at the void ahead, raised his right hand, and snapped his fingers.

Rumble!

Amidst the sudden eruption of intense flames, Burman's body materialized, shattering from an explosion.

Fire Infusion!

Hunter's Fire Infusion!

In truth, Lumian hadn't acted rationally. His optimal strategy would have been to seize the moment when Burman's emotions and desires were ignited and strike at his vital points with the Symphony of Hatred, delivering a decisive blow. However, he yearned to repeatedly pummel the "hidden" version of himself that terrified him!

With a thud, Burman's head clattered to the ground.

In his daze, he caught sight of a slender figure with black hair, blue eyes, and a delicate face.

It was his wife, Helen.

Y-you're back? Burman couldn't help but smile and extend his arm.

He no longer had an arm.

Gradually, he lost consciousness. Darkness enveloped his vision, as if sunlight lurked deep within.

Demon Warlock Burman—dead.

Chapter 530 - 530 Beginning

530 Beginning

Donning the silver Lie earring and retrieving a white bandage, Lumian wrapped it around the burned wound on his right chest and his bloody left hand.

Crimson flames surged around him, engulfing his dripping blood and splattering flesh.

Throughout this process, Lumian gathered the nearby corpse fragments that Burman had scattered and piled them beside the head.

He had been calculating the time. If Burman's Beyonder characteristic still hadn't materialized, he would have to move the corpse pile to the forest beside the Andatna volcano.

This was because the Flog boxing gloves attracted the attention of certain hidden entities, enabling them to command dangerous creatures to attack.

In the past, Lumian would have had to leave the scene as soon as he finished using the Flog boxing gloves, but the battle lasted only a short time. The Flog boxing gloves had already been stowed into his Traveler's Bag, allowing him to wait a little longer.

Lumian observed various colored light spots—light purple, pale-white, and pitch-black—emerge from Burman's head and the scattered corpse pile. Among the items on the ground and torn clothes, Lumian found a diverse array of objects.

There was a miniature brain, blood-dyed and resembling brass, a retractable pitch-black telescope, ointment and powder in metal canisters, a short bone scepter, a peculiar badge encircling the sun with bones, a soft-cover notebook in an iron box, an ordinary-looking

golden ring, and scattered gold and silver coins…

The deposit certificates and paper cash had likely been destroyed by the explosion and the inferno.

Lumian carefully stowed each item away, sensing that three possessed superpowers. Merely coming into contact with them triggered various adverse reactions.

Thankfully, I had no intention of prolonging the battle with Burman from the start… Him using these mystical items later would have been troublesome… To deal with such a half-mad and resourceful enemy, I must end the battle swiftly and deny him a chance to recover… Some items were likely gathered by him, while others might have been taken from Fidel… Lumian concluded, finally picking up the dented and cracked iron box.

Inside the soft-cover notebook lay a blood-stained treasure map. With a brief glance, Lumian suspected it to be a sea map leading to an island in a specific sea area. It contained records of weather patterns and markings of safe sea routes.

Could this be the fake treasure map sold to Burman by Mark Benito? Lumian mused. Flipping to the first page of the dark soft-cover notebook, he encountered scrawled words:

“My mind isn’t reliable all the time. I tend to forget many things. I must record all relevant knowledge and prevent them from being forgotten.”

Lumian refrained from delving deeper. He carefully stowed away the fake treasure map and the soft-cover notebook.

Lumian noticed an ordinary-looking golden ring adorning Burman’s left ring finger in the corpse pile.

It bore a striking resemblance to the gold rings found in the pile of spoils. They varied in size, texture, and quality.

Lumian instantly grasped the situation.

He removed the golden ring from Burman’s finger and tied it to

another golden ring with a piece of wire he had on hand.

At that moment, Burman's Beyonder characteristics fully materialized, merging with parts of his corpse, resulting in two distinct items.

Lumian carefully stowed away the two Beyonder characteristics, taking hold of Burman's head before vanishing from the spot.

Silently, the remaining parts of Burman's body ignited, enveloping the grayish-black volcano in crimson flames.

More than 200 meters away, Lumian retrieved the golden straw hat that had been blown by the strong wind.

As he secured it on his head, he swiftly disappeared.

This time, he appeared on the road outside the Andatna volcano's steam locomotive.

Lumian glanced up at the grayish-black volcano's crater, witnessing the golden-red sunset, resembling flowing lava, receding faster than expected.

The mountaintop swiftly darkened.

…

In the cathedral of The Fool in Port Farim, not far from Quartier des Black Pearls, Lumian, adjusting his golden straw hat, approached the towering half-giant bishop donned in a half top hat and black trench coat. In a deep voice, he said,

"I want to repent."

The half-giant bishop, with light-blue eyes and a towering stature exceeding 2.5 meters, regarded Lumian for a moment before nodding. "Follow me."

He led Lumian into a specialized confessional—a windowless, pitch-black chamber.

“I don’t wish to repent in the dark,” Lumian calmly said, removing his golden straw hat.

The half-giant bishop ignited the candles, sealing the door shut.

Pa! Lumian tossed a head with pale-white fur and vacant eye sockets to the half-giant bishop’s feet.

“Did you commit murder?” the half-giant bishop inquired in a mellow tone, giving the head a brief once-over.

“No, I just want to help him repent.” Lumian gestured towards the bloody head, oozing yellow pus. “He’s Demon Warlock Burman.”

“Burman?” Only then did the half-giant bishop closely inspect the head, recognizing distinct features.

He fell silent for a few moments before stating, “You want the Church to assist you in claiming the bounty from the Intis government?”

“As I mentioned, I’m here to repent for him. His bounty is part of his penance.” Lumian’s voice remained unchanged.

The half-giant bishop struggled to comprehend.

Lumian retrieved most of the items acquired from Burman from his Traveler’s Bag, leaving behind the dark soft-cover notebook and the fake treasure map.

Clatter. These items, some endowed with superpowers, some valuable, spilled onto the ground.

The half-giant bishop, sporting a top hat and trench coat, fell silent for a few seconds.

“The Demon Warlock bounty stands at 600,000 verl d’or. These items hold considerable value too. Together, they could fetch nearly 1 million verl d’or. It’s a substantial sum for anyone. Enough to ensure you don’t have to take further risks. Are you certain about donating it to us and establishing a charity fund?”

Lumian didn’t directly answer the half-giant bishop’s question.

Instead, he reiterated, “This is Burman’s penance.”

“Alright, since you trust our Church, we’ll comply with your wishes,” the half-giant bishop, named Theis, said. “Remember my name and feel free to monitor the charity fund’s progress closely.”

Lumian gazed at The Fool’s Sacred Emblem in the confessional, pressed his hand to his chest, and gave a slight bow.

“Praise The Fool!”

He then closed his eyes and prayed, Great Lord, I implore you to punish the world for their sins and watch over our compensation. This isn’t atonement; it’s self-punishment…

Lumian repented earnestly for a while before straightening up. He opened his eyes and turned to leave.

“What shall be the name of the charity fund?” the half-giant bishop hurriedly inquired. This chapter is updat𝓮d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Lumian took a deep breath and replied, “Helen, the Helen Charity Fund.”

“Do we need to inform the authorities about who killed Burman?” the half-giant bishop cautiously asked.

“No need, but there’s no requirement to deliberately obscure the clues for me.” Lumian didn’t look back. He put on his golden straw hat and exited The Fool’s cathedral.

…

That night, Lumian once again entered the bar beside Sun Square known as Pelican.

Batna Comté, as usual, sat at the bar counter, sipping on Golden Somme sugar wine. Beside him was a girl dressed as an adventurer with adorable facial features.

Lumian walked over and joined Batna and the other patrons. He smiled and snapped his fingers at the bartender.

“A glass of Golden Somme.”

Batna glanced at him and remarked, “Someone’s in a good mood.”

“Indeed.” Lumian received the golden syrup from the bartender and tapped the table with the bottom of the glass. Then, he stood up and raised the glass. “Everyone, I’ve encountered two things worth celebrating today.”

He spoke with enthusiasm and joy, “The first is that I completed a commission worth more than 100,000 verl d’or!”

“Impossible…” Batna and the female adventurer beside him exclaimed in unison.

This bounty was even higher than Black Baronet’s bounty. How could it be accomplished in a day?

Moreover, Batna knew that Louis Berry’s employer, Fidel, was already deceased. How could he have received a new commission?

Lumian continued in a passionate tone, “To celebrate this, I’ll treat everyone at the bar counter to a glass of Golden Somme!”

Nearly ten adventurers and patrons expressed admiration. One of them teased, “Regardless of the truth, I believe you!”

The others chimed in.

Lumian’s smile widened.

“Second thing to be happy about—I’ve woven a tale to deceive a group of fools!”

Suddenly, the expressions of everyone at the bar counter froze.

Lumian glanced at them and continued,”But it’s true that drinks are on the house!”

The adventurers and patrons booed, expressing that if they could drink for free, they didn’t mind being fools.

Thus, Lumian spent 96 licks, or 4.8 verl d'or, treating the twelve people at the bar counter to a glass of Golden Somme.

Observing Louis Berry, Batna silently muttered, He's genuinely happy…

…

Late at night, aboard the Flying Bird, Room 5, first-class cabin.

Lumian returned to the barely habitable master bedroom, ignited the kerosene lamp, and retrieved the dark soft-cover notebook and the fake treasure map he had obtained from Demon Warlock Burman from his Traveler's Bag.

Chapter 531 - 531 Depths of Death

531 Depths of Death

Bathed in the yellowish glow of the kerosene lamp, Lumian perused Burman's notebook. The pages chronicled the erratic musings of a mind teetering on the edge of instability.

"Once life slips away, spirits journey to the spirit world, except in rare cases!

"If I can craft the right summoning chant, a Spirit Guide's power could pull Helen's spirit back to our reality.

"That's step one toward bringing her back."

Upon seeing this, Lumian indiscernibly shook his head.

If only resurrection were that simple…

He turned the page.

"New mystical knowledge gained:

"In ancient times, intelligent beings ventured into the Underworld after death. Those deeply devout or exceptionally impactful could ascend to the corresponding deity's Heaven. However, during the Fifth Epoch, a surplus of undead lingered beyond the Underworld.

"I'm uncertain if Helen's spirit has entered the Underworld or returned solely to the spirit realm. When summoning, I must address these separately; mixing them would guarantee failure.

"Despite the sea monsters' formidable might, they lack the power to confine a soul. No similar occurrences manifest in that sea region. For

now, special circumstances needn't be considered. Additionally, Helen wasn't a fervent follower of the Eternal Blazing Sun."

…

"I encountered Helen again.

"But she's entirely lost the memory of me.

"Her form and essence are gradually fading away. In a few short years, she'll transform into just another undead.

"I have no more than five years.

"How can I reawaken her consciousness and recover her memories? Merely providing a vessel capable of housing a departed spirit doesn't seem sufficient."

…

"Don't forget the moonlit waves by the city's lighthouse. They bore witness to my proposal and Helen's acceptance."

…

"Don't forget Gasparo seafood rice; it's Helen's favorite. After every adventure, when we returned to Port Farim, she always suggested indulging in it."

…

"Don't forget the sunset at Andatna volcano. That's where we met and vowed to revisit often in the future. Even as we age, we can't let that romance fade away…"

…

"Don't forget… Don't forget… Don't forget…"

…

"My head hurts." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

…

“I razed a town, leading to the deaths of two to three hundred people.

“The sight of those couples, parents, and children perishing didn’t bring me joy.

“Instead, my heart plunged into darkness.

“I acknowledge this as my sin, an irreversible mistake. I’m aware that I’m no longer the Burman you once liked.

“Yet, I harbor no regrets.”

…

“Swindlers, curse them!

“Ending these swindlers has rekindled a long-lost sense of satisfaction.”

…

“Helen, if you were still alive, we might have had our own child, right?

“Why do those evil Warlocks always employ infants, children, and their remains as essential ingredients for the creation of their dark arts?

“I’ve become even more evil than them…”

…

“Helen, I’ve lost my way. All my endeavors have ended in failure.”

…

“Helen, I aspire to acquire the Sequence 5 potion formula and ingredients for the Death pathway.”

…

“Helen, Fidel intervened. He warned that it would turn me into a monster and erase my original memories.

“Helen, I refuse to forget you.

“Helen, please forgive my cowardice.”

…

“Helen, I actually encountered that islander from Resurrection Island!

“It truly exists!

“Harrison defeated me, but he spared my life. He questioned why I had forcibly transitioned to the Death pathway.

“He revealed that my previous attempts were misguided. True resurrection isn’t that straightforward.

“He explained that within the depths of death lies everyone’s mark. Only by bringing forth the corresponding mark into reality and utilizing it as a foundation to reconstruct spirit and flesh can we achieve genuine resurrection, retaining our original knowledge and complete memories.

“Helen, I’m overjoyed. I glimpse hope in reviving you once more.”

…

“Harrison imparted knowledge about the Death domain to me. It’s through understanding this knowledge and reclaiming their mark that he and his kin can undergo repeated deaths and resurrections, escaping the clutches of mortality.

“While they seldom depart Resurrection Island, it’s not an absolute. Travel-

loving islanders like Harrison have ventured to different lands, leaving the Resurrection Island legend imprinted in the memories of a select few humans. Those with sinister motives compiled this information into a sea map for Resurrection Island.

“The treasure map Mark sold us is counterfeit, but parts of it trace back to the genuine one. Harrison, in his quest, left Resurrection Island to eliminate the authentic map and eradicate all who know how to reach that sea and discover Resurrection Island.

“Helen, armed with Harrison’s information, I attempted to summon a spirit from the depths of death. I succeeded, conjuring an evil spirit named Arden. As it was feeble, I easily vanquished it, collecting its blood for the ensuing ritual.”

…

“Helen, forgive me. I couldn’t rein in my emotions.

“Ever since encountering Harrison and gaining the knowledge to truly bring you back, impatience has seized me. I can’t control my emotions.

“Those islanders are swindlers deserving of death. I ended the life of a swindler and numerous others. I refused to squander any more time, hastening the ritual.

“Helen, I’m sorry. I failed again. I wasn’t adequately prepared.”

…

“Helen, have I lost my sanity entirely? A mere retort from Fidel triggered a frenzy, leading me to slay everyone in the house.

“He must perish too, the one who dared to threaten me and Fidel!”

…

“Helen, I’ve failed. It’s been a while since I sustained such severe injuries.

“My body is largely undead. These wounds aren’t fatal, but I lack any allies.

“Damn it, damn it, damn it!”

…

“Helen, I’ve missed you once again.”

Lumian reached the conclusion of the dark soft-covered notebook and fixated on the sentence for an extended moment.

It was as if he had transformed into a statue.

After a few minutes, Lumian couldn’t resist raising his right hand to massage his temples.

The marks from the depths of death, Resurrection Island, and Harrison inundated his mind, prompting a sudden regret for not seeking Franca’s assistance.

To ensure a clean demise for Burman, he never intended to channel the Demon Warlock’s spirit from the outset. This meant he had no plans to return to Trier and bring Franca to his current location.

However, his instinct now urged him to delve further into the resurrection method outlined by Harrison. He desired an understanding of the island where inhabitants experienced repeated deaths and rebirths.

Phew… Lumian closed the notebook and exhaled, making an effort to recollect his knowledge of death-related mysticism.

He recalled hearing the words “death” and “mark” conjoined.

Madam Magician had mentioned the term “death mark” while answering a question about the Tudor figure at the Samaritan Women’s Spring!

Is this a concept distinct from remnant spirits and imprints, directly linked to resurrection?

From the depths of death… What lurks within the depths of death…

What I now know that is explicitly tied to death—the Underworld, the Samaritan Women’s Spring, the River Styx connecting two worlds…

What a pity. I wonder what Harrison from Resurrection Island looks

like…

Burman's recorded knowledge is in disarray. It seemed he wrote whatever thoughts occurred to him. Without him, organizing a complete resurrection ritual and the corresponding principles proves exceedingly challenging…

No, not just challenging. Impossible. Burman only documented what he feared he might forget. The remaining knowledge is entirely absent… Lumian rubbed his temples once more and unfolded the counterfeit treasure map. After careful scrutiny, he couldn't discern which parts were authentic and which were spurious.

He intended to send the map to Franca and Jenna at dawn, employing them to employ mysticism to differentiate between the real and the fake.

…

The next morning, Lumian wiped his mouth with a napkin and observed Ludwig grappling with the breakfast dishes.

Knock, knock, knock. A gentle rap echoed on the door.

"Please come in." Lumian gestured for Lugano to open the door.

Do you really think I'm a servant? Alright, providing the money makes you the boss… Lugano criticized, leaving the dining table to open the door.

It was Philip outside.

Philip entered the room, smiling at Lumian.

"We'll set sail in two and a half hours. If you have any special items you want to buy, do it as soon as possible."

"I don't," Lumian replied with a smile as he stood up.

Philip glanced out the window and said, "By the way, you might not be aware, but the Demon Warlock has been apprehended."

“Is that so?” Lugano looked surprised.

Over the past few days, the most popular topic among the passengers on the ship was Demon Warlock Burman, who had caused them to stay in Port Farim.

Seeing Lumian raise his eyebrows in inquiry, Philip said with a relaxed expression,

“Not only was Burman apprehended, but he was also in the state of a corpse.”

“Who’s behind this?” Lumian asked, his curiosity piqued.

Philip shook his head.

“I don’t have all the details yet. What I do know is that it’s closely tied to The Fool’s Church. The adventurer Gehrman Sparrow is said to be their messenger.”

“Could it be that the adventurer took matters into his own hands?” Lugano asked eagerly.

At sea, he naturally heard about faith in The Fool and had no doubts about it

—sailors, passengers, and dock porters would tell him about it.

“Hard to say. But anyone capable of taking down a Demon Warlock has to be at least as formidable as a pirate admiral.” Philip sighed deeply.

Suddenly, a commotion echoed from the gangway. Passengers destined to board at Port Farim were finally given the green light to board the Flying Bird.

Lumian approached the window and spotted a familiar face.

Batna Comté!

He and the adorable-looking female adventurer climbed aboard the deck together.

Lumian pushed open the window and called out, “Batna, are you guys headed to Port Santa as well?”

Batna looked up, surprised, his eyes fixed on the rooms on the top floor.

Spotting Louis Berry, he grinned and replied, “Absolutely. I’m off to witness Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual!”

Chapter 532 - 532 “Real” Map

532 “Real” Map

Among the nations of the Northern Continent, only the Lord of Storms in Loen wielded authority over the sea. Yet, sailors, sea merchants, and adventurers loyal to other deities sought to evade shipwrecks, brutal weather, and the need for specific protection. This led to various compromises and unique circumstances.

Certain Churches established subsidiary gods, Angels, and Saints endowed with storm and sea-related powers for followers with corresponding concerns. Take, for instance, the Sea God of the Church of The Fool.

In some Churches, believers were tacitly permitted to hold a partial belief in the Lord of Storms.

Other Churches turned a blind eye to the folklore beliefs flourishing in ports and islands, allowing the performance of specific rituals without requiring the presence of clergymen.

The sea prayer ritual of Port Santa in the Feynapotter Kingdom fell into the latter category. Its folklore was believed to trace back to the Fourth Epoch. This annual event, overseen by the Church of Earth Mother, was modest and confined to this port; it lacked any widespread publicity.

In essence, nearly nobody—neither the locals of Port Santa nor the merchants, adventurers, or pirates frequenting the shores of the Fog Sea—

was aware of such a sea prayer ritual.

After gathering the pertinent details, Lumian made an initial assessment that either Bard or Ultraman, the culprits behind the sea

prayer ritual pranks, were likely locals of Port Santa or actively engaged in maritime affairs.

Considering that Bard's work, "Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles," had been specifically handed over to Trier's underground booksellers for publication, Lumian leaned towards the belief that Ultraman had been the instigator of the problems at Port Santa's sea prayer ritual.

Despite the fact that "Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles" seemed more suited for sale in Intis, Lumian reasoned that if Bard had a permanent residence in the Feynapotter Kingdom, it would be wiser to publish it under the Feynapotter Kingdom's name before discreetly selling it to Intis. This precaution was to avoid drawing the attention of Intis's secret police.

Many Beyonders had underestimated the vigilance of ordinary police officers and investigators, resulting in unwanted attention and arrests by official Beyonders who got wind of the news.

Upon learning that Batna and his female companion desired to witness Port Santa's sea prayer ritual, Lumian waved with a grin.

"Me too!"

He stepped back from the window, biding his time until nearly noon to compose a letter detailing his recent encounters and the handling of Burman's "legacy."

After folding the letter and wrapping it within the folds of the fake treasure map, Lumian summoned Rabbit Chasel once again.

The rabbit-like spirit creature still sported its gold-rimmed glasses and a small, blurry half top hat. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Silently observing for a few moments, Lumian then handed over the items destined for Franca and Jenna.

"Thank you," he said politely.

That's basic courtesy!

“No need to thank me,” replied Rabbit Chasel, removing his half top hat and executing a slight bow.

Lumian’s lips twitched as he witnessed the mutated Rabbit of Knowledge disappear from the room.

He was worried that this rabbit might unpredictably draw its gun and finish off the sender at any given moment.

The next time around, he resolved to caution Jenna against imparting such dangerous knowledge to Rabbit Chasel!

…

Trier, within the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca glanced at Rabbit Chasel, adorned with its half top hat and gold-

rimmed glasses. Leaning closer to Jenna, she whispered, “Isn’t it too dangerous to let it read the Adventurer series?”

Jenna smiled and replied, “Don’t you find Rabbit Chasel adorable? Furthermore, a messenger can encounter danger. Reading more about Gehrman Sparrow might make it stronger.”

Franca had only briefly raised the issue but shifted her focus to unfolding the fake treasure map and letter, reading it with earnest attention.

“Wow, Lumian’s efficiency is impressive. He aimed to punish Burman for his sins and managed to complete the hunt in less than twelve hours!

“The Beyonder characteristics didn’t form Sealed Artifacts with mixed abilities; instead, they emerged and merged separately. Could it be because Burman no longer harbored madness and paranoia before his death, and his emotions had calmed down?”

“Heh heh, there’s no need to inform 007 so quickly if we encounter similar cases in the future. Lumian might resolve it himself within a

day. Everything will return to normal, and world peace will prevail. That way, 007 won't blame me for always causing trouble for him."

Franca had previously informed Jenna that the code name of her collaborator among the authorities was 007.

So fast? Demon Warlock isn't weak… Jenna couldn't believe it.

That was a criminal with a bounty of 600,000 verl d'or. All the verl d'or she had seen so far added up to less!

Lumian's bounty amounted to less than 100,000.

Franca pursed her lips and remarked, "Think about his experiences in Trier and the items and abilities he possesses. He's simply a supermodel, alright? If he were to be released, it would be equivalent to a dimensional reduction strike on Beyonders without any special traits. He wouldn't be much inferior to most Sequence 5 Beyonders!"

Jenna recalled the dangerous situations she had faced alongside Lumian and nodded in agreement.

"What do you mean by dimensional reduction strike?"

Franca, slightly surprised by Jenna's question, took a moment before explaining, "It's akin to an adult bullying a child or a demigod bullying a Low-Sequence Beyonder.

"Furthermore, think about it. A half-mad Beyonder like the Demon Warlock is mentally, psychologically, emotionally, and physically problematic. He was completely countered by Lumian's Symphony of Hatred. When facing him, all you need to do is be wary of the strange combination of abilities and avoid provoking him into a monster. Lumian has the experience, so he won't be careless."

Jenna muttered, "Now that you mention it, why do I feel that killing the Demon Warlock isn't too difficult?"

"You can't put it that way. It can only be said that the forced switching of pathways will indeed make one very powerful and dangerous, but it also has huge flaws and many problems. It's easy to target," Franca corrected her before continuing reading Lumian's

letter.

After she was done reading, Franca sighed with excitement and said, “The sea sounds so fun, and the scenery is beautiful. If it weren’t for the mission, I’d want to be an adventurer at sea and hunt pirates!”

Jenna, leaning against the sofa and reading the letter from behind, felt a longing in her heart.

Who wouldn’t love to travel? It was just that they hadn’t had the luxury before.

Franca regained her composure and clicked her tongue.

“Lumian is truly generous. He actually donated all the bounty and spoils of war to establish a charity fund. Sigh, actually, I understand his thoughts…”

Until now, she had been covertly providing for the family of her body’s original owner until now.

As Franca and Jenna conversed, they both performed Magic Mirror Divination.

Their answers were unanimous: The map was real!

“Whether it’s Burman or the immortal islander, Harrison, they both admit that a portion of this map is fake. It can’t help adventurers reach Resurrection Island, and they might even encounter great danger along the way… What’s fake about it?” Franca pondered, casting her gaze at the treasure map.

On the map, the location marked as Resurrection Island lay deep within the Fog Sea. The westernmost colonial island of the Intis Republic, Aroca, was still quite a distance away.

…

Can’t distinguish the fake parts? Lumian shook his head after receiving the reply and continued reading the information about spirit world creatures in his hand.

His primary focus was to find any introduction to the Arden evil spirit that Burman had summoned from the depths of death.

Lumian flipped through the information until evening, satiating his hunger in his room. Grabbing the golden straw hat he had recently taken a liking to, he descended to the deck and entered the bar.

By that time, the Flying Bird had already departed Port Farim. As expected, Batna and his female companion sat at the bar counter, engaged in animated conversations with the surrounding passengers about Demon Warlock Burman's demise.

"We don't know which adventurer did it either. If it hadn't been officially announced, we wouldn't have known that Burman had been killed. No one in Port Farim's adventurer circle knew about it in advance!" Batna held the Lanti Proof and said excitedly, "To think that such a powerful adventurer remains hidden in Port Farim! Indeed, we can't be arrogant or conceited. Perhaps the tramp sitting by the roadside is a powerful figure!"

Spotting Lumian pushing his way through, Batna whistled.

"You're staying in first-class? Are you that rich?"

"I'm not considered rich," Lumian replied with a smile as he settled onto a barstool. "I just feel that accidents can happen at any moment at sea, and I can be killed by pirates at any moment. So, why not try to pamper yourself? What's the point of saving up money when you're dead? Since you're an adventurer, you have to lead a carefree life because who knows if there'll be a tomorrow."

"Since you're an adventurer, you have to lead a carefree life because who knows if there'll be a tomorrow…" The female adventurer beside Batna whispered Lumian's last sentence, seemingly touched.

Batna took a sip of the Lanti Proof and chuckled.

"However, the prerequisite is that you have some savings. Otherwise, if you end up having fun today, you'll go hungry tomorrow.

"Man, 600,000 verl d'or. I wonder which adventurer obtained Burman's 600,000 verl d'or. And the items on him…"

Batna revealed a yearning and envious expression.

Lumian picked up the absinthe he had just requested and took a sip, savoring the faint bitterness lingering in the fragrance.

…

In the following days, the Flying Bird calmly navigated towards the Feynapotter Kingdom. Philip, the security supervisor, found it surreal.

Is the bad luck over? Did the major problem disembark? Did Demon Warlock Burman's death stem from the major problem entering Port Farim?

Just as Port Santa was only a day away, Philip observed his subordinate deliver a telegram.

"Boss, it's from your comrades in Port Farim." The subordinate handed the folded telegram to Philip.

What happened in Port Farim that requires me to be informed? Did the major problem cause trouble in Port Farim and trace it to the Flying Bird? He unfolded the telegram and scanned its contents.

"The adventurer who hunted Demon Warlock Burman is suspected to be on your ship. His name is Louis Berry."

Chapter 533 - 533 Forgotten

533 Forgotten

“His name is Louis Berry.”

Philip’s gaze froze at the last sentence.

Him?

He killed Demon Warlock?

Suddenly, Philip recalled the tragic scene of Room 5 in the first-class cabin as though it had been shelled.

Could it be that the clash between Louis Berry and Demon Warlock Burman had caused this devastation?

Rumors circulated that the Church of The Fool exchanged Burman’s head for a bounty the following day, but procedures like that didn’t happen instantaneously. A delay of half a day was ordinary!

Did Louis Berry truly kill Demon Warlock?

Is he truly that formidable? I couldn’t discern it at all…

I understand he’s a magnet for trouble, and various details attest to his strength and unpredictable nature, but the notion of him vanquishing Demon Warlock caught me by surprise. And he appeared unscathed.

He even contained the battle’s impact within a single room, ensuring no one overheard anything…

Could he have also been the one who frightened off Bone Splitter Basil? No, he was near me and didn’t make a move… Unless Basil knows him and comprehends his danger?

A person capable of eliminating Demon Warlock is indeed capable of deterring Bone Splitter… Even though Basil might not be weaker than Burman despite the relatively low bounty. Louis Berry, however, possesses the ability to silence Burman without a trace…

What caused the encounter with the Death Navigators?"

Philip muttered silently.

Though he couldn't fully embrace the idea that the young man who always boasted in the bar with a smile was a powerful enough adventurer to vanquish Demon Warlock, Philip hesitated to harbor too many doubts.

"Boss, should we… should we expose Louis Berry's identity as a fake?" the crew member who had delivered the telegram asked in a hushed tone.

Philip instinctively raised the paper bearing the telegram and delivered a light smack to his subordinate's head.

"Do you have a death wish? I've emphasized repeatedly, when faced with anomalies on the ship, turn a blind eye unless it's an immediate crisis, and wait until we reach our destination."

Philip pondered for a moment, concerned that his subordinate might act in error due to misunderstanding or disbelief. He clarified deliberately, "We're still at sea. Even if we report the false identities now, confirming Louis Berry's true identity and existence won't save or aid us unless someone departs from Port Santa. Yet, such inter-country cooperation requires days of prior communication. By the time assistance arrives, Louis Berry will likely have disembarked.

"Moreover, verifying his real identity takes time. To blow the whistle successfully, we'd be risking Louis Berry noticing and retaliating. Is it worth it?

"I prefer to preserve the peace of these past few days."

The crew member pondered for a moment and ultimately concurred with the boss's decision.

Philip breathed a sigh of relief, tearing up the telegram and casually tossing it into the trash can.

“Inform the recipients and translators of the telegram to keep this information under wraps!” Philip instructed before leaving the room and descending the stairs to the deck.

Just as he was contemplating the romantic plans for the evening with his newfound lover, his thoughts came to a sudden halt when he spotted Louis Berry, the central figure of the telegram. There he stood by the shipboard, his gaze fixed on the gently undulating blue sea, idly twirling a golden straw hat in one hand while holding a glass of light golden champagne in the other.

As if sensing Philip’s gaze, Lumian turned around, locking eyes with him.

A subtle smile played on Louis Berry’s lips as he raised the champagne glass in his right hand, as though toasting him, before taking a leisurely sip.

Philip’s body tensed, determined to conceal any change in expression.

Is Louis Berry merely extending a greeting, or does he possess knowledge about the telegram and my decision?

…

Waa! Waa! Waa!

White-headed seabirds soared gracefully under the pristine, blue sky, their cries distinct from those in Port Gati and Port Farim.

At times, they glided low, skimming past wooden fishing boats adorned with billowing white sails.

Fishing, a vital industry in Port Santa, instilled both fear and reverence for the sea in every fisherman’s veins.

While they could have children who strayed from the beliefs of the Earth Mother, they couldn’t bear descendants who dared to blaspheme the sacred sea prayer ritual.

Lumian, taking in the scenery different from the Intis port and Port Santa's gradually rising mountain range in the distance, silently offered praise to The Fool.

The journey from Port Farim to Port Santa unfolded surprisingly uneventfully

—no storms, no pirates, and no encounters with Beyonder incidents.

This respite allowed him a few days of tranquility. Lumian finished two foundational Highlander textbooks and perused information on spirit world creatures.

He failed to find a description of Arden, the evil spirit from the depths of death. Whether Madam Magician omitted the information or remained unaware of it remained uncertain.

"We'll be entering the port in half an hour." Lumian, who had been taking respite for the past few days, cracked his neck from the living room window of Cabin 5 in first class.

Here lay potential clues about the key members of April Fool's, Bard, and Ultraman!

Of course, it could also be a trap.

Lumian's body trembled slightly, filled with anticipation.

Finally, the Flying Bird smoothly docked at Port Santa.

Lumian, hand in hand with Ludwig and trailed by Lugano carrying their luggage, made their way towards the gangway. On the deck, they encountered Batna Comté and his companion Nolfi, already awaiting their turn. The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

Perhaps influenced by Lumian's words about seizing the moment as an adventurer, Nolfi, who had initially insisted on separate cabins, had moved in with Batna two days ago.

Batna's face radiated a flush of confidence as he waved and exclaimed, "Louis, you don't strike me as much of an adventurer. What adventurer brings their child out to sea?"

“Isn’t it a common task for adventurers to protect their employers’ children?” Lumian retorted with a smile.

In a sense, the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom was indeed his employer.

Batna, eyeing Ludwig, dressed in a young gentleman’s attire and carrying a distinctive red school bag, found Lumian’s explanation reasonable.

Yet, he couldn’t help but wonder, how could the child’s parents be so nonchalant about entrusting their son to an unfamiliar adventurer?

“At the same time, he’s my godson,” Lumian added.

Understanding dawned on Batna as he gestured towards the harbor below.

“Where do you plan to stay? Shall we attend the sea prayer ritual together?”

“I’m not sure yet. If the gods will it, our paths may cross again.” Lumian’s demeanor shifted upon arriving at Port Santa, his nerves tightening. Casual disclosure of his whereabouts was no longer in his plans.

Batna, accustomed to Lumian’s occasional seer-like words, detected nothing unusual. He sighed and said, “I hope our paths cross once more.”

With a casual wave, Batna led Nolfi toward the ramp.

Lumian smiled and offered a parting reminder, “Do you know Highlander?”

“A bit,” Batna replied, gesturing toward Nolfi, whose adorable features, black hair, and brown eyes spoke of her mixed Feynapotter and Intis heritage. “Her mother is a native of Port Santa. She carries blood from both Feynapotter and Intis.”

Port Santa local… That explains your desire to experience the sea prayer ritual after learning about it. Lumian held his silence,

watching as Batna and Nolfi descended the gangway with their suitcases.

“Not only is Louis generous and warm, but he also has a knack for humor. He appears quite professional,” Batna commented before leaving the port district. Glancing back at the Flying Bird, he said to Nolfi, “He didn’t disclose their lodging just now. Clearly, he’s unwilling to unveil his employer’s circumstances. He likely came to Port Santa to escort that child home.”

Nolfi nodded gently.

“You shouldn’t have asked. An adventurer’s companions are only in the present. We might not cross paths again in the future.”

“Haha, you’ve been influenced by Louis’s life philosophy.” Batna noticed a paperboy approaching and suggested to Nolfi, “Grab a few newspapers related to maritime rumors. We’ve been at sea for days, and we’re out of the loop.”

Nolfi shared the same idea, using degan copper coins she had exchanged prior for two newspapers.

Standing on the street, she unfolded the coastal port favorite, Five Seas News, and began reading its contents.

Batna, unfamiliar with Highlander, patiently waited for Nolfi to digest the news and relay the information to him.

Suddenly, Nolfi’s eyes narrowed, and her grip on the newspaper tightened.

“What’s wrong?” Batna asked curiously.

Nolfi hesitated before sharing, “There’s a rumor in Port Farim that the adventurer who hunted the Demon Warlock is named…”

“What’s his name?” Batna pressed.

Nolfi fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “His—his name is Louis Berry.”

Louis, Louis Berry? Batna was taken aback.

…

Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano patiently waited for most passengers to disembark before making their exit.

As Lumian stepped off the gangway, his attention was drawn to a woman in a black nun's attire and matching hat. Carrying a brown suitcase, she turned into a fork in the road.

C-could it be the weeping woman I glimpsed through the Mystery Prying Glasses? Lumian pondered, averting his gaze thoughtfully.

As he moved forward, his mind raced with plans for the immediate future.

Firstly, he needed to find an inn in the harbor district. Secondly, he had to compose a letter to Madam Magician, notifying her of his arrival in Port Santa. The situation involved Celestial Worthy and potentially played into Loki's schemes. Carelessness was not an option.

Write a letter to Madam Magician…

Write a letter!

Lumian's pupils dilated as he sought to discern if the world ahead was real.

Throughout his days aboard the ship, he kept forgetting to write to Madam Magician!

He had intended to consult his Major Arcana card holder, questioning the significance of the frequent occurrences related to the Flying Bird's calamities.

Yet, he had completely forgotten about it!

Chapter 534 - 534 Over the Mountain

534 Over the Mountain

It was today, amidst Lumian's contemplation of his next moves, that he seemed to snap out of a dream-like trance. The recollection of his intention to write a letter to Madam Magician, now forgotten, hit him like a bullet.

The realization was more unsettling than a battlefield injury, sending shivers down his spine, and causing his hair to stand on end.

Had this situation escalated, he might have perished without even realizing it!

It feels like déjà vu… That's right! In Dardel, Lugano and I had unintentionally overlooked the option of escaping. We were searching for a pretext to enter the town and investigate Derangement. As Lumian's thoughts raced, a sudden revelation struck him.

The woman he had seen weeping on the Flying Bird was the source of Derangement—a humanoid Sealed Artifact that had escaped its restraints!

After leaving Dardel, she had reached Port Gati and boarded the Flying Bird.

Could she be instinctively influencing the minds of those around her, erasing thoughts that might pose a threat? But that would require her to monitor everyone's psychological activities at just the right time.

Or, as Anthony had speculated, did she naturally implant mental cues, causing observers to overlook her existence? Even if glimpsed,

the memory of her would fade later. Simultaneously, any communication with High-

Sequence Beyonder powers would be ‘actively’ forgotten or abandoned. This classification wasn’t determined by her but by the individual’s self-

awareness. If they believed the person to be a High-Sequence Beyonder, then so they were…

Once she disembarked and ceased planting those natural and persistent cues, the overlooked issues could be recalled through other connections.

Fortunately, the Sealed Artifact remained dormant on the Flying Bird. Otherwise, I might have lost control and transformed into a monster…

Apart from me and Ludwig, she also played a part in scaring off Bone Splitter Basil? Heh heh, it’s quite funny from the perspective of the notorious pirate. Choosing an ordinary merchant ship for plunder, Basil found himself faced with three escalating waves of malice upon surfacing—a hornet’s nest stirred into action. In that scenario, he had no other choice but to escape.

Were the strange Death Navigator fish also drawn by her presence?

Initially, Lumian felt lingering fear, but soon a sense of joy washed over him.

This revelation confirmed that his contribution to the calamities on the Flying Bird was minimal, just as Aurore had suggested. Throughout the journey, only the Demon Warlock incident could be attributed to him.

Lumian could accept such frequency.

With determination, Lumian retrieved a post-it note and fountain pen, hastily scribbling a memo:

“Find a nearby motel and write to Madam Magician. Focus on the death mark and the humanoid Sealed Artifact.”

After folding the note and stowing it in his pocket, Lumian utilized Lugano's interactions with the dock's inhabitants to discreetly inquire about nearby motels. Lowering his voice, he addressed his left chest.

"Temiboros, you actually failed to notice such a dangerous Sealed Artifact nearby."

Termiboros's majestic voice resonated. "Why should I warn you?"

Lumian criticized, Oh, you've learned the art of sophistry… He turned to Ludwig, who was nibbling on a long piece of bread.

I wonder if this kid's lack of awareness stems from the Church of Knowledge's seal or a belief that there was no danger since the woman hadn't gone mad. I don't have to dwell on it for now… Averting his gaze, he waited for Lugano to gather directions before leading Ludwig toward the exit of the port district.

Port Santa stood divided, its territories sliced into thirds. One-third bustled with the comings and goings of fishermen, surrounded by a vast open space. Nearby, three ice mills hummed with activity. The remaining two-thirds, a realm reserved for merchant ships, witnessed a constant influx of passengers. Mechanical cranes labored tirelessly, lifting smelted steel, forged swords, and woven wool into the undercabin.

Amidst the pungent scent of fish, Lumian maintained an outward calm. Sometimes, his gaze wandered to the distant mountain range; other times, he scrutinized the billowing black smoke drifting from the southeast, carried downwind by the breeze. This chapter is updat*e*d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Tasking Lugano and Ludwig with selecting two candidates each, Lumian delegated the decision-making. Ultimately, they settled at an unassuming motel named Solow.

In Highlander, "Solow" translated to "sun."

Although the Feynapotter Kingdom didn't subscribe to the Eternal Blazing Sun faith, instead venerating Earth Mother, the prevalence of sunlight in their environment resulted in the frequent use of words

like “Solow” and “Soros” (sunlight) in various place names.

Lumian removed his golden straw hat, shielding him from the October sun, and secured a suite from the motel’s owner—a gray-haired, tall figure with prominent cheekbones and a thick beard. The cost: 1.5 gold risot per day, or 3 verl d’or.

Official currencies in Feynapotter included risot, setta, and degan. Legend had it that before the kingdom’s split from the south-central regions, the Church of Earth Mother and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom jointly governed the land. Unlike the Loen Kingdom’s unconventional gold pound system, Feynapotter’s currency was designed by scholars from the Church of Knowledge. One risot equaled 10 settas, and one setta equaled 10 degans, denominated as five degans, whole degan, half degan, and a quarter degan. Currently, one risot was roughly 2 verl d’or, making 12 risot equivalent to approximately 1 gold pound.

Having exchanged for 1,000 risot, Lumian held a variety of settas and degans in his possession.

After settling the bill and ascending to his quarters, Lumian’s attention was drawn to a young girl with long brown hair and freckles entering the establishment. She greeted the proprietor using the Highlander term for “grandfather.”

The owner, his cheekbones tinged by the sun, warmly embraced the girl, their right cheeks meeting as he responded with a smile and a single word

unfamiliar to Lumian. Puzzled, he turned to Lugano, seeking an explanation with his eyes.

“Ol’ Delva said, ‘It’s so good to see you, my little cabbage.’”

“Little cabbage…” Lumian echoed, taken aback by the term.

Lugano, with his pronounced eyebrows, large eyes, and sharp features, inquired with confusion, “Don’t you know that there are many descendants of Dariège here?”

Positioned on the second-floor staircase, he gestured towards the wall

outside.

“The distant mountain range is the Pyraez mountain range. You Dariège folks prefer calling it the Dariège mountain range.”

At that moment, Lumian grasped the entirety of the situation.

“Is this south of the Dariège mountain range?”

“Southwest. The Dariège mountain range is a few hours away by train. In between, you’ll find vast plains, pastures, and numerous towns and villages,” Lugano clarified as he ascended the stairs. “As you might know, every autumn, shepherds from Dariège and nearby areas migrate to the southern plains for grazing. Some settle down, while others seek opportunities in the larger surrounding cities, including Port Santa.

“If you head northeast, Highlander might not be necessary. Many people there are familiar with Intisian. I have a cousin who was a widow initially. Later, she met a local while shepherding and married him. She gave up grazing and helped the herdsmen develop businesses related to sheep, cheese, wool, and more. Eventually, they saved enough to start a vineyard. Her husband values her opinions. This might be an example of Feynapotter men. Unfortunately, I’m not a woman; otherwise, I might have converted to Earth Mother!”

Listening to Lugano’s insights, Lumian recalled a piece of information Aurore had once shared.

The Dariège mountain range acted as a barrier against the cold winds heading south.

Consequently, the Gaia Province, situated south of the Dariège mountain range, enjoyed abundant sunlight and warm weather. Even in winter, the plains and pastures thrived with lush grass suitable for grazing. Lumian sensed that this knowledge had become “dynamic,” forming a network that allowed him to comprehend the geographical and weather characteristics of Port Santa and its northeastern region.

Abruptly, another thought crossed his mind.

Could it be that most of the Beyonders captured by shepherds like

Pierre, who believed in Inevitability, hailed from this area?

Given the presence of a thriving port and a mountain range rich in mineral deposits, it makes sense that there would be more Beyonders here…

If that were the case, perhaps my Hunter, Provoker, and even Pyromaniac Beyonder characteristics might have originated from this region.

I'm here now…

Why do I smell the scent of inevitability…

Lumian responded casually to Lugano's information, "How many children did your cousin have?"

"Three," Lugano replied.

"If she hadn't produced children, would her husband have been so obedient?" Lumian, aware of the beliefs of Earth Mother's faith, heard about these matters with the shepherds who frequented the pastures.

They held fertility and reproduction in high regard.

"Definitely not," Lugano affirmed without hesitation.

As the conversation unfolded, the trio ascended to the fifth floor, entering a suite at the corridor's end.

Lumian strolled to the balcony, casting his gaze towards the rugged mountain range in the distance.

There lay a highlander pasture and Cordu.

After nearly fifteen minutes of silent contemplation, Lumian returned to his room and began composing letters to Madam Magician and Franca.

His intention was to inform Franca of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, urging her to alert the official Beyonders of the Feynapotter Kingdom

through 007. A potentially hazardous pathogen capable of madness at any moment was not fit for roaming freely outside.

…

“Wow! See? What did I say? Lumian will definitely encounter the source of Derangement again!” exclaimed Franca as she was about to depart with Jenna when she received the letter.

They were heading to Trier’s catacombs.

In the preceding days, Jenna harbored a desire to revisit Krismona Night Pillar, hoping to uncover something valuable. However, she hesitated to approach recklessly, fearing it might attract the suspicion of the Demoness Sect. Residing with Franca offered no guarantee of safety from their watchful eyes.

Thanks to Anthony’s introduction, she finally secured a mission at a mysticism gathering, providing a valid pretext.

Her task involved venturing to a specific family’s tomb on the catacombs’ third level, retrieving an antique tearcatcher for her employer.

Chapter 535 - 535 Reply

535 Reply

Jenna completed reading Lumian's letter and lapsed into silence for a few moments before remarking,

"The origin of the Derangement is genuinely formidable… Lumian unknowingly endured its effects for nearly half a month."

Luckily, the woman's ailment didn't erupt. Otherwise, everyone on the ship would have descended into madness.

Jenna contemplated for a moment, convinced that if she were in Lumian's position, the outcome would be the same; nothing would alter.

"Hence, Sealed Artifacts above Level 2 wield immense power, but they're not practical for most situations. Their mere existence can bring catastrophe to the surrounding humans," Franca seized the chance to enlighten her companion, who had only been a Beyonder for half a year.

She conveyed this information to Madam Judgment, not 007. This decision arose from the unpredictability of the emergency communication methods. What if 007 happened to be occupied and didn't go to that location? Regular communication had to wait until after 10 p.m.

Considering the imminent threat of Derangement, Franca didn't want to waste valuable time. With Madam Judgment's real-world identity, contacting the official Beyonders of the Feynapotter Kingdom was assured—no worries about not locating her. Come nightfall, she would notify 007, ensuring the message reached the right people.

With this matter settled, Franca and Jenna reached the catacombs in

a rented carriage.

Having followed Lumian to the third level, they had drawn valuable information from him. The place was now familiar to them. Soon, they entered a small square illuminated by burning white candles and adorned with two sacrificial pillars.

Jenna reflected for a moment and, to Franca's confusion, approached the sacrificial pillar representing the Eternal Blazing Sun. She outstretched her arms and reverently declared, "Praise the Sun!"

She was seeking protection.

Franca couldn't help but twitch her lips as she observed the scene. Amused, she remarked,

"Why are you becoming more and more like Ciel—uh, Lumian?"

"Dammit! How do I resemble him?" Jenna retorted instinctively.

"In terms of faith flexibility," Franca pointed out with a smile. "Like me, I only praise Mr. Fool. I didn't say anything like 'By Steam.'"

Jenna pondered for a moment and admitted, "Because Lumian and I once truly believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun…"

Suddenly, she halted, her lips moving as she cursed herself.

Am I admitting that I do resemble Lumian?

Franca had only been teasing. After praising The Fool, she left the sacrificial square with Jenna and headed towards the entrance of the fourth level, where the Krismona Night Pillar stood.

Thanks to Lumian's information, they navigated past the skeletal "blockage" on the road. In the dim environment, they moved cautiously, guided by the faint candlelight.

As Franca walked, an idea crossed her mind.

"Do you think we have to hold the lit white candles in our hands? Can we hold them above our heads or make a lantern and place them

inside? Will this also protect us?”

Accustomed to Franca’s occasional peculiar thoughts, Jenna casually replied, “You can give it a try.”

After considering the potential consequences of a failed experiment, Franca chuckled dryly.

“Forget it, forget it. No need to be curious about such things.”

She looked at Jenna beside her and changed the subject.

“Why are you dressed like this?”

Jenna, now in a black dress and a dark bonnet, exuded a beauty that carried a touch of maturity beyond her years. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Jenna instinctively scanned the surroundings for any dim yellow candles before whispering,

“I’m playing the part of a Witch to add a mysterious touch.”

Clad in a black robe with a hood, she might resemble the witches known to humans, but it could easily raise suspicion from the Demoness Sect, so Jenna found a compromise.

Franca quickly grasped the situation and nodded in approval. “You’ve put in the effort.”

Seizing the moment, Jenna inquired, “What about you? Since Gardner’s demise, have you not found an opportunity to digest Pleasure with someone?”

Franca, usually thick-skinned, felt a bit embarrassed by Jenna’s words. She coughed twice and replied, “It’s not difficult to find someone if I wanted. If it doesn’t work out, I’ll turn down Browns at an opportune moment and see if she takes offense. Heh heh, if she truly experiences pleasure, she might invite me to join her…”

Franca suddenly shut her mouth, wishing she could raise her right hand and slap herself.

Why did I disclose all this to Jenna?

What a disgrace!

Clearing her throat, Franca said, “Besides, this presents an opportunity.”

“Opportunity?” Jenna was puzzled.

Franca nodded solemnly.

“Relying solely on the matters in bed and physical pleasure can indeed slowly digest the potion. It also aligns with the negative characteristics of a Demoness. However, I keep feeling that the meaning of Pleasure shouldn’t be limited to this. Taking advantage of the absence of a target for physical pleasure, I want to calm down and slowly experience and explore other possibilities.

“For instance, captivating a man’s heart. Bringing joy merely by being around me. Providing pleasure through interaction, yet beyond his reach. Each encounter becomes a torment, a glimpse into the catastrophe and affliction a Demoness brings…

“Dammit, I despise such women the most!”

Franca’s frustration blazed as she spoke.

Jenna was taken aback, her lips pursed, her body trembling slightly as she struggled to contain her laughter.

“Something along those lines. At any rate, that’s the gist,” Franca abruptly concluded the conversation.

In the dim candlelight, Franca passed by a newly constructed tomb beside an ancient one. A sudden frown creased her forehead, questioning if she had missed an opportunity.

If I had sighed and hinted at the stagnation of my digestion due to the absence of a pleasure partner, would Jenna offer sympathy and assistance?

Argh, my stubbornness has cost me!

But perhaps she'd suggest Lumian…

Franca's thoughts raced, but she remained vigilant, especially when she noticed the jumbled bones strewn along the roadside.

Finally, she and Jenna reached the Krismona Night Pillar, a black marble structure supporting the cave's ceiling.

No etchings or signs of erosion adorned its surface.

Franca studied it for a moment and remarked, "It's reminiscent of the one in Fourth Epoch Trier, albeit smaller. More like a tip."

Turning to Jenna, she inquired, "Do you sense anything peculiar?"

Furrowing her brow, Jenna shook her head slowly.

"No."

…

Feynapotter Kingdom, Gaia Province, Port Santa, Solow Motel.

Lumian swiftly received a response from Madam Magician:

"Have you faced the dread of a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact?

"Repeating it won't imprint as deeply as experiencing it firsthand.

"This likely is the power of a High-Sequence Beyonder in the Spectator pathway, constantly shaping the thoughts and perceptions of those around. Remember: 'Beware of the Spectator'…

"The Sealed Artifact has other powers. I'm uncertain if it belongs to the evil gods outside. For now, you needn't pursue or capture it. We'll liaise with the Earth Mother Church through Mr. Moon."

Reading this, Lumian muttered to himself, I'd rather not get involved, but it's not my call. Sometimes, my nature thrusts me into things I'd rather avoid.

It was just like him and the Sealed Artifact being on the same voyage, headed for the same destination.

Simultaneously, Lumian gleaned a vital detail from Madam Magician's arrangements.

Mr. Moon of the Tarot Club had close ties with the Earth Mother Church.

After a moment's reflection, Lumian resumed reading the letter.

"We're also probing Resurrection Island's existence. Mr. Hanged Man and Madam Hermit are leading the investigation. They have theories but can't confirm yet. If they need your aid, they'll inform you and seek your consent. However, don't search for Resurrection Island now. It's very dangerous. Remember, very dangerous…

"The death mark is a lingering essence of death. Ordinary humans leave one mark; certain Sequences of certain pathways can leave many. Such marks erode and merge with death, lasting longer for those higher in status or with special abilities. As for ordinary Low-Sequence Beyonders, the corresponding death mark won't exist for anything beyond a few years.

"Setting up a ritual to summon the death mark is nearly impossible. Even a Sequence 0 true god wouldn't dare approach the essence of death, let alone with a ritual.

"I suspect something amiss with the Arden evil spirit Burman summoned. The decline in Burman's mental state may have started with that spirit, not his encounter with Harrison of Resurrection Island.

"Perhaps, the Arden evil spirit isn't dead."

The Arden evil spirit, leaving behind blood traces and easily dispatched by Burman, isn't dead? What an absurd storyline… Even Madam Magician remains clueless about the nature of this creature. Recollecting Burman's encounter, Lumian couldn't detect anything abnormal.

This behavior seemed like that of a half-mad individual, forcibly transitioning between pathways.

In her closing remarks, Madam Magician cautioned: "Exercise caution

during your investigations in Port Santa. Should you encounter any difficulties, don't hesitate to seek aid from the Knight of Swords."

There's no need for that for now… Lumian replied inwardly.

This stemmed from a lack of leads or information. Even if he were to correspond with the Knight of Swords, Lumian wouldn't know what to inquire about or what kind of assistance to request.

Chapter 536 - 536 One in the Light and One in the Dark

536 One in the Light and One in the Dark

Lumian's immediate priority upon reaching Port Santa was to delve into the events of the previous sea prayer ritual, particularly focusing on the individuals involved in the accident. This investigation would be crucial in uncovering the true identities of the key members of April Fool's.

However, this phase of his pursuit carried inherent risks of deception and potential traps.

Understanding the intricacies of last year's prank was paramount before engaging the Minor Arcana—Knight of Swords—in any assistance. Lumian didn't find it plausible to enlist aid on such matters.

The sealed knowledge surrounding the events in Port Santa made it apparent that unless the Knight of Swords happened to be present, he wouldn't yield much help.

Initially, Lumian aimed to gather information about the sea prayer ritual and the previous year's incident, but such details seemed exclusive to this location. Peripheral members of April Fool's, involved in minor roles, offered limited perspectives, offering mere snippets of the puzzle.

With a flick of his wrist, Lumian transformed Madam Magician's reply into a blazing fireball.

Exiting the master bedroom of the suite, he addressed Lugano, who waited in the living room, "Let's get ourselves a local identity."

“You’ve already used Louis Berry’s identity to check into the motel,” Lugano reminded Lumian after some thought.

Did this mean it’s time to depart?

Wouldn’t that be a waste of an entire week’s rent?

Lugano’s heart ached at the thought of the 10.5 gold risot.

Spending money wasn’t an issue; just don’t waste it!

As a bounty hunter who had lived a tough life for many years, he was quite sensitive to money. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been so thick-skinned as to ask Lumian for a “job.”

“Any issues?” Lumian inquired with a smile.

In the October warmth of Port Santa, Lumian sported a straightforward ensemble—light linen shirt, brown pants, a golden straw hat cradled in his grasp.

For a moment, Lugano didn’t know if he should voice his primary concern—

the matter of money. Finally, he decided to broach the subject.

“Boss, I grabbed a few newspapers from the street. Seems there are rumors in Port Farim about you taking down the Demon Warlock.”

Upon reading this news, Lugano rubbed his eyes several times, wondering if he had read wrongly.

When had his boss eradicated the Demon Warlock?

Why don’t I know?

Only the memory of the seemingly bombarded master bedroom stirred skepticism.

“It was me,” Lumian replied with a slight nod.

“…” Lugano momentarily lost the ability to organize his words.

After a brief pause, he suppressed his curiosity and feigned understanding.

“You’ve bagged a bounty of 600,000 verl d’or and some spoils of war. No wonder you’ve been throwing money around lately…” This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

The rent of 20 to 30 verl d’or didn’t seem extravagant anymore.

“All donated,” Lumian disclosed matter-of-factly.

“Why?” Lugano blurted out.

Lumian glanced at him.

Lugano immediately shut his mouth and smiled sheepishly.

“We need to change our location. Louis Berry’s fame in the Fog Sea makes him an easy target.”

In that gaze, Lumian conveyed an unspoken message:

Who’s in charge here? You or me?

Did I need your approval to donate the bounty?

With a subtle smile, Lumian posed the question, “Who said we were relocating?”

Lugano, caught off guard, stammered, “Not relocating…”

Lumian’s smile held a cryptic meaning as he shared, “Why else do you think I didn’t ask the clergyman from the Church of The Fool, who helped collect the bounty, to conceal my identity?”

Louis Berry, the high-profile adventurer, served as a beacon, attracting attention and revealing the landscape of potential threats.

Lumian needed an inconspicuous local guise to operate discreetly in the shadows.

Lugano, grappling with the complexity of his employer’s motives, confessed, “I-I thought you just wanted to be as famous as Gehrman

Sparrow in the Five Seas." He sensed there was more beneath the surface.

Lumian chuckled.

"Who among our generation wouldn't want to match Gehrman Sparrow's fame in the Five Seas?"

The desire for recognition satisfied his vanity, providing a plausible reason for not letting Theis, the Church of The Fool's bishop, conceal his identity completely.

A superficial motive—one genuine enough to make people believe—could effectively veil hidden intentions.

"Uh…" Lugano, feeling like he couldn't decipher Lumian's true colors or grasp his ultimate goal, sighed inwardly.

Sigh, I'm just a Planter, a Doctor, and a seasoned bounty hunter. My intelligence can only be considered ordinary…

Lumian cast a glance at Ludwig, munching on a potato omelet, and declared, "Let's go."

He nudged the coat rack into a blind spot, hanging the golden straw hat, creating the illusion of an inconspicuous figure if one looked from the opposite building.

Exiting the Solow Motel, Lumian strolled along the grayish-white stone street toward the lively bars near the harbor. Lugano followed, holding Ludwig's hand.

The ancient street boasted mottled houses with white walls and red tiles. Near entrances like Cordu, elderly women chatted in the sun, but they didn't lend a hand in catching lice.

Passersby tread softly, lowering their voices to maintain the tranquility of the scene.

In a casual exchange with Francesco, the bartender at the Flying Bird's basement bar, Lumian learned of a cultural phenomenon in Feynapotter, shaped by the Earth Mother's faith and the significance

accorded to family traditions: “Matriarchal culture.”

Within each family, the most venerable grandmother, a prolific progenitor, commanded unparalleled respect. As the unquestionable “parent,” they wielded a certain degree of control over every family member. Even outside the confines of their homes, this reverence persisted, for these grandmothers represented the familial symbol, embodying the Earth Mother.

The combination of religious beliefs and societal norms secured a unique status for these elderly grandmothers.

Observing this dynamic, Lumian found himself contemplating a question.

In Riston Province, a married woman, functioning as a de facto parent, held the right to be addressed as “Madame” and have her name prefixed with “Na.” Could this tradition be an influence from Feynapotter’s matriarchal culture just a mountain away?

Nomadic herdsmen and traders, traversing vast distances, inevitably brought back tales of their experiences. Ancient practices from the Dariège mountain range and its surroundings, spanning over a millennium, undoubtedly left an indelible mark.

Navigating the ancient yet serene streets under the brilliant sunlight, Lumian felt a sense of displacement. It was as if he had returned to Cordu during the bustling season when adults toiled in the fields, tended to sheep in the mountains, or embarked on hunting expeditions, leaving only an old woman and young children behind.

…

Trier, third level of the catacombs.

Jenna closed her eyes and extended her senses, but the black Krismona Night Pillar remained silent, devoid of any sighs or motion.

Assessing the Mirror Substitutions, she cautiously approached the enigmatic weather-free pillar, placing her palm against it.

The black pillar that supported the cave’s ceiling, though cold and

metallic, retained the texture of rock.

Yet, Jenna's probing mind received nothing beyond this information.

"It still doesn't work," she communicated to Franca, shaking her head.

In her reflections, Jenna recalled the two instances and sought their commonality when she had heard Krismona's voice—during her advancement and within a special mirror world in Fourth Epoch Trier.

Both times, danger and intense emotions had been common denominators.

Jenna whispered, "The danger during my Witch advancement was suppressed by the sacrificial square. Is the key intense emotions?" Jenna pondered aloud, delving into memories of painful events that had stirred her emotions,

including her mother's death, separation from her brother, and other poignant experiences of suffering.

Despite the visible fluctuations in her emotions, the Krismona Night Pillar remained silent, the illusory sigh elusive.

Franca, after a moment's contemplation, suggested, "Must there be a special event to trigger it?"

"Perhaps," Jenna replied, biting her lip. "Why don't we try the fourth level? Lumian mentioned the shadow suspected to have formed after the death of the Demoness pathway's Angel. That should be Krismona."

Franca's heart stirred, and she affirmed, "That's right. Moreover, the shadow is controlled by the seal and doesn't have the ability to attack humans. Yes, the prerequisite is that we strictly adhere to the series of rules in the catacombs."

After a brief discussion, the two of them circled around the Krismona Night Pillar, replaced candles, and proceeded to descend the ancient, mottled stone steps. Under the watchful gaze of realistic dark-gray

reliefs depicting human heads on both sides of the rock walls, they descended step by step.

Breaking the suffocating silence, Franca spoke up, “This place is perfect for ghost stories. The atmosphere is amazing.”

Jenna glanced at her, teasing, “Are you afraid?”

“How is that possible?” Franca retorted stubbornly.

Jenna chuckled.

“If you weren’t afraid, you’d just tell ghost stories to scare me. Now, you’re just sighing. It means you mainly want to rely on your voice to boost your courage.”

It’s a waste of your talent not to choose the Spectator pathway… Do theater actors have to learn to read people? Franca was about to argue when they reached the last ancient stone step.

Simultaneously, a sense of oppression enveloped them.

In the next moment, a yellowish candle flame flickered in their eyes.

The candle flame didn’t belong to them. It emerged from the distant fourth level of the catacombs.

Chapter 537 - 537 Charm

537 Charm

537 Charm

Yet, their circumstances didn't permit avoidance. They had to wield a glowing white candle, a feeble defense against the encroaching darkness of the catacombs. The candle's flame, though, made them conspicuous, a visible beacon in the shadows. True concealment required them to find solace behind the sealed doors of an ancient tomb.

The option of becoming invisible or lurking in the shadows was risky —they weren't certain if it meant snuffing out the candle flame.

After a silent exchange of glances, Franca and Jenna chose to take a circuitous route, maintaining a safe distance from the distant candlelight.

In the oppressive stillness that felt like time itself had halted, the two Demonesses cautiously progressed westward, guided by road signs and the black lines on the cave ceiling.

As they approached a point parallel to the candle flame, Franca turned her head to peer down the corridor between the ancient tombs.

Thanks to her exceptional night vision, she identified the person clutching the burning candle.

A man in a black robe—deep black and light hues intermingled in his hair, a gentle profile, pale-white skin, and dark brown eyes, distinct from the Intisians.

Feynapotterian? Strikingly similar, yet subtly different. Why do I

sense familiarity? When have I encountered this person before? Did he leave an impression in the memory recesses of the original owner of my body? Franca felt an inexplicable urge to approach and strike up a conversation.

She took a deep breath and suppressed it.

In the hushed darkness of the catacombs, approaching strangers recklessly could easily spark unnecessary conflict.

Franca had dedicated considerable time to delve into the circumstances surrounding the original body's demise and the person's life experiences. She sought to ensure there were no lingering issues that she needed to be wary about acquaintances from the past.

The man in the black robe, having observed the two Demonesses and noting their lack of intent to draw near, continued on his path, eventually disappearing behind an ancient tomb.

"He doesn't look like a college student." Jenna averted her gaze and eliminated an option.

If the individual hadn't ventured into the fourth level of the catacombs merely driven by curiosity and excitement, it hints at a clear motive. Is he on a commissioned search for antiques, paying respects to an ancestor buried on this level, or a Beyonder delving into the mysticism and seal composition of the catacombs? Perhaps, like Jenna and myself, he pursues the revelations from the three night pillars. Franca's mind raced through various possibilities.

On the fourth level of the catacombs, two more night pillars awaited: Marianne's Night Pillar and Lius's Night Pillar.

The former, the pope of the Evernight Goddess Church in the Fourth Epoch, and the latter, the Blessed of the ancient Death. Both had met their demise during the War of the Four Emperors inside Fourth Epoch Trier.

Having shared her analysis with Jenna, Franca gestured with her right hand, the one without a candle, and reassured, "Don't worry

about his motives. It won't affect our search for Krismona's shadow."

I didn't want to bother either. You were the one considering all the possibilities… I sensed that impulse in your heart. Did you truly want to investigate that person just now? Jenna, attuned to Franca's nuances, grasped her companion's thoughts but chose to chuckle, keeping the revelation to herself.

At times, Franca could be quite prideful!

The entrance was sealed by a dense cluster of pale-white mushrooms tinged with black.

Before Jenna could respond, she continued, "Alright, alright, alright. I get it. Now's not the time for exploration and adventure."

"Dammit, I didn't stop you. Maybe Krismona's shadow is in the mushroom cave." Jenna, feeling stifled since entering the fourth level of the catacombs, vented her discomfort with coarse language, as if confined in a space that oppressed her.

Franca was on the verge of responding when her attention fixated on a figure standing at the corner ahead.

Clad in a simple and unadorned white robe, the figure boasted smooth black hair, exquisite facial features, and a holy aura. Her beauty transcended the surroundings of darkness, silence, and filth, as if she had emerged from the depths of human imagination,

Krismona! The name resonated simultaneously in the minds of Franca and Jenna.

They had indeed stumbled upon a shadow suspected to be a High-Sequence Beyonder—the Demoness, Krismona!

Regaining her composure, Jenna locked eyes with the figure and attempted to speak in ancient Hermes, "Hello."

The woman's beauty was otherworldly, captivating everyone's attention. A faint smile graced the corners of her mouth.

Her allure was fully unleashed.

Entranced by that smile, Jenna and Franca found themselves lost, their minds fixated on a singular thought: Approach her, approach her…

Like moths drawn to a flame, fully aware of the dangers that lay in her beauty, yet compelled to draw near.

One step, two steps, three steps… The two Demonesses, eyes filled with fascination, advanced toward the woman in the simple white robe.

As they walked on, Jenna couldn't help but instinctively sigh and feel a sense of pity.

Why did she sigh when she has such a beautiful smile?

Had she encountered something sorrowful?

Sigh…

Jenna snapped out of her daze, realizing that the woman in the white robe might not be the same as Krismona, who had sighed and protected them. At the very least, she wasn't entirely the same!

Her vision cleared instantly, revealing the beautiful figure's soft black hair billowing. Each strand had become unusually thick, and the top had split open, resembling a snake opening its mouth.

The pitch-black snake's mouth faced Jenna and Franca, seemingly poised for their approach.

Jenna's heart skipped a beat. She swiftly grabbed Franca and whispered, "Something's amiss!"

Franca, initially taken aback, struggled for a few seconds before breaking free from her enchantment.

Coming to a sudden halt, they watched as the holy figure in the white robe stared blankly for a moment before bifurcating into a fork and vanishing into the darkness.

Phew… Franca exhaled, her fear lingering as she remarked, "Why

isn't there a rule in the catacombs guidelines that prohibits communication with those who don't hold candles?"

Franca glanced at her with frustration and said, "You managed to break free from the female ghost's charm before I did."

Jenna recounted the thoughts that had recently crossed her mind.

"But I also heard Krismona's sigh and words in Fourth Epoch Trier…" Franca raised her right hand and touched her face. "Am I really more easily enamored with beauty?"

At this point, a sudden puzzlement overcame her.

"Actually, I've always found it strange that Krismona Night Pillar stands in the catacombs.

"As for the other two night pillars, one belongs to the Church of Evernight's former pope, Marianne, and the other is named after the ancient Death's Blessed, Lius. The latter is the Death Consul, which is very compatible with the catacombs. The former should be on the neighboring pathway of Death. In other words, they are closely related to death, home, and the dead. Krismona is the Demoness of Catastrophe, clearly distinct from them.

"I can understand why there was a giant pillar representing Krismona in Fourth Epoch Trier. That's because there's a special mirror world there. It contains the Primordial Demoness's divine power left behind during the War of the Four Emperors. However, why was Krismona Night Pillar included in the catacombs' construction? Back then, an Angel who followed the Blood Emperor perished. Why did it have to be Her?"

Jenna shook her head slowly and redirected her gaze to the spot where the holy figure had vanished.

She attempted to walk a distance in that direction and suddenly realized that the spot where the white-robed woman had been standing was an ancient tomb.

Unlike the other tombs on the fourth floor, its tomb door was open.

…

After departing Rue Aquina, home to the Solow Motel, Lumian found an empty alley and casually tossed the Lie earring to Lugano.

“Find someone skilled in crafting false identities. Change your appearance, and don’t use your current look.” Lumian gestured towards the café diagonally opposite. “I’ll be waiting for you there.”

“Yes, Boss.” Lugano displayed no sign of worry.

Despite being unfamiliar with this city, he had numerous acquaintances residing here.

Moreover, he was fluent in Highlander.

As Lumian observed the translator-guide completing his disguise, returning Lie, and heading toward Rue des Bars, he led Ludwig into the café, where each table was adorned with a bouquet of flowers.

The sun bore down, rendering the passersby somewhat languid.
Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Unfazed, Lumian, armed with his limited knowledge of Highlander words and gestures, successfully ordered two cups of Torres coffee with milk, a Santa yolk pastry with cream fashioned into a tower, roasted suckling pig, and duck stewed in pear juice.

Ludwig was pleased.

Sipping his coffee, Lumian surveyed the café. He noticed that the six or seven tables were occupied mainly by couples in their twenties, engaged in dates. There was only one middle-aged couple.

With Lumian’s acute hearing, it wasn’t challenging for him to catch snippets of conversations at nearby tables, even though he didn’t comprehend most of it. Only a few words stood out.

“Ocean… Pray… Going aboard… Island…”

Could they be discussing the sea prayer ritual next month? Lumian mused, shifting his gaze out the window.

On the street, two young men with long swords on their backs engaged in a heated argument for some reason. Drawing their swords on the spot, they seemed poised for a duel.

Chapter 538 - 538 Historical Origins

538 Historical Origins

Even through the glass window, Lumian heard the clash of two lads' swords outside. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

He couldn't help but raise his eyebrows.

They're really fighting?

Though duels were popular in Trier, it was rare for them to wield weapons without the formalities. Normally, they'd go through the entire process: determine the type of duel—cold weapons or revolvers—sign a contract, find a recognized witness, and then borrow weapons from the café's front desk or the bar counter. Only these duels were legal, avoiding police intervention.

But wielding a longsword at the slightest disagreement was either a prelude to riot or a mob vendetta. Such lethal weapons rarely surfaced in real fights.

Port Santa, or rather, the Feynapotter Kingdom's security is so poor? Lumian was surprised by this.

From the Flying Bird to the Solow Motel, he noticed the locals' penchant for carrying blades and swords, reminiscent of scenes from classical novels.

It was actually legal!

In a maritime colony like Port Farim, openly carrying such items was unheard of. Even a dagger had to be concealed.

For him, though, this was a welcome advantage.

Fascinated, Lumian observed the desperate struggle between the two lads through the window, occasionally commenting on their combat techniques in his mind.

Suddenly, a group of people jogged over from the street.

All women, they wore black cloth hats with white patterns, black lining, and brown leather armor. Dark cloaks adorned with two crossed swords, and brass revolvers strapped to their waists completed their attire.

The woman leading the group seemed to be in her late twenties, with thick, naturally curly black hair, thick eyebrows, large eyes, and plump red lips—

quite beautiful.

Standing at over 1.7 meters tall, she drew a straight sword from her back and called out to the two men fighting on the street with a cold expression.

Lumian only understood the word “stop.”

The two lads truly ceased their actions, standing by the street and accepting the reprimand from the group of women, their imposing demeanor fading.

After a few minutes, they left separately with their swords, not being apprehended.

The language barrier proved quite troublesome.

Lumian wasn’t in a hurry to inquire if he had found a black-market merchant who could craft fake identities. He casually asked, “Is it legal to possess cold weapons in Port Santa?”

Lugano lowered his round-rimmed black hat and dropped his voice.

“That’s right. It’s a local custom. The Feynapotter Kingdom government respects this tradition. Besides, it’s a good thing for them

to have more people die in the Gaia Province."

"Why?" Lumian inquired with interest.

Lugano covered his face with his hand, as if afraid of being followed.

Observing this, Lumian tossed him the Lie earring.

Lugano hurried to the washroom and reverted to his original appearance, albeit his facial features becoming more refined.

Only then did he relax and explain, "Have you ever heard of the Battle of the Violated Oath?"

Lumian, shaped by Aurore's rigorous education, instinctively replied, "The Battle of the Violated Oath that began in the Fifth Epoch in 738? The one where Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other small south-central countries were separated from the north of the Feynapotter Kingdom, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom broke off from the Church of Earth Mother?"

Lugano was taken aback.

"Yes."

He only had a rough idea. The other party had actually revealed the exact year and final outcome.

After a few seconds, Lugano lowered his voice and said, "During the Battle of the Violated Oath, the entire Gaia Province, especially those near the Dariège mountain range, attempted to gain independence but failed.

"Later, in order to guard against the natives, despite high-quality iron and coal mines just south of the Dariège Mountains, the Feynapotter Kingdom only set up smelting factories and no gun factories. There wasn't a single native in the troops stationed here; they were all assigned to other places.

"Was there once a widespread belief in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom here?" Lumian couldn't help but glance at Ludwig, who was enjoying dessert.

The key to the independence of Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other countries in the south-central region was their mainstream faith in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, not the Earth Mother.

“I don’t know,” Lugano honestly shook his head.

Undeterred, he pressed on with the matter at hand.

“You should already know that the ancient Gaia Province mainly comprised four types of people. Firstly, farmers. Secondly, fishermen from places like Port Santa. Thirdly, mountain dwellers who relied on minerals and hunting to survive. Fourthly, the herdsmen you’re familiar with. The latter three are fierce, wielding swords fearlessly in conflicts.”

Lumian nodded.

That was indeed the case.

Whether fishermen, mountain dwellers, or herdsmen, they all lived in relative poverty. They battled nature’s cruelty and faced various dangers beyond human settlements. They even had to be wary of those among them with ill intentions. Swords and blades were necessities, not ornaments.

Lumian had heard firsthand from the migrating herdsmen about wolf pack attacks and the brutality of bandits. It had left a deep impression on him.

“One of Earth Mother’s three combat orders is stationed permanently in Gaia Province. They guard against us in the north and Lenburg in the northeast. Simultaneously, they aim to monitor the locals.

“Heh heh, encountering combat nuns in Gaia Province and Port Santa isn’t uncommon. Their demeanors differ from other women…”

Lugano’s expression shifted to one of leisure and fascination.

The team just now were the combat nuns who maintain order? Lumian realized.

He teased Lugano with a smile, “They’re nuns.”

Lugano smiled enigmatically and remarked, “The nuns of the Earth Mother Church don’t take vows of chastity. Instead, they pledge to have as many children as possible before a certain age. If they’re interested in you, they’ll be quite proactive. Sometimes, they might even push a bit. The young folks here love showcasing their bravery in front of these nuns. Their courage might catch someone’s eye.”

Pledging to have numerous children before a certain age… It sounds peculiar, aligning with Earth Mother’s teachings but reminiscent of another Mother. Local customs, governmental involvement, religious doctrines, and primal courtship behaviors has all woven into the folklore of this place where cold weapons rule the streets. Lumian hadn’t expected such complexity behind a seemingly trivial matter.

Upon reflection, it was rather intriguing.

At that moment, Lumian suddenly understood Aurore’s words from the past.

“If I return to university without life’s pressures, I’d study history.”

Phew… Lumian exhaled slowly and turned to Lugano, “Any progress?”

Lugano, still lost in thoughts about combat nuns, was caught off guard and struggled to snap out of his reverie.

“You Intisians…” Lumian clicked his tongue.

Only then did Lugano grasp the question. He sheepishly smiled and said,

“I’ve made some. I’ve found a well-connected black-market merchant who can help.

“Would you like to meet them? He’s also a descendant of Dariège.”

“Sure.” Lumian finished his coffee and stood up.

…

Trier, fourth level of the catacombs.

Jenna and Franca each gripped a burning white candle, their eyes fixed on the ancient tomb that lay open, hesitant to advance.

No one knew what lay buried inside, and the fear of something terrifying emerging lingered in the air.

In the outer world, the two Demonesses could employ divination to discern the situation. However, in the catacombs, establishing a close connection with the ordinary spirit world was nearly impossible. The outcome was evident.

After all, Lumian couldn't enter through Spirit World Traversal, but he could "teleport" within its confines.

After a brief pause, Franca passed her Mirror Substitution to Jenna and stepped forward with solemn determination. Relying on her spiritual premonition, she cautiously approached the ancient tomb.

As they drew nearer, the dim yellow candlelight revealed a heap of pale-white bones in the entrance area, adorned with light greenish-black mold spots.

Franca raised the white candle, casting its light into the depths of the tomb.

Skeletons lay scattered in disarray, occupying every inch of the ground. In the center, a tilted sarcophagus revealed a multitude of decaying bones.

Franca hesitated for a moment before declaring, "It doesn't seem dangerous."

Only then did Jenna approach, returning the Mirror Substitution.

Franca continued her observation and remarked, "Nothing of value either."

Gems and other items were absent among the burial articles, likely lost during the construction of the catacombs and the opening of these ancient tombs. Everything else had decayed or shattered. Even the murals on the walls bore only faint traces.

Jenna observed for a while and said uncertainly, “What about the area where these bones are pressing down?”

“Let me take a look.” Franca moved closer, allowing invisible spider silk to spread and entwine the pale-white bones at the entrance, aiding in their movement.

Suddenly, an irregular mirror fragment, seemingly coated in black paint, materialized in the flames.

Jenna and Franca’s eyes narrowed.

It bore a striking resemblance to the Mirror World Fragment they had obtained in Fourth Epoch Trier!

“Did a special Mirror Person once die here?” Franca mused. “Did Krismona’s shadow appear here to inform us? But why did She attack us?”

Jenna shared the perplexity. After a moment of thought, she said, “Why did the special Mirror Person die here? Who owns this tomb? Or rather, which ancient family does it belong to?”

Franca stared for a moment before nodding solemnly.

“That might be our next investigation.”

Finding no anomalies, the duo stored away the mirror fragment. Utilizing the formless spider silk of the Demoness of Pleasure, they meticulously searched the entire tomb but found nothing that identified the tomb owner.

Franca sighed and said, “Well, we’ll unravel it when we get back. Let’s go acquire an antique tearcatcher for the employer now.”

Chapter 539 - 539 Information on the Sea Prayer Ritual

539 Information on the Sea Prayer Ritual

Lumian and Lugano, their appearances altered and attire changed, met the black-market merchant claiming lineage to Dariège.

Seated at the head of the table, he sported a white shirt and a black vest, a glass of pale malt-colored white wine at his fingertips and a slowly burning cigar between them.

He did embody the heritage of the Dariège region with slightly sunken eye sockets, slightly curled black hair, and piercing blue eyes reminiscent of a cloudless sky over a towering mountain. His thin cheeks and thick stubble suggested a man in his thirties.

“Good afternoon, Mr. Valerio,” Lugano greeted in Highlander.

Valerio, casting a glance at his armed bodyguards, responded with a smile in Intisian, flavored with a distinct Dariège accent.

“It’s been a long time since I’ve returned home. It’s a pleasure to see you.”

“Indeed, Mr. Valerio,” Lumian replied in Intisian, his voice also tinged with a Dariège accent.

While shepherds excelled at navigating the perils of the wilderness, an inherent wariness of authorities in settled human areas lingered.

Valerio nodded subtly and inquired, “Did you come from Larnaca?”

“Yes, I just finished attending the trade fair there,” Lumian replied smoothly. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Having learned about Larnaca from the shepherds in Cordu, Lumian was well aware of the monthly trade fair that transformed the suburbs into a bustling marketplace. Shepherds from far and wide flocked to the event, seizing opportunities to trade lamb, wool, cheese, and other goods.

Valerio then delved into the topic of migration and Dariège's folklore. Lumian, well-versed in the subject from a shepherd's perspective, provided insightful answers.

In the midst of the conversation, he felt a bit disoriented. Recollections of his sister's occasional threats echoed in his mind: "If you don't study hard, I'll send you off to be a shepherd!"

Now, irony had it that he found himself playing the role of a shepherd.

After some time, Valerio nodded in satisfaction and took a puff of his cigar.

"You're quite wise. Grazing in the suburbs doesn't require identification, but settling in the city requires it. I'll get you two sets as soon as possible. In the future, if you encounter any difficulties, you can come to me. I might not be of much help, but having one more person will give you more ideas. We're all from Dariège, so we naturally have to have each other's backs."

Lumian wasn't surprised by the black-market merchant's enthusiasm.

Uniting the people of one's homeland would create an exploitable force that couldn't be ignored!

It was reminiscent of the Savoie Mob. In the beginning, the pioneers, mostly Savoyards working as laborers and attendants, paved the way for the big bosses of the Savoie Chamber of Commerce. They expanded operations, safeguarded assets, and contributed immeasurably.

Lumian applied the acting techniques learned from Jenna and Anthony Reid's guidance to commend Valerio's noble character.

"If you want to survive here, it's best to convert to Earth Mother as

soon as possible. Find a good lady to marry and have a few children as soon as possible. Only then will you avoid hidden trouble."

Is urging marriage and childbearing a tradition in the Feynapotter Kingdom? Lumian criticized and smiled bitterly.

"Without copper coins, there won't be any good girls."

This Dariège proverb echoed in the room, signifying the difficulty for the poor, especially shepherds, to attract fine ladies and start families.

"This is Feynapotter, not Dariège," Valerio remarked, taking a sip of his white wine. "The good ladies here value robust bodies and bravery. The money can wait after you get married."

Perplexed, Lumian questioned, "Why?

"Men like that are more suited for reproduction, and they possess the ability to impregnate good ladies," Valerio explained with a smile. "This place is different from Dariège. The essence of many things lies in fertility and reproduction. Only by understanding this can you truly understand Feynapotter and praise the mother of all things!"

The black-market merchant rose, spreading his feet slightly and raising his hands high.

No wonder Feynapotter teems with people in the Northern Continent. Without their knack for land improvement and food cultivation, sustaining such a population would be impossible. Lumian's thoughts raced as he probed,

"Mr. Valerio, I heard there's a sea prayer ritual next month. Any chance to make some money?"

"Yes," Valerio replied, taking a seat. "Port Santa stays relatively warm in November. When my grandfather first came, he rented a wooden box to store popsicles, gathered a pile of ice from the factory, and covered them up. Then, he waded into the crowd, selling popsicles and ice cubes, earning his first bucket of gold. You can still do it now, but the competition is fiercer. You might even need to rent a bicycle for a larger thermal wooden box to hit more ritual venues."

“Many ritual venues?” Lumian asked.

Valerio replied with a smile, “This is a grand event for all of Port Santa. Different processes happen in various places. There’s the Dance of the Sea at the port, a parade of flower boats across the city, a sea boat race, the vigil ritual in Milo Village, and the core sea sacrifice.”

“What’s the sea sacrifice?” Lumian inquired curiously.

Valerio slowly shook his head.

“I don’t know the specifics. All I know is that the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea board a special boat, head to a certain area beyond the port with sacrifices from fishermen and sea merchants, and perform a unique ritual. The detailed process is known only to those who’ve been there.”

“The Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea?” Lumian kept picking keywords.

This perfectly aligned with the situation of a Dariège shepherd who had just arrived in Port Santa.

Valerio smiled and said, “The crucial part of the Sea Prayer Ritual is selecting a man as the Governor of the Sea and four girls as the Maidens of the Sea. They’ll lead a parade through the city on a flower boat before boarding a special fishing boat at the port. Sailing during the Dance of the Sea, they signal the start of the race. Later, they circle the port, entering the oldest local fishing village, Milo, for a night.

“At 7 a.m. the next morning, they reboard the boat and head to the sea sacrificial ground with the offerings.”

The chosen Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea… A sea prayer ritual with multiple segments… Lumian repeated the key parts inwardly.

Suddenly, his heart skipped a beat as he made a connection.

This was very similar to the Lent celebration in the Dariège

mountains and the Spring Elf!

Doesn't the sea prayer ritual here resemble the Lent celebration?

Upon second thought, Lumian felt that the similarity didn't explain the issue.

This was a common process in mysticism—the creation of a specific symbol to represent the sacrificial target to achieve the desired effect.

This was evident in many folklore rituals.

"How are the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea chosen?" Lumian asked curiously.

Could it be, like the Spring Elf, they're elected by all the residents of Port Santa?

Could one gain a high reputation and enjoy hidden benefits after the ritual?

Valerio took another drag from his cigar.

"They're chosen by the committee members of the Fisheries Guild, the oldest guild in Port Santa. They keep the specific criteria and whether they want to vote a secret. Even the official members of the Fisheries Guild don't know."

With that, the black-market merchant grinned.

"I also aim to become the Governor of the Sea. They say it comes with many perks, but no one spills the details."

"How have the previous Governors of the Sea fared?" Lumian was more concerned about this matter.

Valerio was taken aback. He thought for a moment before shaking his head.

"I'm not sure.

"Each Governor of the Sea serves only a one-year term. Once they

step down, they seem to be relocated. Anyway, they can't stick around in Port Santa to avoid clashes with the new Governor. Heh heh, they're surely offered hefty compensation and allowed to bring their families."

Relocated? Were they truly relocated, or did they face something else? Lumian, drawing from past experiences, couldn't help but think of something ominous and dreadful in the face of such a ritualistic folklore.

Regarding the Governor of the Sea's subsequent experiences during the sea prayer ritual, it did sound peculiar.

Lumian thought for a moment and, adopting the tone befitting his current guise, inquired, "What about the Maidens of the Sea?"

"They're a hit among sea merchants, fishing company shareholders, and fishermen and sailors. Everyone wants to wed the Maidens of the Sea, a symbol of the sea's blessing. Explore various fishing villages, the Fisheries Guild, and the homes of sea merchants, and you'll find many influential grandmothers who were once Maidens of the Sea." Valerio's face brimmed with envy, as if he too harbored dreams of marrying a Maiden of the Sea and becoming a true sea merchant.

This mirrors the hidden benefits of being a Spring Elf… Lumian suppressed the urge to raise his right hand and stroke his chin.

Knowing when to cease, he refrained from pressing further. After depositing 50 gold risot, he exited Valerio's illegal casino with Lugano.

Ludwig didn't come with them. Instead, he was stationed in a nearby family restaurant equipped with a children's entertainment facility, overseen by specialized caretakers and a provided meal.

In Feynapotter, numerous industries supported parents in raising children and alleviating stress. Intis and other countries lacked such facilities, and even if they existed, they were accessible only to the elite.

…

Trier, catacombs.

Franca and Jenna descended to the third level with their flickering white candles.

Feeling a bit less stifled, Franca turned her head and inquired, “What’s the name of the tomb we’re after?”

Jenna didn’t hesitate and replied, “The Thorn and Shieldwall Tomb.”

Chapter 540 - 540 Entrustee

540 Entrustee

“Aren’t you tired of this? Can’t you try something different?” she cursed, turning her head to inspect the road sign beside her.

It indicated they had finally reached their destination.

Each level of the catacombs sprawled vast, evident by the multitude of remains it accommodated. The road signs at each node could only display seven or eight iconic names and nearby tombs. Franca and Jenna relied on returning to the small sacrificial square and starting anew to locate the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.

Unlike the fourth-level tomb, mostly sealed off and devoid of corpses and bones along the way, this place was strewn with scattered bones and decaying items, emitting a faint, uncomfortable stench.

Jenna glanced at the pile of bones outside and observed a few thin metal plates inlaid on the tomb wall. Their surfaces were blurry, showing signs of severe corrosion. Only the shieldwall and thorn symbol could be vaguely discerned. Whether there were other patterns remained impossible to tell.

“No wonder it’s called the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.” Franca sighed.

Simultaneously, illuminated by the dim yellow candlelight, she noticed companion items arranged in a groove on the tomb’s inner wall. Some were made of wood, weathered and decayed, while others were glass and porcelainware, in the form of fragments. The only intact item was a glass bottle, its surface inlaid with carved patterns resembling gold and adorned with a unique golden lid. Perhaps due to the metal’s protection, the glass bottle didn’t shatter, but it appeared murky and less transparent.

“It’s exquisite, almost like art,” Franca commented, puzzled. “Why didn’t the catacomb workers take it away?”

It seemed quite valuable!

“Perhaps it was placed in this tomb after the catacombs were completed,” Jenna speculated.

The two Demonesses didn’t linger on the topic. Jenna retrieved one of the Mirror Substitutions and handed it to Franca.

With a swift leap, Franca vaulted over the seemingly silent but dangerous skeletons, gracefully landing at the entrance of the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb.

After confirming her surroundings and receiving no warnings from her spirituality, Jenna cautiously approached the groove on the side wall along the ground, avoiding the pale-white bones.

Instinctively, she reached out with her right hand but withdrew it. An old handkerchief from her pocket was produced, shielding her palm from direct contact with the antique tearcatcher.

The tears in the tearcatcher had long dried up.

Jenna scrutinized the tearcatcher for a moment before stowing it away. She retraced her steps and leaped to Franca’s side.

“You completed the commission so easily?” she whispered uncertainly.

It was a stark contrast to the disappearance of the Deep Valley Cloister’s gatekeeper she had previously accepted.

Franca scoffed and replied, “What kind of difficulty do you want for a 1,000 verl d’or commission?”

…

As Lumian, reverting to Louis Berry, strode into the front hall, his gaze fell upon a vibrant scene. A young brown-haired girl, clad in a red dress adorned with black patterns, swayed gracefully in a corner.

From time to time, she paused to refine her dance moves.

Lumian's thoughts raced as he approached the front desk. Seizing the opportunity, he inquired, "What's she doing?"

This time, he spoke in Intisian.

The grizzled boss, his cheekbones etched with sunburnt marks, appeared taken aback. Responding in Intisian with a Dariège accent, he explained, "She's my granddaughter, Isabella. She's practicing the Dance of the Sea for the performance next month."

"Dance of the Sea… Dance of the Sea for the sea prayer ritual?" Lumian hadn't anticipated this revelation. Instinctively, he smiled and remarked, "That would make many girls jealous, wouldn't it?" The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The boss grinned.

"This isn't like becoming a Maiden of the Sea. Not many people will be jealous, but participating in the Dance of the Sea performance can indeed make her proud and happy for a long time."

As Lumian signaled for Lugano to guide Ludwig back to their room, he casually inquired of the boss, "Did you come from Dariège?"

"That's right. I'm a Guillaume," the boss said with a self-deprecating smile. "Otta Guillaume. When I saw your identification this morning, I thought about greeting you in Intisian, but I gave up in the end. You know, Intisians aren't the best bunch. Even among my fellow villagers, I've come across a few with questionable morals."

"How long have you been in Port Santa?" Lumian asked with genuine interest, resting his right elbow on the front desk.

Otta Sr. pondered seriously.

"Forty years, I reckon. Probably forty years. Back then, I was an assistant in a caravan. I met my wife here and decided to stay. Heh heh, she's now a nagging old lady. Always fussing about how to dress when it gets cold or reminding me to head home for dinner, leaving the motel to the assistants. She manages everything so well that I

don't have to worry. How great is that? It's rare to encounter such a woman in Dariège."

Lumian endured Otta Sr.'s ramblings for a while before cutting to the chase.

"I've been invited by a friend to Port Santa to witness the sea prayer ritual."

"It's quite lively. The entire port will be in euphoria," Otta Sr. praised without hesitation.

Lumian cast a glance at Isabella, still engrossed in her practice, and casually remarked, "I heard there was an accident at last year's sea prayer ritual?"

"No?" Otta Sr. responded with a puzzled expression. "I watched the flower boat parade, the boat race, and the Dance of the Sea. There were no accidents."

Frowning, he fell into deep thought.

"However, Sandro did mention that the number of shipwrecks has increased significantly this year. We've encountered more pirates, and our fishing gains haven't been as good as last year's… Was there really an accident at last year's sea prayer ritual? Was it the vigil ritual or the sea sacrifice? Did the old fogeys at the Fisheries Guild conceal the problem?

"Who's Sandro?" Lumian pressed.

Otta Sr. smiled again.

"It's my child, Isabella's father. He works as a clerk in the government, and his wife is a teacher at the grammar school."

Is Port Santa's sea prayer ritual genuinely effective? Has its protective power diminished after the April Fool's prank? Lumian's mind flashed with the information he'd gathered earlier.

The elderly's mix of shock, terror, and anger upon receiving the news was a source of long-lasting delight for the April Fool's participants.

After seeking more details about the sea prayer ritual, Lumian bid farewell to Ol' Otta and ascended to his suite upstairs.

…

At 4 p.m. in Trier, Quartier de l'Observatoire, near Place du Purgatoire.

After donning a hooded black robe and transforming her face into the dramatic persona of Showy Diva, Jenna followed the feedback from her contact and reached a street that specialized in funeral items.

Most Trieriens passing by appeared fairly ordinary, but a handful sported white masks, brandished blunt scythes, and adorned themselves in black robes. They posed as undead messengers from folklore, sewing white skulls and other artistic elements onto their shoulders…

Thanks to their presence and the unique atmosphere of Trier, Jenna, dressed as a warlock with a hood concealing her features, blended seamlessly into the surroundings.

She paused in a quiet corner and retrieved the exquisite tearcatcher.

Before long, someone resembling her approached and, in a gravelly voice, inquired, "How much for this tearcatcher?"

"1,000 verl d'or," Jenna responded, her excitement bubbling.

This marked her first successfully executed commission.

"1,001 verl d'or," countered the warlock-dressed man.

Upon the secret signal matching, Jenna insisted on charging only 1,000 verl d'or.

Once the confirmation was mutual, she handed over the tearcatcher, received the reward, and discreetly departed.

With the tearcatcher in hand, the hooded figure navigated the nearby streets, taking nearly fifteen minutes to circle back to Place du Purgatoire and approach a street bench at the edge.

A man sat there, engrossed in a newspaper.

The hooded figure presented the exquisite tearcatcher, adorned with intricate hollowed-out golden patterns, and whispered, “I’ve completed your commission. Will it offset the money I owe you?”

The person on the bench lowered the newspaper, looked up, revealing a clerk with curly black hair, sunken eyes, and thick lips. A crystal-like monocle adorned his right eye.

“Monsieur Monette?” the hooded figure pressed in confirmation.

Monette accepted the tearcatcher, gently tracing the golden patterns with a slow smile playing on his lips.

…

Solow Motel, fifth-floor suite.

Lumian spent the entire afternoon within the confines of his room at the Solow Motel. Lounging on a recliner, he swayed gently, engrossed in his ongoing study of Highlander. Now and then, he leafed through travel books detailing the customs of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

As evening approached, Lugano, who had ventured downstairs for a chat, returned to Lumian’s room.

Leaning in, Lugano lowered his voice and shared, “Boss, there’s a Madame looking for you.”

Madame… Lumian felt a chill run down his spine upon hearing that term, and the muscles in his back tensed.

Which “Madame” could this be?

After a brief pause, Lumian realized that Lugano was referring to an ordinary Madame, not the “Madame” of the Beyonder world.

“Which Madame, and what brings her here?” Lumian inquired calmly, sitting up and addressing his translator.

Lugano shook his head and replied, “She didn’t say. Just mentioned

having something to entrust to the renowned adventurer, Louis Berry."

Lugano emphasized the term "renowned adventurer."

Chapter 541 - 541 Simple Entrustment

541 Simple Entrustment

He stood up and said to Lugano, “Invite that Madame in.”

With those words, Lumian stooped to pick up the distinctive golden straw hat from the small round table. He aimed to make Louis Berry’s image more memorable, adding a touch of flair to his persona.

In no time, Lugano escorted a woman in her thirties into the room.

She wore a loose-fitting white dress adorned with red flowers, accentuating her curves.

Port Santa’s women, in contrast to the Dariège region just across the mountain, favored glamorous and stylish attire, embodying a romantic and liberated aesthetic—reflecting the traditional taste of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

The lady, with long brown hair tied up and a healthy complexion, entered without a maid. Her azure eyes, framed by thick eyelashes, focused on Lumian, who held the golden straw hat.

Her red lips moved, and though Lumian couldn’t grasp every word, the name “Louis Berry” was discernible in her pronunciation.

Promptly, Lugano initiated the translation.

“The Madame says, Honorable Monsieur Louis Berry, I’ve heard about your hunt of the Demon Warlock. I wonder if you’re willing to help my family solve a problem.”

Lumian’s gaze shifted from the jeweled bead bracelet on the lady’s

wrist to her beautiful and mature face.

“What’s your name?”

“Giorgia,” the lady replied after Lugano translated.

Lumian repeated, acknowledging the lady’s name with a smile,

“Madame Giorgia, what would you like to entrust me with?”

Giorgia listened attentively to Lugano’s translation and spoke in Highlander with a slight local accent, “An evil creature has appeared in my household. I need your help eliminating it.”

Lumian, though grasping the gist, awaited Lugano’s translation by casting his gaze at him.

When Lugano conveyed Giorgia’s words in Intisian, Lumian chuckled and said, “I’m sorry, I forgot to invite the beautiful Madame to have a seat.

“The great adventurer Gehrman Sparrow taught us that manners are very important.”

Gesturing toward the sofa, Lumian settled onto the divan, attempting to caress Ludwig’s head, like a godfather.

As Giorgia took her place in an armchair, Lumian, shaking his golden straw hat, leaned forward.

Giorgia looked at Lugano and listened attentively.

She pursed her thick lips and replied in Highlander,

“We don’t want the Church to know about this. It will damage our family’s reputation.”

Is that why you are entrusting me, a foreigner who will leave after watching the sea prayer ritual? And that’s after confirming my ability to deal with that evil creature… Lumian, pondering this choice, shifted his gaze away from Lugano. After a brief pause, he inquired, “Tell me more about that evil creature.”

After a brief pause, Giorgia contemplated and then shared, “It resembles a tailless lizard. It attacked everyone in the household, killing a few maids and valets and devoured their bodies.

“Our family’s bodyguards fired on it and injured it, but they failed to kill it because it has very strong scales. We could only chase it to the basement and lock it up.

“We thought it would slowly starve to death from hunger and thirst. To our surprise, nearly two weeks later, it’s still alive and trying to break open the basement door.”

It doesn’t seem very dangerous. They could repel it with ordinary firearms… They didn’t mention why the lizard appeared. It appears that this is why they aren’t willing to seek out the Church of Earth Mother and the local government to handle it… Lumian thoughtfully compared the few words he understood to the content translated by Lugano and confirmed that the guide hadn’t embellished or redacted any content.

Lumian then casually inquired, “Were there any casualties among the bodyguards?”

Giorgia, after the translation, shook her head slowly.

“No fatalities. Two were injured, but nothing severe. Yes, that monster made the entire room feel like it had been dragged into the deep sea, affecting normal movements.”

As if dragged into the deep sea… There’s indeed certain Beyonder phenomena, but it seems relatively weak… Deep sea… Lumian’s interest was piqued as he earnestly inquired about the details.

After a series of responses, Giorgia said gently, “Monsieur Louis Berry, we’re willing to pay you 15,000 risot, but you have to promise not to publicize this matter.”

15,000 gold risot? According to your description, the monster is worth at most 5,000 gold risot. The remaining 10,000 should be a hush money, right? Lumian smiled and said in broken Highlander, “Sure thing.”

Rising from his seat, Lumian announced in Intisian, “I want to observe the situation at the scene.”

Giorgia stood up and listened to Lugano’s translation.

She wasn’t surprised by Louis Berry’s request. Familiar with adventurers and bounty hunters, she understood the importance of assessing the situation firsthand and making thorough preparations. It meant survivability or success for the elites.

“Now?” Giorgia sought confirmation.

Lumian comprehended the word and affirmed in Highlander, “Now.”

Adorning his golden straw hat, he made his way to the door, supplementing in Intisian, “Also, prepare a sumptuous dinner for me, my godson, and my translator.”

Giorgia, slightly taken aback by the translation, watched Lumian’s departure. She couldn’t shake the feeling that this adventurer possessed a distinct quality compared to those she had encountered before.

…

Port Santa, Saint Lana Street.

Giorgia’s residence occupied number 21 on this street. The five-story villa boasted brownish-red outer walls, adorned with statues of Angels and Saintesses from the Earth Mother Church, along with symbols depicting waves and fishing.

Wearing his distinctive golden straw hat and holding Ludwig’s hand, the latter carrying a red school bag, Lumian trailed behind Giorgia, accompanied by her maid and valet. Together, they entered the villa’s hall, which also served as a spacious dance floor beneath a tall, dome ceiling.

As Lumian stepped inside, he felt unseen eyes upon him from the circular railings on the upper floors.

It’s indeed a household with multiple families sharing one roof. There

are quite a few people… Lumian mused, choosing not to look up, smiling inwardly.

The concealed observers remained hidden. Giorgia then summoned two legally armed bodyguards, leading Lumian and the entourage down to the second basement where the iron-black door stood tightly shut.

As if sensing someone approaching, the door slammed as if struck by a powerful force.

“It’s inside,” Giorgia stated, pointing at the iron door with a complicated expression.

Lumian, understanding without the need for translation, pressed down on his golden straw hat and directed, “Take my godson to the living room for pre-

dinner dessert.”

As he spoke, he strode towards the subterranean iron door without a backward glance.

Upon hearing Lugano’s translation, Giorgia and the maid hastily guided Ludwig back to the surface. A bodyguard caught up to Lumian, his expression serious, and handed him a pewter-black key.

Without delay, the two bodyguards drew their revolvers, positioning themselves to aim at the iron door, preventing the monster from escaping.

Lumian methodically inserted the key into the lock, unlocking it.

He tossed the key aside and effortlessly pushed the iron door open with one hand.

In an instant, the monster’s figure came into view.

A humanoid lizard, adorned with glistening, robust scales, met Lumian’s eyes. Where there were no scales, smooth, sinister snake-like skin was exposed.

The monster's eyes were vertical, and they glowed with a nearly transparent light. Its mouth harbored sharp teeth that formed a menacing vortex.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt the air around him grow dense, like shackles enveloping him, clearly impeding his normal movements.

The moisture gave the sensation of plunging into the deep sea, enduring pressure from all directions.

The humanoid lizard lunged forward, and Lumian's body leaned towards the enemy as if pulled by a vortex.

Yet, the obvious smile on his lips persisted as he calmly attempted to pivot.

Suddenly, a latent power surged within him, allowing him to break free from the air's constraints.

Lumian swiftly rotated his body, swinging his right fist from below.

Instantly, crimson flames, nearly white, ignited from his fist, spreading to his forearm, resembling a dazzling fire serpent.

Bang!

The punch struck the humanoid lizard's chest and abdomen, causing the flames to compress.

Boom!

The humanoid lizard was sent flying, crystalline scales splattering from its chest and abdomen, resulting in a massive wound.

Lumian didn't give chase. With one hand in his pocket, he changed his right fist to a palm and gently pushed forward.

Crimson, nearly white fireballs materialized before him, whistling into the wound on the lizard's chest and abdomen.

Rumble!

The monster disintegrated, its flesh and blood splattering across the ground.

Lumian observed for a few moments before adjusting his golden straw hat. He turned around and walked towards the stairs leading to the surface.

The two armed and vigilant bodyguards maintained their original posture, still in a daze, unable to comprehend what had transpired.

Lumian didn't "rouse" them as he ascended the stairs.

Upon hearing the explosion, Giorgia, on the ground, left the lounge with Lugano and approached the staircase. She saw Lumian coming up.

"Have you confirmed the situation?" Madame Giorgia asked with concern. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Lumian replied with a smirk, "It's resolved."

Chapter 542 - 542 Abnormal Situation

542 Abnormal Situation

It's resolved? It's already resolved? Giorgia suspected that the translator had made a mistake. Instinctively, she asked, "Is there a quick solution, or has it already been resolved?"

Lugano cast a sympathetic glance at the beautiful madame, experiencing the same emotions he felt when reading about how his employer had slain the Demon Warlock.

How could a monster confined to the basement by ordinary armed bodyguards compare to Burman, who had a bounty of 600,000 verl d'or? New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Despite finding it unnecessary, Lugano respectfully conveyed Giorgia's words to Lumian.

Lumian removed the golden straw hat from his head and said, "You may instruct the servants to clean the basement."

Upon hearing Lugano's translation, Giorgia's pupils dilated as she looked at Lumian in bewilderment, unsure of what to say.

At that moment, a bodyguard guarding the basement ran up. Upon seeing Giorgia, he immediately leaned over, lowered his voice, and whispered something to her.

Giorgia's expression shifted a few times before she smiled and said to Lumian, "As expected of the renowned adventurer. I previously suspected that your hunt for the Demon Warlock was merely a rumor. Now, I completely believe it. Your might is enough to resound throughout the Five Seas."

She paused for a moment and said apologetically, “I’m sorry; we haven’t had time to prepare dinner. We might need you to wait in the lounge for a while.”

“Better to have me wait than a beautiful lady,” Lumian replied with a smile.

That’s basic courtesy!

He followed Giorgia’s maid into the lounge specially catered for Ludwig to enjoy the pre-dinner dessert.

Giorgia and her bodyguard descended into the basement.

A sense of relief washed over her as she surveyed the blood-stained room, finding no trace of the humanoid lizard; it had completely vanished.

Dinner unfolded in a private chamber, exclusive to Lumian, his companions, and Giorgia. The lady’s maid attended to them, serving dishes and pouring wine.

Lumian, intrigued by his surroundings, noted how the expansive mansion accommodated the needs of its diverse occupants. Small private rooms outside the grand banquet hall ensured the privacy of gatherings.

The meal was a delight for everyone. Lumian received 15,000 risot in banknotes; Giorgia appeared visibly at ease; Ludwig appreciated the villa’s chefs; and Lugano experienced a high-end banquet for the first time.

The great adventurer, usually one to boast and joke while not in his monster-

hunting cold persona, lightened the atmosphere at the dining table.

This pleasant ambiance continued until Lumian departed from 21 Saint Lana Street alongside Ludwig and Lugano.

Lugano, slightly flushed from the white wine, gazed back at the brightly lit building and sighed deeply.

“I wonder when I’ll have a house this grand, with numerous servants and chefs, and a wife like Giorgia.”

Lumian teased, “Your emphasis is on the last part, isn’t it?”

Lugano chuckled sheepishly and replied, “Well, based on your description, I might as well have been capable of taking down that humanoid lizard too.”

It meant he possessed the skills to tackle a mission worth 30,000 verl d’or!

With a few more successful missions, Lugano’s dream could become a reality!

“With guns and special bullets prepared in advance, coupled with ample combat experience, a Planter is indeed capable,” Lumian carefully assessed his guide.

He avoided using “Doctor” to refer to Lugano, as this Sequence primarily bestowed healing superpowers and didn’t offer significant improvement in combat.

Lugano was delighted to hear this, sensing a newfound hope in his life.

Lumian glanced at him and added with a smile, “However, if you were to accept this commission, the reward might only be two to three thousand risot.

“The rest accounts for the premium based on the great adventurer’s reputation and the hush money for such a renowned figure.

“That’s why you need to hunt down Demon Warlock before you can accept such a lucrative mission.”

The smile on Lugano’s face gradually faded.

If I could hunt down Demon Warlock, my dream would be fulfilled. I wouldn’t have to be an adventurer!

Lumian paid no mind to the translator’s emotional shifts. He glanced

back at the large five-story villa and said thoughtfully, “The Matriarch of this family didn’t appear even until the end…”

While it was understandable that the other family members hadn’t shown themselves, logically speaking, as the head of the family, the Matriarch should have at least expressed her gratitude to the adventurer who had helped them resolve the problem.

“That’s correct. A woman of Giorgia’s age shouldn’t be the head of such a large family,” Lugano acknowledged, sensing the anomaly.

He refrained from bringing up the potential absence of a Matriarch in the villa. In extended families like this, there were likely more than one older woman who had given birth. If one Matriarch passed away, another would soon assume the role. Additionally, the Earth Mother Church was renowned for its adept treatment of illnesses in the Northern and Southern Continents. The Feynapotter Kingdom’s average lifespan surpassed that of Loen, Intis, Feysac, and other nations. Plenty of individuals lived beyond the age of 70, especially with Giorgia’s family’s wealth providing ample medical resources.

Lumian averted his gaze and took a few steps.

“Go to the bar tonight and inquire about Giorgia’s family.”

As he spoke, he counted out 1,000 risot for Lugano.

“This covers your expenses for your activities during this period, including Ludwig’s meal expenses when I’m out.”

“Yes, Boss.” Lugano appreciated his employer’s generosity the most.

Near midnight, the Doctor returned to the suite at Solow Motel, reeking of alcohol. He addressed Lumian, who was observing Ludwig eat supper, “I got the info. Giorgia is the wife of Rubió Paco, a shareholder of Port Santa’s Fisheries Company and a committee member of the Fisheries Guild. The Paco family’s Matriarch is Rubio’s mother, Martha.”

Committee member of the Fisheries Guild… Lumian instantly focused.

This was a person knowledgeable about the complete process of the sea prayer ritual and the accident from last year.

“What else did you find out?” Lumian asked casually.

Lugano rambled on for a while before adding, “By the way, Martha was once a Maiden of the Sea.”

Maiden of the Sea… Lumian pondered for a few seconds. She had been sought after by a specific crowd before marrying into the Paco family? He asked, “Did you find out anything about Martha’s recent situation?”

“No.” Lugano shook his head.

Lumian leaned back in his chair, as if preparing to doze off, not pressing for more information.

The next day, he stayed at the Solow Motel, awaiting Valerio’s preparations for his local identification documents.

As evening approached, his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, emerged from the void and handed him a letter.

Lumian glanced at the charred corpse, still engulfed in viscous black flames, and casually asked, “Who sent it?”

Only five people were aware of his messenger’s summoning incantation.

“A woman very close to death and darkness,” Baynfel replied.

Lumian unfolded the letter and read the familiar handwriting: “There’s a gathering scheduled for 10 tonight…”

This was from Hela. Before leaving Trier, Lumian had specifically summoned Hela’s messenger and informed her of his messenger’s summoning method. With his frequent travel and changes in residence, it was impractical to summon Hela’s messenger each time he stayed in a motel. Hence, he made such arrangements to convenience her in getting him.

Each messenger was intricately bound to its master. Through the mystical connection of the contract, the messenger could track the contracted target regardless of their changing locations.

The Research Society has another gathering… Lumian dismissed Baynfel and moved to the window of the master bedroom.

He peered into the distance, toward the mottled mountain range to the northeast.

Under the afterglow of the setting sun, the mountains seemed to doze in the burning sky.

Lumian silently observed for a moment, then retrieved the silver Lie earring and placed it on his left earlobe.

In an instant, his hair transformed, turning golden and elongating downward.

…

At 10 p.m., in the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian, cloaked in a black robe, hood, and a silver-white half-

mask with a “Muggle” label, materialized.

He immediately spotted Franca, who wore an Assassin suit and had pulled down her hood.

Franca, no longer concealing their amicable relationship, leaned in and lowered her voice.

“Port Santa didn’t have a Derangement outbreak, I suppose?”

“I’m not the embodiment of calamity,” Lumian replied.

He then said to Franca, “Help me inquire in different teams later if there are any potions, charms, or items that can allow me to master a language in a short period of time—not true mastery, but the kind that allows mastery for a short period.”

Franca asked in confusion, “Don’t you have a translator?”

Lumian smiled and said, “It’s just that I suddenly had an idea. When everyone thinks I don’t know Highlander, I can understand what they’re talking about. Perhaps it can bring about unexpected gains.”

Your scheming heart is truly stained! After Franca playfully cursed him, she wanted to praise Aurore’s beautiful lips and smile, one that ought to be seen more often, but her rationality made her give up on the idea to avoid triggering Lumian.

She glanced at a corner of the palace and said, “The team most likely to obtain such items is actually the Academy. However, it’s inconvenient for you to ask. It can easily arouse suspicion. Coincidentally, I’m heading to the Academy team today to inquire if anyone knows who the owners of the ancient tombs in Trier’s catacombs are. Heh heh, many of them are considered semi-historians. If no one knows, I’ll get 007 to delve into the Church’s confidential information.”

“Why do you ask?” Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Franca recounted how she and Jenna had obtained a new Mirror World Fragment in the catacombs.

Lumian listened attentively and scoffed.

“Aren’t you guys too bold? Jenna has been inspired by your courage!”

As soon as he finished speaking, he saw 007 approaching menacingly.

Chapter 543 - 543 Same Dream

543 Same Dream

Wearing a lion headgear, 007 intercepted Franca's path, gritting his teeth.

"Hidden Blade, thanks to your intel, I might be deployed on a mission right now."

"Huh?" Franca didn't quite get it.

Deployed on a mission? If you're out, who do I report problems to in Trier?

007 glanced at Muggle, standing silently beside them, and took a deep breath.

"I might head to Feynapotter as an assistant to retrieve that Sealed Artifact.

"It's Intis' loss, and it wouldn't be good for it to end up in the hands of the Feynapotter Kingdom." Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

"Will the Feynapotterians allow you to enforce the law in their country? Isn't transnational cooperation troublesome?" Franca roughly understood 007's concerns.

007 pondered for a moment and said, "We're still working through the process, but the Feynapotterians aren't too opposed this time. They want to eliminate the hidden dangers of the Sealed Artifact ASAP. They have precautions to take and can't spare many to surround and intercept it, so they might as well borrow our strength."

The Church of Earth Mother and the Feynapotter Kingdom need to be

vigilant. Are they short on manpower? This is a problem with a single Church country. They don't have the resources like a combination of two or three Churches. Wait, that doesn't make sense. The Feynapotter Kingdom has a royal family, and Beyonders of the Church don't only follow the pathway of their deity. Lumian sensed something amiss from 007's words.

This made him feel that the hidden dangers in the Feynapotter Kingdom were no less than those in countries with multiple deities and Churches.

"Is that so…" Franca suddenly had an idea. "I have a way to ensure you don't have to be deployed!"

"What way?" 007 asked skeptically.

Franca smiled and said, "If you're on an important mission in Trier, there's no need for you to be deployed."

"Important mission…" 007 repeated in a low voice, suddenly having an ominous feeling.

Franca seized the opportunity and said, "We've located another Mirror World Fragment in an ancient tomb on the fourth level of the catacombs."

"Now, we have a lead to pursue the Mirror People in Trier. If you report it and convey that you're conducting an investigation, you likely won't end up in Feynapotter."

007 stared at Franca, dressed in an assassin suit, for a moment. He raised his hand to rub his forehead and spoke gravely, "Thanks a lot, Hidden Blade!"

Franca pretended not to catch 007's underlying message and continued, "The tomb is situated near the Crazy Mushroom Cave. Its door is wide open, and there are no conspicuous signs. Please gather information from the catacombs about its construction date, its occupants, and the ancient family it belongs to. Only then can we determine why the peculiar Mirror People entered and met their demise there."

007 took a deep breath and slowly exhaled.

“You’re a perfect boss for me.”

All you know is to assign me missions!

Franca let out a hollow laugh and shifted the topic.

“Do you have any idea what’s happening in the Crazy Mushroom Cave? Mushrooms are somehow thriving in that silent, dark, and tightly sealed place. Moreover, it seems to be the only location in the fourth-level catacombs where mushrooms grow.”

007 nodded gently and replied, “I have some knowledge about that. Once upon a time, I was quite intrigued by the mushroom cave. I conducted an investigation and discovered that it was initially quite ordinary—a naturally formed cave among the ancient tombs. When the catacombs were completed, some of the ancient corpses were relocated there. Within a few weeks, it became overrun with mushrooms and sealed off.”

The Beyonder powers brought about by the seal’s formal formation combined with the problem of certain ancient corpses created such a Crazy Mushroom Cave? Lumian analyzed the reason thoughtfully.

Observing Muggle’s attentive silence, 007 nodded courteously and turned to head towards the Sanctuary team.

Franca couldn’t help but chuckle.

“He’s so polite to you. If only he knew that most of his troubles and fatigue stemmed from you, his expression would be quite the sight.”

Lumian chuckled in response.

“But the Mirror People situation has nothing to do with me.”

As they conversed, they strolled toward the corner where the Academy team congregated.

Midway, Lumian suddenly turned to Franca.

“Do you think any member of the Research Society, especially those in Trier, might have been replaced by the Mirror People?”

“That’s impossible… Don’t scare me!” Franca sounded alarmed.

Lumian fought the urge to pout, not wanting to destroy his sister’s beautiful image.

“What’s impossible? Any Trier citizen could be replaced by the Mirror People, even if they’re part of a secret organization.

“Moreover, most in the Research Society are Beyonders with a strong spirit of exploration. Their encounters with Beyonder incidents are more frequent than regular folks.”

Franca nodded seriously, acknowledging the potential risk couldn’t be disregarded.

“As a Review Committee member, you should liaise with Madame Hela and the others, observe discreetly,” Lumian reminded her.

There lingered uncertainty about whether the Mirror People of transmigrators retained their pre-transmigration memories. If they did, they could bypass the Committee’s safeguards easily. Their interactions within the Research Society could go undetected unless they caused harm, staying concealed.

“Understood,” Franca responded with solemnity.

At that moment, many familiar members of Lumian’s team gathered in the corner, including Professor, Associate Professor, Headmaster, Periodic Table, Bear, Griffin, and Isotope.

Some wore different disguises than before, though Lumian had grown accustomed to their diverse outfits. They were individuals who wouldn’t attend a masquerade ball in the same attire twice. Regardless, their general body shape, language, and chest labels helped others accurately identify them.

After exchanging greetings, Lumian and Franca each took a seat.

After a few minutes, Franca raised her hand and said, “Is anyone

selling Language Comprehension-type items? I know someone who's going overseas and wants to acquire some."

Upon hearing her request, some chuckled, while others pursed their lips. The former wanted to inquire if her friend was herself, while the latter recalled the key member of April Fool's who had caused numerous catastrophes in the Research Society.

Bear, encased in a brown bear hide, spoke in ancient Feysac in a muffled voice, "I have a Language Comprehension charm that achieves a similar effect."

"Language Comprehension charm?" Franca asked with interest.

Having been fluent in ancient Feysac for many years, she had become relatively proficient in Loen, Highlander, and other languages of the Northern Continent. However, she lacked knowledge of the Southern Continent's languages.

The Academy team member with the code name "Bear" glanced at Hidden Blade with his coffee-colored eyes.

"Yes, its essence is to temporarily strengthen and alter the Body of Heart and Mind, improving understanding, reasoning, and communication. It also imparts a portion of the corresponding language's knowledge. Using one lasts seven days.

"Currently, Language Comprehension charms are divided into three types. The lowest level is for all ancient Feysacian languages. Creating them is the least difficult. You only need…"

Bear paused, making a conversion based on the current exchange rate.

"A thousand verl d'or.

"The middle level covers all ordinary languages. It costs 2,000 verl d'or. At the highest level, you can temporarily master a designated supernatural language. 5,000 verl d'or. Hidden Blade, which one do you want?"

Franca listened attentively, sensing a subtle expression of pity and

regret in Bear's gaze.

Is he pitying me for daring to drink the Witch potion back then? Franca wondered silently. Without looking at Muggle, she made the decision.

"Three lowest-level Language Comprehension charms, one mid-level. Uh, can I get a discount?"

She believed Lumian would eventually track down Hisoka in the Southern Continent. It was better to prepare a Mid-level Language Comprehension charm now.

"No." Bear shook his head.

"Alright," Franca said, lacking talent for bargaining. She habitually asked for a discount to avoid potential future regret.

After Franca paid and settled on the delivery method, Professor, adorned with a black butterfly mask, surveyed the area. After a moment of contemplation, she spoke up.

"Associate Professor, I and a few Warlocks I know have been having strange dreams lately. In these dreams, there's a wilderness with many indistinct figures wandering around."

"Have any of you had one too?"

She directed her inquiry towards the other Warlocks in the Academy team.

Wilderness… Wandering figures… Could this be related to some Madame's Paramita? Lumian, concealed behind a silver-white half-mask, furrowed his brow slightly. It seemed unlikely that a Warlock would dream of Paramita. Why would they?

Observing other Warlocks expressing that they had similar dreams, but the frequency and clarity decreased over time, Lumian, acting as Aurore, nodded and posed a question instead of providing an answer.

"When did you guys start having this dream?"

Could it be an abnormality caused by the Hidden Sage?

Professor had clearly made confirmation on this matter.

“The two of us and some friends started after the night of the terrifying storm in Trier—last month.”

She knew that Muggle was also in Trier and knew the exact night she referred to.

The sudden, terrifying downpour occurred the night the Hostel ritual was activated… Could it be influenced by the leaked power of the seal? Is there a high-level power of the Mystery Pryer pathway sealed inside? Or were the fallen monks of the Deep Valley Cloister connected to the Hidden Sage? Did this evil god secretly do something that left some power in the real world? Lumian pondered and then said, “I heard something happened to Trier’s Deep Valley Cloister that night, and the Savant pathway and the Mystery Pryer pathway are neighboring pathways.”

Professor, Associate Professor, and the others turned their gaze to Muggle. They hadn’t expected their companion, who had recently moved to Trier, to possess such secretive knowledge about the local area.

Lumian continued slowly, “Shouldn’t we inquire with people from the Savant pathway and see if they had similar dreams?”

Good idea! Franca silently praised.

Chapter 544 - 544 Threat

544 Threat

Dressed in a doctor's white coat with a saucepan over his head, Stonemason's azure eyes focused on the Academy Warlocks through two specially dug holes.

He nodded and said, "Recently, I've also been having strange dreams related to a wilderness. However, in addition to the endless wilderness and wandering figures, there are also some peculiar scenes in my dreams."

As expected, it affects the neighboring pathways of Mystery Pryer and Savant… Lumian nodded slightly as Professor pressed further, "What scenes are they?"

Stonemason's voice echoed within the saucepan.

"I see scenes of primitive humans independently creating fire for the first time. Ancient humans making sacrifices to the sky and land. There were many similar scenes, but they were very vague. I was in a dream and couldn't scrutinize them carefully. I can't remember the exact situations clearly.

"According to the Savant pathway's Beyonders, this is a fragment of civilization."

Upon hearing Stonemason's response, Lumian's forehead twitched imperceptibly.

It reminded him of the moment he heard a peculiar sound accompanying scenes while wearing the Mystery Prying Eye in Fourth Epoch Trier!

As the scenes unfolded, a chorus of voices echoed one name: Celestial

Master!

Was what I received a fragment of a civilization? The Eye of Truth correspond to the Mystery Pryer pathway. Upon their use, they activated the powers of neighboring pathways, revealing corresponding sounds? But there is a prerequisite, a special environment… Fourth Epoch Trier holds remnants of advanced powers from the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways. Celestial Master—the term is similar to the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings which influences Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways. Meanwhile, Celestial Master correlates with the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways. Lumian fell into deep thought after his initial shock.

Franca glanced at him, perplexed by his limited participation in the discussion.

After a moment, Lumian snapped out of his daze. Considering Professor, Stonemason, and others' speculations, he carefully stated, "The sudden downpour in Trier is an outward manifestation of a catastrophe, much like the Deep Valley Cloister.

"I suspect that a high-level power leaked during the catastrophe, affecting Beyonders from two neighboring pathways. The impact is more pronounced for those in Trier but relatively minor for those outside."

At this point, Lumian smirked.

"I've observed that Warlocks outside Trier experienced significant decreases in the frequency and clarity of their wilderness dreams. Strangely, none of the Warlocks in Trier mentioned this."

Bear in a brown bear skin suit nodded approvingly.

Professor and others concurred with Lumian's hypothesis, relieved that the situation was indeed improving.

They couldn't help but marvel at Muggle's remarkable growth after surviving the April Fool's trap.

Franca then inquired about the owner of the ancient tomb beside the

Crazy Mushroom Cave in Trier's catacombs.

Franca had already entrusted this matter to 007. Her current focus was on uncovering any Mirror People who might have infiltrated the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, thanks to Lumian's teachings.

After discussing the Mirror People situation with Hela, Lumian emerged from the corner where the Academy team was located, ready to gather mysticism knowledge from the death domain with the Purgatory team.

Franca immediately approached Lumian, lowered her voice, and asked with a smile, "What were you thinking when Stonemason recounted his dream? It seemed like you had thought of something important."

Hadn't I shared what I saw and heard after using the Eye of Truth underground? That shouldn't be the case. I won't forget sharing matters involving the Celestial Master with Franca… Lumian's heart suddenly stirred, feeling that his spirituality was hindering this matter.

After a moment of contemplation, he responded, "It's rather complicated and involves high-level powers. I'll write to Madam Magician later and see if I can share it with you."

"Alright," Franca said eagerly. "Don't forget!"

Her curiosity was piqued.

At that moment, Hela, still dressed as a black widow, approached Lumian and asked, "Any progress in tracking Ultraman and Bard?"

"Not at the moment. I'm still compiling the necessary information," Lumian replied truthfully.

Hela nodded slightly and replied, "If you need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out to me or Gandalf."

The primary objective for most members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society was to eliminate the April Fool's traitors.

“Got it.” Lumian had no plans to confront the key members of April Fool’s on his own.

Undoubtedly, it was optimal for him to carry out the final execution.

…

Upon returning to the real world, Lumian noticed that night was falling. He set out a stack of late-night snacks for Ludwig and summoned Madam Magician’s messenger. After freshening up—washing his face, brushing his teeth, and snuffing out the wall lamp—he settled into bed.

Just then, a sense of alertness surged through him. He sat up suddenly, focusing on a specific spot in the room.

Outside the window, a faint crimson glow shimmered. In one corner, a shadow swiftly expanded, reaching up to the ceiling, forming a silhouette resembling two goat horns.

It was as if a devil had emerged from the dark abyss.

Lumian’s eyebrows twitched as he stared at the colossal black shadow.

The devil-like shadow resonated with a deep and imposing voice.

“Lowly human, you must answer my question truthfully.”

It spoke in Intisian.

Lumian cracked his neck gently and asked, “What’s the question?”

The devilish figure rumbled in a deep tone, “What did the Paco family’s Giorgia hire you to do?”

“What do human affairs have to do with a devil like you? I’m a professional adventurer. I won’t betray my employer.”

The devilish shadow growled, “Then I’ll use your blood as the answer!”

Before it completed its sentence, its aura surged, and the crimson moonlight in the room instantly succumbed to darkness, shrouding the space in a chilling aura.

The corners of Lumian's mouth curled up. With a swift press of his left hand, he catapulted from the bed like a cheetah, propelling himself towards the ceiling.

Overhead, darkness enveloped him, resembling an abyssal reflection.

In a sudden twist, Lumian's body turned pitch black, almost zero in thickness.

He morphed into a shadow creature and seamlessly melded into the darkness!

Within the dimly illuminated fishnet of shadows, Lumian spotted the "devil."

Standing just over a meter tall, the creature was child-sized, yet its skin was creased like that of an elderly man in his seventies or eighties.

Its disproportionately large head featured protruding eyes, presenting a grotesque visage that was beyond Lumian's knowledge of creatures.

In the form of a shadow, Lumian "swam" toward it, aiming to ensnare the peculiar creature that manifested the devil's projection. He planned on pulling it out of the darkness and controlling it with the Spell of Harrumph.

Many of Lumian's abilities were constrained in the shadow creature form.

The short, malevolent creature with wrinkled skin appeared defenseless against the shadow's entanglement, surprising Lumian, who had anticipated fierce resistance.

Without hesitation, he prepared to depart, leaving the shadow to detain its captive.

Just then, the darkness surrounding him brightened, illuminated by

the light from the “sky.”

Instinctively, Lumian looked up and witnessed the pure darkness rapidly dissolving, unveiling a colossal star hanging in the void.

The star bore a faint blue hue, resembling a demonic eye. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

In an instant, Lumian felt his blood freeze, involuntarily snapping out of his shadow creature form. The big-headed “shorty,” adorned with wrinkles, seized the chance to break free from its constraints, swiftly merging into the pale-blue starlight and disappearing from sight.

After a moment, Lumian fully recovered. He stared at the now-normal room, sinking into contemplation.

What in the world was that thing? It seemed so weak, yet it came to intimidate me!

Nevertheless, the blinking star held an air of peculiarity.

Why not just send the star to frighten me right away? After suppressing me, it didn’t seize the opportunity to attack. Even though I regained some mobility upon escaping the shadows, I was still relatively slow… Lumian mused silently.

While he couldn’t grasp the full picture, certain details became apparent.

No wonder Giorgia didn’t casually enlist a foreign adventurer with Beyonder powers to handle the humanoid lizard. Someone lurking in the shadows would interrogate me about the entire matter in the future. Only a renowned adventurer like Louis Berry, capable of hunting Demon Warlocks, can resist it.

Heh heh, earning 15,000 risot isn’t a walk in the park…

The one in the shadows knows Louis Berry isn’t weak, so they didn’t dare to attack directly. Instead, they dispatched a small monster with unique abilities to intimidate me, hoping to extract information?

Why not go to Giorgia’s house and ask? Their family doesn’t seem to

possess any superpowers…

Is this an internal conflict within the Fisheries Company and the Fisheries Guild?

Yes, it's an opportunity to interact more deeply with the Paco family and understand the core process of the sea prayer ritual…

Shaking his head, Lumian reclined on the bed and resumed his slumber.

Around 8 a.m. the next day, Lugano, who had gone out to buy breakfast, rushed back and said to Lumian, "Boss, those combat nuns are looking for you!"

Chapter 545 - 545 Order

545 Order

In any country on the Northern Continent, wild Beyonders were unwelcome. They faced control and even apprehension. This wasn't like colonies such as Port Farim, where renowned adventurers could freely roam the streets and boast about their experiences without the concern of official Beyonders knocking on their doors.

"Boss, is there any danger?" Lugano nervously inquired, his perpetual fear evident as a wild Beyonder.

Lumian chuckled, responding confidently, "That depends on their attitude."

The implication was that the nuns were the ones facing danger.

Lumian teased, "Aren't you excited about the combat nuns? Shouldn't you be thrilled that they're here?"

Imagination isn't the same as reality… Seeing his boss showing no intention of "teleporting" away with him, Lugano nervously descended and extended an invitation to the combat nuns.

The leader was the same one Lumian had encountered before.

Most of her naturally curly, thick black hair was neatly tucked into a black hat with white patterns. Her bright and lively light-blue eyes, along with her thick eyebrows, bestowed upon her a unique and captivating charm.

The woman in leather armor gazed at Lumian and inquired gently, "Are you the adventurer Louis Berry?"

Lumian nodded. "Who might you be?"

The strikingly beautiful combat nun replied with a smile, “I’m Sister Noelia of the Fertility Order, in charge of a combat team.

“Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

Noelia raised her hands to the sky, her feet slightly apart.

Observing that Noelia and the other combat nuns of the Fertility Order were not as judgmental as he expected, not viewing wild Beyonders as inherently evil creatures, Lumian smiled.

“Madame, what brings you here?”

Noelia smiled and explained, “You’re a great adventurer who hunted Demon Warlock. If we hadn’t known you were in Port Santa, we might not have bothered. However, now that we are aware, we must come and speak with you, reminding you to abide by the corresponding order.”

“What order?” Lumian inquired, anticipating the answer while holding the golden straw hat.

The demeanor of these combat nuns made him wonder if they were official Beyonders. They didn’t directly arrest him, nor did they use stern warnings.

Is this the distinction between the Church of Earth Mother and other Churches? Emphasizing motherhood and respecting life?

“However, this is Port Santa, and many sea merchants here have a genuine need to resist pirates and protect their goods. We lack the manpower to safeguard them all, so we’ve tacitly agreed to allow them to hire Beyonder bodyguards.

“Firstly, you cannot venture inland without our permission. To reach other cities, you need our approval. Secondly, you cannot perform any rituals in Port Santa, consume potions for advancement, or engage in mysticism experiments. Thirdly, you must refrain from using your abilities to cause chaos or catastrophe.

“Of course, if you return to Port Santa in the future, you’ll need to register with us first.”

It's a reasonable request, and coming from the ruling Church, it's not excessive at all… It's even simpler and easier than obtaining a firearm permit in Port Farim or other places. Of course, not applying for identification in Port Farim isn't a big deal. No one will report it, and there won't be any issues if you don't directly encounter the officials… Lumian nodded gently and replied, Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Sure thing."

At this moment, Lumian's thoughts raced, and he couldn't help but chuckle.

"But Port Santa isn't entirely safe. I encountered a monster last night…"

He briefly recounted how the little monster had disguised itself as a devil to intimidate him. While he didn't conceal that he had accepted Giorgia's commission, he refrained from specifying the details.

Noelia listened attentively and responded without surprise, "We'll handle it. Try not to get involved in the Fisheries Guild's matters in the future. Their internal issues will be resolved internally."

Does this mean that the Earth Mother Church refrains from interfering with the internal strife of the Fisheries Guild, allowing them complete autonomy? Lumian smiled and said,

"I'll do my best to avoid participation, but I'll reserve the right to defend myself and counterattack."

Noelia didn't offer any further comments. Her smile faded as she led the combat nuns to the door.

In just two or three steps, she smoothly drew a straight sword from her back, half-turned, and slashed at Lumian.

The series of movements flowed seamlessly, occurring in the blink of an eye.

Lumian stared at the sword beam, neither dodging nor raising his hand to block.

With a swoosh, the straight sword grazed the tip of his nose and pointed to the ground.

Noelia smiled radiantly and nodded in satisfaction.

“As expected of a great adventurer. Your foresight, judgment, and courage are exceptional.”

She then turned around and addressed the combat nuns who followed her.

“This is a true man. Those who only know how to flaunt their muscles and swing their swords can only be called male beasts.”

As they spoke, the combat nuns exited Lumian’s rented suite.

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his chin, feeling a strange sensation.

The sight of women openly scrutinizing men made him uncomfortable.

After watching Noelia and the nuns leave, Lugano lowered his voice and asked, “Boss, did a little monster really come to warn you last night?”

Lugano was taken aback for a moment before understanding Lumian’s intentions. He grabbed Ludwig and followed closely behind.

…

21 Saint Lana Street, in the activity room of a suite on the fifth floor.

Lumian encountered Giorgia once again.

Dressed in a vibrant dress adorned with intricate patterns, the lady glanced at the boy, whose appetite exceeded her imagination, before turning her gaze to the adventurer, Louis Berry.

“What brings you here?”

Lugano translated professionally.

“Last night, a monster came to intimidate me, but I chased it away.” Lumian briefly recounted the monster’s appearance and behavior.

Upon hearing Lugano’s account, Giorgia displayed no obvious surprise. After a few seconds of contemplation, she said, “Wait a moment.”

Leaving the maid and valet behind, she disappeared into an inner room.

After a few minutes, she reappeared, arm in arm with a man.

The man seemed to be in his forties, tall and gaunt, his eyes a nearly translucent blue. His grayish-black, slightly curly hair cascaded over his shoulders like an artist’s. His appearance couldn’t be described as particularly good or bad, yet he possessed an unforgettable quality.

“This is my husband, Rubió Paco,” Giorgia introduced.

The shareholder of the Fisheries Company and a committee member of the Fisheries Guild? Lumian had gathered information about the Paco family through Lugano over the past two days.

Rubió’s father had initially been a prosperous fisherman who shared a boat with others. After marrying Martha, who had once been a Maiden of the Sea, he gradually established himself. Not only did he manage the Fisheries Company for a time, but he also ascended to become a committee member of the oldest local guild, the Fisheries Guild.

Shortly after the sea prayer ritual last year, the old gentleman passed away. With strong support from Matriarch Marta, Rubió inherited his father’s status and became the youngest committee member of the Fisheries Guild.

However, he no longer held a specific position at Port Santa Fisheries Company. He only held onto the shareholders’ voting rights and dividends.

This middle-aged man had once been rebellious. He was expected to comply with his parents’ arrangements and marry a Maiden of the Sea. However, he remained single until his early thirties and then

married Giorgia, the daughter of a textile merchant. If it were any other prominent family, the matriarch would have surely intervened and perhaps even banished Rubió. Yet, Martha indulged him and eventually chose to compromise.

Before Lugano could commence with the translation, Rubió spoke in less fluent Intisian, “We can communicate directly. When I was young, I often took a boat out to sea and visited places like Port Farim.”

“Monsieur Rubió, I don’t think there’s a need for communication, and I don’t intend to find out why the monster came looking for me. I’m just here to inform you about this.” Lumian glanced at the puzzled Giorgia and suspected that Rubió had switched to Intisian not out of politeness but to keep his wife in the dark about something.

Rubió nodded gently and said, “I understand your concerns. I merely wish to entrust you with another mission.”

“What mission?” Lumian asked with a smile.

Rubió calmly replied, “My mother, Martha, hails from Milo Village. Recently, she wishes to return and meet the current Governor of the Sea to request his permission to seek treatment at the Church of Earth Mother. Yes, my mother hasn’t been in good health recently. She can’t get out of bed.”

Martha is still alive? Lumian was slightly surprised.

Experienced as he was, he deduced that the monster might have been transformed by Martha, based on the absence of the matriarch, the Paco family’s reluctance to expose the humanoid lizard, and the fact that she was once a Maiden of the Sea!

The sea prayer ritual wasn’t just an honor for the Maidens of the Sea. Perhaps there was also hidden corruption that might erupt at some point in time.

But now, from what Rubió had said, Martha was still alive. Previously, she had only been seriously ill.

Where did that humanoid lizard come from? Lumian suppressed his

puzzlement and asked in confusion, “Why does Madame Martha need the Governor of the Sea’s permission to seek treatment?”

Rubió’s expression shifted, a mix of disgust and resistance evident in his words.

“All Maidens of the Sea have to follow the orders of the Governor of the Sea when dealing with Church-related matters. Failing to do so would be blasphemous to the sea prayer ritual.”

Chapter 546 - 546 Monitor

546 Monitor

546 Monitor

“What might that be?” Rubió asked cautiously.

A cunning smile formed on Lumian’s lips.

“I’m here to witness the sea prayer ritual, but I’ve heard only a select few can observe its core segments. I seek such an opportunity.”

Rubió remained silent for a prolonged moment.

Giorgia, unable to contain her curiosity, questioned her husband in Highlander about the conversation and his concerns.

Lugano seized the chance to approach Lumian and translated the couple’s exchange.

Lumian’s eyebrows twitched imperceptibly upon hearing they were genuinely considering allowing him to pose as a sailor and board the special sacrificial ship.

Is Rubió Paco truly considering my request?

I’m merely offering an outrageous deal to test if I can glean details about the sea prayer ritual. I don’t intend to leverage this seemingly straightforward task to gain access to the last two segments of the ritual!

It remained a secret harbored by the Fisheries Guild for over a millennium, the wellspring of their power and prestige!

As these thoughts raced through Lumian’s mind, he strongly suspected that the commission to send Madame Martha to Milo

Village to meet the current Governor of the Sea carried a high risk. It wasn't a task for any random Beyonder. Therefore, Rubió Paco was reluctant to let go of Louis Berry, the proven adventurer.

But where could the danger lie? This is Port Santa, not the islands on the sea or the remote towns of the Southern Continent. Which Beyonder would dare to attack me on the streets in broad daylight? Aren't they afraid of being captured by the combat nuns and turned into fertilizer for the land? One can't underestimate the power of an orthodox Church!

Unless someone possesses a special ability, like Loki's, to kill me undetected on the bustling streets, or if a Saint with godhood personally takes action, aiming to end the battle before the Church of Earth Mother reacts… But it can't be that exaggerated. It's such a trivial matter… As Lumian pondered, Rubió and Giorgia reached a conclusion.

The former said to Lumian, "I cannot permit your participation in the last two segments of the sea prayer ritual. It is a blasphemy against the sea. Those involved will face expulsion from Port Santa, including their family.

"However, I am willing to allow you to conceal yourself in Milo Village in advance and witness the ancient performances during the vigil ritual."

So, I can't directly witness the vigil ritual, but I can partake in the accompanying folklore performance? Did Ultraman, Bard, and Mad Lady use a similar method to approach the core of the sea prayer ritual and complete the most crucial part of the prank? Lumian noticed that Rubió had already made a significant concession and no longer insisted. He smiled and replied, "Deal."

Without waiting for a response, he "kindly" suggested, "Let's send Madame Martha to Milo Village today, shall we? We mustn't delay when it comes to illnesses. Get her treatment as soon as possible."

Rubió hesitated for a moment before saying, "My mother is already asleep. She's been resting a lot lately. Forcing her awake will impact her body and mind. How about tomorrow morning?"

Is some advanced preparation needed? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He cast a quick glance at Lugano, and his heart skipped a beat.

Lumian emphasized the word “doctor.”

Without hesitation, Rubió Paco shook his head and said, “We trust the Church’s doctors more. My mother is my most important family. I don’t want her to take any unnecessary risks.”

What he implied was that he couldn’t vouch for the medical skills of the interpreter. He couldn’t use the Paco family’s matriarch as an experiment.

Lumian was actually looking forward to sending Madame Martha to Milo Village because it meant he might meet the current Governor of the Sea and have a chance to learn something. He had only suggested that Lugano treat the matriarch to test Rubió.

The result of the probe revealed many hidden secrets in this matter!

Having agreed to escort Madame Martha and her maid to the Governor of the Sea at 9 a.m. the following day, Lumian led Ludwig and Lugano out of the main house at 21 Saint Lana Street. Giorgia walked them all the way to the door.

Lumian nonchalantly remarked, “Does the Governor of the Sea have to reside in Milo Village?”

With Lugano’s translation, Giorgia nodded slightly and said, “The Governor of the Sea resides in the building where the vigil ritual is held every night. He can move freely during the day, but he can’t leave Port Santa.”

The building where the vigil ritual is held? The essence of the vigil ritual is to allow a quasi-Governor of the Sea to enter the residence and replace the former Governor of the Sea, waiting to be officially appointed by the sea the next day? Lumian speculated, combining his mysticism knowledge.

He smiled and asked, “What are the perks of being Governor of the Sea?” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

After hearing the translation, Giorgia fell silent for a few seconds before saying, “Among the fishmongers, the merchants, he’s already the true governor in their eyes.”

It wasn’t an answer, just a whisper of truth.

Lumian nodded without pressing further. He led Ludwig and Lugano through the iron gates.

After taking a few steps along the verdant path in the forest, he suddenly looked up.

On a branch stood a gray-feathered myna.

Lumian gave it a cursory glance and continued on, his steps brisk towards the waiting carriage.

After a while, the myna flapped its wings and flew up. After circling a few times, it circled a house two streets away before dipping down towards an open window.

It landed on a middle-aged man’s forearm and spoke in precise Highlander, “Louis Berry is back at the Paco house! He stayed nearly half an hour!”

The middle-aged man, dressed in gray clothes with disheveled brown hair, resembling a suburban farmer, fed the myna a few self-made rice grains and said, “Observe further and see if Rubió Paco and Giorgia will go out today.”

After the myna flew out of the window, the middle-aged man exhaled and turned around.

Suddenly, his eyes froze as he saw someone sitting in the only armchair!

The man had black hair and green eyes, wearing a white shirt, a black vest, dark pants, and a golden straw hat.

Louis Berry!

The middle-aged man’s back arched slightly, and his feet parted

slightly, but he took no further action.

Lumian leaned back in his chair and engaged in casual conversation in Intisian, as if he had been expected.

“What did you have your bird spy on?”

The middle-aged man fell silent for a moment before speaking in somewhat awkward Intisian, “Watch if anyone enters or exits Paco’s house, and see if there’s anything unusual there.”

“Very honest.” Lumian nodded approvingly. “Who asked you to do it?”

He was pleased that the other party knew some Intisian. Otherwise, he could only rely on key words to communicate or capture him to have Lugano translate.

“Juan Oro,” the middle-aged man replied without hesitation.

Juan Oro… The president of the Fisheries Guild and the former village chief of Milo Village? Lumian smiled and said, “I’m surprised you’re so forthright.”

The middle-aged man forced a smile and said, “I don’t think I’m stronger than Demon Warlock and can defeat you.”

“That’s right. Those who understand the situation and themselves can live longer.” Lumian crossed his right foot over his left leg. “Why is Juan Oro monitoring the Paco family?”

“I don’t know, and there’s no need for me to know. I’ll receive a reward as long as I pass on what I see,” the middle-aged man replied sincerely.

Lumian gazed at him for a few seconds before saying, “Did you send that little monster last night?”

The middle-aged man was taken aback.

“What little monster? What happened last night?”

Lumian chuckled and stood up without explaining.

“What’s your name?” he asked as he walked towards the door.

The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment before answering truthfully, “Sanches.”

Lumian opened the door, walked out, and disappeared from Sanches’s sight.

…

Upon his return to Solow Motel, Lumian noticed a folded letter resting on the master bedroom’s desk.

Skillfully unfurling it, he found the distinct handwriting of Madam Magician.

“You can share those matters with the Two of Cups, but avoid delving into excessive detail.

“I refrained from elaborating on the voices you heard and the fragments of civilization you glimpsed earlier as they remain too advanced for your understanding. Simply remember not to heed random sounds or sights in an ancient ruin like Fourth Epoch Trier. Also, caution your Warlock associates—

it’s acceptable to occasionally take in the Hidden Sage’s indoctrination, but they mustn’t fully believe in Him. His state is precarious.”

After incinerating the letter, Lumian contemplated for a moment and decided to “teleport” back to Trier to inform Franca in person and avert any potential mishaps.

…

Trier, nestled within the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.

As Lumian materialized, Franca and Jenna were engrossed in perusing a stack of ancient information from an unknown source.

“Hey, could you ‘teleport’ outside and knock? It’s quite startling when you suddenly appear like that!” Franca nearly tensed the formless spider silk she’d permanently set up in the room.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “With a Witch’s spiritual perception, what’s the difference between me ‘teleporting’ outside the door and appearing in the living room?”

“Why the sudden return?” Franca paused before asking, “Madame Magician said you could share about that matter?”

“What’s going on?” Jenna queried, looking puzzled.

She stood up and prepared to leave.

“Yes,” Lumian replied to Franca’s question, but he made no attempt to stop Jenna from leaving.

Nor did Franca intervene.

Once Jenna had retreated to her bedroom, Lumian turned to Franca and disclosed, “When they discussed the wilderness dream, it made me recall the voices and visions I encountered in Fourth Epoch Trier. They’re connected to the Celestial Master!”

Chapter 547 - 547 Source of Familiarity

547 Source of Familiarity

547 Source of Familiarity

Confusion enveloped her.

“In the Fourth Epoch Trier, what did you see or hear that we didn’t?”

Everyone had been together unless it was before they met, but Jenna should have been aware!

Without pausing for Lumian’s response, Franca contemplated for a moment and suggested, “Could it be the aftereffects of using the Eye of Truth?”

She recalled Lumian’s abnormal behavior during that time.

“Yes, that’s right.” Lumian nodded, pulled up a chair, and settled down. He described the collision of two rocks, sparks flying, and the ensuing blaze that engulfed dry leaves and withered branches, amid echoing voices chanting “Celestial Master.”

The more Franca listened, the more her focus intensified. Uncharacteristically, she refrained from interrupting.

As she listened, her gaze gradually shifted, seemingly lost in reminiscence and distant thought.

Once Lumian finished recounting, Franca remained motionless for what felt like an eternity, frozen like a mechanical doll paused mid-action.

After several seconds, she abruptly straightened up, pinched her nose,

and forced a smile.

“As anticipated, the Celestial Master is part of our world.

“The fragments of civilization you received bear a striking resemblance to some aspects of my country’s history, yet there are differences… Could it be the true history concealed beneath the surface?

“The Celestial Master is attempting to interfere and breach into this world, wielding significant influence over the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways, much like the way the Celestial Worthy affects Seers, Apprentices, and Marauders?

“Could the depravity among some of the monks in the Deep Valley Cloister and the peculiar state of the Hidden Sage be linked to the Celestial Master?”

Franca’s thoughts crystallized as she spoke, her eyes sparkling like a serene lake.

“That’s my hunch too,” Lumian concurred with Franca.

Franca rose and paced, seemingly alone, contemplating how to follow this trail and unveil the truth behind the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society’s transmigration.

After a few minutes, she muttered to herself, “The connection between the two worlds is stronger than I expected. It’s not just through the River Styx…

“We should still be able to find many traces of the interaction between the two worlds…”

“When we grow stronger and amass enough gold, I want you to summon Chen Tu again, the Armored Shadow. He should possess some insight into the Celestial Master.”

Franca lapsed into silence once more, her mind retracing an unknown memory.

A few moments later, she produced four brass metal plates and

handed them to Lumian.

“The Language Comprehension charms you wanted. The one with the most intricate patterns allows you to understand the languages of the Southern Continent. The others are for the ancient Feysac language family. The activation incantation is the word ‘knowledge’ in ancient Hermes.”

She and the Bear had completed the delivery through Madame Hela’s messenger. The other party proved quite efficient.

After Lumian handed Franca the money, he “teleported” out of Trier and back to Port Santa.

In the hushed aftermath, Jenna cautiously opened the bedroom door and stuck her head out.

“Has Lumian left?”

“Yes,” Franca replied, her emotions subdued.

Jenna glanced at her but didn’t press for more information. Instead, she redirected the conversation to the stack of information related to the underground tomb.

Late at night.

Franca returned to her room.

Glancing at the small analyzer, the accompanying typewriter, and the radio transceiver, she didn’t sit down to chat as usual. Instead, she climbed into bed.

Sitting in the middle of the bed, leaning against the pillow, hugging her legs and curling up, Franca’s gaze unfocused on the crimson moon and stars outside the window.

Lumian’s words today plunged her into nostalgia, but the more her emotions fluctuated, the less she wanted to reveal vulnerability. She endured it, pretending to have recovered.

Only when solitude enveloped her, as the night fell silent and the

seemingly eternal stars adorned the sky, did she shed her thick "armor" and sink deep into her emotions.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Franca lowered her head, burying her face between her knees.

That night, she delved into a multitude of dreams. Broad shoulders carried her as a child, a touch of white hair at the temples, dishes not particularly delicious but always suited her tastes. Pure emotions of her youth, memories of being the "atmosphere livening machine," and her "broadminded" self all danced in fragmented sequences…

As her two decades unfolded in her dreams, she unknowingly opened her eyes, feeling the coldness on her face. Reluctant to move, she lingered in the moment.

Suddenly, a recollection struck her.

Back on the fourth level of the catacombs, she and Jenna had encountered a man who seemed strangely familiar.

Initially, she believed that the original owner of her body had encountered him. Now, the reason for his familiarity became clear.

The man bore an uncanny resemblance to someone from her home country before transmigration!

Despite altering his appearance to thwart immediate recognition, Franca was now certain that his facial features differed from those she had encountered in this world. Softer, less chiseled!

…

After breakfast, Lumian stepped into the master bedroom's washroom and retrieved a low-level Language Comprehension charm from his Traveler's Bag.

"Knowledge," he whispered in ancient Hermes.

The brass-like charm ignited with bluish-green flames and swiftly vanished.

Instantly, Lumian felt an abnormal clarity in his mind, as if an avalanche of additional knowledge had flooded in, unveiling the structural origins and connections of numerous words.

Today's agenda: a visit to the oldest fishing village, perhaps meeting the Governor of the Sea. Mastering Highlander in secret seemed imperative to avoid missing crucial clues!

The charm's effects would last for seven days.

Leaving the bedroom, Lumian took Ludwig and Lugano to 21 Saint Lana Street in a rental carriage, where they met Martha, the matriarch of the Paco family.

Martha didn't look like she was in her sixties, with only faint wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, appearing more in her early fifties based on her eyes, nose, mouth, and brows. Her features retained a unique charm.

At that moment, the old lady with grayish-black hair and light-blue eyes wore a black, widow-like dress and a dark, old-styled bonnet. Pale-faced, she was supported by two young maids as they boarded a four-wheeled, four-

seater carriage.

"Monsieur Berry, I'll be relying on you," Rubió Paco nodded at Lumian beside the carriage.

He was to accompany his mother to Milo Village to meet the Governor of the Sea. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Lumian directed Ludwig to Giorgia.

"Please keep an eye on him until I return from Milo Village."

Rubió translated this time.

Giorgia smiled and replied, "Don't worry, I'll make sure there's plenty of food."

She had already realized that this boy had the appetite of two or

three adults, but as the godson of a great adventurer, it was understandable that he was special.

Lumian wasn't concerned about Ludwig's treatment in the Paco household. He feigned his understanding of Highlander and waited for Lugano's translation before saying, "A meal every two hours."

With that, he sat on the right side of the carriage driver and didn't enter the carriage. Seeing this, Lugano had no choice but to choose the seat to the left of the carriage driver.

Before doing so, he diligently translated Lumian's final instructions.

Although he didn't know what would happen if Ludwig starved, he felt that it wouldn't be good, so he emphasized it twice.

As the carriage set off, Giorgia processed the translation.

"A meal every two hours? Two hours?"

The Paco family's carriage rolled along the grayish-white stone-paved street. Lumian leaned against the carriage wall, retracted his right leg, and stepped on the edge of the carriage driver's seat.

Lugano glanced at him, feeling a bit uneasy.

A seasoned bounty hunter, Lugano sensed something awry in this seemingly ordinary mission that prompted Rubió to assist his employer in hiding in Milo Village.

His heart raced as he observed armed pedestrians on the street, fearing an imminent attack from the crowd.

Under the October sun still blazing in Port Santa, the streets, damp from the previous night's heavy rain, hadn't completely dried. Lugano yearned to reach Milo Village quickly.

Glancing at Lumian, he noticed that Lumian had narrowed his eyes. Lowering his straw hat, Lumian seemed to be peacefully napping, showing no signs of nervousness.

Phew… With a powerhouse like him around, there shouldn't be a

problem… Lugano silently reassured himself.

The carriage headed north, leaving Port Santa and reaching a village nestled against the Dariège mountain range, overlooking the azure sea.

Fishing boats set off, accompanied by the resonant singing and chirping of seabirds.

Milo Village's buildings exuded a historic feel. Brown, yellow, and beige stone-brick outer walls, blackened at the lower half, gave them character. Though the wooden components had been replaced, weeds still clung.

A small cathedral belonging to Earth Mother stood near the mountain, and facing the fishing village dock was the Governor of the Sea's residence.

The four-story building, with a white backing and gray bricks, resembled a cathedral and a sacrificial ground more than a human residence.

As they arrived safely at their destination, Lugano sighed in relief and jumped off the carriage. Two maids supported Madame Martha as they headed toward the Governor of the Sea's building, accompanied by Rubió Paco.

Suddenly, Lugano heard his employer's voice.

"Take a look at what's wrong with that old lady."

Uh… Lugano glanced at Lumian, who had appeared beside him, wearing a golden straw hat. He raised his hand and gently tapped his forehead, activating his Spirit Vision.

Observing Madame Martha's back for a few seconds after she entered the Governor of the Sea's residence, he frowned and said, "Most notably is the excessive loss of blood and weak vitality…"

Lugano hesitated before concluding, "It doesn't look like illness. It looks more like an injury."

Chapter 548 - 548 Governor of the Sea

548 Governor of the Sea

Injured? Injured by the humanoid lizard? Lumian made a casual guess after hearing Lugano's judgment.

He stood by the carriage, his gaze naturally surveying the surroundings of the Governor of the Sea's residence.

The location was close to the fishing village's docks, with boats sailing into the sea and fishing nets secured to the reefs. Around nearby houses, women were busy processing seafood, turning them into salted fish and jerky. Children ran along various village roads, playing games.

Though different from Cordu, the essence of the scene remained similar.

In front of the Governor of the Sea's residence stretched a sizable square where Lumian and the others awaited Madame Martha, Rubió Paco, and their emergence.

Children gathered in a corner, arranging numerous shells and engaging in an acting game.

The eldest, dressed in a linen shirt, declared, "I'm the Governor of the Sea!"

"I'll be the guard!"

"I'm the mother," the other children replied.

The youngest hopped around, asking, "What about me? What about

me?”

The child playing the role of the Governor of the Sea pondered for a moment and said, “You can be the Child of the Sea.”

Child of the Sea? What’s that? Lumian, though not looking, listened intently to the children’s discussion.

These kids may not understand many terms, but their lack of confidentiality made them unwitting carriers of information. The adults in Milo Village wouldn’t be overly vigilant against such young children, who might inadvertently reveal details remembered in their daily games.

Recalling his experiences in Cordu, Lumian recognized the value of sounding out children and playing games with them. It was a subtle way to glean insights into family matters.

After absorbing the children’s discussions and gauging the time, Lumian adjusted his golden straw hat and headed straight for the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

Lugano was taken aback and swiftly followed Lumian.

Two “guards” in brownish-green shirts and pants, each armed with a rifle, blocked the entrance of the cathedral and sacrificial ground, fixing their gaze on Lumian.

“Halt!” the “guards” shouted.

Undeterred, Lumian continued forward, speaking in Intisian nonchalantly, “I don’t understand what you’re saying.”

With a swoosh, the two “guards” raised their rifles, aiming at the outsider in the golden straw hat.

Lugano hurriedly translated, “They won’t let you in.”

Ignoring his guide, Lumian neither sped up nor slowed down as he approached the white building with gray bricks.

A cold glint flickered in the blue eyes of the two “guards” as they

squeezed their triggers.

At that moment, the outsider in the golden straw hat vanished from their sight.

He melded into the sunlit shadows of the governor's residence.

In the next instant, Lumian reappeared from a shadow in the foyer behind them and continued walking.

It was as if the distance between them had been erased.

The two "guards," with keen senses, quickly turned around, peering behind them. However, Lumian had already entered the building, leaving the foyer.

Outside, Lugano stood in a daze, uncertain whether to take the risk of following and acting as a translator or to prioritize his own safety.

After passing through the foyer, Lumian suddenly noticed the space ahead darkening. The dome, just over ten meters tall, emanated an inaccessible aura. Aqua-blue walls adorned with various reliefs caught his eye. Unlike the typical statues of Angels and Saints, these depicted objects from the sea—

starfish, corals, numerous fish, lobsters, and crabs.

Simultaneously, Lumian sensed the reliefs coming to life, casting a dangerous gaze at him.

No, they weren't alive. The building itself seemed alive, instinctively rejecting intruders and exerting layers of pressure.

Lumian's steps instantly became heavy, as if burdened by hundreds of kilograms of food.

Within his field of vision, Martha, the Paco family's matriarch, knelt diagonally on the ground with her legs crossed. Rubió Paco stood at a distance. The two maids also knelt, their backs turned towards the entrance hall, as if unwilling to look at a certain important figure.

Directly opposite the high dome lay a "carpet" made of fish skin. A

young man in a retro white robe reclined on it, propping himself up with his elbows as he quietly observed Martha.

Four other beautiful women adorned the “carpet.” One knelt behind the lad, serving as his cushion. Another peeled late-ripened grapes and delicately fed them to the lad. The remaining two held trays with alcohol, food, and towels, each standing in a separate spot. Their pregnant bellies were unmistakably visible, radiating a maternal glow.

Upon Lumian’s sudden entrance, the lad appeared alarmed, sitting up straight and seeking solace in the embrace of the woman behind him.

Sensing the abnormality, Rubió turned around and saw the adventurer he had hired, Louis Berry. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

His pupils dilated slightly as he urgently spoke in Intisian, “Why did you come in?”

Only then did Lumian pause and smile.

“I’m a professional adventurer. You’ve been inside for too long. I’m worried something might happen.”

As he spoke, Lumian sensed dangerous gazes from various parts of the building.

Rubió fell silent for a moment before saying, “Don’t worry. Just wait outside for us to come out.”

“Alright,” Lumian chuckled, turned around, and sauntered into the foyer, acting as if the dangerous gazes didn’t exist.

Back in the foyer, he faced the two “guards” and their rifles without giving them a glance as he walked past.

The expressions of the “guards” shifted, but they refrained from firing, allowing Lumian to exit the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

Lugano breathed a sigh of relief, grateful he wouldn’t be hunted down by the people of Milo Village.

Despite being a Beyonder, facing more than one armed soldier still made him uneasy.

Glancing at Lumian, he hesitated to ask why his employer insisted on barging in.

Lumian settled back beside the carriage driver, tucking in his legs with one bent and the other extended, allowing his right arm to rest on it.

After nearly ten minutes, Rubió Paco and his mother, Martha, emerged from the cathedral-like building.

Rubió took a deep look at Lumian and said, “Let’s go. The Governor of the Sea has agreed to let my mother receive treatment at the Church.”

Is that lad the current Governor of the Sea? He looked weak and appeared panicked. How can he protect Port Santa’s fishermen and sea merchants for a year? Or does he lack abilities but possess a special symbol? Did the April Fool’s prank cause an accident at last year’s sea prayer ritual? This Governor of the Sea might have failed to receive the sea’s boon or appointment, but the Fisheries Guild members conceal the matter to avoid causing panic, treating him as the real Governor of the Sea. He must know about what happened back then… Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He smiled and asked Rubió in Intisian, “Then, should we thank Earth Mother for Her love and care or the Governor’s approval?”

Rubió didn’t respond and followed his mother, Martha, into the carriage.

Lugano hurriedly took a seat on the other side of the carriage driver, watching as the horse circled around and changed direction, gradually departing from the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

Phew… Lugano sighed from the bottom of his heart.

This commission doesn’t seem dangerous…

Apart from his employer insisting on barging into the Governor of the

Sea's residence, there were no surprises.

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "That's because I'm here. If it were just you, those hidden observers might have already come knocking."

Lugano fell silent, observing as his employer pointed at the Governor of the Sea's mansion, resembling a cathedral, and uttered a phrase in Highlander word by word.

"What. Will happen if. Blown up?"

Lugano shuddered, his hair standing on end.

He glanced at the astonished carriage driver and advised his employer in Intisian, "You'll probably be hunted down by the entire Port Santa."

Lumian smiled and averted his gaze, remaining silent.

Only then did Lugano realize.

His employer was testing someone!

Why else would he use Highlander, a language he hadn't mastered yet?

He was testing the reactions of the carriage driver and Madame Martha in the carriage!

Listening to Martha and Rubió's conversation, Lumian noted the mother and son barely spoke during the journey, perhaps due to Martha's poor health, with occasional moans of pain.

As the carriage left Milo Village, the driver suddenly pulled the reins, stopping the horses.

An old man with a black cane had appeared in front of the carriage.

With dark and white hair, eyes as blue as the sea, and wearing common fishermen's clothes, the wrinkled face of the old man could have killed a mosquito with its folds.

“Mr. Oro…” the carriage driver whispered, his expression tense, uncertain how to react.

Juan Oro? Lumian thought. The president of the Fisheries Guild and the former village chief of Milo Village?

Supported by a young man resembling him, Juan Oro approached the Paco family’s carriage with his cane.

In the carriage, Rubió and Martha remained silent.

At that moment, a revolver appeared on Juan Oro’s forehead, pressing the cold muzzle against his flesh.

Lumian raised his chin slightly and looked at the president of the Fisheries Guild. With a calm expression, he asked, “Who allowed you to approach this carriage?”

Chapter 549 - 549 True Purpose

549 True Purpose

The young man supporting Juan Oro glanced up at Lumian, who sat beside the carriage driver with one leg bent, the other propped up. His eyes blazed with undisguised anger.

The carriage driver jumped in fright and desperately tried to distance himself from Lumian. However, with a horse in front of him and Lugano on his left, dodging proved impossible in his haste.

Lugano swallowed hard, blaming his employer for being overly aggressive.

Is he trying to imitate Gehrman Sparrow?

But his employer hadn't exhibited such madness before; instead, he seemed intelligent!

Juan Oro, an elderly man with mottled black hair, seemed oblivious to the revolver pointed at his forehead. He turned his head, stepped aside from the firearm, and continued forward.

Observing this, Lumian pulled the trigger without hesitation.

Bang!

A yellow bullet shot from the revolver, heading straight for the side of Juan Oro's head.

At some point, a palm intercepted the bullet, causing it to decelerate and spin. The bullet landed in the palm, feeling as if it had fallen into a thick swamp.

The wide, bronzed hand belonged to the young man supporting Juan Oro. He glared at Lumian, his lips curling in disdain. Then, he

bellowed, “Have you lost your mind?”

Before he could finish, fiery crimson orbs, nearly white in hue, materialized right in front of him, barely a meter away. They surrounded him in a blaze.

Almost instantly, Lumian felt as though he’d been ripped from reality. The carriage disappeared from beneath him, the ground vanished from his sight, and he found himself in an endless void of darkness.

The crimson fireballs, almost white, were controlled by an unseen force and changed direction, hurtling down from their original path.

Rumble!

They collided with the roadside dozens of meters away, carving deep, massive craters.

The horses, startled, reared up, neighing in terror. The carriage driver instinctively pulled at the reins, struggling to calm the panicked animals.

The “illusion” Lumian experienced dissolved with the explosion. He saw Juan Oro and the lad again.

Juan Oro, deeply wrinkled with his beard and hair standing on end, lifted his black cane and growled in a low voice, “Have you had enough?”

Lumian grinned and raised his revolver once more, aiming it at the president of the Fisheries Guild.

At that moment, Rubió Paco’s voice echoed from the rear carriage.

“Let them through,” he spoke in Intisian.

Only then did Lumian lower his arm and offer a smile in Intisian.

“My employer says you’re free to pass.”

He acted as if he couldn’t comprehend Juan Oro and the lad’s

Highlander.

Juan Oro observed him for a moment before shifting his attention. Using his cane, he circled around to the side of the carriage. The lad supporting him shot a glare at Lumian, but he was at a loss for cuss words since Lumian couldn't understand.

Juan Oro glanced at the window and calmly inquired, "Martha, I heard you're not feeling well?"

"Yes," the old lady weakly replied through the glass.

Juan Oro nodded.

"Has the Governor given you permission to seek treatment? Do you need my help in pleading your case?"

"He's already given permission," Rubió replied on behalf of his mother.

"That's good." Juan Oro nodded slightly and didn't press further.

He turned and slowly walked toward the building housing the Governor of the Sea's residence, using his cane as a crutch.

The young man supporting him shot a final glare at Lumian before refocusing on the old man.

Lumian adjusted his posture, acting as if nothing had transpired. He said to Lugano, "The carriage can continue forward."

Lugano snapped out of his daze and quickly directed the startled carriage driver to soothe the horses and exit Milo Village as soon as possible.

Without any issues, they made their way back to 21 Saint Lana Street.

Lumian retrieved Ludwig, his mouth still glistening with oil, from Giorgia and smiled at Rubió Paco.

"Remember your promise. Otherwise…"

He smiled and left the statement hanging.

“Don’t worry,” Rubió replied in Intisian.

After Louis Berry, his godson, and the interpreter departed, Giorgia sighed in relief and glanced at her husband.

“I’ve never seen a child eat so much. He must be abnormal!”

“Otherwise, Louis Berry wouldn’t have let him stay with us so easily,” Rubió responded, unfazed.

…

Aquina Street, Solow Motel.

After shutting the door, Lugano couldn’t resist asking Lumian, “W-why were you so aggressive? He’s the president of the Port Santa Fisheries Guild, a big shot. And, we’re in Milo Village!”

He suspected his employer had some hidden agenda.

Lumian gave his guide a glance and grinned.

“Why else? When making a scene in public, it’s unlikely both parties can go all out. It’s the perfect chance to test them, see what they’re made of. Trying it under the cover of night, when no one cares about the Earth Mother Church’s authority and the Feynapotter government? That would be way too risky.”

If Lumian had discovered that Juan Oro had godlike powers, he’d need to act quickly and call for backup!

“Ah, I see…” Lugano had an epiphany.

His employer’s craziness was just a facade. Every radical move had an ulterior motive!

But why is he in Port Santa? Is he planning something during the sea prayer ritual? Why target people from the Fisheries Guild?

That sounds very dangerous!

Should I resign early and forget about the remaining paycheck?

Lumian observed the silent interpreter and strolled over to a reclining chair in the living room, settling in with a smile. He leaned back and relaxed.

What he'd told Lugano was just one layer of the motivations behind his recent actions—the most surface-level one.

Most importantly, Lumian aimed to send a clear message with his radical actions:

He was in Port Santa to investigate the sea prayer ritual, unafraid of the Fisheries Guild or Milo Village. He possessed the strength and courage to back it up!

Breaking into the Governor of the Sea's residence or casually pointing a gun at Juan Oro's head and firing—all of it was to convey this information.

Lumian believed there were dissatisfied people in Port Santa regarding the Fisheries Guild's sea prayer ritual. After all, the primary beneficiaries were fishermen, sea merchants, and those in related industries, not representative of the entire Port Santa population.

For instance, even though the Church of Earth Mother and the Port Santa government had allowed the Fisheries Guild autonomy and excluded outsiders from involvement, someone bold enough to investigate, regardless of consequences, might tempt others. Could they silently or even covertly support this person to stir up trouble for their benefit?

Likewise, the beneficiaries wouldn't be united. Some gaining meant others losing; the powerful had jealous rivals. While not wanting the sea prayer ritual to end, they likely desired those in power to suffer and vacate their positions.

Lumian, by setting up a flag to investigate the sea prayer ritual and displaying decisiveness, steadfastness, and strength, didn't need to painstakingly gather clues. From his residence, he could receive various pieces of information, openly and covertly, and compare

them to determine authenticity.

For an outsider with limited time, this was the fastest and most effective way to uncover the entire sea prayer ritual process and the truth about last year's accident.

For the key member of April Fool's lurking in the shadows, possibly setting a trap, this was a strategic move to draw attention to adventurer Louis Berry and raise suspicion.

In due time, armed with the acquired information and discovered clues, Lumian had a chance to expose them through their own trap.

Of course, the main drawback of this plan was its relative danger. Putting himself in the spotlight was a risk, but in the pursuit of prey, risks were inevitable. Moreover, Lumian had plenty of allies.

As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, he realized that becoming a Conspirer had given him a clearer understanding of the situation and the conflicts between various groups. Using a term favored by Aurore, he developed a deeper insight into conspiracies: "The most brilliant conspiracy is an open conspiracy!"

This became a key principle for his future acting.

Around 2 p.m., Lumian spotted his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, emerging from the void and handing him a letter.

Puzzled, he asked, "Who's it from?"

Haven't those he needed to communicate with already been reached?

"It's from the tall Demoness," Baynfel replied.

What's up with Franca again? Lumian took the letter and began reading.

The man she and Jenna encountered on the fourth level of the catacombs is suspected to be from the world where the Celestial Master resides—the world before her transmigration? Lumian's pupils dilated slightly.

This was different from the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society; they had transmigrated through their souls, but these individuals had brought their bodies over!

In the midst of his surprise, Lumian pondered a crucial question.

Why would someone like that venture into the fourth level of the catacombs?

Was it because the Samaritan Women's Spring lay sealed there, along with the River Styx's overflowing water that bridged the two worlds?

Had similar individuals entered our world before? If so, why hadn't they left any trace like Emperor Roselle and the other transmigrators?

Franca and Jenna's expedition to the fourth level of the catacombs appears laden with coincidences. Not only did they uncover a new Mirror World Fragment, but they also encountered such a person.

After penning a letter to Franca, Lumian was about to request Lugano to translate today's newspapers when footsteps echoed from the corridor.

His eyebrows twitched as he pulled up an armchair, facing the door.

Knock, knock, knock. A few seconds later, a knock resounded on their suite's door. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

"Who is it?" Lugano inquired.

A mature and gentle voice floated from beyond the door.

"I'm Noelia of the Fertility Order."

Upon hearing this name, Lumian leaned back slightly and offered a smile.

He sensed that his digestion of the Conspirer potion had progressed a bit further.

Chapter 550 - 550 Effects of the Sea Prayer Ritual

550 Effects of the Sea Prayer Ritual

550 Effects of the Sea Prayer Ritual

Lumian hesitated, embodying the character of the adventurer—Louis Berry—

grappling with the unfamiliarity of Highlander. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Once Lugano finished translating Noelia's words, he nodded gently, sporting a welcoming smile as he spoke in Intisian, "Come in, please."

Simultaneously, he rose from his seat.

Lugano, who had already reached the door, opened it.

The figure outside indeed proved to be Noelia, the combat nun of the Fertility Order. Contrary to expectation, she wasn't cloaked in black or adorned with religious headwear. Her thick, black, curly hair flowed over her brown leather armor, and her lively light-blue eyes exuded energy.

Lumian noticed the pair of straight swords strapped to Noelia's back and the revolver at her waist. Smiling, he stepped forward.

"Thank you for your assistance."

Previously dependent on Lugano's translation, Noelia replied in Intisian, "How did you know I was here to help?"

Lumian didn't conceal his intentions for today's performance. He

raised his hand, pointing at his head, indicating deduction.

Of course, his gratitude stemmed from her aid in digesting the Conspirer potion.

Noelia's thick eyebrows twitched approvingly as she nodded.

Then, she turned her gaze to Lugano and Ludwig, as if seeking Lumian's opinion on whether to have them leave. Lugano's expression made it clear he preferred not to be part of it.

Sparing Lugano, Lumian gestured for him to take Ludwig outside, perhaps for street snacks.

After the two departed the suite, Lumian remarked to Noelia, "You actually know Intisian. You didn't say a word of it earlier."

Noelia replied with a smile, "We often take turns guarding the mountain passes in the southern foothills of the Pyraez mountain range."

The Pyraez range, termed by the Feynapotter Kingdom, referred to the Dariège mountain range. Shepherds frequently traversed it, entering the plains and pastures of Gaia and other provinces.

Without awaiting Lumian's further inquiry, Noelia tucked her hair behind her ear and grinned.

"It's impolite to have a lady standing and chatting with you."

Only then did Lumian invite Noelia to sit on the divan while he chose the armchair.

Noelia gazed at him and continued, "Port Santa's sea prayer ritual dates back to the late Fourth Epoch. It's over a thousand years old and can be considered ancient. The Church once purged it, relocating all relevant insiders and purifying all participants. However, less than a hundred years later, someone here began secretly conducting the sea prayer ritual again."

She didn't explain why she shared this history; it seemed like she was merely recounting.

“They didn’t continue purging it afterward?” Lumian inquired.

Noelia pursed her red lips and replied with a solemn expression, “In this matter, the brass’s orders are often contradictory. Sometimes, they let our Fertility Order handle it; other times, they signal us to observe for a while. All of this has been permitted by a second-in-command Blessed.”

Lumian, drawing knowledge from Madam Magician, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, and other sources, had come to understand that the Earth Mother Church operated on two major systems: Favored and Blessed. Favored referred to Beyonders of the Earth and Moon pathways among clergymen. Meanwhile, Blessed encompassed Beyonders of other pathways favored by the Earth Mother. Orders from a Favored required at least one second-in-command Blessed to be valid. Without this, they risked being considered products of the influence of evil gods and demons.

Lumian found the Earth Mother Church’s intricate system perplexing, seemingly designed to guard against the Favored. Nevertheless, he believed that there must be a reason behind such complexity.

Having undergone numerous experiences, he became increasingly aware that seemingly inconspicuous rules in the mystical world often held lessons etched in blood.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian inquired, “Are you a Favored or a Blessed?”

“I’m a Blessed,” Noelia replied without delving into the specifics of her pathway.

Lumian nodded slightly, indicating for her to continue.

Noelia smiled and sighed.

“After a long period of repetition, we eventually reached an unspoken agreement to allow the sea prayer ritual. At the very least, it brought prosperity to Port Santa without causing social chaos or significant disruptions beyond the participants.

“That decision was made ages ago, and while ancient dossiers

provide a rough understanding, the exact reasons convincing matriarchs, presidents, and archbishops remain elusive. Essentially, the sea prayer ritual has evolved into a traditional folklore in Port Santa, fostering prosperity in maritime trade and fisheries."

Crossing her arms over her chest, Noelia intoned with piety, "Life's precious embrace, the harvest's grace."

Lumian, intrigued, narrowed his eyes and inquired, "Why did you change the prayer gesture?"

Is there a problem?

Noelia opened her eyes and grinned.

"This was a gesture frequently used in the past, but as Earth Mother regained some lost authority, we adopted a new posture for formal occasions."

She rose, positioning her legs slightly apart, hands raised high, and passionately explained to Louis Berry as if preaching.

"The feet connect to the benevolent earth, and the palms reach towards the spiritual sky. In the middle resides the light of life. This is the domain of the Mother of All Things."

One can regain some of Their lost authority? Lumian was puzzled, but that wasn't the focal point.

Noelia settled back into her seat and continued, "While we haven't deciphered the core process of the sea prayer ritual, years of surveillance have yielded some insights.

"The Governor of the Sea, who successfully gains the sea's favor, wields the power to control this stretch of the sea, preventing shipwrecks. However, this seemingly comes at the cost of their lives and something more. Simultaneously, the ritual triggers rapid reproduction and thriving life in the area, ensuring fishermen a bountiful harvest. It also intertwines with fate; families with Maidens of the Sea in their lineage tend to experience good fortune, not just due to preferential treatment."

The sea prayer ritual's effects are intricate, wielding the power of the sea domain and influencing fate, reproduction, and abundance… Lumian struggled to grasp the reasons behind these occurrences.

Noelia peered into Lumian's face, her eyes bright yet gentle, and said, "The committee members of the Fisheries Guild, some villagers from Milo Village, and participants in the core process of the sea prayer ritual have all acquired mystical powers. We once confronted the little devils you encountered. When pursuing certain criminals, we discovered them transformed into lizard-like monsters."

Humanoid lizards? Similar to the Paco family's? Lumian hadn't anticipated obtaining any clues from Noelia.

Noelia smiled.

"Later, we found a commonality among those who can transform into lizard-

like monsters."

"What is it?" Lumian couldn't conceal his curiosity.

Noelia replied with a faint smile, "Their mothers were once Maidens of the Sea."

Maidens of the Sea's children? Child of the Sea? Which of Rubió's siblings did I kill? Not only did he transform into a humanoid lizard, but he also went mad and severely injured his mother? Lumian swiftly connected the dots, sensing he had grasped the essence of the Paco family's commission.

Yet, confusion crept in.

If this information is known to families with Maidens of the Sea, why would the Paco family conceal it from Juan Oro and other committee members in the Fisheries Guild?

Noelia didn't seek his thoughts and teased, "After confirming the link between the lizard-like monsters and the sea prayer ritual, we intentionally alerted the Fisheries Guild committee members. Since then, no such criminals have surfaced. They show discipline and

restraint. This is why, at times, I understand why the brass tacitly permit the sea prayer ritual in Port Santa. The participants are more obedient and easily controlled compared to adventurers like you."

Noelia implied: "I just advised you to stay away from the Fisheries Guild. Yet, the next day, you stormed into the Governor of the Sea's residence, pointing a gun at Juan Oro's head. That's much more troublesome than those involved with the sea prayer ritual!"

Lumian smiled, choosing not to comment.

Noelia pondered for a moment, locking eyes with him.

"I'm not sure why you're investigating the sea prayer ritual, and I don't want to know. What I can say is, if your actions endanger all of Port Santa, we will step in and expel you. With that condition, we might offer some assistance."

Lumian picked up the straw hat beside him and pressed it against his chest.

"It would be an honor."

Noelia left the Earth Mother Church's objectives in this matter unspoken, and Lumian chose not to delve into it.

The combat nun of the Fertility Order rose, making her way toward the door.

With her left hand on the handle, she abruptly turned around, her eyes sparkling as she asked with a smile, "Do you want to have a child here?"

Lumian was taken aback.

"Madame, aren't you changing the subject too quickly?"

Noelia's eyes held a maternal glint as she said with pity, "According to our assessment, the sea prayer ritual is at least as dangerous as a Saint or a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact when fully utilized for a short period. I don't know what you're up to, but once you're involved in this matter, you can't escape just because you want to.

“Before that, have you considered leaving a descendant for yourself? I can help you.”

Are your Earth Mother Church’s combat nuns way of inviting someone to a one-night stand so special? Lumian was momentarily speechless.

Noelia spoke sincerely, “Descendants are the continuation of our lives. Flowers wither and fall to the ground, only to bloom into a more brilliant scenery the next year. Are you really not considering having a descendant?”

“Not for now,” Lumian replied with a cold expression.

Noelia expressed regret, “Whenever you think it through, come to me.”

With that, she opened the door and walked out.

Chapter 551 - 551 Coming One After Another

551 Coming One After Another

Nevertheless, Noelia's kindness served as a reminder that delving into the sea prayer ritual wasn't a straightforward endeavor. The associated risks demanded the Church of Earth Mother's serious consideration.

Despite this, Lumian believed that many dangers could be sidestepped, and he wasn't inclined to actively confront them.

His primary objective wasn't to unveil the truth behind the sea prayer ritual and eradicate the influence of folklore on Port Santa, preventing its inhabitants from transforming into monsters. His true goal lay in unraveling the details of the April Fool's prank to track down Ultraman and Bard, executing them one by one. With Port Santa plagued by numerous problems and abscesses, Lumian saw no need to expose them; he could withdraw in a timely manner.

Concealing his true motives was a fundamental principle of acting as a Conspirer!

This could lead others to misinterpret his decisions and react incorrectly during critical moments.

After shutting the door, Lumian grabbed the golden straw hat and settled into the recliner. Smirking at the corridor, he muttered to himself with interest, Who will be the next to provide information?

Rubió Paco, who clearly dislikes the Maidens of the Sea and detests such matters, or the families who have lost their positions as committee members of the Fisheries Guild for many years?

Beneath the bright sunlight outside the window, Lumian swiftly flipped through the textbooks he had purchased, hoping to memorize and grasp more relevant knowledge. He couldn't wait until the charms' effects wore off, leaving nothing in his mind.

About an hour later, unfamiliar footsteps echoed through the corridor.

Knock, knock, knock. Another knock resonated on his door.

"Who is it?" Lumian inquired in simple Highlander.

"The book you bought has arrived," the motel owner, Otta Guillaume, replied in Intisian.

The book I bought? When have I ever bought a book? Lumian pondered, standing up thoughtfully. He opened the door and received a cheaply packaged but colorful book from the old man.

The title of the book was "Travel around Feynapotter."

Lumian pretended not to get the title written in Highlander and chuckled at himself.

"I'll have to wait for my interpreter to swing back and decode it for me. Might not even wrap my head around it before I bid Feynapotter farewell by flipping through a dictionary."

Otta Sr. expressed his understanding.

"When I first landed in Port Santa, seven or eight mates shared an Intisian-

Highlander dictionary. None of us dared to venture out solo. But after hanging around a bit and pushing ourselves to chat with the locals, we gradually got the hang of it. Truth be told, Highlander's quite similar to Intisian."

He turned the book over, gripping its spine and giving it a shake.

Lumian caught it and flicked it open with a swift motion.

Written on it was Intisian:

“The Maidens of the Sea are also not allowed to leave Port Santa or tie the knot with outsiders. But exceptions have cropped up over the years.

“Feynapotter’s women dig romance before tying the knot and chase after love. The ladies of Port Santa are no different. Throughout the past millennium, plenty of Maidens of the Sea have bolted to preserve their love or freedom. Around 30 to 40 have made it out. The most recent case dates back over 20 years. A Maiden of the Sea married an Intisian and had a kid. We’re unsure if she’s still alive because the Fisheries Guild has been hunting her down.

“Her child’s name is Nolfi. You might know her. She’s already back in Port Santa.”

Nolfi? Batna Comté’s lover? She’s actually a child of a Maiden of the Sea. She even dragged her “partner” to Port Santa to witness the sea prayer ceremony… Lumian sometimes felt something was off with Nolfi while on the Flying Bird, but he never guessed she was so tied up with the sea prayer ritual.

This made him wonder about Nolfi’s real reasons for returning to Port Santa. Batna Comté might find himself in a mind-boggling mess over this romantic fling.

Lumian’s eyes shifted down as he read the last line.

“Once you’re out of these waters and Port Santa, the mystical powers from the sea prayer ritual weakens significantly. Against folks from other regions, the Fisheries Guild mostly wrangles them using adventurers, bounty hunters, and professional assassins.”

Is this a go ahead to meddle with the sea prayer ritual and dig into it? As long as I could slip out of Port Santa and these waters, the Fisheries Guild’s committee members would be powerless against me? Lumian had no clue about the identity of the person who delivered the paper and the intel. After all, he hadn’t seen many folks’ handwriting in Port Santa, but he could unmistakably sense their eagerness and anticipation.

Crimson flames roared to life, consuming the white paper laden with information. Lumian reclined, sipping on Feynapotter Kingdom's famed Manzan, the top-tier white wine produced in specific regions without dilution. He absentmindedly flipped through the book "Travel around Feynapotter" penned in Highlander.

The author raved about Feynapotter Kingdom's diverse culinary delights, praising beef, mutton, and pork while expressing disdain for the local tobacco, likening it to smoking chili.

After a stretch, Lugano returned to the suite with Ludwig, bearing a stack of street snacks—roasted baby octopuses, lamb loin, fried fish, potatoes, corn omelet, and pork rolls.

Lumian had long set aside "Travel around Feynapotter." He rose and addressed Lugano,

"Don't forget to change your appearance tomorrow to fetch our new IDs. Also, figure out where Batna Comté will be in the next two days. I want to share a drink with him."

"Alright, alright." Lugano couldn't fathom why his employer suddenly wanted to locate the finely dressed adventurer, but he sensed it wasn't as simple as a casual drink.

After assigning the task, Lumian grabbed the sun straw hat and casually mentioned as he sauntered toward the door, "I'm stepping out for a bit. I'll be back before dinner."

"D-do you need any translations?" Lugano asked instinctively.

Lumian chuckled in response.

"I'm just taking a stroll, getting a feel for the terrain. No need to chat with anyone. Don't worry, I won't lose my way."

Lugano tersely acknowledged and refrained from probing further.

He trusted that his employer's adept body language skills would make simple communication a breeze.

Once out of Solow Motel, Lumian ambled down the street.

…

Solow Motel, fifth-floor suite.

As Ludwig polished off the fermented grape juice, he leaped from the chair and headed briskly to the washroom.

Lugano slouched on the sofa, reluctant to budge.

After tending to the child for nearly two hours, fatigue had settled in. Lugano yearned for a break. His plan was to gather intel on Batna Comté and rendezvous with the spirited Feynapotter ladies at the bar later in the night.

Ludwig entered the washroom, lifted the toilet lid, and half-closed his eyes. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

As he relieved himself with determination, a slim silhouette emerged from the shadows in the corner.

The black shadow took the form of an insect, about the thickness of a finger, with long bristles on its surface resembling spoiled food.

Its bristles fluttered, extending like tentacles, reaching out to touch everything in its path.

As it twisted, the black shadow silently crept up behind Ludwig. It abruptly stood up and plunged its head into Ludwig's cervical spine.

At that moment, it caught sight of the boy's brown eyes.

Abruptly, it froze, holding its shape like a snake rearing its upper body.

Ludwig, at some point, had ceased urinating and half-turned around.

He extended his right palm and seized the black shadow.

The shadow didn't put up a fight.

In the next instant, the chubby boy, Ludwig, shoved the black shadow into his mouth.

Amidst distinct chewing sounds, the lower half of the shadow's body twisted upward, melding with the blurry flesh in front of it.

In the blink of an eye, Ludwig consumed the black shadow as if it were a bowl of Feynapotter noodles.

He licked his lips, appearing as though he wanted another serving.

…

Outside Aquina Street, in the café adorned with flowers on every table.

Along the way, Lumian stumbled upon two street brawls. He snagged a skewer of Port Santa's roasted octopuses for a quick bite, yet no one approached him discreetly, attempted to stuff him with something, or whispered secret messages. There were no covert attacks.

Under the radiant sky and brilliant sun, he chose a quiet corner in a café, ordering a glass of Torres coffee with milk, relishing its rich bitterness with patience.

As time drifted by, a woman donned in a blue veil and an exquisite dress suddenly took a seat across from Lumian.

She scanned the surroundings and swiftly raised the blue fishnet hanging from the brim of her hat.

It wasn't a woman—it was a man.

A man dressed in women's attire, with distinctive features and grayish-blue eyes that couldn't conceal the anxiety on his face.

Lumian's pupils widened.

He recognized the man in the feminine garb.

It was the current Governor of the Sea!

The same Governor of the Sea whom Martha had bowed to in the cathedral-

like building, served by numerous maids!

He sought me out? The one coming to me is actually him? Lumian was both astonished and oddly convinced that this made sense.

Noticing that the adventurer Louis Berry had identified him, the Governor of the Sea lowered the blue veil, shrouding his face once more.

Then, he hushed his voice and spoke in Highlander, filled with desire and concern, “Save me! Save me!”

Chapter 552 - 552 Fake and Reality

552 Fake and Reality

Lumian didn't find the current Governor of the Sea's plea for help surprising.

He raised his left hand and touched his ear. In Intisian, he asked, "What are you saying? I only understand the word 'help.'"

The current Governor of the Sea, disguised as a woman, appeared dumbfounded, as if the language barrier was unexpected.

Having racked his brains and risked his life to reach Louis Berry, the Governor of the Sea found himself unable to convey his request due to the language barrier!

Maintaining his pretense of not understanding Highlander, Lumian calmly took out a dark-red fountain pen and a stack of post-it notes, handing them over.

"Write down everything you want to say. I'll get someone to translate it."

This time, he used Intisian again but gestured with the fountain pen to guide the other party on what to do.

If the Governor of the Sea is illiterate and unable to write Highlander, it would be troublesome… I would have to resort to communicating with individual words and body language. I don't want to reveal my knowledge of Highlander yet… Lumian thought with concern.

In Intis and Feynapotter, there were numerous illiterate individuals.

The Governor of the Sea, after a brief moment of confusion, grasped Louis Berry's intentions. He took the fountain pen and note and began scribbling.

Lumian observed with a composed expression. Despite being on the opposite side, with a Hunter's vision and spatial imagination, he easily discerned the content of the written message:

"Please help me. Rescue me out of Port Santa! I'm not the true Governor of the Sea!"

Not the true Governor of the Sea… Lumian suppressed the urge to raise his eyebrows and refrained from directly asking, maintaining an appearance of complete ignorance of the words.

He desired to see what additional information the current Governor of the Sea would reveal before considering his next set of questions.

The man dressed in feminine attire paused for two seconds before continuing,

"The true Governor of the Sea died during last year's sea prayer ritual."

Dead? The genuine Governor of the Sea perished during the sea prayer ritual? Lumian felt a sudden surge of joy at this revelation.

I can finally see the tail of the key members of April Fool's!

One consequence of their prank last year was the predetermined Governor of the Sea's failure to successfully perform the sea prayer ritual. He suffered a backlash from Beyonder powers and lost his life!

This aligned with the revelations from Otta Guillaume, the Solow Motel owner, and his son, a government department clerk, regarding an increase in shipwrecks, a decline in fish harvests, and disrupted trade.

The imposter Governor of the Sea wrote swiftly, as if fearing someone might catch up to him at any moment.

"I was chosen by Juan Oro and the Fisheries Guild to impersonate the

Governor of the Sea for a year because I resemble the true Governor of the Sea. This was to prevent fishermen and sea merchants from knowing about their grave mistake and the slip-up that caused the sea prayer ritual to fail. Such a failure has not occurred in recent centuries.

“Now that I know this secret, they won’t let me leave alive. After the Governor of the Sea handover ritual is completed and the vigil begins, I’ll undoubtedly be killed.

“I never wanted to play the role of Governor of the Sea. It was a blasphemy against the sea, but they pointed a gun at me, claiming they had already killed someone who refused to cooperate.

“The Church and the government won’t intervene in the Fisheries Guild’s affairs. You’re the only one daring enough to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea’s residence and confront Juan Oro with a gun. I can only seek your help. Over the past year, I’ve saved up quite a bit of money. I can give it all to you—

100,000 gold risot!

“I’ve heard about your recent exploits. I believe you have the strength. I implore you to help me!”

Quite educated… Lumian, after studying the three completed post-it notes, sensed that the imposter Governor of the Sea differed from ordinary fishermen, vendors, or workers based on his grammar and vocabulary.

Phew… After jotting down his reasons and request, the fake Governor of the Sea set aside the fountain pen and slid three post-it notes filled with Highlander words to Lumian.

With a quick glance, Lumian contemplated using Highlander words and body language.

“Help? Your. Family?”

The fake Governor of the Sea hastily wrote down a response: “My parents passed away a few years ago. I don’t have any other relatives. I was originally an employee of the Fisheries Company.”

It's no surprise Juan Oro and his associates dared to "kidnap" this person to be the Governor of the Sea. The Earth Mother Church refrains from meddling in the Fisheries Guild's internal affairs. If it affects other citizens, they will still handle it… Lumian pretended to ask first and planned to find someone later to translate the response.

"Servant girls. Pregnant?"

He inquired about the maids in the Governor of the Sea's residence and the reason for their pregnancies.

The fake Governor of the Sea, concealed behind a blue veil, displayed no change in expression. His right hand trembled slightly as he wrote: "The Governor of the Sea will receive the same treatment as the ruler of Port Santa. He can appoint anyone from Milo Village, the Fisheries Guild, and those sea merchant families as his maids and guards. He can do whatever he wants and directly visit them, enjoying the treatment an owner can receive.

"I couldn't help it."

Observing this, Lumian nearly laughed aloud.

Even in captivity, he's focused on such matters? Does he believe he can't escape and is resigned to his imminent demise? Is he seeking enjoyment while he still can?

The fake Governor of the Sea added: "I can also tax those people and forcefully allocate their market share, but they will listen to me. However, I dare not go too far. Otherwise, Juan Oro will privately whip me with his cane and threaten to kill me."

So, this is the source of your savings? Well, he can't control the weather or the tides. After all, he's merely a false Governor… Lumian took the fake Governor of the Sea's new post-it note and pondered for a moment before asking in a clumsy manner, "Original. Governor. Where?"

He inquired about the whereabouts of the former Governors of the Sea.

Noelia, the combat nun of the Fertility Order, hadn't raised this issue

before. It was unclear if she deemed it unimportant, chose not to disclose it for some reason, or lacked the corresponding information.

The fake Governor of the Sea wrote: “I don’t know. I heard a maid from Milo Village mention it before. She’s Juan Oro’s granddaughter. She said that all the Governors of the Sea will eventually return to the sea.”

Return to the sea… That doesn’t sound promising… Heh heh, designating Juan Oro’s granddaughter as your maid. Are you seeking revenge for the oppression from her grandfather? And Juan Oro agreed to it, indirectly retaliating by lashing you? Juan Oro and his sons are married to Maidens of the Sea, and there’s a chance his granddaughter is a lizard-like monster… How would you feel if you knew you were sleeping with a humanoid lizard? Lumian criticized the fake Governor of the Sea internally.

He seemed to ponder for a moment, as if unable to comprehend the other party’s writing, and changed the question.

“Juan Oro. Powerful?”

The fake Governor of the Sea suddenly shuddered.

Swiftly, he wrote: “He’s very powerful. He’s a monster! He can suffocate people and cause them to die in pain!”

After writing this, the fake Governor of the Sea glanced at the sun outside the window. He set down the fountain pen, stood up, and bowed to Lumian.

Then, swaying in his elegant dress, he made his way toward the café’s back door and departed.

He appeared anxious about his “disappearance” during the shopping trip potentially raising suspicions from the bodyguards.

Lumian observed his departure, crumpling the post-it notes into a ball in his palm.

Crimson flames trickled from between his fingers before swiftly dissipating.

After sprinkling the ashes into the bottle with flowers, Lumian picked up the partially finished Torres coffee and took a sip.

Lumian's mind raced as he analyzed the information that concerned him the most.

Is what the imposter said true? Could an ordinary person find an opportunity to escape their bodyguards and approach me? Is it possible that Juan Oro and the others secretly prompted him to set a trap for me, waiting for me to fall into it?

During the April Fool's prank, the specially crafted golden ring, lacking Beyonder powers, was concealed within the lamb's body. The lamb was taken as a sacrifice on the Governor of the Sea's ship…

Is April Fool's meant to substitute something with this ring? Is there another sacrificial ring similar to it?

Did the Governor of the Sea's appointment fail last year because the crucial sacrificial ring turned out to be a fake and couldn't be utilized?

This implies that key members of April Fool's or their subordinates are on the special ship. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to deceive the committee members of the Fisheries Guild and surreptitiously replace important items…

Based on the information I've gathered, there aren't many sailors on that ship. The only passengers are the Governor of the Sea, four Maidens of the Sea, and a few individuals guiding them through the ritual. Who among them is connected to April Fool's?

The Fisheries Guild must have conducted an investigation afterward. I wonder if they've drawn any conclusions…

I can't dismiss the possibility that the deceased Governor of the Sea is linked to April Fool's. Maybe he was completely deceived, thinking that by changing the ring and causing the ritual to fail, he could avoid returning to the sea like the previous Governors of the Sea. However, Bard, Mad Lady, and Ultraman may not have cared about his life at all…

What's the purpose of April Fool's? Is it merely a prank for their own amusement, or does it harbor a deeper motive?

Ordinary April Fool's members might engage purely for entertainment. As for the key members, truth and lies are invariably intertwined…

Sitting in the café until the sun neared the horizon, Lumian donned the straw hat and leisurely made his way back to the Solow Motel. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Late at night, Lugano returned from the bar, emanating the scent of alcohol. He approached Lumian and said,

"I've inquired with adventurers and bounty hunters about Batna and his lover. They all claim not to have seen them in the past few days. As soon as they arrived at Port Santa, it was as if they vanished."

Vanished? Nolfi, being the child of a Maiden of the Sea, wouldn't be so clandestine if she were merely returning to Port Santa and the Fisheries Guild… Could she be involved in something related to the sea prayer ritual and convinced Batna to join her? Yet, they were targeted upon their return? Perhaps she possesses significant knowledge… I can't personally search for them right now. I need to be more visible as an adventurer… Lugano isn't the most reliable source… What about Noelia, the nun? A flurry of speculations raced through Lumian's mind.

As his thoughts raced, he suddenly realized the kind of assistance he should seek from the Knight of Swords.

Chapter 553 - 553 Half-Fairy

553 Half-Fairy

Lumian remained composed, not rushing to summon the messenger of the Minor Arcana, the Knight of Swords. His patience persisted as he waited for a particular individual.

Since expressing a strong desire to investigate the sea prayer ritual and taking action, only three waves of people had contacted him today, openly or covertly. Yet, the person he awaited the most had not shown up.

Maybe Rubió Paco prefers to wait until late at night when there's no one around? Shaking off his thoughts, he smiled at Lugano.

"Batna just began his fling with Nolfi. He might want to explore all the villages, towns, pastures, and vineyards around Port Santa before the sea prayer ritual. If you hear anything about him later, inform me. There's no need to deliberately inquire." Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Lugano didn't think it was a big deal and smiled understandingly.

"Maybe he even took on some missions along the way—earning some bucks while traveling."

Once the interpreter and Ludwig retired to their rooms, Lumian settled into a recliner and casually perused the Highlander textbooks under the soft glow of the gas wall lamp.

As time passed, the night grew quieter.

Lumian, confirming no further intel would arrive that night, pondered the situation.

Stroking his chin, he pondered this matter.

It seems more people are observing. Unless the great adventurer's investigation makes a breakthrough and remains unscathed, they won't easily place their bets until I demonstrate greater reliability or value.

The trio who reached out today possesses distinct traits. One affiliated with the Earth Mother Church, insulated from losses even if their gamble fails. Would the Fisheries Guild risk confrontation with the cathedral and the Fertility Order?

The second, the imposter Governor of the Sea, faces high odds of death during the sea prayer ritual. He'd clutch at any chance for survival. Additionally, his lack of confidence in both the Earth Mother Church and Port Santa's government makes him value the adventurer capable of defeating the Demon Warlock more. However, his plea might be a trap by the Fisheries Guild.

The third, elusive figure hinted at useful clues without divulging the sea prayer ritual's secret…

After careful contemplation, Lumian gained deeper insight into the mindsets and choices of various factions.

Conspiracies often manipulated human emotions, exploiting the circumstances at hand. Lumian found himself increasingly fascinated by these two aspects.

This was both a daily routine and an essential necessity.

Putting aside the Highlander textbook, Lumian returned to his bedroom.

Closing the door, a black mark on his body emitted a faint glow.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian enveloped the entire room within the Bottle of Fiction. The entry conditions were simple—only spirit world creatures.

Ripple-like light briefly adorned the walls, floor, and ceiling of the

bedroom before swiftly vanishing, leaving everything appearing entirely ordinary.

Only then did Lumian compose the letter and arrange the ritual. He sanctified the dagger, erected a wall of spirituality, and lit the candle representing him.

Stepping back, he spoke in ancient Hermes, “I!”

Then, switching to Hermes, he said, “I summon in my name:

“A peculiar creature wandering above the world, a half-fairy who fiddles with melodic strings, a messenger that belongs solely to the Knight of Swords…”

The orange candle flame transformed instantly into a deep blue hue, expanding to half the size of a human.

In the blue radiance, a figure of blood-red hue emerged from the candle flame.

Resembling a female human in form, it shared traits with a creature Lumian had encountered in Cordu’s ruins. Devoid of skin or external coverings, it exposed bloody muscles, bluish-black blood vessels, ghastly white tendons, oily yellow fat, and large red or white fascia.

Lumian studied the 1.7-meter-tall Knight of Swords messenger and pondered silently, Does Half-Fairy mean it’s divided internally?

I assumed it would be either split vertically or horizontally…

Don’t you know how to fiddle with melodic strings? Where are they?

With these musings racing through his mind, Lumian handed the folded letter to the messenger and politely uttered in Hermes, “Kindly deliver this to the Knight of Swords.”

As his strength grew, Lumian became increasingly aware that most messengers he encountered could be lethal—if unafraid to unleash the corruptive source, Termiboros.

Though Lumian couldn’t gauge the strength of the Knight of Swords’

messenger—the Half-Fairy—all his experience urged him to maintain politeness.

The black and white eyeballs of the Half-Fairy, embedded in the blood-

colored face, darted around before gently nodding and accepting the letter.

It spoke with a clear, pleasant voice akin to a mountain stream's flow, "I'll deliver it promptly."

How melodious. It's like a bard strumming a guitar… Lumian snapped out of his reverie.

He suddenly grasped the reason for the messenger's melodic string prefix.

"Thank you." He bowed politely.

Observing the Half-Fairy about to retreat into the blue candle flame, Lumian couldn't suppress his curiosity and inquired, "What would you do if given human skin?"

The Half-Fairy fixed its black-and-white eyes on Lumian for a few seconds.

As it delved into the blue candle flame, it left behind a melodious voice, "I'll put it on."

You'll embody whoever's skin you wear? Has the Half-Fairy always sought its other half? Lumian speculated.

At that moment, he recalled an unfinished promise.

Help the Abscessed Hand find its body!

This pledge determined whether Lumian could attain godhood and advance to Sequence 4. However, being only a Sequence 6, he wasn't in a rush.

…

Late at night, in Trier's market district, within an empty room.

Franca, clad in an assassin suit, was having her first face-to-face encounter with 007.

As moments drifted by, 007 strode in, sporting a brown lion headgear and a double-breasted coat.

After confirming his identity, Franca pushed back her hood, emerging from the shadows.

"What brings us to this in-person discussion?" 007 inquired, his brow furrowed.

His instincts screamed to decline, yet he sensed the gravity of the situation. Failing to act promptly could result in a colossal catastrophe.

Ultimately, he acceded to Hidden Blade's request for a meeting.

Franca chuckled, emotions swirling within.

"It's a good thing."

"I'm skeptical when it comes from you, Hidden Blade," 007 expressed his concern openly.

Franca clarified her reason for requesting an "offline" meeting, "It's true. I need your help to find someone. Telegrams can't convey a portrait. I can't craft a digital image using just words and dots, can I?"

007 regarded Franca with suspicion.

"Simply seeking help to locate someone? No ulterior motives?"

Franca chuckled.

"For now, that's all I can divulge."

"That only heightens my apprehension." 007 keenly sensed the search for this individual might harbor a crucial issue. Otherwise,

Hidden Blade, having witnessed catastrophic events, wouldn't have taken it so seriously. She wouldn't have insisted on an offline meeting and handing over the portrait personally. More likely, she would have left it somewhere for retrieval.

Franca produced a portrait, drawn through dream divination and ritualistic magic, and passed it to 007.

Upon receiving it, 007's hand naturally emitted a sunlight-like glow, revealing the photo-like drawing in the dark night.

The depicted figure wore a black robe, with his head slightly turned, revealing very short dark hair that seemed freshly grown. The facial contours on his side profile were gentle, and his sickly pale-white skin contrasted with his dark brown eyes, which were not sunken enough.

Initially, 007 perceived nothing remarkable, but trusting Hidden Blade's knack for stirring trouble, he scrutinized it for more than ten seconds.

Beneath the lion's headgear, his brow furrowed as he whispered, "This doesn't seem like someone from any country in the Northern Continent."

Franca smiled playfully and self-deprecatingly.

"Don't you think he resembles us from before we transmigrated?"

007 froze, as if struck by lightning.

He studied the drawing repeatedly and fell silent for nearly 20 seconds before saying,

"Hidden Blade, do you understand what you're saying?"

Franca raised her head slightly and said in a deep voice, "I suspect he came from that country from our world.

"Muggle, I, and the others found signs of interaction between both worlds before!"

“When? What signs?” 007 interjected, fighting the urge to grab Hidden Blade’s shoulder and shake her for every bit of information.

Franca chuckled.

“I’m not at liberty to answer you. I can only reveal it after discussing with Muggle and the others. There are many secrets involved. First, discreetly search for the person in the portrait. I encountered him on the fourth level of the catacombs.”

007 struggled to contain his impatience, resisting the temptation to handcuff Hidden Blade for details. Through gritted teeth, he said, “Can’t you guys discuss it first before involving me?”

I was just considerate of your emotions, afraid that you’d lose control upon receiving so much information at one go… Franca let out a hollow laugh and replied,

“It’s not time to meet Muggle and the others yet. I need to find him urgently, afraid he might leave Trier.

“Calm down, calm down. You can’t hide your desire to kill me.”

Franca smiled sheepishly, fading into the shadows.

Holding the portrait, 007 took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

…

Feynapotter Kingdom, Port Santa, Solow Motel.

After breakfast, Lumian had just returned to the master bedroom when he sensed a sudden chill.

Simultaneously, a tarot card materialized on the desk.

The card depicted a knight running with a sword in hand.

Minor Arcana card, Knight of Swords!

Chapter 554 - 554 Favor

554 Favor

554 Favor

Lumian's gaze fixated on the Minor Arcana card before he noticed another person standing in front of the full-body mirror in the room.

The man sported a white shirt and a black vest, his face unusually pale and his brown hair tousled, suggesting he had just woken up.

For some inexplicable reason, Lumian sensed a conflicting demeanor in this person—elusive yet restrained. The brown eyes held an indescribable weight, akin to staring into an abyss.

"Knight of Swords?" Lumian inquired.

The man nodded subtly and responded, "Seven of Wands, how may I assist you?"

Surprised, Lumian questioned, "How do you know I'm the Seven of Wands?" Lumian hadn't disclosed his exact code name in the letter, merely stating he sought help from the Knight of Swords as guided by Madam Magician.

The Knight of Swords spoke slowly, as if holding back something.

"Ma'am Hermit informed me that the Seven of Wands, affiliated with Madam Magician, would soon arrive in Feynapotter, possibly in need of intel or assistance."

Madam Magician intentionally communicated with Ma'am Hermit about me, Lumian realized.

"I need your help locating two individuals in Port Santa and the surrounding seas. Try not to alert any factions."

“Be specific,” the Knight of Swords replied, economical with his words.

Lumian shared Batna Comté and Nolfi’s details, adding, “I’m not certain if they’re still alive. They might have become corpses by now.”

As he spoke, he handed two photo-like sketches to the Knight of Swords—a unique skill he’d acquired from Aurore’s grimoires and his expertise in ritualistic magic. These images, directly replicated from his mind, bore an uncanny resemblance to photographs.

The ritualistic magic involved in creating such images demanded a suitable and secure target for prayer—a practice more common among official Beyonders who had orthodox gods to appeal to. Wild Beyonders rarely resorted to praying to dangerous entities for trivial matters. Being part of the Tarot Club, Lumian straddled both worlds, with the ability to seek aid from Mr. Fool or tap into Madam Magician’s strength.

The Knight of Swords studied the photo-like sketches before affirming, “I’ll help you find them as soon as possible.”

There was no demand for payment or any immediate request, prompting Lumian to sigh.

Organizations do have their advantages!

Internal assistance often translated into favors, subtly binding individuals to reciprocal obligations. Some preferred setting clear prices rather than owing favors,

but Lumian didn’t entertain such thoughts. Securing the Knight of Swords’ presence and help was already a considerable favor in itself.

He pondered for a moment and then inquired, “What mission do you have in Feynapotter? Do you need my assistance?”

The Knight of Swords paused briefly before responding, “The matter in Feynapotter is wrapping up, but I’ll be heading to the Southern Continent soon. I might require your help there.”

“Sure thing,” Lumian agreed.

Intrigued, he asked, “Is Ma’am Hermit also overseeing matters in the Southern Continent?”

Wasn’t she too busy?

Madam Magician had indicated that this Major Arcana card holder primarily dealt with sea-related affairs and a clandestine organization dedicated to the Hidden Sage, with little involvement in the Southern Continent.

The Knight of Swords replied in a subdued tone, “It’s a personal matter, unrelated to Ma’am Hermit.”

“Got it,” Lumian acknowledged. Many of his past tasks weren’t orchestrated by Madam Magician, and even his mission in Port Santa to track down April Fool’s key member was considered personal business if it didn’t involve the Celestial Worthy.

After a two-second pause, the Knight of Swords added, “Moreover, I’m only temporarily under Ma’am Hermit’s command.”

What does he mean by temporarily subordinate? Can one switch to other Major Arcana card holders in the future? Lumian wondered.

Without explanation, the Knight of Swords’ form suddenly turned ethereal and disappeared.

Lumian, without activating his Spirit Vision, couldn’t catch the departing figure in time.

It doesn’t feel like teleportation or blending into the shadows… After a quick assessment, he changed into a brownish-green short-sleeved shirt and loose brownish-yellow pants commonly seen in Port Santa.

Exiting the master bedroom, Lumian tossed the Lie earring to Lugano.

“Go to Valerio and get the new IDs. Remember the face you used when you last saw him.”

“I remember it clearly.” Lugano took the Lie earring.

As Lugano was about to proceed with his disguise, Lumian halted him.

“Find a secluded spot after leaving the room to use it. When you return, shift back to your original appearance before entering the motel.”

Doesn’t this mean I’ll have this mystical item to myself for a while? Aren’t you worried I might take off with it? It’s not just unique; it’s valuable! Lugano refrained from probing further. Following his employer’s instructions, he took the Lie earring, a bag containing his disguise, and exited the room.

Observing Lugano’s departure, Lumian picked up a golden straw hat and addressed Ludwig, “There’s plenty of food in my bedroom. Stay put until I’m back.”

“Sure thing,” Ludwig agreed, seemingly eager.

Would someone exploit the absence of his guardians to attack him, the boy?

Lumian, passing by the sofa, casually placed the golden straw hat on Ludwig’s head.

Simultaneously, he switched to a common round-rimmed felt hat and left the suite gradually.

He wasn’t concerned about Ludwig being alone in the motel. In fact, those who might come into contact with the boy faced more significant risks.

Lumian adjusted his hat in the corridor and activated Shadow Transformation.

Swiftly, he transformed into a pure shadow, blending into the darkness at the base of the walls on both sides.

In the dark, veiled void, Lumian inhaled the scent of the gray amber perfume he had deliberately left on the Lie earring, using it to track Lugano.

His intent wasn't merely to determine whether the interpreter was problematic but to anticipate a potential attack.

With adventurer Louis Berry probing the sea prayer ritual and presenting himself as resolute and radical, it was likely the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village would swiftly react in a decisive manner, eliminating this outsider to dissuade others and factions from clandestinely stirring.

In this scenario, Lumian, Lugano, and Ludwig were at risk.

He specifically tasked Lugano to seek Valerio alone for the IDs, intending to see if Juan Oro and others had their eyes on his companions, seizing an opportunity to strike Lugano.

This strategy allowed Lumian to swiftly intervene if needed, rescuing Lugano while potentially neutralizing some Beyonders from the Fisheries Guild, showcasing the adventurer's strength and instilling confidence in onlookers, compelling further attempts.

However, the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village might not act immediately. They might feign vulnerability, luring hidden adversaries to reveal themselves before eliminating them in one fell swoop.

Lumian shadowed Lugano to Valerio's underground casino, observing him pay the remaining 50 gold risot for two local IDs.

No attack… Could it be the Fisheries Guild is fishing, or did they fail to recognize Lugano after he used the Lie earring? Lumian pondered the potential reasons while traversing through the shadows.

Lugano hurriedly avoided lingering on the streets, well aware that his employer had incurred the wrath of the Fisheries Guild. He feared being ambushed by those unwilling to target Lumian, dragged into an alley, and subjected to a brutal beating. This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Seeking refuge in a crevice between two buildings near Solow Motel, he swiftly reverted to his altered appearance. Removing the Lie earring, he switched into his customary black formal suit,

finally exhaling a sigh of relief. He turned onto Aquina Street and made his way back to the motel's entrance.

Several tramps lay dozing on both sides of the street, basking lazily in the sunlight.

Lumian was aware that unlike the severe tramp situation in the Loen Kingdom and the Intis Republic, Feynapotter's tramp issue was less acute due to fertile soil, ample pastures, and the Church's modified agricultural methods, resulting in surplus food production.

Here, food was notably cheaper, about 15 to 20% lower compared to Intis and other countries. Previously, before the Loen Kingdom began importing food from Feynapotter, the price of rye bread of the same weight was nearly twice as high.

Despite the abundance, bankrupt farmers, herders, and city dwellers ended up as tramps due to land acquisition, loan sharks, and other reasons. However, they received free food from various sources like the cathedral of Earth Mother, the Fertility Order, government departments, and charitable organizations, which although not filling, prevented starvation, allowing them to recuperate and find new opportunities.

As Lugano neared Solow Motel, Lumian, concealed in the shadows, sensed a disturbance.

Three tramps on the street abruptly stiffened, adjusting their postures unnaturally.

In an instant, they sprang to their feet like puppet marionettes, drawing revolvers in an odd manner and aiming at Lugano from three different angles.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Their white-eyed state left Lugano no room to evade as they pulled their triggers successively.

Chapter 555 - 555 Monster Illustrated

555 Monster Illustrated

555 Monster Illustrated

It wasn't until three tramps pointed revolvers at him that Lugano sprang into action.

As a seasoned bounty hunter, he had no time to discern where the assailants planned to shoot. He pushed off with strength in his feet, swiftly lunging to the side.

He dodged two bullets, but the third one was too close, altering his trajectory

—inevitably striking him.

In midair, Lugano did something unconventional.

Instead of curling up to shield vital spots, he extended his body, using his palm to shield his chest.

Bang!

The bullet connected with his right rib, unleashing a vivid spray of blood.

With a thud, Lugano landed on the street, rolling forward to evade subsequent shots.

In the midst of his lunge, Lumian's form materialized from the shadows by the roadside. He delivered a powerful punch to the tramp who had just fired.

With a resounding thud, the tramp's eyes rolled back, and he crumpled, unconscious.

Lumian returned to the shadows and swiftly moved behind another tramp. Before he could fire a second shot, Lumian punched him behind the ear.

As the tramp collapsed, Lugano skillfully evaded the second bullet fired by the remaining assailant.

In that tense moment, passersby and elderly women chatting on the street scattered, desperately seeking cover. The surroundings seemed eerily vacant.

Shadows danced as Lumian emerged from the darkness beside the last assailant. Extending his right palm, he seized the other's neck.

Almost simultaneously, the assailant's mouth opened naturally, emitting a slender black shadow.

An insect, as thick as a finger, with tentacle-like bristles floating on its body, lunged straight for Lumian's neck.

"Hmph!"

Two pale-white beams of light flickered in Lumian's nostrils. The slender, peculiar black insect lost its strength, gently descending into his raised left palm.

As anticipated… Lumian withdrew his right hand from the tramp's neck, unfazed.

The tramp's eyes returned to normal. Clutching his revolver, he staggered backward, leaning against the wall before slumping to the ground in a daze.

Lumian paid him no heed. Utilizing the shadows, he swiftly approached an unconscious tramp, noticing a small, bloodless wound on the back of his cervical spine.

Another slender, bristle-covered black insect darted out, attempting escape. Lumian's hand, engulfed in crimson flames, seized it. After a

few struggles, the insect emitted a cooked fragrance.

Subsequently, Lumian employed a similar method to handle the strange black insect emerging from another tramp's body.

During this procedure, Lugano half-squatted on the street, his left palm flickering with a clear light as he pressed it against the gunshot wound on his right rib.

The charred wound immediately contracted, ceasing to ooze blood.

Drawing a dagger, Lugano skillfully "picked" a yellow bullet from the wound with precision and efficacy.

With that accomplished, he generated a faint light in his left palm, pressing it against the wound.

The injury squirmed and swiftly fused, reducing to a fifth of its original size in no time.

Lugano had intentionally stretched, hoping the bullet would hit a spot he could conveniently handle!

As he retrieved a bandage to tend to the remaining wound, Lumian approached, extending his free right palm.

Understanding his employer's gesture, Lugano returned the Lie earring, expressing relief, "Fortunately, I'm a Doctor. As long as I'm not killed on the spot, gunshot wounds aren't a big deal."

Silently, Lumian donned the silver Lie earring. Leaning down, he pressed and swiped at Lugano's wound, transferring it to the back of his right hand.

Due to the disparity in location and Lugano's pre-treatment, the wound regressed into a small scrape—one akin to scraping against a rough wall.

"…" Lugano stared at the wound that didn't even require a bandage, falling into a prolonged silence.

Lumian smiled and remarked, "Why else do you think I let you carry

Lie?”

“…” Lugano gaped, uncertain of what to say.

Surveying the area, Lumian instructed, “Take the three tramps’ guns and wait for the police to arrive. Report that you were attacked.

“After giving your statement, if there’s nothing else, take Ludwig to the Fertility Order’s entrance and have them uphold justice and maintain order in Port Santa.”

“Alright, alright.” Lugano hurriedly stood up.

Just as he took two steps toward the dazed tramp, realization struck. He turned around and blurted, “What about you? Where are you going?”

In his haste, he had forgotten to use honorifics.

Lumian simply chuckled, saying nothing.

I sent you to the Fertility Order to inform them of my intentions—to let them know!

Lumian proceeded towards Solow Motel, leaving crimson flames in his wake that incinerated the blood dripped by Lugano.

As he advanced, Lumian lowered his voice and asked, “Temiboros, do you recognize these insects?”

Termiboros remained silent.

Upon reaching the suite on the fifth floor, Lumian observed Ludwig eagerly awaiting him.

His heart stirred as he spread his left palm, revealing three black insects. Casually, he inquired, “Do you know what these are?”

Ludwig nodded obediently, speaking swiftly, “Batings Black Insect, a creature from Planet Heveen 3. Rich in various proteins and possessing high energy levels. They invade human bodies via the cervical spine, controlling their nervous systems to manipulate them

to their advantage.

“These Batings Black Insects ceased evolving generations ago. While controlling the nervous system, the host’s movements stiffen, and their eyes roll back.

“They seldom directly kill the host, but their larvae, once laid, absorb the host’s energy, indirectly leading to their demise.

“In ancient times, many of their ancestors received boons. Though their descendants no longer possess these, their body structures adapted to the boon’s power were inherited, eventually evolving into this special species with minor Beyonder-level powers.

“Consider it a special spirit world creature or a degenerated Beyonder creature.”

After the long explanation, Ludwig gazed at Lumian longingly, asking, “That’s all I have to say. Can I eat them now?”

You really know… You make it sound so real. The Batings Black Insect, Planet Heveen 3. What’s happening… The alien planets Aurore mentioned? Lumian was taken aback.

Lumian wasn’t surprised that Ludwig had the desire to consume the Batings Black Insects.

This guy could even gnaw on live rats!

The insects even emitted a rather pleasant fragrance after being roasted.

Lumian stared at Ludwig for a few seconds before handing over the three Batings Black Insects in his hand.

Ludwig didn’t hide his delight. He swiftly devoured two of the roasted insects, relishing the explosion of juices in his mouth.

He half-closed his eyes, and an unusual fluctuation seemed to surge within him.

Lumian furrowed his brow in confusion but refrained from

intervening. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Having used the Mystery Prying Glasses to discover that there appeared to be something beneath Ludwig's skin, coupled with Ludwig's daily behavior and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom's stance, Lumian speculated that the boy was a monster in human guise, sealed by the Church to carry out tasks inconvenient for deploying clergymen.

Regarding the Reader pathway controlled by the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, it held various applications at the Body of Heart and Mind level. It was reasonable to assume why Ludwig's mind had suffered damage after being sealed, rendering him seemingly foolish.

After 20 to 30 seconds, Ludwig opened his eyes and rushed to the dining table. Grabbing a small steel table knife, he carefully placed the remaining Batings Black Insect on the tablecloth and skillfully cut it open, removing numerous black fascias.

Ludwig poured a glass of Manzan and arranged the fascia and the shell of the Batings Black Insect on the table, adding the black juice squeezed from the insect's body.

Lumian observed as the pale-golden liquor swiftly transformed into a dark-

red, almost black hue, emitting dense bubbles.

Once the bubbles subsided, Ludwig lifted the peculiar cocktail.

Only then did he remember Lumian's presence. Stammering, he asked, "Can I

—can I drink a little?"

A sealed Body of Heart and Mind indeed… Lumian smiled and sighed.

"Drink up."

Gulp! Gulp! Ludwig finished the small amount of dark-red nearly

black liquor and expressed satisfaction to Lumian, saying, “After concocting the Batings Black Insect’s bodily fluids, it can enhance the physique of those who drink it for the first time to a certain extent. It grants everyone the ability to paralyze primate creatures within two hours. Yes, it will only be effective through contact.”

Th-this is turning the Batings Black Insect into something akin to charms? Moreover, it provides permanent effects and short-term Beyonder powers… Amidst Lumian’s surprise, he sensed that Ludwig had undergone significant changes.

He had never demonstrated the ability to prepare such food before!

Lumian didn’t delve deeper and calmly remarked, “Take Lugano to the Fertility Order’s entrance later and ensure he informs Noelia about the attack.”

“Alright.” In a good mood, Ludwig readily agreed.

…

Meanwhile at the port district—while Ludwig and Lugano arrived at the Fertility Order.

Wearing a golden straw hat, Lumian strolled towards the square dominated by an Ocean Waves statue. His attention focused on the grayish-black house adorned with the Port Santa Fisheries Guild’s sign.

The four- or five-story castle-like ancient structure was rumored to be over a millennium old, having been destroyed and rebuilt centuries ago.

Lumian’s eyes traced the intricate symbols on the wall, which included iron hooks and fishing nets. Adjusting his straw hat, he proceeded towards the Fisheries Guild.

Chapter 556 - 556 Violent Beating

556 Violent Beating

556 Violent Beating

Lugano gripped Ludwig's hand and raised his eyes to the green vines entwining the cloister's spire, with the Sacred Emblem of Life at its center. A simple depiction of a baby amidst wheat ears, flowers, spring water, and other symbols. Turning to Noelia, he uttered, "I was attacked. Just wrapped up my statement at the police station."

Noelia, adorned with a black hat adorned with white patterns, blending religion and combat, furrowed her brow and inquired, "Where's Louis Berry?"

Rather than delving into the specifics of Lugano's assault, she honed in on the whereabouts of Louis Berry, the great adventurer.

Lugano shook his head and replied earnestly, "I don't know. He told me to come here after giving my statement and inform you that I was attacked."

Noelia's expression shifted to solemnity.

…

In the bustling port district, standing before the robust grayish-black edifice of the Fisheries Guild,

Lumian, now garbed in a white shirt, black vest, and brown pants, topped with a golden straw hat, casually strode to the building.

The two guards stationed here lacked guns, carrying only straight

swords on their backs and daggers at their waists, blending in with the multitude of passersby.

“Who are you looking for?” Both guards extended their hands simultaneously, halting Lumian’s advance.

Lumian couldn’t “comprehend” Highlander. Without hesitation, he drew his revolver, pointed it towards the sky, and squeezed the trigger.

Amidst the gunshot’s echo, he slipped between the two guards, entering the castle-like abode of the Fisheries Guild.

The guards exchanged uncertain glances but refrained from intervening.

One of them dashed towards the port’s police station, while the other hurried into the grayish-black building, aiming to report to his superior and seek guidance.

Clutching his revolver, Lumian advanced at a measured pace. Beneath the puzzled stares of the staff, who hastily sidestepped, he traversed the hall and ascended the stairs leading to the committee member’s office.

Just as he approached the second floor, a figure appeared before him.

Bronze-hued skin, broad and sturdy physique, black hair, and blue eyes characterized the young man who had aided the Fisheries Guild’s president, Juan Oro.

He was Fernandez Oro, the old man’s grandson.

Fernandez glared at Lumian ascending step by step, gritting his teeth.

Lumian paid him no heed. He maintained a steady pace, neither hastening nor slowing as he approached the entrance to the second floor.

Suddenly, Lumian sensed a significant dimming of the ambient light.

Simultaneously, an intangible force descended from above, entwining

around his feet, making him feel shorter and causing his body to sway. Fernandez, in contrast, seemed to grow taller, casting dense shadows that engulfed the corridor's meager light.

Thud!

Advancing, Fernandez swung his right fist towards Lumian's head.

A gusty wind permeated the space, propelling the fist with hammer-like force, guided by an unseen magnet.

Lumian gazed upward as something within him erupted, shattering the binding force.

His thighs swelled suddenly, and his loose brown pants constricted. He grew taller seemingly out of thin air, sleeves and pants tightening around bulging muscles.

Bang!

A left punch from Lumian met Fernandez's incoming fist in a thunderous collision, causing the stairs to quiver and sway.

Fernandez, forced back two steps, bore no fear but a hint of joy on his face.

Retreating, his eyes darkened with a touch of brilliance.

Raising his left hand, a dark-green light swiftly concentrated on his unusually rough fingertips.

The light transformed into a ray, silently hurtling towards Lumian, momentarily immobilized by the collision.

Fernandez chose close combat from the start, creating an opening for the ray, capable of disrupting the human structure and inducing swift internal injuries.

The dark-green danger ray matched the speed of light. Lumian, unable to dodge in advance, could only watch as it struck between his chest and abdomen.

Yet, the dark-green ray pierced through, striking only an illusion.

Leveraging the Ascetic's accumulated strength in clashing with Fernandez, Lumian had seized the chance to arch his back and stand in place like an arc, deftly evading potential sneak attacks.

In this intricate dance, he even employed the Niese Face, creating an illusion of himself still standing upright!

Gradually, the dark-green ray dissipated, vanishing around the corner of the stairs.

Suddenly, a crimson fire, nearly white-hot, erupted from Lumian's body.

Transformed into a fireball, he hurtled towards Fernandez, who had just regained his footing.

Fernandez's pupils constricted, seemingly challenged by the blaze.

Swiftly, he sidestepped, clenched his right hand into a fist, and yanked it down.

Clang!

His massive form stomped heavily, causing the building to sway. In a single stride, he stood before Fernandez, who had just risen. His left fist, wreathed in crimson, nearly white flames, collided with Fernandez.

Without a moment to activate his superpowers, Fernandez raised his arms hastily to block.

Boom!

Flames erupted as Lumian's punch sent the young man flying, crashing into the partially open side office, demolishing the wooden desk.

Capitalizing on Fernandez's disorientation and pain, Lumian followed, rushing into the office and delivering another punch with his left fist.

Boom! Crimson flames, nearly white, illuminated the room as the punch explosively struck Fernandez's chest.

The flames were contained by an unseen force, preventing them from entirely obliterating Fernandez's chest. Instead, they crumpled, clouding the target's vision.

Expressionless, Lumian halted, gazing at the semi-conscious Fernandez. He raised his left hand.

A colossal crimson fireball, nearly white, condensed rapidly, poised to act as a Reaper.

In the next instant, the fireball shot forth, homing in on Fernandez.

Abruptly, it ascended, passing the target, and collided with the wall behind the desk.

Boom!

Blazing white and red flames burst through the glass window, the wall, and ignited outside the Fisheries Guild building, creating fiery clouds in the air.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian felt as though he entered a dark and profound void. Distant, resplendent stars blinked like vigilant eyes. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Once more, he confronted Juan Oro, an elderly man with deeply etched wrinkles.

At that moment, Noelia had rushed to the square where the statue of the waves stood, shouting towards the building with a fallen window frame,

"Stop!"

At the sound of the combat nun's voice, Lumian sighed with regret, swiveled his revolver, and holstered it under his armpit. Juan Oro and the surrounding void vanished.

A few minutes later, Juan Oro emerged from the grayish-black

building of the Fisheries Guild with his walking stick. In a deep voice, he addressed Noelia, “He attacked Fernandez. You must apprehend him!”

Noelia cast a cold glance at the president of the Fisheries Guild and retorted, “Should I then invite Fernandez to the police station to assist in the investigation of the Aquina Street shooting?

“All of you, calm down and jointly maintain order in Port Santa. Otherwise, do you think the Church can’t handle any of you?”

In the final words, the combat nun shifted her gaze to Lumian, issuing a warning as a gesture of fairness.

Juan Oro fell silent for a moment before stating, “I don’t know anything about the Aquina Street shooting.”

With that, he turned and limped back to the Fisheries Guild with his cane, where many employees rushed to assist him.

Observing this, Noelia led her combat team to “escort” Lumian away.

Once out of the port district, the combat nun instructed her team members to slow down and create some distance, walking alongside Lumian herself.

“You’re making things difficult for us. Order, understand? Superficial order must be maintained.” Noelia raised her hand, pinching both sides of her forehead. “Fortunately, you didn’t really kill Fernandez. Otherwise, I would have had no choice but to carry out the arrest.”

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “If I truly wanted to kill Fernandez, he wouldn’t have survived until your intervention or Juan Oro’s rescue.”

His words held undeniable truth.

Noelia was taken aback. After a few seconds of contemplation, she spoke, “Are you displaying your attitude, strength, and confidence for the onlookers? Simultaneously, do you wish for Juan Oro to misjudge your capabilities based on this encounter?”

Lumian remained silent. With a smile, he looked ahead and remarked, “Where did the former Governors of the Sea end up?”

Noelia fell silent for a moment before answering, “On the surface, they were dispatched to various locations. However, according to our observations, it takes at least four to five months, or no more than three years, for these Governors of the Sea to mysteriously vanish without a trace. There are often no signs of a struggle at the scene, and their families remain unharmed.”

Did they return to the sea voluntarily? Lumian smiled and said, “See, didn’t I gain something from dealing with Fernandez just now?”

The Church of Earth Mother now seemed more willing to share information.

Noelia wasn’t upset. She smiled and added, “No one reveals all their cards from the start. Once your investigation reaches a certain point, we’ll provide more.”

Lumian stared at the azure sea beside him, contemplating for a moment.

“You haven’t disclosed the intentions of your Earth Mother Church in this matter.”

Noelia’s eyes flickered. Suddenly, she raised her hand and pointed at the arguing pedestrians ahead, shouting, “Street brawls are prohibited!”

Before completing her sentence, she sprinted over with her team, leaving Lumian alone.

Lumian scoffed and slowly shook his head.

…

Late at night, as Lumian was about to retire for the night, he heard the deep and hoarse voice of the Knight of Swords, as if suppressing something.

“Clues to the whereabouts of the two targets have been found.”

Chapter 557 - 557 Purpose

557 Purpose

557 Purpose

Trusting his gut, he turned, meeting his reflection in the full-length mirror.

There stood the disheveled, pallid-faced Knight of Swords, a sudden appearance.

“Just clues?” Lumian mused, distilling the essence of the other’s words.

The Knight of Swords shot him a gaze, tightly reined, and uttered, “The day after hitting Port Santa, they visited Balan?at Ship Rental, asking about renting a boat for fishing. Vanished since.”

Those words sparked a fleeting thought in Lumian’s mind.

Quite romantic. As expected of a three-halves Intisian and half-

Feynapotterian duo. Opting for a fishing date!

If only Nolfi didn’t carry the Maiden of the Sea’s lineage and this wasn’t Port Santa; then, romance might’ve been their motive. Regrettably, reality doesn’t entertain “ifs.” Lumian sighed, pondering Nolfi and Batna’s true intentions.

Port Santa teemed with fishermen, yet not all owned boats. The lower-class ones either worked on vessels for a set pay or pooled funds to rent or buy. Balan?at’s profits came from these folks, not the tourists or middle-class sightseers. This wasn’t a city known for tourism.

In Lumian’s contemplation, the Knight of Swords pressed on, “Nolfi

handled the price inquiry, but Batna cooperated without resistance."

Did Batna truly perceive it as a date? For Intisians, it holds allure. No wonder he didn't resist. Renting a boat for a sea excursion… Lumian pondered, his mind racing with possibilities. Was Nolfi planning to intercept the incoming Governor of the Sea during the sea prayer ritual or collide with their ship loaded with gunpowder? Perhaps she intended to replace them at a critical juncture? Lumian's thoughts whirred with conjectures.

Then, a sudden recollection jolted him.

Various sources mentioned a crucial detail about the sea prayer ritual: The final and pivotal part unfolded in a special sea area beyond the port. Details and the location were undisclosed to those who hadn't witnessed it.

A new hypothesis formed in Lumian's mind.

Nolfi's mother, a fleeing Maiden of the Sea, likely visited that special sea and might have shared pertinent information with her daughter.

Was Nolfi's motive for renting the boat to reach that unique sea area?

What lay there?

The core of the sea prayer ritual. Did this imply something, an entity, or power concealed in that zone? Was the ritual designed to harness something extraordinary?

Did Nolfi aim to seize the item and establish herself as the permanent Governor of the Sea? Or did she intend to obliterate it, terminating Port Santa's tradition of selecting the Governor and Maidens through the sea prayer ritual?

Destruction might indeed be the simpler route…

Could April Fool's key members have orchestrated a prank to steal the item or its uniqueness?

Had they succeeded?

This was a pivotal question.

The Knight of Swords observed Lumian in silence, not disrupting his contemplation. He stood motionless, resembling a lifeless figure.

After a while, Lumian asked with curiosity, “How did you manage to trace Nolfi and Batna in just one day?”

The Knight of Swords, in a deep tone, responded, “Gathering information from the spirit world and conducting a field investigation. After their departure from the Balan?at Ship Rental, all pertinent information was either concealed or eliminated, making it impossible to locate them again.”

Isn’t this the premise of certain divinations… Nolfi and Batna didn’t take precautions against divination before visiting the ship rental company, but they did so afterward?

This doesn’t add up. Either they never take precautions, or they do it consistently, unless they are both novices who only remember to guard against divination after inquiring about the boat’s price…

Yes, a more plausible explanation is that ship rental falls within the fisheries and sea trade-related industries, deeply intertwined with the committee members of the Fisheries Guild. Nolfi and Batna, as outsiders, inquiring about the price of a ship rental attracted attention, and their identities were exposed, leading to their “disappearance”…

The note revealing that Nolfi is the child of the Maidens of the Sea might come from the owner or a shareholder of the Balan?at Ship Rental? Lumian’s thoughts gradually became clearer.

He gazed at the Knight of Swords, pondering how to request him to continue the investigation.

At that moment, the Knight of Swords took the initiative to say, “I’ll delve deeper into the ship rental company.”

“Thank you,” Lumian expressed his gratitude sincerely. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Then, he witnessed the Knight of Swords's figure swiftly becoming transparent and vanishing.

Transformed into a soul-like entity? Wraith? Lumian discerned more details this time.

This led him to suspect that the Knight of Swords belonged to the temperance faction of the Church of The Fool. His subsequent journey to the Southern Continent was likely to deal with the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought.

Without hesitation, he shed his clothes, donned a faded cotton shirt, and reclined on the bed.

…

Late at night in Trier, Franca strolled beneath intermittently-lit street lamps, clad in a thick tweed shirt and pants that clung to her legs.

Even without makeup and deliberately concealing her appearance in the darkness and shadows, numerous inebriated individuals still approached her upon glimpsing her back or side profile, behaving like tiny flying insects circling under the gas street lamps on a summer's night.

Smack!

Franca's ponytail swayed slightly as she sent a particular drunkard flying with a sidekick.

The drunkard screamed and vomited on the ground.

However, those scoundrels came expecting joy and anticipation, only to receive a beating and the accompanying pain. Right, could this be considered a simplified version of pleasure causing affliction?

It was precisely because Franca wanted to experience this and potentially find an opportunity to digest the potion that she didn't sneak through the shadows and move undetected.

After a while, Franca slipped into the shadows and reached the empty room where she had previously met 007.

Her associate had mentioned that he'd discovered information about the ancient tomb beside the Crazy Mushroom Cave on the fourth level of the catacombs through the Church's resources and municipal archives. However, it wasn't safe to disclose it in the telegram group, no matter how close their bonds were. Therefore, he compiled the details and left them at the designated spot for Franca to retrieve.

Franca conducted a brief search and found two folded sheets of thin paper.

She unfolded them and swiftly skimmed the content. As an Assassin, even in the dimmest environment, she could decipher the words:

"The ancient tomb where you found the Mirror World Fragment belongs to a noble family from the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire.

"Their last name is Tamara. I haven't located specific details about the members in that tomb, but I've stumbled upon something odd.

"Not only does the fourth level house Tamara family tombs, but there are also tombs on the third level, such as the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb and the Impartial Tomb. Why aren't they grouped together…"

Franca's gaze froze.

Isn't the Thorns and Shieldwall Tomb where Jenna completed her tearcatcher mission?

The mission they used as a pretext involved the Tamara family, and the tomb where they found the Mirror World Fragment belonged to them too!

Wasn't this an extraordinary coincidence?

Could it be a manifestation of mystical laws?

Franca collected herself and continued reading.

"…I can't access more detailed Tamara family information at my level. Figure something out yourself."

Hmm… Franca nodded, resolved to report the entire situation to

Madam Judgment, seeking insights and information from the Tarot Club.

…

In the early morning, on Aquina Street in Port Santa.

In a house diagonally opposite Solow Motel, Lumian, his appearance transformed, stood by a window in a room. Clutching the new ID provided by Valerio, he surveyed the suite where he, Lugano, and Ludwig were lodged, as well as the street below.

Now, he aimed to play the role of an ordinary bounty hunter who had taken on a confidential assignment, diligently monitoring the adventurer, Louis Berry.

Given Louis's assertive conduct in recent days, it was likely that all the well-

informed individuals in Port Santa knew of this great adventurer's desire to investigate the sea prayer ritual. The probability was high that Bard and other pivotal members of April Fool's would be in tow!

Chapter 558 - 558 Tamara Family

558 Tamara Family

Lumian savored the tang of fermented grape juice bought from a street vendor as he coolly surveyed the suite rented by the adventurer, Louis Berry. He occasionally cast a discerning eye over Aquina Street, on the lookout for any potential monitors.

A little over half an hour ago, Lumian had transformed his appearance and changed into a different outfit. He had seemingly "teleported" to a nearby street before returning to secure a suitable room.

Soon enough, Lumian spotted Lugano cautiously heading out to fetch an extra breakfast for Ludwig. A chuckle escaped him.

This guy was still spooked from yesterday's attack.

However, unless the members of the Fisheries Guild had succumbed to the corrupting influence of superpowers, losing control of their emotions and rational thinking, it was improbable for them to target Lugano, the interpreter and guide. Louis Berry's response the previous day had sent a clear message to everyone:

If you can't take me out directly, keep your sights off those around me. You might eliminate me, but I, Louis Berry, can do the same. There'll come a time when your Fisheries Guild's committee members, your kids, and descendants travel without protection or lack strength. Wanna guess if I'd dare to make a move or if I have the capability?

Either find an opportunity to bring me down with all you've got, or play nice!

Faced with such a resolute “answer,” the rational committee members of the Fisheries Guild would know what to do. Louis Berry, the adventurer, wasn’t bound by official rules like a Beyonder or a cop. Expecting him not to involve family in the game was unrealistic.

Moreover, considering his recent behavior and the circulating rumors, he was a daring adventurer, reminiscent of Gehrman Sparrow. Known for his aggression, madness, and coldness, there were no limits to what such a person might do.

Of course, Lumian wasn’t letting his guard down entirely. Lugano would either have Ludwig’s “company” in the future, or he’d be under Lumian’s watchful eye at all times. After all, beyond the Fisheries Guild, many individuals in Port Santa were secretly plotting to exploit this opportunity for their own gain. Disguised as Fisheries Guild members, they could attack the interpreter and godson of the adventurer Louis Berry, intensifying the conflict and stirring up trouble prematurely.

Ignoring conspiracies at this level would be unacceptable for a Conspirer.

After Lugano returned to his suite on the fifth floor of Solow Motel with a heap of breakfast, Lumian purposefully avoided looking at the high-backed chair, seemingly adorned with a golden straw hat, positioned strategically at the dining table. He turned on his heel and exited the room, ready to explore the surroundings.

Stepping into the corridor, Lumian immediately spotted a burly man standing near the staircase, barely reaching 1.7 meters in height.

The man, with brown hair, brown eyes, and rugged skin, held a distinctive long mouth cigarette between his lips, fixing his gaze on Lumian.

In Highlander, the man inquired, “Who sent you here to keep an eye on Louis Berry?”

Lumian couldn’t help but let out a soft chuckle.

“Are you not here to monitor Louis Berry yourself?

“I didn’t even inquire about your sender. Why the sudden curiosity?”

He responded in flawless Highlander as well.

The man, with the long mouth cigarette dangling, contemplated for a moment before nodding in agreement, making way for the stairs.

Lumian strolled past him, descending the staircase step by step.

As he departed, the man’s gaze took on a gradually ominous edge.

He raised his left hand, delicately twisting the special long mouth cigarette.

Taking a deep breath, he exhaled into the cigarette, and in silence, a slender steel needle shot forth from the charred tobacco, aimed directly at Lumian’s back, mere two meters away.

It was a blow dart, originating from certain tribes in the primitive forests of the Southern Continent. Typically, blow darts were one to two meters long, making them unsuitable for concealment or sneak attacks. However, bounty hunters, followers of the God of Steam and Machinery with strong hands, modified them into a more portable version—only slightly longer than regular cigarettes.

While this modification increased portability and its concealed nature, it sacrificed some power and limited its range to a mere four to five meters. When paired with specially crafted arrows carrying anesthetic and lethal toxins, it remained a favored tool among bounty hunters on both Northern and Southern Continents.

The man had concealed the blow dart within the long mouth cigarette, intending to lull the target and strike when the opportune moment arrived.

His objective: to subdue Lumian and extract information about the identity of his employer.

The steel needle flashed past, but Lumian seemed to have anticipated the attack. Just as the man blew air to propel the needle, Lumian swiftly bent forward, arched his spine, and dodged the blow dart in an almost inhuman contortion.

With a soft poof, the steel needle embedded itself into the wooden staircase.

In the next moment, the assailant's eyes widened as Lumian, in a display of flexibility surpassing human limits, swung a boxing glove.

Bang!

He fainted.

Swiftly recovering from his contorted evasion, Lumian bent down, scooped up the unconscious assailant, and dragged him into his rented room.

Taking advantage of the assailant's unconscious state, Lumian administered a dose of truth serum and calculated the time for him to regain consciousness.

Examining the unremarkable, ordinary face of his assailant, Lumian calmly listened to the panicked shout.

"I just wanted to incapacitate you and find a spot to interrogate you about your employer!

"The poison on the arrow is just an anesthetic!"

Squatting in front of the man, Lumian smiled and responded, "Now, let me ask you, who's your employer?"

"It's Juan Oro!" the brown-haired, brown-eyed man blurted out.

Lumian chuckled and probed further, "Is that so?"

"Yes, no, it's actually someone else…" At this point, horror overcame the man, and he fell silent.

Lumian prompted him patiently.

"Who is it?"

After struggling for a few seconds, the man involuntarily spoke,

"Rubió Paco."

Rubió… Why is he keeping tabs on me? Does he seek to gain from the adventurer's activities? Is that why he didn't approach me discreetly to share information? Lumian nodded subtly and straightened up.

"Your breath stinks. Remember to brush your teeth more often." The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"…" The assailant looked perplexed, unable to fathom why the conversation had taken this turn. Nonetheless, he replied half-heartedly, "I'm not a fan of brushing my teeth."

Lumian shook his head in disdain, uninterested in the blow dart as a trophy. Leaving the room, he left a parting message: "Make sure to lock the door behind me."

…

In Trier, within Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Franca and Jenna's rented apartment.

They had already received Madam Judgment's response via Rabbit Chasel.

Before departing, Rabbit Chasel, adorned with a miniature top hat, shrunken gold-rimmed glasses, and a diminutive black trench coat, made an unusual request.

"Can I use a custom-made revolver as compensation for delivering the next five letters?"

Jenna's mouth hung open, momentarily taken aback.

"Sure."

She questioned, "Why can't you conjure one yourself?"

Similar to your top hat, glasses, and trench coat.

"They have no practical use, but I hope the revolver does. The bullets need to be custom-made too," Rabbit Chasel explained earnestly.

Jenna blinked and acquiesced.

Once the messenger departed, Franca commented with a peculiar expression,

“Why does it feel like it has shifted from pursuing knowledge to pursuing strength?”

Jenna wanted to defend Rabbit Chasel but struggled to find a compelling excuse. Instead, she cursed, “It’s not necessarily a bad thing. It might even aid me in future battles!

“Moreover, the stronger the messenger, the safer the letter deliveries.”

Franca, lacking a messenger, suddenly felt a twinge of envy. Without delay, she unfolded Madam Judgment’s reply.

“The Tamara family, one of the five noble families from the Fourth Epoch’s Tudor Empire, held a hereditary duke aristocratic title, akin to the Amon you’re familiar with, albeit slightly lower in status.

“In the era when the gods roamed the land, families capable of becoming great nobles undoubtedly possessed angelic powers. According to the information, the Tamara family had existed for many years before Alista Tudor became the Blood Emperor. They were renowned nobles from the previous empire.

“They had the coat of arms changed once and two internal divisions. This is why Tamara was buried on different levels of the catacombs at different times.

“Initially, their coat of arms consisted of thorns, a shieldwall, and vertical swords. Later, it became an open door, with the vertical sword acting as the crack.

“This represents a significant change in the Tamara family. It shifted from being dominated by the Justiciar pathway to being dominated by the Apprentice pathway. However, no corresponding historical information has appeared for the time being.

“A small number of members of the Tamara family, who adhere to

the Judgment pathway, have survived to this day and are secretly active.

“The other Tamara group had established a close connection with the Demoness family during the Tudor Empire’s era. During the Fifth Epoch, a secret organization known as the Theosophy Order emerged. It had Demoness figures and originated from Tamara’s Apprentice pathway. There’s reason to believe that they are still cooperating.

“This Tamara group has been estranged from the other one for many years, refusing to acknowledge each other.

“The Tamaras of the Judgment pathway also experienced a division. The exact situation is unknown…”

Upon reading this, Franca and Jenna shared the same thought.

The Tamara family is indeed connected to the Demonesses!

They continued reading the contents of the letter.

“The person who led you to the Tamara family’s tomb and discovered the Mirror World Fragment is likely targeting that special mirror world and the Demoness Sect. Don’t worry for the time being. Just be vigilant against coincidences, theft, and scams around you…”

…

In the ensuing days, Lumian, along with Lugano and Ludwig, remained unharmed.

Port Santa seemed to settle back into a semblance of normalcy. Those secretly observing displayed no indications of advancing further.

Just as Lumian contemplated taking further actions to elucidate all details before the sea prayer ritual in early November, the Knight of Swords brought fresh information regarding Nolfi and Batna.

His face maintaining a pale-white hue, he spoke to Lumian, “I’ve identified a suspect involved in the kidnapping of the two targets. Should I handle it alone, or shall we proceed together?”

Lumian took a moment to consider before responding, “Together.”

Chapter 559 - 559 Top-Notch Collaborator

559 Top-Notch Collaborator

559 Top-Notch Collaborator

After making his decision, Lumian had a chance to inquire, “Who’s the suspect?”

“Lato Guiaro,” the Knight of Swords announced.

Lumian recognized this individual. He was also a committee member of the Fisheries Guild. Not only did he own shares in three large fishing boats and the Port Santa Fisheries Company, but he was also involved in shipbuilding, ice production, and other industries. Someone in his family had already married a Maiden of the Sea over a hundred years ago.

Lumian asked thoughtfully, “What’s Lato Guiaro’s connection to Balan?at Ship Rental?”

“He’s a creditor of the company and has arranged employment for many relatives there,” the Knight of Swords replied succinctly.

“It all adds up.” Lumian nodded in agreement and paused to reflect. “Let’s convene at the crossroads of Saint Lana Street and Golden Wheat Street. How about meeting in three minutes?”

He had never set foot in Lato Guiaro’s extended family estate, so he lacked the corresponding spirit world coordinates. His only teleportation option was Saint Lana Street, relatively close to their target. He needed to utilize Spirit World Traversal discreetly to evade any surveillance.

“Sure.” The Knight of Swords dissolved into transparency and disappeared instantly.

Lumian spent two minutes hydrating, donning a vest and a straw hat. Only then did the faint glow of the black mark on his right shoulder illuminate.

In an instant, his figure vanished from the shrouded room.

At the crossroads of Saint Lana Street and Golden Wheat Street, Lumian materialized from a concealed corner. The Knight of Swords, now sporting disheveled brown hair, a switched flaxen-colored shirt, and a dark brown vest, stood at the fringe of the crimson moonlight. His pallid face and oppressive eyes hinted at an underlying transformation, as if he could shed his human guise at any moment, revealing a monstrous form fueled by pent-

up desires.

While others might miss these subtleties, Lumian, being an Ascetic, possessed a heightened sensitivity to such situations.

The temperance faction, indeed… Lumian mused at the Knight of Swords’s appearance, entertaining a whimsical thought.

Bro, ever considered embracing Inevitability? As an Alms Monk or an Ascetic, you’d spare yourself from enduring so much!

Of course, Lumian merely toyed with the idea and wouldn’t actually propose it. Without the right strokes of luck, the boon of an evil god could gradually corrupt Beyonders within the potion system, eventually transforming them into humanoid monsters aligned with the evil deity. Nevertheless, his musings hinted at the potential synergy between specific Sequences of the boon system and potion system.

“Let’s proceed.” As the Knight of Swords remained silent, Lumian took the lead and spoke.

The Knight of Swords nodded, and they followed the shadows along the street, turning into Golden Wheat Street at a measured pace, heading north.

Soon, they reached a five-story building resembling a small castle.

Observing the illuminated windows and grayish-blue outer walls, the Knight of Swords pointed at a specific glass pane, noting,

“That’s Lato’s bedroom. He and his wife sleep in separate rooms.”

The gathered intelligence is impressively detailed… Lumian acknowledged silently and inquired, “What’s your plan?”

“Sneak in and take control of the target,” the Knight of Swords responded succinctly.

Isn’t that a bit too straightforward and crude? The Guiaro family likely employs more than just ordinary Beyonders. Some members may have gained powers through the sea prayer ritual… Lumian recalled the unique characteristics of a Wraith and assessed his capabilities. With one hand in his pocket, he casually remarked, “Okay.”

With those words, his form dissolved into a shadow, seamlessly merging with the darkness.

Beside him, the Knight of Swords had already vanished.

Utilizing the shadows cast on the building’s outer wall, Lumian deftly infiltrated Lato Guiaro’s room.

In an instant, his target came into view. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

A middle-aged man, with slightly curly black hair and dark brown eyes, adorned in a dark-blue cotton robe, greeted Lumian’s sight. His long face featured a neatly trimmed thick beard.

Lato Guiaro’s expression morphed into one of fear, and his body froze. He stumbled toward the shadow concealing Lumian.

In the reflection within each eye of the Fisheries Guild committee member, Lumian spotted the pale-faced Knight of Swords, clad in a dark brown vest and flaxen-colored shirt, with disheveled brown hair!

Observing Lato Guiaro losing control of his body, unable to utter a sound, Lumian stepped out of the shadow, returning to his original form.

An oppressive heaviness enveloped the air around him, akin to the weight of seawater.

Apart from this, nothing seemed amiss.

With a controlled step, Lumian approached Lato Guiaro, a sensation akin to moving through a swamp.

He refrained from resorting to the direct use of the Spell of Harrumph. Firstly, the other party seemed powerless and could be managed through alternative means, saving his spiritual energy. Secondly, Lumian hesitated due to uncertainty about whether the Spell of Harrumph would incapacitate both of them, given the forceful possession of Lato Guiaro by the Knight of Swords.

Retrieving a bottle of sedative from the Bliss Society, Lumian unscrewed the cap and brought it to Lato Guiaro's nose.

Fanning the opening with his hand to hasten the gas's flow, after about ten seconds, the committee member of the Fisheries Guild closed his eyes and slumped into unconsciousness.

Remarkably, he remained standing, not collapsing to the ground.

The Tarot Club's Minor Arcana card holder, the Knight of Swords, maintained absolute control over Lato Guiaro's body.

This is even simpler than employing teleportation and the Spell of Harrumph… I've faced numerous Beyonders before, but never have I subdued one without laying a hand on them. I strolled up casually, administering the sedative. A Wraith truly stands as an exceptional ally, capable of harmonizing with any Sequence of any pathway… Yes, a Wraith remains impervious to anesthetic gasses. The Bliss Society's sedative had no effect on him. As Lumian observed the noiseless resolution, he almost felt as if he hadn't partaken in the skirmish at all.

He returned the Bliss Society sedative to his concealed pocket and

retrieved a canister of truth serum. Seizing the moment, he administered nearly a third of it to Lato Guiaro. Sensing that the sedative's impact might be short-lived on Beyonders with unknown traits like Lato Guiaro, he hastened to complete his preparations before the target regained consciousness.

Within 20 to 30 seconds, Lato Guiaro's eyes fluttered open.

First, he encountered Louis Berry, the adventurer in the golden straw hat, adorned with a faint smile. Subsequently, he discovered himself seated on a chair at some indeterminate moment, facing the divan in the bedroom.

Lato attempted to scream, but his vocal cords rebelled, rendering him motionless.

"Have you grasped your situation?" Lumian reclined on the sofa, placing his right foot on his left knee.

He spoke in Intisian.

Fear etched across Lato's face, rendering him unable to nod or respond.

While he possessed certain abilities, Lato was certain they wouldn't suffice against the adventurer Louis Berry. They would likely result in a renewed coma or a swift lightning strike.

"What do you want?" Lato suddenly inquired.

He, too, knew Intisian.

Attempting to raise his hand in surprise to touch his neck, he found himself immobilized.

Lato Guiaro lapsed into silence.

With a smile, Lumian responded, "I have a few questions for you. Answer them satisfactorily, and I might consider letting you live until tomorrow to assist me in spreading the word about this affair."

Lato remained silent for a moment before consenting, "What do you

want to know?”

Lumian casually shook his right ankle.

“Are Nolfi and Batna with you?”

“Yes,” Lato responded with a strong inclination to divulge information. “They’re locked up in the basement. They’re still alive. I just want to use them.”

“For what?” Lumian inquired, intrigued.

Lato’s lips trembled as he explained, “I intend to use them to lead you to the location of the sea sacrificial ritual and guide you to rent a boat there.”

“So, you’re the one who wrote that note…” Lumian exclaimed in realization. “How do you plan to guide me?”

Lato struggled to articulate his actions, but his mouth moved faster than his thoughts.

“I want you to discover that Nolfi and the Batna intend to rent a boat and head out to sea. Then, I’ll arrange for them to seize an opportunity to escape and relay something to you, letting you know the significance of the sea area.”

“And then?” Lumian inquired with curiosity.

Lato sealed his lips shut but eventually spoke.

“What they will tell you is the truth, but they are unaware of one thing: “Never engage a Child of the Sea in a sea battle! Juan Oro awaits you in that sea region, ready to bury you entirely!”

So, the Fisheries Guild planted a deceptive trail through the clue about Nolfi, posing as a turncoat to lure me into a trap and eliminate me… If I hadn’t swiftly revealed my intent to investigate the sea prayer ritual, exposing Nolfi and Batna to exploitation, they might already be sleeping with the fishes… The skirmish against Lugano was crafted to deceive me… As Lumian’s thoughts raced, he heard Lato express confusion, “You haven’t even started your investigation.

How did you find me? You merely sent your interpreter to inquire about Nolfi and the others' whereabouts. There was no follow-up…"

Lumian's smile held a cryptic undertone as he disclosed, "Do you think I'm here alone to investigate the sea prayer ritual?

"I represent the will of many. Numerous comrades lurk in the shadows of Port Santa."

Lato felt a chill course through his stiffened body, lending credence to Lumian's words.

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his chin.

"Where does your power come from?"

Lato's throat constricted as he answered, "From the sea. Each sea prayer ritual grants us strength.

"Unfortunately, the ritual failed last year. We received no replenishment for two years, and everyone weakened to varying degrees. Otherwise, Juan Oro would have finished you long ago. He would have cast your lifeless form into Wave Square, a stark warning to those who cross us!"

Similar to a boon? Theoretically, even without replenishment, a boon's power will gradually wane… Lumian pondered for a moment and remarked,

"The sea prayer ritual is a large-scale boon-seeking ritual, with the Governor of the Sea as the primary sacrifice?"

Lato contemplated for a moment before responding,"He serves as both sacrifice and host. Juan Oro and we act as assistant hosts.

"The sea prayer ritual is essentially a marriage to the sea and appeasing it. The boon is a byproduct."

"Marriage to the sea?" Lumian suddenly found his imagination lacking.

Chapter 560 - 560 Traces

560 Traces

Lato rarely divulged details about the sea prayer ritual. He spoke with a weighty demeanor, “Yes, the Governor of the Sea ties the knot with the sea, quelling its violence and bringing peace. They truly become the spouse of the sea, commanding authority over this stretch of water.

“As the assistant and deputy hosts, we also gain varying degrees of in Port Santa receive some boons, although they are limited in number.”

So, the Governor of the Sea is synonymous with Husband of the Sea. The assistant and deputy hosts are like close friends or family busy assisting at a wedding, naturally earning gratitude. Those with the sea bloodline are akin to children attending a wedding, typically gaining some candy… Lumian attempted to comprehend Lato Guiaro’s description of the sea prayer ritual by combining reality and wedding traditions in novels.

Intrigued, he inquired, “Does the Governor of the Sea engage in those acts with the sea?” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Aren’t weddings supposed to conclude with newlyweds consummating their marriage?

“Of course!” Lato affirmed, “After the wedding, the sea will bind itself to the four Maidens of the Sea. Through their union with the Governor of the Sea, the first child of each Maiden of the Sea is a noble with a pure sea bloodline, possessing the strongest Beyonder powers.

“Why four and not one Maiden of the Sea? It’s because individual humans can’t endure the vastness, expansiveness, weight, and transcendence of the sea. Enough partners are needed to share the

burden."

The more I listen, the more ominous it becomes… Marrying a Maiden of the Sea is akin to marrying a remnant of the sea's power. It's no wonder they're highly valued, and their destinies change. The only challenge is acknowledging and loving their wife's first child. Lumian contemplated for a moment and remarked, "And the Governor of the Sea can withstand the passion of the sea?"

And it was four at a time.

Lato, devoid of pity or sympathy, stated, "One of the two most crucial purposes of the vigil ritual is to utilize the house and some of the sea spawn concealed within it to transform the Governor of the Sea's body, enabling them to withstand the violent and unrestrained sea.

"That's why the Governor of the Sea can only serve for a year. Even with the physical transformation, the power acquisition, and the Beyonder enhancement, they won't endure much longer."

Consumable. The husband of the sea is a consumable… Lumian sighed inwardly and queried, "Then why would the Governor of the Sea return to the sea after leaving office?"

"No one knows the exact reason, but there's a certain conjecture. Juan Oro believes that the sea doesn't allow those who were once its husband to start a new life. And I believe that the modifications of the vigil ritual, the intrusion of spousal intercourse, and the influence of maritime authority make the Governor of the Sea more and more like a sea creature and less human. Eventually, he will inevitably return to the sea that gives him peace and comfort." Lato felt that his deduction was correct.

What exactly is the sea you're referring to? Is it a natural spirit or a creature beyond, controlling the sea? Lumian replayed Lato Guiaro's answers in his mind before asking, "Sea spawn? Like the wrinkled monsters that can disguise themselves as devils, and the long black insects that control humans by burrowing into their necks?"

"Yes," Lato responded, yearning for a cigarette but unable to move his hands. "We, the Children of the Sea, are spawn of the sea. One of

our duties is guiding certain sea spawn from the depths to settle on land using our Beyonder powers, helping them reproduce."

However, Ludwig mentioned that the Batings Black Insects originate from another planet, not some sea spawn… Lumian didn't rush to ask about the Children of the Sea's Beyonder powers; instead, he focused on the details of the sea prayer ritual.

"What's the other vital purpose of the vigil?"

Lato's expression hinted: "Don't you understand what weddings are about?"

"Well, there's the exchange of rings for marriage. And the vigil ritual modifies the Governor of the Sea's body, attaching a unique trait to a fixed golden ring, matching it to the sea bride's identity."

A unique golden ring… Lumian perked up and said, "And then?"

During last year's April Fool's prank, fringe members received orders to acquire a gold ring from Torres and conceal it within the lamb sacrifice's stomach!

"Then, following the completion of the other rituals, the Governor of the Sea will take the golden ring and cast it directly into the sea before the ship. He will utter in a unique language from the depths,

'We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion!'

"If the sea consents to this union, gentle waves will stir, transforming into pure white foam petals that will shower over the four Maidens of the Sea.

"The returned ring carries symbolic weight, signifying authority over the waters surrounding Port Santa[1]."

Just the waters encompassing Port Santa? From the indications, it seems it's not the true sea, but rather something that affects this specific area of the waters… Lumian paused briefly before speaking, "How do you express 'We espouse thee, O sea…' in that peculiar language?"

Lato Guiaro contemplated for a moment before emitting a chattering sound.

Under the influence of the Language Comprehension charms, Lumian failed to grasp its meaning. He concluded it wasn't part of the Northern Continent's languages.

Simultaneously, he observed the Knight of Swords in Lato's eyes slightly shaking his head.

If the Knight of Swords truly belongs to the temperance faction that parted ways from the Rose School of Thought to align with the Church of The Fool, he should possess knowledge of the Southern Continent's language. Additionally, with his high Sequence and extensive tenure as a Beyonder, he must have encountered most supernatural tongues. Does this imply it's not from the language family of the Southern Continent, let alone ancient Hermes, Dragonese, Elvish, or other mystical languages? Lumian regarded Lato Guiaro with an intrigued grin.

"Are you certain those words translate to 'We espouse thee, O sea…'?"

Lato hesitated briefly before explaining, "Probably. This is a language passed down from ancient times, existing since the sea prayer ritual. There are only a few sentences…"

He's not sure… They hadn't systematically mastered the language, only capable of uttering two or three sentences based on the legacy… Lumian sensed there might be more to it than Lato's description; there was no denial if the true meaning was akin to "Open Sesame."

The folks from the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village might have been akin to the individuals Aurore and Franca spoke of. They employed a peculiar language, its true meaning eluding them as they substituted it with their own interpretation.

As Lumian pondered, his expression remained unchanged.

"Does the Governor of the Sea safeguard the ring after he acquires the special trait?"

“No,” Lato responded, shaking his head. “In addition to the Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea, and sailors in charge of controlling the ship, there are four pure-blooded Children of the Sea acting as deputy hosts. They guide the Governor and the Maidens through the ritual stages, teaching the unique call to marriage. The golden ring is held by one of the deputy hosts and only handed over to the Governor when needed.”

The Governor of the Sea doesn’t have a chance to switch ritual rings… Suppressing his anxiety, Lumian continued at a measured pace, “Did the sea prayer ritual fail last year?”

Lato initially seemed taken aback, but then relief crossed his face.

“Did the imposter seek your help?”

“Yes, for some reason, the sea prayer ritual failed. The sea’s rage claimed the lives of the Governor of the Sea and the four Children of the Sea serving as deputy hosts. Only the Maidens of the Sea and some sailors survived.”

The four deputy hosts are dead? Just as Lumian uncovered clues about April Fool’s, he sensed the link had been abruptly severed.

The individuals with the best chance of substituting the ceremonial ring had all perished in the unsuccessful sea prayer ritual!

Lumian thought for a moment before inquiring, “What happened to the surviving Maidens of the Sea and sailors?”

“They’re still alive, but under strict surveillance.” Realizing that the failure to last year’s sea prayer ritual was exposed, Lato, not dwelling on the survivors’ details, continued, “We arranged marriages for the four Maidens of the Sea who lack actual sea powers with ordinary family members. Though it won’t bring about a Beyonder-level change, it has its benefits.

“The sailors, from Milo Village, received some benefits from Juan Oro but are restricted from leaving Milo Village until this year’s sea prayer ritual succeeds.”

Shifting gears, Lumian asked, “Did the sailors transport the sacrificial

lambs and other offerings for the marriage to the sea to the deck?"

"Yes." Lato nodded. "Sailors handle such cumbersome and laborious tasks."

Within the ranks of sailors, one among Bard, Mad Lady, or Ultraman had sneaked in. If the other side held a stronger Beyonder power or a mystical item from the Marauder pathway, they could snatch the genuine ceremonial ring during the exchange, swapping it with a counterfeit… It wouldn't be a surprise that the Marauder pathway, influenced by the Celestial Worthy, has key April Fool's members wielding matching strengths or artifacts… Lumian swiftly suspected this.

He turned to Lato Guiaro, keeping his tone composed.

"Tell me about the four Maidens of the Sea and the survivors from last year among the sailors."

Lato recounted the details from memory.

Having absorbed the specifics about the potential targets, Lumian inquired further, "Were all participants in the sea sacrificial part thoroughly checked?"

"Absolutely. No unauthorized items allowed onboard to maintain the ritual's integrity. And before the ship reaches its destination, Juan Oro will vigilantly oversee using his powers," Lato elaborated.

As anticipated, Lumian nodded subtly.

"What powers does Juan Oro wield?"

[1] Adapted from the Marriage of the Sea ceremony of the Venice Doge set to be hanged.

Chapter 561 - 561 Language of the Stars

561 Language of the Stars

Lato Guiaro struggled to keep silent, but the words burst out of him.

After a long internal battle, he finally responded, “He’s the most powerful among us. Before joining the Fisheries Guild committee, he served as a deputy host on the sea sacrifice ship a whopping 11 times. He gained numerous boons and established a solid connection with the sea.

“He can fly. If he’s not afraid of losing lifespan, he can temporarily take control of these waters on behalf of the Governor of the Sea. He possesses other special abilities, though they’re rarely revealed. We’re not entirely sure either. What we do know is that the failure of last year’s sea prayer ritual significantly weakened him.”

Lato paused and couldn’t resist adding, “First and foremost, we are astronomers. Our expertise lies in observing the stars’ transformations and calculating their patterns.

“Keep in mind that the annual sea prayer ritual doesn’t have a fixed date. It could happen any day during the first week of November. This is because, to enter that special area that communicates with the sea, the stars need to be in specific positions to open the corresponding passageway.

“The date of a similar phenomenon varies from year to year. Astronomers with sufficient knowledge must predict it in advance through observation and calculation.”

The idea of Fisheries Guild committee members being astronomers seems comical and absurd… Lumian didn’t interrupt Lato Guiaro’s

narrative.

The self-proclaimed astronomer continued his explanation.

“Secondly, we are humans who worship the sea and the cosmos. We can receive revelations and guidance of fate from the changes in tides, the waves of the sea, and the trajectories of the stars, avoiding danger and making the right choices. Many times, we refer to such revelations and guidance as the Language of the Stars.”

The Language of the Stars… sounds pretty dangerous. How do you know it’s not something risky like Termiboros or Ludwig winking at you? Lumian resisted the urge to shake his head and sighed inwardly. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Furthermore, we are descendants of the sea and the cosmos, serving as clergymen who offer sacrifices to them.

“We can manipulate the power of the land to completely immobilize the target or make them float.

“We can emit rays from the cosmos, causing damage to the enemy’s body structure and weakening them. Without the corresponding superpowers to treat them, they will face an irreversible and agonizing death.

“We can also create a powerful magnetic effect. Combined with the power of the land, we can generate a half-real illusion. We call it the Cosmic Void.” Lato’s expression gradually turned fanatical.

From a mysticism perspective, the Beyonder characteristics of the Children of the Sea involve the land and the cosmos. According to Aurore’s knowledge, it encompasses gravity, radiation, and electromagnetism. Furthermore, due to gravity and electromagnetism, they also possess some illusionary and spatial abilities. Lumian, rephrasing Lato Guiaro’s words for easier comprehension, couldn’t help but criticize inwardly, Hey, you’re the Children of the Sea, not the Children of the Stars. Why don’t I see many sea-related powers…

Lato took a deep breath and continued, “We are also the navigators

of the sea and the cosmos. We can find the right path under any circumstances, guided by the performance of the sea and the stars. We can use this power to help others.

“Without our guidance, ships can’t enter that special water even on the correct date. That’s why Nolfi insisted on returning to Port Santa before setting off. Although she knew the coordinates and route of the sea sacrificial land from her mother, she would never have reached it if she didn’t set off from Port Santa.

“The spawn that come to land from the seabed also rely on our abilities in this area to survive the fog, vortex, and storms without losing their way in the sea route or being swallowed by darkness.”

Navigators… Lumian suddenly recalled the strange fish he had encountered on the Flying Bird, the Mutated Bannerfish, who could control the waves.

They were also known as Death Navigators!

“Have you heard of the strange fish known as Death Navigators?” Lumian interrupted Lato Guiaro’s account.

Lato hesitated for a moment before responding, “Yes, they’re also spawn of the sea. We all suspect that they were transformed from the Governors of the Sea who returned to the sea.”

Transformed from the Governors of the Sea? Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Lato swallowed and explained, “They should still be fused with the sea, so future generations will be born, but their strength is inferior to theirs.

“In the past, they only roamed those waters. In recent years, for some reason, they occasionally swam out and returned. After the sea prayer ritual failed last year, this situation became even more frequent.”

Did the failure of the ritual cause the Death Navigators to go out more frequently? Did the Death Navigators lure sailors to those special waters? Were they ultimately devoured by the sea? Lumian’s

mind raced with questions, but he knew that Lato Guiaro couldn't answer them.

Lato returned to the main topic.

"We can still manipulate the waves to a certain extent and influence the tides, but we can't compare to Juan Oro, much less the Governor of the Sea."

That's more like a Child of the Sea? That's why they think it's easier to bury me in the sea? Lumian pondered as he inquired about a few more details. He then lowered his right foot from his left knee and slowly stood up.

Nodding at the Knight of Swords in Lato's eyes, Lumian said to Lato Guiaro, "Last request, release Nolfi and Batna."

With that, Lumian walked to the bedroom window.

Simultaneously, the Knight of Swords, who had possessed Lato Guiaro, vanished. The committee member of the Fisheries Guild regained control of his body.

As Lumian left, Lato Guiaro couldn't help but express his confusion, fear, and a hint of uncontrollable emotion, "I thought you'd kill me once you got the information…"

Otherwise, wouldn't it expose the fact that you have many hidden helpers, the secret of a faction behind you, and the uniqueness of your helpers?

Lumian didn't look back and continued forward.

On the way, he pressed down on his golden straw hat and smiled.

"To you, this might be important, but not to me."

Just as Lato Guiaro was about to say something, he saw the body of the adventurer, Louis Berry, suddenly turn black and thin, transforming into a shadow that disappeared from the crimson moonlight's reach.

After staring at the darkness for a while, Lato adjusted the collar of his robe and left the master bedroom. He personally headed to the basement to release Nolfi and Batna.

Opposite the building where his family resided, beneath a row of verdant trees,

Lumian leaned leisurely against the black gas streetlamp pole, gazing at the glass windows illuminated by the light.

The disheveled, pale-faced Knight of Swords materialized behind him and asked in a deep voice, “Are you really not going to kill him?”

Lumian chuckled and said, “If we kill him, who’s going to inform Juan Oro that I have powerful helpers and the support of a powerful faction lurking in the shadows?”

He couldn’t just toss tarot cards at Lato Guiaro’s corpse, could he?

Furthermore, the problem lay in the fact that no one knew that the adventurer, Louis Berry, was a Minor Arcana cardholder of the Tarot Club.

Upon hearing Lumian’s response, the Knight of Swords pondered for a moment before vanishing into the darkness.

Before long, Batna emerged from the house where Lato Guiaro’s extended family resided, clutching his rapier and revolver.

Upon seeing Lumian, they looked a little ashamed and approached him with slow steps.

“Thank you for saving us,” Nolfi, adorable in a blouse and brown pants, expressed her sincere gratitude.

Batna said, “I’m well aware of Nolfi’s intentions and haven’t been deceived by her. I sympathize with the tragic fate of these sea spawn and hope to help her end all of this.”

Lumian looked at Nolfi.

“What kind of tragic end will it lead to?”

The committee members of the Fisheries Guild seemed quite pleased.

Nolfi fell silent for a moment before saying, “All Maidens of the Sea and Children of the Sea eventually transform into a lizard-like humanoid monster. Perhaps earlier, perhaps later, my mother passed away because she was attacked by assassins hired by the Fisheries Guild and wanted to die as a human. Not only did she refuse treatment, but she also inflicted some damage on herself.”

In that case, the humanoid lizard at Rubió Paco’s house is a common sight in families around Port Santa. Why the need for secrecy? Lumian turned to Batna with a smile, asking, “Did you know Nolfi would transform into a humanoid lizard?”

“Yes.” Batna expressed that he didn’t mind.

At that moment, Nolfi inquired, “Then do you know what a humanoid lizard looks like?”

As she spoke, the rather attractive female adventurer’s eyes widened. Shimmering illusory scales appeared on her body, and her skin transformed into that of a snake.

Batna jumped in fright, taking a step back involuntarily.

Lumian continued to ask Nolfi, “Why didn’t you rent a boat at a nearby port and find a sailor to sail it over? Why choose a ship rental company in Port Santa?”

Nolfi undid the phantom scales, reverting to her original appearance, frustration and embarrassment evident in her voice.

“In Port Santa, people often rent boats for fishing and sightseeing. This should be a very ordinary thing…”

Lumian sighed helplessly.

“Did you know that last year’s sea prayer ritual failed? The Fisheries Guild will be on high alert this year, investigating all unstable factors. Besides, the sea prayer ritual is only a few days away. It’s inevitable to start paying attention to those who rent boats to go out to sea.”

Nolfi and Batna remained silent, resembling two students.

After a moment, Nolfi asked in surprise and suspicion, “Did the sea prayer ritual fail last year?”

Lumian didn’t answer immediately. He thought for a moment and said,

“You want to end the sea prayer ritual with just the two of you? What gave you the confidence?”

Nolfi pursed her lips and stated, “As long as I can enter those waters and find the palace, I have a way to destroy it and end everything.”

“Palace?” Lumian’s eyebrows twitched.

Nolfi nodded.

“When my mother was possessed by the sea, she saw a strange palace through her spirituality and the connection between them. It’s located at the bottom of the sea. It’s the palace of the sea!”

Chapter 562 - 562 Changed Plans

562 Changed Plans

Palace? Lumian hadn't anticipated gaining information that Lato Guiaro lacked from Nolfi.

After a brief pause, he inquired, "What's the palace like?"

Was it an ancient relic or the abode of some natural spirit?

Could the sea prayer ritual be tapping into the palace's inner power?

Nolfi shook her head.

"My mother couldn't give a detailed description. She just mentioned that the palace is unlike any structure on land. It boasts a peculiar design, with smooth curves and a reflective metallic sheen. Overall, it's silver-gray."

Lumian envisioned the palace based on Nolfi's account, though lacking specifics, he could only conjure an approximate image.

He grinned and remarked, "If that's truly the sea palace, do you honestly believe you two can bring it down?

"If you struggle against Lato Guiaro and his crew, how do you plan to breach the sea spawn's defenses? How will you escape the sea's fury?"

Nolfi paused for a moment before responding, "I have my ways."

She didn't elaborate on the method.

Could a Child of the Sea, likely below Sequence 7 in strength, truly

destroy the sea palace? An entity capable of unleashing violent storms across the entire sea… Lumian pondered, forming a sudden hypothesis.

Was Nolfi's confidence rooted in collaboration with others? Had she not returned to Port Santa without adequate preparations?

As Lumian's mind raced, he shifted his gaze toward Batna.

Batna Comté, who had inadvertently distanced himself from Nolfi by two to three steps, had just re-sheathed his rapier and concealed his revolver.

Sensing Lumian's scrutiny, he grinned sheepishly and explained, "I'm here for support and to command the ship. You might not know, but I served as a second mate for a while before becoming an adventurer."

In other words, he implied: "I'm not sure about Nolfi's plan either. Whether she succeeds or not doesn't concern me much. I've fulfilled my duty as a lover by providing some assistance."

I can tell that you come from a good background based on your refined attire and grooming… Initially, I thought you ran away from home, enchanted by Gehrman Sparrow's adventure story, and went to sea to become an adventurer. Now, it seems your family recommended you to be a second mate to gain work experience. After a while, you resigned and chose the path of an adventurer… Lumian was unsure how to assess Batna's romanticism. Glancing at him, he commented, "Do you realize how dangerous this situation is?"

Batna cleared his throat and replied, "I thought the Children of the Seas wouldn't be too formidable. Nolfi and I have sparred before."

Lumian eyed Batna for a couple of seconds before redirecting his gaze to Nolfi.

"What are your plans moving forward?"

Without directly inquiring about hidden collaborators, Lumian circumvented the question, aiming to lower Nolfi's guard and uncover any hints from her responses.

Nolfi pursed her lips and said, “We’ve been exposed and targeted by the Fisheries Guild. Our original plan is no longer viable. I intend to lay low until the sea prayer ritual concludes.”

“Why not just leave?” Batna interjected, expressing surprise on Lumian’s “behalf.”

He believed that once Nolfi’s motives and identity were revealed, she would promptly abandon this operation and devise an alternative plan for a future sea prayer ritual. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Nolfi fell silent for a moment before revealing, “If the sea prayer ritual succeeds, and I’m still in Port Santa, being a Child of the Sea with a relatively pure bloodline, I should be able to gain a certain boon…”

She paused, briefly gazing at the ground.

“Although it might hasten my transformation into a humanoid lizard, it can also enhance my strength…”

A subtle sorrow lingered in her words.

Batna stared blankly, his mouth agape, but no words escaped him.

Lumian raised his hand, adjusting the golden straw hat on his head. Using a well-known line from the Adventurer series, he remarked, “This is both a blessing and a curse.”

As Louis Berry prepared to depart, Nolfi once again expressed her sincere gratitude.

“I don’t know how to express my gratitude. If you need any help, feel free to come to me.”

“You can find me too,” Batna chimed in.

Caught between staying with Nolfi or leaving Port Santa, he hesitated.

Lumian’s gaze swept across their faces, and he suddenly smiled.

“Coincidentally, I have something for you two to do.”

Nolfi was taken aback but nodded gently.

“Just shoot.”

…

Having bid farewell to Nolfi and Batna, Lumian stealthily returned to Solow Motel from the shadows.

Emerging from the darkness in the corner of the master bedroom, he found the Knight of Swords standing by the curtains, silently observing him under the crimson moonlight.

Why do you always appear like a scene from a ghost story… Is this a Wraith trait or a manifestation of the potion’s influence? Lumian critiqued, expressing gratitude,

“Thank you for your assistance.”

The Knight of Swords remained silent. He looked at Lumian and inquired, “After controlling Lato Guiaro, it seems you’ve altered your original plan?”

Lumian chuckled.

“You’re quite perceptive, but I changed my mind perhaps a little earlier or later than the moment you specified.”

He responded with a hint of a charlatan’s demeanor and elaborated with a smile, “How can an original plan be executed without any changes? That’s not the mark of a Conspirer but an omnipotent and omniscient one.

“During the planning process, one must adjust their approach based on feedback, new information, and changes in the situation, while ensuring the true motive remains intact.”

Hence, concealing his true motives was crucial.

It was akin to the many paths between the starting point and the end,

with often only one true conclusion. This point was the most vulnerable to blockages and ambushes.

The Knight of Swords listened quietly and then silently vanished by the window.

Lumian allowed himself to relax, washed up, and retired to bed, sleeping soundly until six in the morning.

Following breakfast provided by the motel, he directed Lugano to take Ludwig to the streets for some snacks.

Observing their departure through the closed door, Lumian returned to the master bedroom, where the curtains still hung. In the dimness, he pulled out the armchair from the desk and settled in.

After an indeterminate period, he suddenly noticed glimmers in the depths of the darkness.

He felt himself suspended in midair, devoid of solid ground beneath his feet or a backrest behind him.

Lumian maintained a stoic expression as he gazed into the profound void with a cosmos-like backdrop. From a distance, Juan Oro, the president of the Fisheries Guild, approached, attired in a formal suit and wielding a walking stick.

Lumian looked at the old man in silence, displaying no surprise, as if anticipating Juan Oro's arrival.

As the distance closed to a certain extent, Juan Oro's wrinkles trembled as he uttered in Intisian, "Milo Village was once obliterated, along with the sea spawn that ventured onto the land. Yet, we stand here today.

"As long as the sea endures, as long as the cosmos persists, as long as Port Santa remains a forbidden land for death, we can resurface from the sea's depths, regardless of the blows we endure or the loss of our descendants. We can rebuild Milo Village and initiate the sea prayer ritual anew.

"This is attested by the clergyman of the Earth Mother Church, their

combat ascetics, and their nuns.

“If we, the Children of the Sea, are truly pushed to the edge of a precipice, we possess the courage and determination to drag the enemy into the abyss. This is because we firmly believe in our indestructible spirit and the ability to rebuild our village, preventing its extinction.”

You share all this with me to convey that the Fisheries Guild and Milo Village’s sea spawn are unafraid of threats, possessing both the ability and courage to face powerful enemies. Furthermore, you suggest that the corresponding legacies will endure, resurfacing from the sea in the future. It’s akin to a warning, cautioning me not to go too far. Otherwise, they won’t hesitate to engage in an internecine conflict… Lumian comprehended Juan Oro’s veiled message and chose not to respond. He silently observed the old man, waiting for him to continue.

Juan Oro’s azure eyes reflected the image of the black-haired, green-eyed adventurer Louis Berry. In a resonant voice, he questioned, “What do you and the forces supporting you desire? What is your aim? We won’t tolerate the disruption of the sea prayer ritual, nor will we abandon the foundations laid in Port Santa.”

Realizing that adventurer Louis Berry is not only formidable but also backed by a faction, they must perceive me as a tough adversary. If they were to confront me head-on, they might find it challenging to prevail. Hence, he’s here to negotiate, seeking to exchange concessions for my withdrawal? Is he attempting to assert his bottom line and strength to dissuade me from rash actions, leaving both sides with a way out? Lumian showed no surprise. He glanced around and remarked, “Why isn’t there a chair? I prefer discussing matters while seated.”

After a brief silence from Juan Oro, the armchair reappeared behind Lumian, and he resumed his original posture.

Lumian calmly gazed at Juan Oro, the Fisheries Guild president, and stated, “Would you believe me if I told you I never intended to disrupt the sea prayer ritual?”

“Never intended to disrupt the sea prayer ritual…” Juan Oro repeated, his deep wrinkles furrowing.

Lumian continued, “As long as you’re willing to spare the innocent, like the fake Governor of the Sea, cooperation isn’t out of the question.”

“Cooperation?” Juan Oro couldn’t conceal his astonishment. He scrutinized the adventurer who had forcefully intervened in the Fisheries Guild’s affairs upon arriving at Port Santa. Lumian had stormed the Governor of the Sea’s residence, blown up the Fisheries Guild’s main building, and nearly killed his grandson. He wondered if his hearing had slowed down like the other elders.

A smile gradually spread across Lumian’s face. He leaned back in his chair and snapped his fingers, igniting a crimson flame.

“Yes, cooperation.”

Chapter 563 - 563 Another Attempt

563 Another Attempt

Upon learning the intricacies of Louis Berry's collaboration and his unwavering commitment, Juan Oro found himself questioning the reliability of his own ears once again.

It wasn't that the other party's demands were outrageous or absurd, making it sound like some kind of jest. On the contrary, the Fisheries Guild could fulfill his desires with minimal effort, without requiring a substantial payment.

This went beyond Juan Oro's initial expectations.

Prior to meeting Louis Berry, he had mentally prepared himself for potential ruthless "extortion." After all, considering the ease with which the other party subdued Lato Guiaro and displayed strength against the Fisheries Guild, Oro had anticipated a tougher negotiation. Surprisingly, Louis Berry proved to be more amenable to discussion than Oro had envisioned.

This led Juan Oro to contemplate whether there might be some deception at play. He wondered if, in the future, Berry would abruptly turn against him during their collaboration, breaking the promises made.

Lumian observed the wrinkled old man silently, refraining from clarifying his intentions. Explaining might expose his true motives, and the timing wasn't right yet.

After careful consideration, Juan Oro let out a sigh of age.

"We can accede to your request."

“However, throughout our collaboration, we will remain vigilant and formulate contingency plans.”

Lumian smiled, rising from the suspended armchair in the void. He extended his right hand to Juan Oro.

“Pleasure working with you.”

Juan Oro shook his hand and remarked, “You’re not as crazy as you seem…”

Lumian pondered for a moment and smirked.

“Of course, I’ve always been a clever, rational, and polite adventurer.”

Juan Oro wasn’t in the mood for idle chatter. He nodded at Louis Berry and stated, “Given your preference for discretion in our collaboration, I should depart now. Otherwise, my visit might become known to others.”

Lumian took a moment to contemplate before responding, “I’ll dispatch my concealed companion to Milo Village tomorrow night. Ensure the surviving sailors from last year’s ritual are brought to your main building in advance and kept under control.”

“Agreed.” Juan Oro didn’t object; this was one of the terms they had agreed upon.

As the cane-wielding old man prepared to leave, Lumian called out thoughtfully,

“I’m a man of my word. I promised Giorgia I wouldn’t disclose the details of the commission to anyone.

“But I have a question for you. Have any Children of the Sea from the Paco family gone missing recently or not been seen for an extended period?”

He hinted that his inquiry was linked to the Paco family’s commission.

Juan Oro's expression darkened as he contemplated for more than ten seconds.

"The Paco family's Children of the Sea have made appearances recently.

"At first, I thought something had happened to Rubió's mother, Martha, that we shouldn't know about. Yet, it turns out she's still fine, just severely injured."

No missing Children of the Sea from the Paco family? Where did the humanoid lizard come from? Lumian was alarmed.

His initial thought was that the Paco family might be involved with other Children of the Sea. His second thought was that one of the Paco family's Children of the Sea might have been replaced.

Is the impostor parading around with the original's face, while the real individual had transformed into a humanoid lizard, meeting their demise at the hands of the great adventurer?

Lumian couldn't help but associate the substitute and the frequent appearances of the person in question with a Sequence name: Faceless! Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

It aligned with the Lie earring's Sequence—the previous Sequence of Marionettist Loki!

Could it be that after Loki's resurrection, he infiltrated Port Santa and clandestinely replaced a key member of the Paco family? Was his goal to set a trap for me and execute something during the sea prayer ritual, continuing what he had left incomplete the previous year?

With these thoughts swirling, Lumian couldn't help but experience a blend of excitement and fear.

However, upon further consideration, he dismissed the notion.

If Loki had genuinely substituted an essential member of the Paco family, there wouldn't be any humanoid lizard sightings. He could have discreetly resolved the issue and erased all traces, avoiding such an obvious loophole!

Moreover, Rubió Paco wasn't the sole Child of the Sea in the Paco family. Martha, as a Maiden of the Sea, also wielded the residual power of the sea. How could they struggle against a humanoid lizard whose strength hadn't reached the Mid-Sequence? Why would they take the risk of exposing the secret and hiring an external adventurer, Louis Berry, to handle the situation?

With Lumian's comprehension of the sea prayer ritual and sea spawn deepening, it left him even more bewildered about the Paco family's previous decisions. He believed that crucial information was concealed within.

He turned to Juan Oro, organizing his thoughts.

"Are descendants of the same Maidens of the Sea prohibited from attacking each other?"

"There's no such restriction." Juan Oro dismissed Lumian's speculation.

Lumian deliberately mused aloud, "Then why did the Paco family intentionally hire an outsider like me for the commission instead of utilizing their own Beyonders?"

Juan Oro maintained his serious expression.

"It's for the same reason I hired someone to monitor Paco's house. That's why I sent the Little Devil to interrogate you. That's why I needed to meet Martha."

You call that wrinkled, old man-like monster "Little Devil"? Lumian nodded gently and asked, "The Paco family must be harboring a significant secret."

He refrained from delving deeper and watched as Juan Oro turned away, walking off with his cane.

Soon, the Cosmic Void around him dissipated, and he "returned" to the draped master bedroom of the suite, seated in the armchair before the desk.

Lumian smiled, pivoted, grasped the curtain, and drew it open.

The morning sun flooded in, casting a radiant glow.

…

The next night, within the ancestral house of the Oro family in Milo Village, a structure only one floor shorter than the residence of the Governor of the Sea.

The building had undergone numerous renovations, showcasing a fusion of antiquated and modern architecture. Blackened gray stone walls stood alongside concrete pillars, and beneath the seaweed-covered roof lay red-

ringed tiles.

The door to the first-floor lounge had been shut, leaving only an elderly man with a black cane—Juan Oro—and his cherished grandson—Fernandez Oro—

alongside eight unconscious villagers of Milo Village sprawled on the ground.

Suddenly, a shadow flickered in a corner of the room, and a figure materialized.

Standing just over 1.7 meters tall, the figure possessed an ordinary face and sported a brownish-green short-sleeved shirt, loose brownish-yellow pants, strapless leather shoes with vents, and a short circular felt hat.

“Who are you?” Juan Oro inquired in Intisian.

As one of Port Santa’s strongest sea merchants, he had sailed numerous times between the ages of 30 and 50. It was only natural for him to comprehend Intisian.

The man responded fluently in Highlander, “I’m Louis Berry’s companion. You can call me Charname.”

It doesn’t seem like the spirit-type Beyonder Lato encountered… Louis Berry has more than one companion lurking in the shadows… Juan Oro rejoiced that he had chosen negotiation first.

With these thoughts racing through his mind, he glanced at Fernandez, whose face remained pale, and understood that he wasn't entirely pleased.

It was common for young lads to be calculating about who suffered and who benefited, often forgetting their most essential motives.

"You can start questioning them," Juan Oro instructed the man known as Charname. "Over the past year, we've employed various methods to determine if they're lying or not. We've even exploited the uniqueness of other sea spawn. All the results indicate that they've told the complete truth and concealed nothing. The failure of the sea prayer ritual has nothing to do with them."

Charname's lips curved into a smile as he replied, "How would I know if I don't give it a shot myself?"

Approaching the unconscious sailors, he retrieved a dagger and stabbed their fingertips one by one, smearing the corresponding blood on various spots on the back of his hand.

Amidst the pain, the sailors began to awaken one after another.

In front of them, Charname produced a mirror and smiled.

"Your blood will reveal if you're lying and if you're the genuine person. If anyone deceives me, their blood will burn on the mirror, and they'll face the same fate.

"Alright, answer them one by one."

As Charname spoke, he calmly transferred the blood from the back of his hand to the mirror, a strange sight as it seemed to seep into the glass.

The sailors glanced at Juan Oro, realizing this was another investigation into the cause of the sea prayer ritual's failure last year. Skilfully, they recounted their experiences, leaving no details omitted.

After hearing their accounts, Charname asked thoughtfully, "Were Iru and Salah responsible for transporting the lamb sacrifices?"

“Yes,” all the sailors replied in unison.

Charname pressed on, “Did they both perish during the sea prayer ritual?”

The surviving sailors nodded, confirming that their two companions had been thrown overboard in the tidal wave of the failed ritual, never to surface again.

Turning to Juan Oro, Charname inquired, “Do you have any belongings from Iru and Salah? Clothes they’ve worn many times, toothbrushes not discarded, and the like.

“I want to try summoning their spirits. Although most of their spirits would have dissipated over the past year and can’t remember effective information, the state of their spirits can reveal certain things, such as deep resentment and hatred.”

Juan Oro shook his head.

“We attempted it after the sea prayer ritual. We couldn’t summon their spirits. Those consumed by the raging sea would have their spirits devoured as well.”

Charname chuckled and suggested, “Let’s give it another shot. There’s nothing to lose by trying.”

Juan Oro pondered for a moment and agreed. He immediately instructed Fernandez to retrieve Iru’s extracted tooth and Salah’s clothes, previously used for spirit channeling.

Then, they observed as Charname set up the altar and initiated a summoning ritual.

“I!

“I summon in my name:

“The sailor of Port Santa’s Milo Village, a man named Iru Adela, the owner of this tooth…”

A gust of wind blew, and the altar’s candle flame took on a dark-

green hue.

A blurry figure quickly materialized.

Success? He actually succeeded? Fernandez's pupils dilated as he gazed above the candle flame.

The figure vaguely resembled Iru, but it showed no signs of drowning; its skin was pale-white and swollen. Instead, its face was covered in blood, and there was an evident wound on its forehead.

The specter's eyes brimmed with pain and hatred.

Chapter 564 - 564 Individual Roles

564 Individual Roles

564 Individual Roles

Looking at the specter suspected to be Iru, Juan Oro's expression shifted.

Back then, even though they had missed the optimal time for spirit channeling, they still managed to learn about the deaths on the first day and found items that could accurately pinpoint the target. Utilizing the Little Devil's ability, they completed the summoning, but none of the deceased spirits appeared. This led them to believe that the human spirits that angered the sea would be devoured. No further attempts were made.

Nearly a year later, the summoning had actually succeeded!

Moreover, it appeared that Iru hadn't drowned at sea but had been shot.

This was entirely different from the backlash caused by the failure of the sea prayer ritual!

Charname used Hermes to inquire about the spirit suspected to be Iru, but the target was already in a daze and couldn't recall anything. Even his appearance had become blurry, assimilated by the environment.

Charname concluded the ritual and used Salah's clothes, worn over many years, to summon the spirit of the other deceased.

This time, nothing happened.

Charname refrained from further attempts. He extinguished the candle's flame and dispelled the wall of spirituality. In Highlander, he addressed Juan Oro, "The problem has become clearer."

Juan Oro didn't respond. Instead, he turned to his grandson, Fernandez.

"Take them out and send them home. Instruct each of them."

"Alright." Although Fernandez yearned to hear Charname's conjecture and understand the subsequent events, he didn't dare disobey his grandfather's orders. He hurriedly led the surviving sailors out of the lounge and closed the door.

After a few moments, Juan Oro shifted his gaze to Charname, whose features didn't stand out.

"Are you suggesting that the Iru who perished during the sea prayer ritual was an imposter?"

Charname asked with a smirk, "Why do you think the fake Iru is really dead? The others might have been swallowed by the sea, but not him."

Disregarding the miraculous resurrection, nobody present could prove that the fake Iru had indeed fallen into the sea.

Observing Juan Oro's silence, Charname pressed on, "The real Iru should have been assassinated by those saboteurs days or even weeks before the sea prayer ritual. No, he was more likely to have been kidnapped, killed by a gun a period after the sea prayer ritual completed; after all, the living cannot have their spirit channeled. Later, someone disguised themselves as him and lived in Milo Village for a period. Without arousing suspicion, they boarded the Governor of the Sea's wedding ship as a sailor.

"Right, is Iru the kind with no living elders, no spouse, no kids, and not residing with siblings?"

Juan Oro's eyes narrowed as he spoke, "More or less. Their grandmother passed away over a decade ago. His parents, Children of the Sea, established a separate family. After reaching adulthood, they

lost control of their powers, turning into pure sea spawn. We had to send them back to the sea."

"As expected, they picked the sailor with the least difficult disguise," Charname remarked with a sigh.

Juan Oro frowned and said, "Yet, everyone boarding the ship undergoes a routine inspection by another sea spawn to confirm authenticity."

Charname chuckled.

"As you said, it's a routine inspection, and in this world, many disguises require specific methods or deeper identification to uncover."

Juan Oro nodded solemnly.

Charname kindly suggested with a hint of flaunting, "Next time, it might be wise to draw blood from everyone boarding the ship and compare it to their closest relatives. It could reveal their true bloodline."

"That's an idea," Juan Oro tersely acknowledged.

Over the centuries, the sea prayer ritual had encountered no issues, so they hadn't considered refining the details.

Juan Oro inquired, "What do those who disrupted the ritual want?"

"We're not certain either," Charname shrugged, glancing towards the curtained window that led to the Governor of the Sea's residence.

Juan Oro sensed a hint in Charname's allusion to something Louis Berry had mentioned earlier. He subtly nodded and added, "When this year's sea prayer ritual succeeds, we'll release Miguel and allow him to live in Torres. By then, the failure of last year's ritual won't remain a secretive burden. There's no need for us to harm Miguel."

"Miguel?" Charname inquired thoughtfully.

"He's the false Governor of the Sea. He used to work for the Fisheries

Company, and his lineage traces back to Milo Village," Juan Oro explained succinctly.

Charname diverted his gaze, a faint smile gracing his lips.

"He's had his year of indulgence. Fear may linger, but everything comes with a price."

The companion of the great adventurer paused, curiosity lighting up his eyes.

"Did your ancestor come from the depths of the sea, or did ordinary fishermen suddenly gain inspiration and enlightenment, mastering the art of pleasing the sea and gaining its favor?" he inquired.

Juan Oro took a moment of silence before responding, "We don't know. Both possibilities are equally plausible. Milo Village was once eradicated by the Earth Mother Church. Many legacies were severed, and we're left clueless about our ancestors' origins.

"On a personal note, I lean towards the second theory. We're different from typical sea spawn. The children we bear initially resemble humans. It's only as they absorb more of the sea's power that they transform into humanoid lizards. Additionally, while our strength weakens, theirs does not."

Charname nodded in agreement.

"I'm inclined to think the second scenario is more likely too."

He then asked, "Have all traces of Milo Village's ancestors truly been erased? Is there no evidence left?"

Juan Oro studied Charname for a moment before revealing, "There's some residual evidence in the underground chamber of the Governor of the Sea's residence, but it's just symbols and patterns. They're meaningless and indecipherable.

"If you want to see them, wait until the vigil ritual. But aren't you concerned about the risk of exposing our collaboration by going to the Governor of the Sea's residence now?"

“Fair point.” After obtaining other details, Charname abruptly receded into the shadows in the corner and vanished.

Juan Oro watched as the great adventurer’s companion disappeared and released a slow sigh.

He sensed a storm brewing around Port Santa.

…

In the master bedroom of the fifth-floor suite at Solow Motel.

Emerging from the shadows, Charname adorned the silver Lie earring behind his left ear. His eyes swiftly transformed, becoming as clear as a lake, and his flaxen-tinted hair cascaded over his shoulders.

Franca, still radiating astonishing charm despite her male attire, tossed the earring back to Lumian. She retrieved a black rubber band from her pocket and tied her long hair into a high ponytail.

“I’ve discovered traces of Bard!” the Demoness of Pleasure exclaimed with joy.

“Why Bard and not the other two?” Lumian sat in an armchair in front of the desk, tightly drawn curtains behind him.

Deliberately returning to Trier and bringing Franca to Port Santa for her assistance, Lumian believed himself inferior to the Demoness of Pleasure in divination and spirit channeling. Rather than wasting the truth serum, he sought Franca’s direct help. Additionally, he wanted Franca to assume the guise of his other identity, completely separating “him” from the adventurer Louis Berry. This would enable him to deceive those secretly monitoring him and potentially execute future deceptions. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Franca shared her findings from the spirit channeling today and the completed conversation.

“The fake Iru must first possess powers akin to a Faceless’s, followed by adept thieving skills. Long ago, I Know Someone mentioned that Bard is a Sequence 6 Prometheus of the Marauder pathway. It’s highly likely he’s even stronger now.

“If others hadn’t confirmed that Loki wasn’t involved in last year’s sea prayer ritual prank, at least not openly, he would have been the most suitable to impersonate Iru. Now, the probability of Iru being Bard is higher.

“As a Mid-Sequence Marauder Beyonder, perhaps he possesses an item similar to Lie. Maybe he prayed to that Celestial Worthy, undergoing a change in physique and appearance. Additionally, he could be imbued with mystical anti-divination and anti-prophecy traits. Marauder is one of the three pathways most easily influenced by Celestial Worthy.”

Lumian listened quietly, and a smile gradually formed on his face.

“Bard’s role and purpose in last year’s ritual are essentially clear.

“He disguised himself as a sailor, boarded the ship, stole the genuine ceremonial ring, and replaced it with a fake one. Then, he willingly leaped into the sea, feigning his death to make his escape!”

Lumian paused briefly before continuing, “The question now is, what roles did Mad Lady and Ultraman play in this matter? So far, their presence doesn’t seem to affect the final failure of the sea prayer ritual.”

Franca pursed her lips and paced back and forth.

“Mad Lady might handle receiving and communication. For instance, after Bard jumped into the sea, she could ‘teleport’ over and whisk him away to prevent him from being consumed by the tumultuous sea. Only a Traveler possesses such an ability.

“Ultraman is likely responsible for providing information about the sea prayer ritual and devising the corresponding plan. But that can’t be all. He probably has other roles…”

Lumian leaned back in his chair, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

“I concur with your hypothesis about Mad Lady, but according to the information we have, entering those special waters requires guidance from the Children of the Sea, following a specific route. How did Mad Lady ‘teleport’ inside? Was she lurking on the ship? Or does Bard

carry some special coordinates with him? It's certainly not a physical item; otherwise, it would have been discovered.

"As for Ultraman, I've always suspected he's a native of Port Santa with a profound understanding of the sea prayer ritual. He likely orchestrated the prank last year."

At this point, Lumian stood up.

"My intuition suggests that if we can uncover Ultraman's actions in last year's prank and identify his role beyond being the mastermind, we can discern April Fool's true motives in this matter!"

Chapter 565 - 565 Possible Breakthrough

565 Possible Breakthrough

565 Possible Breakthrough

Franca's emotions were stirred by Lumian's words, and she responded with anticipation, "Then it's akin to catching a fox by its tail. When the time comes, we'll summon good helpers and strive to eliminate a few more key members of April Fool's!"

As she spoke, she gritted her teeth.

Despite Lumian and Franca making various guesses and deductions about Ultraman's role in last year's prank, none of them felt they had grasped the key to the mystery.

Franca exhaled and said, "Phew, there are still some important puzzle pieces missing. See if you can fish out more details."

She needed to return to Trier.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and asked thoughtfully, "How's your search for the Tamara family's descendant going?"

"Nothing yet, but Madam Judgment intends to inform the other Major Arcana card holders about this. She hopes they can help keep an eye out," Franca briefly explained her situation.

Lumian gazed at her face and said, "I have an investigative direction."

"What?" Franca perked up.

Lumian's lips curled up.

“Investigate the other members of the Demoness Sect in Trier.

“Given the close ties between certain members of the Tamara family and the Demoness Sect, they might even be collaborating to establish the secret organization, Theosophy Order. There’s a chance that one of them could directly join the Demoness Sect.

“Moreover, considering Madam Judgment’s mission for you to infiltrate the Demoness Sect, discern the Primordial Demoness’s current state and issues, why not investigate other Demonesses? Are you going to wait until you reach the level of a powerhouse like a Demoness of Red before gathering information? Do you believe there will be enough Angel-level Hunter Beyonder characteristics to aid your return to your original gender at that point?”

“Why the Demoness of Red?” Franca instinctively focused on this question.

Lumian smiled.

“Have you forgotten your nickname, Madame Red Boots?”

Franca smiled awkwardly.

“Isn’t that to create a persona with characteristics that can be easily changed when you’re on the run? It’s clearly different from the description on the wanted poster.

“Ahem, isn’t it too dangerous to investigate other Demonesses under the watchful eyes of the Demoness of Black?”

Lumian raised his eyebrows and smiled meaningfully.

“Why are you investigating the Tamara family?”

“Investigating Mirror People,” Franca replied subconsciously.

Lumian asked again, “And who assigned you the Mirror People investigation?”

“The Demoness of Black…” Franca immediately shut her mouth.

She then muttered to herself, “However, an intricate balance needs to be struck. The source of the intel must be fabricated nicely; otherwise, we’ll still be suspected.”

Lumian didn’t say anything else. He grabbed Franca’s shoulder and planned to send her back to Trier. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Franca glanced at the curtained window and eagerly said, “Remember to ask me for help when you visit the combat nuns in the future.”

She arrived in Port Santa in the afternoon and spent a long time using the fake name—Charname—she chose herself, and the face on Lumian’s fake ID to travel about. With her fluent Highlander, she quickly grasped the folklore and combat nuns’ styles.

Lumian scoffed dismissively.

“Don’t even think about it. You can’t impregnate them.”

Franca replied indignantly, “Theoretically, it’s not impossible, but it’s quite dangerous. Think about it, Madame Pualis.”

Lumian was left speechless.

“Besides, giving birth isn’t the only important thing in life…” Franca continued to search for an excuse.

Lumian exhaled silently and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He disappeared from the master bedroom with Franca, who was still talking.

In no time, Lumian reappeared at the exact spot he had left.

Shaking his head and teasing Franca, he eased back into the armchair.

It had to be acknowledged that bantering and joking with friends, free from the need for caution, proved helpful in relieving the pent-

up emotions within him.

Having regained his composure, Lumian reclined in his chair, sorting through the information on the sea prayer ritual and various rhetoric in his mind. He sought details that might unveil traces of Ultraman's existence and confirm any overlooked issues.

As a Conspirer, Lumian didn't require jotting down key points on paper. He relied on his eyes to decipher the hints. All the information formed a colossal spiderweb in his mind, slowly weaving and transforming.

After a while, he abruptly sat upright.

A breakthrough had been unearthed that could expose the essence of the sea prayer ritual.

Lumian stood and exited the master bedroom. He spotted Ludwig devouring a crispy potato omelet at the dining table in the living room.

Seated across from the boy, Lumian smiled as he retrieved the mutated black spider's compound eye, a spiritual ingredient lacking Beyonder characteristics.

Ludwig immediately glanced up at Lumian.

"Can you eat this?" Lumian flicked the black compound eye.

Ludwig vigorously nodded.

"Yes."

Intrigued, Lumian took out the Mystery Prying Glasses and inquired, "Can you eat this?"

"Not yet," Ludwig honestly replied.

Not yet. In other words, perhaps in the future? Lumian stowed away the Mystery Prying Glasses and placed the mutated black spider's compound eye on the dining table before him.

“I’d like you to translate something. If you can provide the correct answer, it’s yours for consumption.”

Ludwig gulped and agreed, “Okay.”

Lumian recalled Lato Guiaro’s strange pronunciation and emitted a chattering sound.

Finally, he said, “That’s the general idea.”

Ludwig shook his head in disappointment.

“I don’t know.”

He paused briefly before adding, “But I think I’ve heard it somewhere. It’s somewhat familiar.”

Had most of his memories and knowledge been sealed when his Body of Heart and Mind was sealed? Under Ludwig’s reluctant gaze, Lumian returned the mutated black spider’s compound eye to his Traveler’s Bag.

Ludwig shoved a mouthful of potato omelet into his mouth and mumbled, “If you can find a creature that understands this language for me to eat, I can translate for you.”

Wh… Lumian asked in surprise, “Can you acquire a certain ability or knowledge by consuming something?”

“There’s a time limit, and it depends on the specific situation,” Ludwig succinctly explained without elaborating.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

“Were you able to reveal information about the Batings Black Insect because you had consumed that kind of insect shortly before?”

Ludwig nodded. “Yes, it wanted to ambush me. It had been waiting for a long time.”

That explains it. I had thought you had recovered some of your memories and knowledge. Indeed, a paralyzing attack wouldn’t only

target Lugano. After all, this could turn into a trap at any moment… Lumian stood up and left the dining table, returning to the master bedroom under Ludwig's pitiful gaze.

He had no means to find Ludwig a creature that understood the Language of the Sea. The Fisheries Guild members couldn't be certain if their interpretation was accurate.

After entering the master bedroom and closing the door, Lumian lowered his voice and said, "Temiboros, do you understand that language? Do you know the true meaning of that sentence?"

Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in Lumian's ears.

"In any case, it doesn't mean 'We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion.'"

With that, Termiboros fell silent again, showing no intention of explaining the true meaning to Lumian.

Dammit, might as well not answer! You confirmed my guess but didn't unveil the true content! Heh heh, could it be that you're just pretending to understand? Lumian cursed inwardly, feeling that Termiboros, the Angel of Inevitability, was becoming less direct and straightforward than before. He didn't comprehend the art of sophistry.

Gradually, He learned how to infuriate!

Lumian composed himself and settled back into the armchair. Unfolding the letter, he began writing to Madam Magician.

Detailing his travels, he recounted what he had observed in Port Santa. Finally, he pieced together the pronunciation and wrote down the words to the unknown language. He gave the interpretation of what the Fisheries Guild believed: "We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion." Then, he made a request: Madam, have you encountered this language before? Do you know its true meaning?"

After folding the letter, Lumian initiated a ritual and summoned the "doll" messenger.

The “doll” messenger, adorned in a light-gold dress, emerged from the candle’s flame and surveyed its surroundings. In a menacing tone, it declared, “Don’t let that filthy child near me!”

“He’s dining outside. He won’t enter without my permission.” For some reason, Lumian sensed hidden fear in the “doll” messenger’s aggressive words.

The messenger nodded in satisfaction.

“Keep an eye on it! If it acts up, don’t feed it!”

Using it as a substitute name… Lumian smiled and said, “If I don’t feed him, something even more terrifying might happen.”

The messenger fell silent for a moment before saying,

“Then feed it more!”

With that, the doll-like messenger swiftly withdrew the folded letter into the candle flame.

Lumian concluded the ritual, extinguished the candle’s flame, and gazed at the master bedroom’s door. He muttered to himself, It’s indeed a dangerous sealed creature…

He then retrieved the golden pocket watch from Salle de Bal Brise and opened it to take a look.

Suddenly, he transformed into a shadow, seamlessly blending into the darkness.

There was still something to attend to tonight.

…

In the port district, atop the Fisheries Guild’s castle-like building, Lumian found Lato Guiaro waiting on the spot resembling a tower, dressed in a formal suit.

“Are you on duty tonight?” Lumian casually pressed down on his golden straw hat, as if engaging in casual conversation with a friend.

Lato, the middle-aged man, sighed and said, “Originally, no, but since you wanted to come over, that’s the case. We can’t let an old man like the president do it, right?”

Without further ado, Lumian conjured delayed crimson, nearly white fireballs and hurled them into various corners of the tower.

Having completed this task, he waved at Lato Guiaro and melted back into the shadows.

Lato approached the tower’s entrance, clenching his fists in fear.

In just 30 seconds, the crimson, nearly white fireballs exploded simultaneously.

Rumble!

The entire tower became engulfed in flames, and Lato, stationed at the entrance, was sent flying by the shockwave.

Bright scales had already surfaced on his body to mitigate the damage.

Rumble!

In less than half an hour, everyone in Port Santa who was well-informed learned something: the Fisheries Guild had been bombed!

Chapter 566 - 566 Gathered Clues

566 Gathered Clues

566 Gathered Clues

Solow Motel.

Lumian gazed at the red flames in the port district, tuning in to the distant commotion, anticipating potential visitors.

Before long, a knock echoed on the door.

Lumian didn't wait for Lugano to wake up. He pivoted and strode to the door.

The moment he swung it open, Noelia, clad in brown leather armor and a wimple, stood before him.

Noelia's expression was as cold as ice. She abruptly raised her hand and uttered ancient Hermes words, "Imprison!"

Lumian found himself instantly immobilized. Transparent walls or a viscous liquid seemed to encase him, turning him into an insect trapped in amber.

In the next second, Noelia unsheathed a straight sword from her back.

Simultaneously, Lumian's pants tightened, as if he had grown taller and more robust. An explosive force emanated from his body.

The transparent "amber" restraining him creaked, revealing invisible cracks.

With a whoosh, Noelia clutched the hilt of her straight sword with both hands, slicing through the air, carving through the already shaky “prison,” aiming for Lumian’s head.

Lumian’s right fist, ready to strike, collided with the side of the straight sword, a condensed crimson, almost white flame accompanying the impact.

Amidst a deep and controlled explosion, the straight sword slanted, grazing the door frame as it descended to the ground.

Taking advantage of the situation, Noelia retreated, sheathed her sword, and inquired in Intisian, “Were you the one who blew up the Fisheries Guild?”

Upon witnessing this, Lumian refrained from retaliation. His body returned to its normal state as he smiled and replied, “It doesn’t matter if I blew it up. What matters is whether anyone can prove it.”

He understood that Noelia had issued a warning and wasn’t truly targeting him. Otherwise, she would have employed other Beyonder powers after the “Imprison” instead of slashing with her sword.

Noelia, upholding the dignity of maintaining order in Port Santa throughout the year, used a questioning tone typical for various suspects.

“Why did you go to such lengths? Why did you cause such a commotion?”

Lumian turned his head, signaling Lugano, who had awakened at the commotion, to return to sleep in the servant’s room.

Walking toward the recliner in the living room, he ignored Noelia’s question and smiled.

“I’ve discovered something.”

“Like what?” Noelia entered the suite and closed the wooden door behind her.

Lumian motioned toward the divan.

“Let’s have a seat and talk. I wouldn’t want you accusing me of being impolite.”

Noelia glanced at Lumian and grinned.

“What kind of politeness is there without greeting me by pressing your cheek against mine?”

Her demeanor was direct.

Lumian eased into the recliner and responded to the question, “For instance, last year’s sea prayer ritual failed.”

Noelia didn’t display surprise. She sat on the edge of the divan, leaning forward slightly to avoid the straight sword on her back from jabbing her.

“What else?”

Lumian pondered for a moment and casually remarked, “Also, the sea prayer ritual is a marriage to the sea.

“Furthermore, the Governor of the Sea is the husband of the sea, and the Maidens of the Sea embody the sea in the real world.

“Whether it’s the Governor of the Sea or the Maidens of the Sea, the offspring they bear are the Children of the Sea. The first one possesses the purest bloodline…”

Though Lumian was well aware that the offspring of the women the Governor of the Sea had slept with were descendants of the sea, whether they were Maidens of the Sea or not, with his profound mystical knowledge and extraordinary insights, he couldn’t help but consider that the Governor of the Sea having his children on his own was also part of the equation.

Phew, as expected, the more you know, the easier it is to be corrupted. I wouldn’t have thought so in the past… Lumian sighed inwardly. Noelia, in surprise and admiration, sighed.

“You’ve made faster progress in your investigation than I anticipated. Most of it pieced together in such a short time.”

It's been quite a while. My Language Comprehension charm will expire tomorrow. I wonder how much I'll retain from this enhanced week of study… Lumian grinned and teased, "Don't tell me you think my reputation as a great adventurer was just boasting?"

"Claiming a bounty of 300,000 gold risot for the Demon Warlock certainly isn't a boast," Noelia diplomatically acknowledged, indicating she didn't underestimate someone capable of hunting down such a target.

Content, she nodded and continued, "While many Beyonders wield impressive abilities, their intelligence often falls short. They revel in belligerence and flaunt their might, but you're not one of them.

"Still, I must caution you not to push too far. Despite understanding your true motive for stirring up this commotion, we must uphold peace and order in Port Santa. Don't make things difficult for us."

Coupled with the warning, the implication is that you shouldn't disrupt Port Santa's current situation. You're free to investigate the sea prayer ritual, but stirring up trouble with the Fisheries Guild is a no-go. What exactly does your Church of Earth Mother aim for? It seems like there's a mixed desire—both wanting and not wanting some actions to be taken… Lumian contemplated Noelia's hint, a smile playing on his lips as he spoke, "If you had been more forthcoming, I wouldn't have had to work this hard."

Noelia offered a polite yet awkward smile.

"We lack extensive intel. All I can say is the Church allows the sea prayer ritual and the Fisheries Guild to obtain power from the sea for a reason, unrelated to our ability to solve it.

"I'm not privy to the reason—perhaps the Archbishop or our Fertility Order president could shed light."

Lumian scoffed and said, "Then why allow my investigation of the sea prayer ritual?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

With a sigh, Noelia replied, "Do we need to know? We didn't pry into your true motives for probing the ritual, did we?"

With that, the combat nun swiftly rose from the sofa, striding purposefully towards the suite's door.

After a few steps, she halted, a thoughtful expression crossing her face.

"There are ancient traces concealed in the basement of the Governor of the Sea's residence in Milo Village. They might unveil something crucial. It's best to seize an opportunity to investigate."

In the subterranean chamber beneath the Governor of the Sea's residence? According to Franca's account, Milo Village's ancestors had left behind symbols and patterns. Does Noelia suggest these hold vital information? Is the reason for the Church of Earth Mother knowingly allowing the occurrence of the sea prayer ritual hidden in that chamber?

If Juan Oro isn't deceptive or concealing the truth, and isn't engaging in foul play, doesn't that imply that the Earth Mother Church possesses a deeper understanding of Milo Village's ancestors than their own descendants? It makes sense. After all, they once obliterated Milo Village and eradicated the faction of those ancestors. Over the past thousand years, there has been no disruption in the legacy, maintaining a prominent position in the real world. Lumian observed Noelia's departure without pressing further.

As he returned to the master bedroom, preparing for sleep, the "doll" messenger dropped a folded piece of paper, swiftly departing without a greeting.

Ludwig isn't that repulsive, except for being a bit ravenous and devouring everything, right?

Uh, Madam Magician does tend to stay up late. She's quickest with her replies at night… Lumian muttered under his breath as he picked up the response.

Swiftly unfolding it, he scanned the contents.

"Your performance in Port Santa has been impressive thus far.

"I won't interfere or provide excessive guidance. This is a prime

chance for you to further digest the Conspirer potion.

“I’ve roughly reconstructed that sentence and read it multiple times. It’s not in any language I know presently, but what I can confirm is its lack of natural power. However, it possesses a certain energy—language can possess such energy.

“What does this imply? It means that during the sea prayer ritual, it can’t serve as a sacrificial language or communicate with Beyonder items—in simpler terms, the sea.

“So why does the sea prayer ritual work? The key may lie within the ceremonial ring. There’s a high chance it has a distinct appearance, peculiar patterns, strong spirituality, and embedded knowledge. The sentence relies on its pronunciation, structure, and energy to activate the ring, making it functional.

“If you can recreate the ring’s state after the vigil ritual, I’m confident I can decode its specific effects and approximate meaning.”

That makes sense. When Lato Guiaro recited the words ‘We espouse thee, O sea…’ there were no indications of natural power being invoked. It must serve a different purpose… Lumian gained a deeper understanding of the sea sacrificial segment after reading Madam Magician’s explanation.

Most of the clues seemed to await his infiltration of the Governor of the Sea’s residence.

…

The next morning, Lugano led Ludwig through the streets, grabbing breakfast according to the boy’s cravings.

Out of nowhere, someone hurriedly passed by, head lowered, and seemingly slipped, accidentally bumping into him.

Lugano smoothly shifted his body, preventing the person from making contact.

He went the extra mile, helping the individual up and hypocritically saying, “Be careful.”

The man quickly pressed something into Lugano's hand,

muttered an apology, and seamlessly melted into the crowd.

Lugano glanced down at his palm, revealing a crumpled white post-it note.

Unrushed, he didn't immediately read the note. After securing breakfast for Ludwig, he returned to Solow Motel and briefed Lumian.

Lumian took the crumpled note, unfolding it with a nonchalant gesture.

In delicate handwriting, it conveyed: "After last year's ritual, the sea experienced an anomaly."

Chapter 567 - 567 Possible Leaker

567 Possible Leaker Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

The failure of the sea prayer ritual last year caused an anomaly in the sea? Lumian couldn't help but interpret it that way after going through the contents.

Studying the note in his hand, a familiar fragrance wafted to him.

After some thought, Lumian recalled the source: the Paco family's Madame Giorgia's perfume.

Were they inexperienced or intentionally leaving a trace, implying the Paco family as the source of this information? Lumian mused to himself, recalling the sudden appearance of a humanoid lizard in the Paco family, the severe injuries to Rubió Paco's mother Martha, and the peculiarities surrounding them.

Is the core issue the sea's abnormality? Has it weakened the Paco family's Beyonders, causing an ordinary person without sea lineage to transform into a humanoid lizard? Perhaps they don't want other sea spawn to know and were lacking the strength to handle the humanoid lizard, thus seeking foreign adventurers to resolve it? Lumian gained a new insight into the contradictions within the Paco family's commission.

Lato Guiaro and Juan Oro hadn't mentioned the sea's anomaly.

They only noted the sea's increased violence without the ritual's appeasement, the frequent departure of Death Navigators from their territory, and the declining strength of the Children of the Sea.

From their perspective, this situation seemed normal, foreseeable,

and unrelated to any anomaly.

Did the anomaly solely affect the Paco family, or did Juan Oro, Lato Guiaro, and others intentionally conceal this matter? Are they guarding against each other? Lumian speculated as he watched the note consumed by crimson flames in his palm.

He leaned toward the latter possibility. If the Paco family wasn't unique, the sea's anomaly should have widespread effects, not solely targeting them.

This understanding shed light on Rubió Paco's disdain when speaking of the Maidens of the Sea.

Discovering the truth about the Maidens of the Sea and his true lineage likely filled him with self-loathing and contempt for the entire sea prayer ritual. He'd rather forfeit his family's inheritance than marry another Maiden of the Sea. When the sea anomaly affected the entire Paco family, these emotions reached their zenith.

Lumian's suspicion grew that Nolfi's covert ally might be Rubió Paco.

Regardless, given the Paco family's resources and status, they could lead a comfortable life even without the sea prayer ritual.

Lugano stood to the side, observing his employer as Lumian delved into deep thought after reading the note. A twinge of nervousness and fluster crossed Lugano's demeanor.

Is something about to unfold again?

Lumian glanced up at Lugano, his expression pensive.

"Though I haven't reached Highlander proficiency, I've mastered the daily words I need. My body language suffices for a normal life in Port Santa. Plus, the folks I'll be dealing with know Intisian.

"I can settle the remaining balance now and offer you a free 'teleport' back to Trier."

Instinctively, Lugano shook his head.

“You can’t attend to Ludwig when you’re in action. If I leave now, who’ll keep an eye on him?”

It’s unclear who’s watching whom… Lumian stared at Lugano for a brief moment, sensing, for the first time, an unsettling undertone in the interpreter’s demeanor.

Despite prior attacks and potential risks, there was an inexplicable resistance to the suggestion of terminating the employment contract and taking his offer for a safe departure!

It wouldn’t even cost him a verl d’or!

Considering Lugano’s typical behavior and personality, Lumian assumed he would readily accept the remaining payment and leave Port Santa. Reality, however, proved otherwise.

Perhaps Lugano himself doesn’t understand the rationale behind his decision. It is just an “instinctive” choice… Lumian nodded subtly, opting not to press further on settling the final payment and terminating their employment contract.

…

In Milo Village, within the Oro family’s extensively renovated ancestral house, Juan Oro lounged by the window, puffing on a hookah, his gaze fixed on the sun dipping below the horizon, casting an orange glow. His thoughts drifted to the impending sea prayer ritual, just over a week away.

Abruptly, he turned his head, eyeing a shadow near the door.

The darkness stirred, and a man with green eyes, sporting a golden straw hat, white shirt, and black vest, emerged—the adventurer, Louis Berry.

“Why are you here again?” Juan Oro sighed, switching to Intisian.

Lumian chuckled, dragging a chair into the sun’s waning rays.

“I’ve got another inquiry and a heads-up about a particular operation.”

Juan's eyes narrowed.

"What scheme are you plotting now?"

"Tonight, I intend to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence. If I go unnoticed, I'll observe the rooms where the vigil ritual is conducted. If discovered, I'll make a swift exit. This fits my radical persona and purported motives, doesn't it? It'll deflect suspicion from our covert collaboration," Lumian disclosed, a hint of a smile in his explanation.

Juan Oro harbored an unexplained sense of threat from Louis Berry, yet he found no tangible evidence. Despite this, Lumian's words resonated with an unsettling logic.

He drew a deep drag from his hookah in silence before he spoke.

"What are you getting at?"

Lumian smiled.

"I'm curious to see the ring that marries the sea, its intricate engravings, and the patterns it bears.

"I know you've only crafted the ring mold and haven't completed the ritual to infuse it with something special. However, after serving as deputy host 11 times and assisting even more, I'm confident you've memorized the patterns, symbols, and structure."

Juan Oro stiffened, his tone turning icy.

"What's your motive?"

The room's afterglow, touched by the setting sun, dimmed suddenly, as if being pulled into another dimension.

Unfazed, Lumian responded, "Why all the secrecy? Haven't you heard that the ring's design, patterns, and structure have long been exposed?"

Juan Oro's eyes narrowed."When did this happen?"

Lumian arched an eyebrow.

“Didn’t my companion inform you of the true reason behind the sea prayer ritual failure?”

“He merely confirmed the fake Iru on the ship.” Juan Oro had his suspicions.

Lumian grinned, shaking his head. He began unraveling his deductions, starting with the custom-made fake ring in Torres and the orchestrated lamb sacrifice sent to the ship after a bribe.

Juan Oro held his silence, his countenance growing darker.

After a tense pause, he spoke in a hoarse tone, “Not many are privy to the intricacies of the Ring of the Sea Queen, and the fact that sea spawn seldom inspect the sacrificial offerings’ entrails. Each of them, the Children of the Sea, veterans of countless core rituals, are still alive… Iru and Salah were oblivious…”

As Juan Oro’s words, spoken through gritted teeth, reached Lumian’s ears, a sudden realization dawned upon him.

Ultraman is affiliated with the Fisheries Guild, a Child of the Sea endowed with numerous powers and a distinct status!

There’s also the possibility that he’s manipulated such an individual, establishing a clandestine “partnership.”

Without such a connection, how could April Fool’s possess precise details about the ceremonial ring’s appearance and exploit the sea prayer ritual’s “supervisory” loophole?

Even though I Know Someone mentioned that Ultraman is a Sun pathway Beyonder, it doesn’t rule out his identity as a Child of the Sea. Transforming into a Child of the Sea first and then drinking the Sun pathway’s potion shouldn’t pose an issue. The power of the Child of the Sea resonates with the cosmos, and the Sun and the cosmos are inherently compatible. Is April Fool’s true motive for disrupting the sea prayer ritual preparations related to Ultraman or his collaborator aiming to fully control the power or the palace at the bottom of the sea? Lumian’s thoughts gradually clarified.

He looked at Juan Oro with a relaxed smile and remarked, “If there wasn’t a mole, how could the sea prayer ritual be disrupted so easily?”

Juan Oro had harbored similar suspicions for the past year; Lumian’s words were irrefutable.

After some contemplation with an unpleasant expression, Juan Oro composed himself and stated, “I have to uncover the traitor before the official sea sacrifice…”

At this point, Juan Oro turned his gaze to Lumian.

“I might need your cooperation on something when the time comes.”

Oh, you’re fishing too? Lumian replied with a smile, “No problem.”

Juan Oro set down his hookah and left his seat.

He walked to the desk, retrieved a pen and paper, and began sketching.

Nearly ten minutes later, the old man staggered to Lumian and handed him the paper.

Lumian glanced at it and recognized six designs—representing the front, left, right, back, front, and inner parts of the Ring of the Sea Queen. Each design featured intricate and mystifying symbols and patterns.

“It’s actually useless for you to obtain it. It won’t have any effect,” Juan Oro said in a low, raspy voice. “The corresponding sea spawn have to use their special abilities to inscribe them on the ring and corrode them for six hours to please the sea and gain her recognition.”

Lumian nodded and replied,”I have no intention of replicating one.”

He was obtaining it solely to send to Madam Magician for interpretation.

He then asked, “Is this the ring-making segment of the vigil ritual? Is

there no other step?”

“There’s another step. An assistant host will take the ring to the basement and place it in front of the patterns and symbols representing our ancestors for an hour. This is a show of respect to our ancestors, like greeting the elders before a wedding,” Juan Oro explained briefly.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian responded, “Can you also draw the patterns and symbols representing your ancestors?”

Juan Oro returned to the desk.

This time, he completed it in just two minutes.

Lumian took it and noticed scattered lines and arcs. Many details were missing from the middle, making it impossible to discern its original appearance.

“Seeing it in person might allow you to make connections easier.” Juan Oro sighed again.

Lumian nodded.

“Then I’ll infiltrate the Governor of the Sea’s residence tonight.”

Juan Oro tersely acknowledged his words.

“Be careful of the sea spawn there. They have their own specialties. They might not be very strong, but they can counter certain abilities of yours.”

…

Late at night, under the crimson moonlight, Lumian appeared near the cathedral-like building.

Chapter 568 - 568 Patterns of the “Ancestors”

568 Patterns of the “Ancestors”

Lumian swiveled his head towards the docks, his body seamlessly blending into the shadows beyond the moonlight’s reach. The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Following the shadowy path, he smoothly bypassed the guards at the entrance, slipping into the sacred-looking building without a sound.

In the foyer, he came to a sudden halt.

Amidst the dark “fishnets,” he spotted short figures with oddly large heads, bulging eyes, and wrinkled skin – like elders in miniature. Standing just over a meter tall, they were the “Little Devils” mentioned by Juan Oro, a species of sea spawn.

Infiltrating the shadows, these Little Devils patrolled the Governor of the Sea’s residence, using their unique abilities to prevent any unauthorized entry.

Having encountered them before, Lumian knew these Little Devils weren’t formidable opponents. Despite their talent for blending into shadows and creating illusions, he could dispatch a team with ease.

Yet, eliminating them discreetly posed a challenge. Lumian couldn’t be certain that dealing with one group of Little Devils wouldn’t stir up trouble and alert other creatures lurking in the building.

Focused, Lumian surveyed the areas untouched by shadows. In the crimson moonlight, he discerned vague figures drifting in the void, intermittently appearing and disappearing.

These were fish adorned in dark-gray armor, their bulging eyes resembling meatballs at both ends. Starlight-threaded “thin threads” peeked through the gaps in their scale-like armor.

The peculiar fish hovered in the air, scattering across different regions. Occasionally, they released bubbles carrying formless storms and impalement-inducing cracks.

Erupting bubbles created countless invisible spikes, setting perilous traps for teleporting “guests.”

At the hall intersection and various aisles, silent three-man guard teams patrolled. Their expressions betrayed nothing, but Lumian noticed slender black insects, covered in bristles, emerging from their necks and mouths.

After a brief inspection, the Batings Black Insects swiftly retracted into the guards’ bodies.

The eyes of sea creature statues on the wall appeared alive, scanning the areas with a strange awareness.

Just as Juan Oro said, there are a large number of different sea spawn here. Infiltrating silently amidst the diverse sea spawn here proves to be a formidable task. Lumian, patient, opted to remain in the foyer, awaiting the right moment.

In under two minutes, a thunderous bang reverberated from the dock.

Crimson flames shot into the sky, casting an eerie glow on nearby windows, making them quiver.

Little Devils lurking in the shadows, Armored Monster Fish manipulating the surrounding void, Batings Black Insects orchestrating guards, and peculiar creatures concealed in the statues’ eyes—all instinctively shifted their focus to the glass window near the dock.

Lumian sprang into action.

He orchestrated the disturbance with a delayed explosion!

Seizing the opportunity, he stealthily navigated through the shadows surrounding the Little Devils and skirted the region patrolled by the Armored Monster Fish.

Before other sea spawn could react, he pinpointed the room at the far end of the hall, relying on Juan Oro's intel.

A dim light emitted from the black mark on his right shoulder as he swiftly reached the door of the target room. In a blink, he transformed into a shadow, slipping through the crack.

Inside, Lumian discovered intricate patterns and symbols etched on the floor, ceiling, and walls, reminiscent of magnified versions of Juan Oro's hand-

drawn sacrificial ring pattern.

Besides that, nothing else caught his eye.

Lumian deduced, During the vigil ritual, some sea spawn enter this place, condense the patterns from every direction, and carve them into the ring mold. Then, they infuse them with special energy. Quickly scanning the area, he stepped out of the shadows, activating a black mark on his chest.

Nearly invisible water ripples danced on the surrounding walls, then subsided.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian "enclosed" the two connected rooms into the Bottle of Fiction. The entry requirement: ordinary humans.

He positioned himself near the opening of the Bottle of Fiction, deliberately creating loud footsteps as he hid by the door.

Almost instantly, certain sea spawn picked up on the disturbance.

Recalling the explosion at the docks and the towering flames, they realized they had fallen into a diversion.

Summoning the Armored Monster Fish, Batings Black Insects, Little

Devils, and their cohorts, they ordered an investigation into the ring-making ritual venue for potential infiltrators.

Despite attempts to rush in through the door, the sea spawn inexplicably found themselves back in the hall.

The Armored Monster Fish, discerning the issue, released bubbles with a formless storm toward the entrance of the Bottle of Fiction.

As before they surged towards him, aiming to breach the room, Lumian, now a shadow creature, slipped through the crack at the base of the wooden door, quietly exiting the Bottle of Fiction and returning to the hall.

His ploy successfully diverted the sea spawn's attention, creating a chance for him to change positions.

Naturally, he needed to employ effective tactics a few more times!

Anticipating the enemy's disbelief in encountering the same trick repeatedly within a short span, Lumian knew they would assume there were alternative plans.

Of course, on the third attempt, heightened vigilance would set in. Everything they saw would seem like a distraction. When the moment arrived, Lumian could flip the strategy.

Seizing the moment when the sea spawn fixated on the Bottle of Fiction, Lumian deftly avoided the gathering of Little Devils. He circled the Armored Monster Fish, reaching a corner of the hall, and once again utilized Spirit World Traversal.

This time, Lumian's destination was the staircase leading to the basement.

The guards, lured into the hall, left the area unmonitored.

As Lumian's silhouette appeared at the staircase entrance, he swiftly transformed into a shadow, slipping into the basement through the darkness.

No guards or sea spawn patrolled this seemingly unimportant area,

an area that was merely a testament to the villagers of Milo Village's reverence for their ancestors.

In his shadow creature form, Lumian possessed "natural" night vision. Even without a fireball, he could vaguely discern the dark basement.

Despite its dampness due to proximity to the sea, the absence of a moldy odor was thanks to the various Beyonder powers within the building.

At the center stood a decrepit stone platform, reminiscent of an altar for ancestor worship. Surrounding it were signs of destruction, leaving only disjointed lines, arcs, and indistinct patterns.

Do these fragmented symbols and patterns constitute the coat of arms of Milo Village's ancestors? Or do they possess mystical effects? Lumian scrutinized them repeatedly, struggling to reconstruct the undamaged version in his mind.

Yet, he sensed that since Noelia of the Fertility Order had alluded to the revealing nature of these symbols and patterns, he might extract valuable information.

What kind of information could it be? Maintaining his shadow creature form, Lumian extended into the darkness, surveying his surroundings.

Frowning, he whispered, Could it be that the Church of Earth Mother, fully capable of obliterating this place, deliberately left traces? Does this imply that the sea prayer ritual holds some influence over them too?

Lumian directed his gaze at the stone platform, the sacrificial offering to the ancestors, recalling Juan Oro's details about the ring-making ritual.

After crafting the Ring of the Sea Queen, it would rest here for an hour as a mark of respect to their ancestors.

Was it placed on this partially collapsed altar? Approaching the grayish-black stone platform, Lumian observed no dust accumulation.

All remaining lines converged on an empty space at the center of the circle.

His heart stirred as he retrieved a Louis d'or, placing it in the center of the altar.

Nothing happened.

Undeterred, Lumian replaced the Louis d'or with gold risot, Mystery Prying Glasses, Flog boxing gloves, and various other items.

Yet, still no anomaly.

Persistence drove him. Lumian pulled out the silver Lie earring from his pocket and positioned it on an empty space on the stone platform.

In the next moment, a surreal sensation enveloped Lumian.

Within the stone platform, illusory lines and arcs materialized, intertwining with remnants to form two distinct patterns:

One pattern featured layers of doors sketched with simple strokes, while the other resembled a clock divided into twelve sectors, albeit having a single hand.

Lumian observed keenly, sensing something adhering to the Lie earring.

In an instant, the lines from the stone platform dimmed, retracted, and returned to their original positions. Normalcy resumed.

Are these the patterns representing Milo Village's ancestors? Or did they gain knowledge from the initial revelations? Lumian sensed sea spawn surging toward the basement. After muttering to himself, he seized the Lie earring and "teleported" away.

…

In the master bedroom of the suite at Solow Motel.

As Lumian's figure manifested, he settled down and began writing to Madam Magician. Unfazed by checking the changes in the Lie

earring, he intended to send it to his Major Arcana card holder for inspection.

Recreating the patterns, symbols, structure, and various scenes from the Governor of the Sea's residence, Lumian neatly folded several letters, arranged a ritual, and summoned the "doll" messenger.

Then, he patiently awaited the reply.

Chapter 569 - 569 Language Interpretation

569 Language Interpretation

The crimson moonlight seeped through the not-so-thick curtains, casting its glow on the desk, already yellowed by the gas wall lamp's illumination, emphasizing its presence.

Lumian perused his freshly acquired Highlander textbook, patiently waiting for over half an hour before finally receiving a reply from Madam Magician via the "doll" messenger.

The letter was concise and spanned only two pages. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Let's start with the basics.

"Combining the patterns, symbols, and structure of the ring—although I can't precisely decipher the meaning of that sentence—I can identify its composition and the practical application of various short sentences.

"It breaks down into three segments:

"The first part serves to precisely locate the ring, facilitating the subsequent activation of special characteristics and the infusion of energy contained in the language.

"The second part involves injecting the energy carried by the words into the ring through resonance and other forms, activating a magic circle formed by patterns and symbols. Consider the sacrificial ring as a charm. The second paragraph is akin to its designated special activation incantation. It doesn't necessitate invoking supernatural powers but requires prior guidance.

“In the third part, I suspect it’s a ciphertext attached to the ring. In simpler terms, once the ceremonial ring is fully activated through the first two parts, it records and carries the final ciphertext into the sea to transmit it to something.

“Are you following so far? The ceremonial ring is like a special key, functional only after activation. Furthermore, it necessitates the corresponding password to open the ‘doors’ of the target.

“Heh heh, the actual meaning of ‘We espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion’ is roughly akin to ‘a key to unlock the passageway. The password is XXXXXXXXX.’ Naturally, if translated directly, it’ll differ significantly, but that should capture the essence.”

Lumian couldn’t resist a smirk.

Recalling the solemn recitation by the previous Governors of the Sea, envisioning the act of marrying the sea, anyone familiar with the corresponding language would likely burst into laughter.

What sea, what espousal, what dominion! After all the complexity, it boiled down to unlocking and opening a passageway—a simple password entry!

Contemplating sharing this interpretation with Juan Oro, Lato Guiaro, and the others, Lumian pondered their likely reactions.

No, they wouldn’t believe it. A millennium or two of misunderstanding had morphed into faith, perseverance, and legacy. Admitting a mistake wasn’t something they’d easily embrace.

Regardless, the result would be the same. Interpretation or translation, it didn’t matter how they perceived it!

Collecting himself, Lumian turned to the second page of the letter, eager to continue reading.

“Next is the more complicated part.

“The two patterns you witnessed in the Governor of the Sea’s basement have a profound history, stretching back to the early Fourth Epoch.

“They serve as symbols of mysticism and the coat of arms of ancient nobles. One of them is linked to an acquaintance—no, a familiar Angel, Amon!

“The pattern resembling a clock signifies the Worm of Time. It stands as the Amon family’s coat of arms.”

Worm of Time? The Amons’ coat of arms? Why is it Him again! Lumian’s eyes narrowed, feeling as though he was still entrenched in the Amons.

What connection did Milo Village’s ancestors, Port Santa’s sea prayer ritual, and the distinctiveness of those waters share with the Amons?

On the surface, no apparent link existed!

As Lumian’s thoughts raced, he suddenly sensed a connection between the sea prayer ritual and the former King of Angels of the Marauder pathway.

Reflecting on the key members involved in the April Fool’s ritual prank, Bard, a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, and Mad Lady, belonging to the neighboring Apprentice pathway, even prayed to The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth—a being with profound influence over the Marauder pathway.

While this didn’t directly point to the Amons, the gathering of Marauder-

related individuals suggested a reasonable association between the sea prayer ritual and the Marauder pathway.

Lumian exhaled, lowering his head to read further insights from Madam Magician.

“The layers of doors come from the Abraham family. Yes, the Abraham family, one of the five nobles of the Tudor Empire. I previously mentioned that in the Tudor Empire, only five families hold the hereditary duke title: Abraham, Amon, Antigonus, Jacob, and Tamara. Among them, the Abrahams control the Apprentice pathway. Remember, Apprentices often represent seals.

“Therefore, it’s plausible to believe that the sea prayer ritual predates previous estimates, tracing back to before the demise of the Fourth Epoch’s Tudor Empire. Encountering matters related to the Tudor Empire sure isn’t a coincidence for you, is it?

“Do you now grasp the essence of the sea prayer ritual? Further explanations may not be necessary, correct?

“I’m starting to suspect that Milo Village’s ancestors misunderstood the initial sentence’s meaning, leading to the expansion of the sea sacrifice and vigil from the revelation. This resulted in an absurd sea marriage ritual spanning a millennium or two. It could very well be a manifestation of that individual’s mischievous nature, reveling in playing a joke on everyone, indifferent to the fate of others.

“See, this is what a prank should be. Those April Fool’s folks could learn a thing or two.

“If you have more questions or haven’t clarified certain aspects, feel free to write and ask.

“By the way, Lie now possesses a temporary ability lasting half a month. It can absorb a specific amount of power from a target, though this power won’t endure long. For ordinary people, it might persist for half a year or a year. However, for you, it won’t last more than a week due to the conflict with your powers.”

Lumian averted his gaze from the letter, his thoughts in disarray.

Madam Magician suggests that the uniqueness of those waters originated from the ancestor of the Abraham family and a certain Amon? The core of the sea prayer ritual was personally devised by these two Angel-level figures. They guided the ancestors of Milo Village in Port Santa and left behind a revelation, compelling them to perform the ritual annually?

Due to Amon’s mischievous nature, the ancestors of Milo Village misunderstood the true meaning of that sentence, thinking they were meant to marry the sea. Consequently, the core of the sea prayer ritual became increasingly complex, expanding into more segments over the years. It transformed into an extensive prank that persisted

for over a millennium?

Having comprehended Madam Magician's hypothesis, Lumian reconsidered the essence of the sea prayer ritual.

Appeasing the special entity concealed at the bottom of the sea—perhaps that palace?

Apprentice represents a seal… Marauder is stealing…

Stealing…

Lumian suddenly glanced down at his left chest.

He grasped the essence of the sea prayer ritual!

Finding a husband for the sea, pacifying its violence, genuinely pleasing it, and obtaining corresponding boons were all absurd reasons concocted by Milo Village's ancestors after being misled!

The essence of the sea prayer ritual was to steal boons!

The "palace" at the bottom of the sea had been sealed by the Apprentice pathway, but the ancestor of the Abraham family worried that, over time, the seal's power would wane, allowing the "palace" to gradually regain strength. To counter this, he enlisted Amon to devise a ritual for regularly siphoning off the restored power of the palace each year, preventing it from breaking through the seal.

Consequently, after each sea prayer ritual, the sea area would become tranquil, free from excessive storms. The previous year's failed ritual had allowed the palace to accumulate a certain degree of strength. Consequently, the sea experienced abnormality, leading to an increased number of shipwrecks, and Death Navigators departed the special sea area more frequently.

The reason for only entering the sea when the stars aligned and following a specific route to reach the destination was that only then would a complex passageway appear in the outer seal!

Lumian stood up and took a few steps forward.

Having unraveled the essence of the sea prayer ritual, he comprehended the Earth Mother Church's motive for perpetuating it.

Initially, the clergyman of the Earth Mother Church, lacking thorough investigations, destroyed Milo Village, putting an end to the sea prayer ritual. However, at the bottom of the building, they discovered the coat of arms representing the two nobles of the Tudor Empire, halting the final step in time. Later, they realized they needed to dispatch demigod-level Saints to deal with the unique waters each year. High-end forces were required to guard it for an extended period, making it quite troublesome. Consequently, when the sea prayer ritual resurfaced, they tacitly agreed to the reconstruction of Milo Village.

In most cases, the sea prayer ritual didn't adversely affect the innocent or disrupt local order. Every Governor of the Sea possessed a certain amount of the sea's bloodline, and while the Maidens of the Sea would eventually transform into humanoid lizards in their old age, they could alter their fates and enjoy power and wealth for 30 to 40 years or even longer.

For Maidens of the Sea seeking free love, the Church of Earth Mother likely tacitly consented or even aided their escape, as the chances of success were otherwise quite low.

So, why did the Fertility Order encourage me to investigate the sea prayer ritual? Why did Noelia provide some information while withholding crucial details? Lumian's confusion swiftly dissipated.

The real entity fishing behind the scenes was not the Fisheries Guild but the Church of Earth Mother!

The failure of last year's sea prayer ritual had alarmed the Church of Earth Mother, fearing a similar problem this year. Observing Louis Berry's inclination to investigate the sea prayer ritual, they encouraged him to do so, allowing potential saboteurs hidden in the shadows to contact him, surface, and capture them all at once!

Phew. Lumian exhaled, redirecting his focus to April Fool's.

Now, he was certain that April Fool's intended to break the seal

around those special waters.

Last year marked the first step towards breaking the seal, but it hadn't progressed to the point where the underwater "palace" could breach it. This year, they would undoubtedly create a similar situation once again. Otherwise, if the sea prayer ritual succeeded, their pranks from last year would be in vain!

The question now was, what would the key members of April Fool's do? How could they seize the benefits represented by the palace and evade the corresponding dangers? Lumian stared at the gas wall lamp emitting a yellowish glow, sinking into deep thought.

…

More than a week quickly elapsed, and in the blink of an eye, the day of the sea prayer ritual arrived.

After completing his breakfast, Lumian heard the melodic tunes of various musical instruments wafting in from the street outside.

With a smile, he wiped his mouth with a napkin and strolled toward the window, welcoming the bright sunlight pouring in.

Chapter 570 - 570 Festival

570 Festival

On Aquina Street, a two-story ceremonial boat crafted from wood, cardboard, and adorned with ribbons rolled forward, propelled by four sleek horses.

This intricate vessel mimicked the Governor of the Sea's boat, designed to economize materials and size, allowing horses to guide it through the city.

Eight men and eight women, dressed vibrantly, stood on both upper and lower levels of the flower boat. They sang and danced, their joy infecting the spectators on both sides of the street.

Port Santa's premier folk orchestra surrounded the ceremonial boat, playing rhythmic drumbeats and a variety of instruments such as clarinets, oboes, flutes, and strings.

The onlookers on the roadside were in high spirits, alternating between singing and following the ceremonial boat, hoping to catch a refreshing spray from the water droplets scattered by the sixteen men and women.

Observing the scene from the fifth floor of the Solow Motel, Lumian sensed that the sea prayer ritual had evolved beyond a mere sacrificial ceremony. Excluding its core aspects, it had transformed into a city-wide folklore festival.

Despite many residents of Port Santa being devout followers of the Earth Mother and not attributing spiritual significance to the sea, they embraced the festivities, dancing and celebrating on this special day.

As the flower boat concluded its tour of Aquina Street, Lumian turned

to Lugano and remarked,

“Take good care of Ludwig today. No matter which celebration you attend, ensure he’s with you.”

“Yes, Boss,” Lugano replied, influenced by the cheerful atmosphere of the sea prayer ritual, his emotions lifted.

Without wasting any time, Lumian snatched his golden straw hat, exited the suite, and descended the stairs.

In the lobby, his gaze fell upon Otta Guillaume, the Solow Motel owner, doling out cash to the lady at the front desk and the two attendants—two risot each.

“Is this a holiday bonus?” Lumian inquired in Intisian.

Otta Sr. chuckled and replied, “No bonus, just their compensation. They’re on duty at the motel today, keeping an eye on the place. They’ll miss out on the sea prayer ritual and other celebrations.

“I’m heading to the docks to see my little cabbage dance!”

“I’ll be there too,” Lumian said with a smile, embracing the festive ambiance once again.

If the sea prayer ritual lacked mystic elements, Lumian would have fully immersed himself in the festive atmosphere, reminiscent of the few years of Lent he experienced in Cordu.

Exiting the motel, Lumian leisurely strolled towards the harbor, taking note of Port Santa’s residents bedecked in their most glamorous and festive attire. At a glance, the streets appeared to be awash with a sea of colors.

His attire—a white shirt, black vest, and dark pants—made him stand out like a foreigner amidst the lively crowd.

Lumian adorned the golden straw hat, injecting a splash of color into his appearance.

The rhythmic chime of bicycle bells accompanied the passing of

wooden crate-laden bicycles. Vendors energetically peddled popsicles of various flavors to eager citizens anticipating the sea dance and boat race.

Observing the two segments with a relaxed demeanor, Lumian savored the festivities. He patiently waited until the two-story festival boat, carrying the Governor of the Sea and the Maidens of the Sea, embarked on its journey to Milo Village before departing the port.

Choosing to abstain from other citizen-organized celebrations, Lumian sought refuge in a public washroom within the nearest department store, slipping into a cubicle.

Triggering the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian materialized in a concealed corner of Milo Village.

Shifting into a shadow creature, he seamlessly infiltrated the Oro family's blend of ancient and modern architecture, arriving at Juan Oro's bedroom.

The president of the Fisheries Guild awaited Lumian's arrival, and upon seeing the figure of the adventurer, Louis Berry, emerge from the darkness, Juan Oro, with deep wrinkles, gestured towards the unconscious Milo villagers on the floor.

"These are two of the four deputy hosts for the vigil and the sea sacrificial ritual. Choose one to assume his form."

This condition was pivotal for Lumian's collaboration with Juan Oro. He sought continuous participation in the core sections of the sea prayer ritual.

Initially hesitant due to the inability to deceive other sea spawn and introduce a stranger onto the ship, Juan Oro only agreed to allow Lumian to infiltrate the Governor of the Sea's residence before the vigil ritual, observing it discreetly.

However, with Ultraman under suspicion as a key figure in the Fisheries Guild, Lumian seized the opportunity when Juan Oro required cooperation and assistance, showcasing the abilities of the Lie earring. Thus, Lumian devised a plan to disguise himself as a

specific deputy host and gain access to the ship.

After studying one of the deputy hosts for a few moments, Lumian adorned a silver earring. He replicated the appearance of the chosen deputy host, seamlessly blending into his guise.

In no time, except for his clothing, there was no discernible difference between Lumian and the deputy host.

“It’s my turn,” Juan Oro said in a deep Intisian voice.

He decided to take on the guise of another deputy host and personally board the ship to avert any potential mishaps.

Concerned about Louis Berry’s involvement in the sea sacrifice and wary of lurking enemies employing unknown methods to cause trouble, Juan Oro believed that everything would converge during the sea sacrifice segment. Boarding the boat covertly would enable him to address unforeseen circumstances in time, delivering a strategic “surprise.”

Juan Oro harbored suspicions that Louis Berry might be an accomplice of last year’s saboteurs, his prior actions serving as a ploy to deceive them and allow him to openly disrupt the ritual at a crucial moment.

Lumian casually tossed the Lie earring to Juan Oro, who proceeded to change into a dark-blue robe embroidered with various sea elements.

Upon donning the silver earring, Juan Oro experienced a remarkable control over every detail of his body.

Attempting to adjust the wrinkles on his face, he observed himself becoming ten to twenty years younger in the mirror.

Despite his potent and diverse Beyonder powers, the president of the Fisheries Guild couldn’t help but marvel.

“How magical.”

After completing his disguise, Lumian pointed at the unconscious deputy host.

“Who’s responsible for keeping an eye on them and preventing their appearance before the sea prayer ritual?”

“My wife,” Juan Oro replied, already prepared.

She, a former Maidens of the Sea and the current Matriarch of the Oro family, possessed considerable strength. While she hadn’t participated in any ring-

making rituals, she was a trusted individual who wouldn’t divulge secrets.

Lumian redirected the conversation, inquiring, “As the president of the Fisheries Guild, won’t you be suspected if you don’t wait for news of the successful sea prayer ritual with the other committee members?” This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

“No, I don’t go every year. I can also wait for news at home, and my wife will pretend to be me,” Juan Oro stated, pointing at Lie on his left ear and removing it.

After confirming the details, Lumian inquired further, “Have you investigated any of those who nearly died and came back to life, or have their personalities undergone a significant change?”

These individuals were key members of the Fisheries Guild familiar with the specific design of the Ring of the Sea Queen and the complete details of the sea prayer ritual.

According to Franca, every member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society was a soul from another world, having “resurrected” in recently deceased human bodies. This information could help identify who might be Ultraman.

Juan Oro slowly shook his head.

“No, at least not in my memory. Time was tight, so I couldn’t investigate them one by one.”

The rejuvenated elder, now appearing in his prime, continued, “Remember, your name is Brian now. My name is Jorge. If you don’t understand what others are saying later, it’s fine. I’ll hint at you.

When you need to answer questions, I'll help you."

"Alright." Lumian maintained the pretense of not knowing Highlander.

In reality, having extensively studied under the effects of the Language Comprehension charm, he had already mastered more words and grammar. While still unable to fully comprehend others' words, he could grasp key words, tense, and the active and passive voice, allowing him to roughly understand the meaning. Expressing himself with short sentences and simple structures presented no challenge.

…

Clad in the dark-blue robe of a deputy host, Lumian entered the Governor of the Sea's residence, guided by Juan Oro, who no longer staggered. Passing through a hall adorned with sea creature statues, they reached the room where the Governor of the Sea maintained his vigil.

The current Governor of the Sea, Simon of the Guiaro family, was from a branch with a thin bloodline, unqualified to reside in the ancestral house.

At that moment, Simon sat cross-legged on the cold floor, suppressing his excitement. With half-closed eyes, he felt the moist air enveloping him.

Although Lumian refrained from activating his Spirit Vision, he sensed various sea spawn bustling in the shadows, the void, and the statues.

Juan Oro led Lumian out of the room, guiding him to the most secluded part of the building. Opening the wooden door to the servants' quarters, Juan Oro addressed the fake Governor of the Sea, Miguel, lying on the bed.

"Once the sea prayer ritual succeeds, you can leave, but you must depart Port Santa with the wealth you've amassed over the past year."

Miguel sat up excitedly. “Alright, alright!”

Though their conversation occurred in Highlander, Lumian grasped the essence.

After this exchange, Juan Oro translated the conversation for Lumian, emphasizing, “You can verify if I’m lying based on Miguel’s expression.”

Lumian silently pondered, thinking, So what if you’re not lying? What you said might not be done… He then returned to the hall, assuming a cross-

legged position opposite the other two deputy hosts.

As time passed, midnight arrived, marking the completion of the Ring of the Sea Queen. One of the deputy hosts retrieved it and guided it to the basement in the dim moonlight.

The moment had come to pay homage to their ancestors.

Lumian observed the scene in silence and suddenly had a thought.

Chapter 571 - 571 Key Details

571 Key Details

The Governor of the Sea's residence hall opened into a labyrinth of rooms, its scarcity of windows allowing only a trickle of light despite the crimson moon's glow. The dimness cast a cloak of silence over the place.

Even as the deputy host, clutching the coveted Ring of the Sea Queen, moved with caution, the floor still betrayed him with a faint echo.

Lumian observed him heading towards the basement staircase, a sudden realization dawning upon him.

Once in the basement, the deputy host could effortlessly switch the authentic Ring of the Sea Queen with a crafted counterfeit without alerting anyone.

The other deputies were occupied in the hall, and the Governor of the Sea, undergoing physical modifications, had the Maidens of the Sea by his side. The sea spawn were scattered elsewhere.

Frowning, Lumian shot a sidelong glance at another deputy host. He lowered his voice and addressed Jorge, the form Juan Oro had taken, in Intisian.

"Every year, during the vigil ritual, does a deputy host send the Ring of the Sea Queen alone to the basement, retrieving it an hour later?"

He stressed the word "alone."

Juan Oro nodded subtly.

"Yes. There's no need for extra protection in this building…"

But just as Juan Oro was about to continue, he halted abruptly.

This presented a golden opportunity to swap the Ring of the Sea Queen unnoticed.

The fact that external enemies couldn't breach the building didn't mean the deputy hosts within were without their own problems!

Lumian wasted no time and turned to Juan Oro, uttering, "Should I follow, or will you take charge?"

Juan Oro regarded the matter gravely, rising from his seat and responding, "I'll go."

Harnessing his abilities, he steadied himself and swiftly caught up with the deputy host. In a deep tone, he stated, "Let's go together. I want to seize the chance to pay my respects to my ancestors."

The other deputy host raised no objections.

As Lumian observed the two lighting their lanterns and descending into the basement, his mind instinctively filled in the upcoming sequence.

Place the Ring of the Sea Queen on the decrepit stone platform… Offer prayers to the ancestors… Return to the surface… Re-enter and retrieve it an hour later…

During that hour, the Ring of the Sea Queen sits unguarded in the basement, vulnerable to any opportunistic interference… If someone had concealed themselves there beforehand, swapping the genuine ring for a counterfeit would be a straightforward task…

Certainly, infiltrating and concealing oneself in this location is no simple feat. I can't even do it; I could last a mere two minutes before being detected by the sea spawn…

The Ring of the Sea Queen has to be positioned on that worn stone platform. Any deviations—deviations…

With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Lumian suddenly recalled the transformations in the Lie earring when it rested on the

weathered stone platform in the basement.

The Seer pathway item had activated a pattern embodying an Apprentice and a Marauder, granting it the ability to siphon someone's power that lasted half a month!

Lie could accomplish this feat, but what about the Ring of the Sea Queen?

Though not an item of the Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder pathway, it had been meticulously crafted based on a ritual passed down by an Amon. Perhaps, over time, it could activate the unique characteristics of the basement, gradually assimilating with thieving qualities.

Yes! Considering that the essence of the sea sacrificial ritual involves extracting power from the seal at the bottom of the sea and claiming it, the Ring of the Sea Queen, being a key item, should not only be capable of loosening the seal to a certain extent but also possess the power-stealing ability. It could distribute the gains among various participants in the ritual—

the host receiving the most, followed by the Maidens of the Sea as assistant hosts, and the deputy hosts and sailors gaining some within the ritual's range, provided they possessed similar powers!

In essence, Juan Oro and his companions' understanding of the ring-making ritual is incomplete. The "paying homage to the ancestors" segment is integral and crucial. Without honoring the ancestors, the sea sacrificial ritual would merely open the seal without stealing the accumulated power. Instead, it would erupt and disperse… Lumian had just marveled at the mysticism's terrifying complexity when a sudden alarm gripped him.

He realized he had overlooked a pivotal detail.

According to Madam Magician's interpretation of the Ring of the Sea Queen's functions and her speculations about the essence of the entire sea prayer ritual, the substitution of the genuine Ring of the Sea Queen with the fake ring customized by April Fool's in Torres should have prevented the catastrophic phenomenon of the sea's fury consuming the Governor of the Sea, all the deputy hosts, and some

sailors in the subsequent ritual!

The fake ring hadn't undergone the initial ring-making ritual, leaving its patterns, symbols, and structure devoid of the necessary mysticism characteristics. Even if the Governor of the Sea recited the prescribed words, he couldn't infuse energy into it to open the seal!

As a complete counterfeit, it shouldn't have triggered any phenomena. However, due to its incapacity to extract the amassed power, the sea area would experience more shipwrecks, and the weather would deteriorate.

To align with the events of the previous year, the fake ring thrown by the Governor of the Sea had to complete the first part of the ring-making ritual. Still, without being placed in the basement to honor the ancestor, it could only partially open the seal, unable to extract and monopolize the gathered power. This incomplete process led to a sudden eruption, causing the sea to "rage"!

Lumian's eyes narrowed slightly. As a Conspirer, he had seized the core of the matter.

Two Rings of the Sea Queen were on the ship, but both were fakes.

The ring brought by the deputy host to the ritual ship was also a forgery. In fact, the authentic Ring of the Sea Queen hadn't made an appearance during last year's sea prayer ritual!

The genuine Ring of the Sea Queen, which had undergone the entire ring-

making ritual as per the Fisheries Guild's knowledge, hadn't been placed on the stone platform in the basement to fulfill the ritual of honoring the ancestors. Consequently, it was also a sham—a counterfeit ring lacking the most crucial effect!

The deputy host who had taken the Ring of the Sea Queen into the basement and retrieved it last year might also be part of the problem!

The peripheral members affiliated with April Fool's weren't considered trustworthy. Their actions likely didn't disrupt the overall plan. The fake ring concealed in the lamb's stomach and the Bard's

performance likely served as preparations for subsequent investigations, camouflaging vital clues. As Lumian's thoughts raced, Juan Oro and the deputy host returned to the hall.

"It's on the stone platform," whispered the president of the Fisheries Guild, masquerading as Jorge, to Lumian.

Lumian refocused his attention and casually inquired, "Who was responsible for sending the Ring of the Sea Queen to the basement last year?"

"I don't know. Without any special arrangements, anyone can do it. The four deputy hosts in the hall last year died in the sea's rage when the ritual failed." Juan Oro, sensing Lumian's suspicion, clarified.

Dead? Unlikely… Lumian lacked the corresponding item for spirit channeling and didn't have time to search for it. All he could do was ask, "Which one of them was familiar with the ring-making ritual and knows the details of the Ring of the Sea Queen?"

"None of them; it was their first time serving as deputy hosts." Juan Oro shook his head. "Besides, as I said, those who know these secrets are still alive."

If the deputy host wasn't Ultraman… Then who was it? Lumian's mind raced as he arrived at a conclusion.

It was Mad Lady!

Similar to Bard, she utilized the same technique to alter her appearance. With Ultraman's assistance, she assumed the guise of a deputy host, completing the final step in creating the Ring of the Sea Queen. Then, she boarded the ceremonial ship with it.

Lumian had been puzzled by how Mad Lady could locate the special sea and rescue Bard accurately and in time. Now, he had the answer.

Mad Lady was present on the ceremonial ship, right beside Bard. There was no need for coordinated locations or timing!

Initially suspecting Mad Lady to collaborate with Bard, Lumian now realized that Bard worked with Mad Lady, providing assistance in

case of unexpected developments and shouldering the responsibility of misleading investigations.

Dammit, Faceless abilities are so annoying. April Fool's is so annoying! Lumian's emotions fluctuated as he struggled to contain his emotions as he cursed. Relying on his Ascetic trait, he restrained himself from erupting.

More importantly, while he had unraveled the issues with the sea prayer ritual from last year, the identities of Ultraman and the forthcoming plans of April Fool's remained elusive.

…

The night passed in silence.

On an out-of-fashion sailboat in the harbor, Charname, sporting a short, round-rimmed felt hat, emerged from the cabin and approached Nolfi, who stood at the edge of the deck. Charname inquired, "Can we enter those special waters if we set off now?"

Nolfi nodded, responding, "Yes, the stars will align in a specific pattern after midnight."

Following Lumian's instructions, she and Batna had rented a boat for a few days from other ports along the same coastline.

Charname chuckled, saying, "Then let's set off!"

Observing the surprised and puzzled expressions of Nolfi and Batna, he explained, "If we follow the Governor of the Sea's ceremonial ship, we'll undoubtedly be discovered by the Fisheries Guild. Setting off an hour or two later would be meaningless. Therefore, we'll go ahead of time and hide there, patiently waiting for an opportunity!"

Although Nolfi didn't understand the nature of the opportunity Charname referred to, she didn't inquire. She responded with anticipation, "Okay."

Charname then turned to Batna.

"Are you joining us? It will be very dangerous."

Batna's expression fluctuated. After more than ten seconds, he declared, "I'm going!" This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Charname clicked his tongue but remained silent.

At that moment, Nolfi frowned, glancing at other parts of the deck, and asked, "What about the sailors here? We can't leave the sea without them, and they can't handle too much danger."

Charname chuckled.

"Don't worry, we have sailors who can handle danger."

As soon as he finished speaking, he half-turned, raising his right hand to the third level of the cabin. He clasped his index finger and thumb into a ring and extended his other three fingers.

Soon, the captain, first mate, second mate, and all the sailors emerged,

their eyes tightly shut. Like sleepwalkers, they lined up and walked down the gangway toward the docks.

Batna and Nolfi's eyes froze, as if trapped in a terrifying dream.

Chapter 572 - 572 The Real Target

572 The Real Target

572 The Real Target

In seven to eight minutes, their figures vanished from different spots.

Immediately after, Nolfi and Batna observed pitch-black shapes emerging at the edge of the cabin, and eerie pale-white or dark-green flames igniting across the deck.

Figures crawled out of the pitch-black flames.

Some wore tattered clothes, and their skin visibly rotted. Others were white bones with fragments of flesh hanging from them. Pale-white flames protruded from their eye sockets.

These were all corpses!

Soon, a half-rotted corpse in a dirty jacket hoisted the sail. The corpse with a missing breastbone stowed the heavy anchor. The other corpses took their positions, steering the sailboat slowly away from the port.

As they gazed at the decaying flesh, pale-white bones, and sinister flames of different hues, Batna and Nolfi felt as if they had stepped into a novel world.

Horror novels! Ghostly tales!

“Navigator, it’s time for you to work.” Charname’s voice snapped Nolfi back to reality.

…

In the Governor of the Sea's residence.

Lumian leaned against the statue-less wall, surveying the other deputy hosts in the hall, including Juan Oro.

Uncertain if any of them were genuine, they could easily be impersonated by a Faceless.

In the upcoming operation, the only person he could unequivocally trust was himself.

An hour passed in an indescribable silence. This time, Lumian took the initiative, leading Juan Oro into the basement to retrieve the Ring of the Sea Queen, completing the "paying homage to the ancestors" segment.

The ring rested on the dilapidated stone platform, untouched. Lumian couldn't be certain if it was authentic, but the patterns, symbols, and structure seemed intact, and no one had lurked in the basement after inspection.

Maintaining his calm demeanor and a tense heart, Lumian patiently waited until 6 a.m., feeling both mental and physical fatigue dissipate.

Two hours later, the current Governor of the Sea, Simon, exited the vigil room with four Maidens of the Sea and approached the building's door.

Lumian, Juan Oro, and the other deputy hosts promptly stood up and followed.

Ascending the gangway to the deck, Lumian sensed an invisible gaze from every window, flower, and mast—a familiar feeling from when the statues in the Governor of the Sea's residence came to life.

This was the designated spot for him, the deputy host named Brian.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

On the dock of Milo Village, vibrant paper fragments burst forth from ceremonial cannons, creating a colorful display.

Amid the festive atmosphere, the ship set sail gradually. It circled Port Santa, capturing the cheers and blessings of the people before venturing toward the distant sea.

As the navigator, Juan Oro guided the ship into a boundless azure sea with no discernible landmarks. They weaved between left and right turns, occasionally reversing direction.

Nearly an hour passed, and beneath the clear, bright sky, dense fog suddenly enveloped the ship.

Splash!

Within the fog's depths, waves surged like mountains. Any ship it touched would capsize or shatter.

The Governor of the Sea, the Maidens of the Sea, some sailors, and the two deputy hosts, participating in the sea sacrificial segment for the first time, were terror-stricken by the ominous scene, their faces paling.

For Juan Oro, a veteran of many sea sacrifices, it seemed like he was observing a child's plaything. He directed the sailors with no emotional fluctuations, guiding the ship along the only safe sea route through the thick fog and exaggerated waves.

After an unknown duration, the fog lifted, and the tidal waves miraculously subsided. An ocean resembling sapphires unfolded before Lumian's eyes. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

The sea appeared limitless, but the distance and sky were gray, with only a hint of sunlight seeping through.

…

Port Santa, Solow Motel.

Lugano stood by the window, observing as the citizens formed celebratory teams, weaving through streets and alleys, spreading their joy.

Having already taken Ludwig to witness the Governor of the Sea's

colorful flower boat ritual and participated in two spontaneous citizen-led celebrations, Lugano returned to the suite as teatime approached. There, he provided Ludwig with food he had purchased and prepared in advance.

I could still head out later. When the Governor of the Sea returns, another wave of celebrations will ensue. Unfortunately, I can't engage with the enthusiastic Feynapotter girls with such a child in tow… Lugano thought regretfully.

At that moment, a knock echoed on the door.

"Who is it?" Lugano, a seasoned bounty hunter, heightened his guard.

"It's me." A gentle voice emanated from outside the door.

Lugano recognized her as Rubió Paco's wife, Madame Giorgia.

She's here to see the boss? Has something happened to the Paco family again? Lugano glanced at Ludwig, who was eating earnestly, and quickly walked to the door and opened it.

Giorgia, not clad in her usual glamorous attire, wore a black dress akin to that of an old widowed matriarch.

"Where's Monsieur Louis Berry?" the lady inquired.

"He's participating in various celebrations for the sea prayer ritual," Lugano fabricated an excuse.

He observed the distressed Madame Giorgia and instinctively inquired with concern, "Did something happen?"

"H-h…" Giorgia stammered, panic and fear evident in her eyes. "I discovered the true identity of that humanoid lizard!"

That humanoid lizard? The one the boss killed? Amidst Lugano's confusion, Giorgia suddenly threw herself into his arms.

The fragrance permeated Lugano's senses, momentarily hindering him from immediately pushing the madam away.

Giorgia suppressed her voice but couldn't conceal her fear.

"That humanoid lizard was my husband, Rubió Paco!"

"Huh?" Lugano was both surprised and bewildered.

Giorgia gritted her teeth and explained, "The one you guys saw, it's fake!"

Fake? Someone impersonated Rubió Paco, and the real Rubió Paco had transformed into a humanoid lizard, killed by the boss? As this realization struck Lugano, his thoughts suddenly slowed down. The surroundings seemed coated in a glass-like layer.

He instinctively struggled, but Giorgia held him tightly, interrupting him with various subtle actions.

Ludwig, engrossed in devouring a skewer of roasted octopuses at the dining table, appeared oblivious to the unfolding silent drama at the door.

In a suite diagonally across the corridor, Rubió Paco sat quietly in a recliner, wearing a faint smile.

He had orchestrated the humanoid lizard incident and hired Louis Berry to resolve it intentionally. Firstly, he aimed to confirm the other party's identity. Secondly, he wanted to leave a vulnerability in the Paco family's handling of weak monsters, ensuring others wouldn't suspect a Faceless's involvement to confuse the target.

However, he abandoned the plan to deal with Louis Berry and refrained from triggering the corresponding trap.

This decision wasn't due to uncertainty about the target's identity; the Mysteries aura on Lumian Lee's chest couldn't escape his notice. He was unlike others. Instead, he had a new plan.

The overall April Fool's operation might not align with Loki's personal objectives!

His current focus shifted to the young boy, Ludwig.

To him, a sealed demigod-level powerhouse was a gift from the Celestial Worthy!

No ritualistic target could be more suitable.

Hence, he hinted at the sea anomaly, simultaneously confusing Lumian Lee and allowing him to connect the concepts of sealing and theft, understanding what occurred during last year's prank. He took the initiative to board the ship and head to the sea sacrifice grounds, enticing this formidable opponent away while another force restrained him.

Now, he was ready to execute a grand performance, captivating the attention of numerous Port Santa citizens!

…

The calm, gem-like sea held no waves. The four Maidens of the Sea engaged in a brief sacrificial dance, while sailors carried offerings—lambs, roosters, ox heads, and more—from the cabin, stacking them at the bow.

With the Ring of the Sea Queen in hand, Juan Oro approached the Governor of the Sea, awaiting the groom's gift for the proposed marriage.

Lumian, vigilant of everyone present, scanned his surroundings.

Any one of them could suddenly reveal themselves as Bard, Mad Lady, Ultraman, Loki, Hisoka, or a marionette.

The gentle, rhythmic dance concluded swiftly. Juan Oro produced the peculiar golden ring, passing it to the incumbent Governor of the Sea, Simon Guiaro.

At that moment, a person emerged openly from the cabin.

A woman in a black nun's uniform and matching hat, her expression calm yet tinged with sadness.

The surrounding sailors paid her no heed, as if she were invisible.

Seeing this, Lumian's pupils dilated, then constricted.

It was the source of Derangement!

The humanoid Sealed Artifact lost by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church!

In an instant, Lumian comprehended two things.

The Death Navigators, transformed Governors of the Sea, had coincidentally appeared near the Flying Bird, stirring colossal waves.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact had unconsciously set out to sea, coincidentally choosing the same destination as him—Port Santa.

There was a purpose behind this!

Chapter 573 - 573 Bard

573 Bard

573 Bard

Lumian's gaze met hers, filled with indescribable colors, and the figure in his line of sight vanished.

Simultaneously, Lumian recognized the insignificance of this occurrence. It didn't warrant further consideration.

Beside the incumbent Governor of the Sea, Juan Oro noticed the once calm azure sea undulating. In the gray sky, stars barely visible to the naked eye underwent changes, stirring an inexplicable throbbing and emotional shift within him.

An anomaly? Juan Oro couldn't determine if it was good or bad. Given the circumstances, any change was treated as an accident, potentially caused by a hidden enemy.

Without hesitation, he forcefully thrust the Ring of the Sea Queen into the hands of the incoming Governor of the Sea, Simon, growling, "Hurry up and marry the sea!"

In a moment of desperation, the president of the Fisheries Guild unintentionally failed to alter his voice to sound like Jorge. However, his vocal cords had changed, making him sound younger than usual.

Simon, taken aback by the shout, didn't notice Juan Oro's voice shift.

He raised his hand, clutching the Ring of the Sea Queen, and recited, "I espouse thee, O sea, as a sign of true and perpetual dominion!" With that, he threw the unique golden ring. It trembled with light, its surface covered in a gentle glow.

As the Ring of the Sea Queen submerged, its glow intensified and expanded to the size of a baby before transforming into a cone of light, vanishing into the azure seawater.

In the next moment, Juan Oro, Lumian, and the rest heard a deafening boom.

Splash!

The sea boiled, unleashing huge waves that catapulted the colorful flower boat into the air. A destructive aura echoed in the surroundings.

Wh… The sea's fury! How could this happen? Juan Oro's pupils dilated in disbelief. He couldn't fathom that they had angered the sea again. It seemed like this year's sea prayer ritual had failed once more.

He had meticulously followed every step, witnessing the placement of the Ring of the Sea Queen on the dilapidated stone platform representing the ancestors. He personally retrieved and guarded it with utmost vigilance. Everything went smoothly!

How could this be?

As the bridal boat teetered on the verge of capsizing, Juan Oro clenched his fists, and crystalline scales resembling starlight manifested on his body.

His eyes darkened, resembling resplendent stars emerging within.

He melded with the "sea."

The crashing sound abruptly ceased, and the majestic, terrifying azure waves froze in midair, as if held tightly by an unseen hand.

In Milo Village, within the cathedral-like Governor of the Sea's building.

Standing before a glass window overlooking the weeds outside, he muttered to himself, It's almost time…

I wonder how Juan Oro will react when he discovers the sea sacrifice has failed again. Heh heh, this is payback for all the 'care' he's given me over the past year.

What's Loki up to? Why the sudden deviation from the original plan? Isn't he concerned about potential accidents?

Miguel—a key member of April Fool's, Bard—had previously disguised himself as the sailor, Iru, and boarded the ship, escaping with Mad Lady when he jumped into the sea.

Their plan over the course of the past year was devised last year. They had selected locals from Port Santa who resembled the unfortunate governor. After disrupting the sea sacrifice and returning ashore, they promptly killed one of their targets, allowing Bard to assume the guise.

Their confidence in Miguel—disguised by Bard—becoming the false Governor of the Sea stemmed from Ultraman taking charge of the matter.

To prevent potential rebellion from peripheral April Fool's members, Bard, a former Swindler, intentionally wrote Emperor Roselle's Secret Chronicles and handed them to Loki. The latter discreetly distributed them in Trier, creating the illusion of Bard's activity in Intis. This tactic prevented others from connecting Miguel—obediently residing in the Governor of the Sea's residence—to Bard.

Writing about Emperor Roselle's romantic past indeed amused Bard, and witnessing Juan Oro's reactions, including the lashing with a crutch before intimate encounters with his granddaughter and the wives and daughters of relevant personnel, greatly satisfied Bard's mischievous tendencies.

However, pranks were secondary. Bard's main objective in assuming the disguise of the Governor of the Sea was clear:

He gained unrestricted access to the basement of the building, believed by Milo Village's inhabitants to be the sacrificial ground for their ancestors!

Despite being a fake Governor of the Sea under the watchful eyes of sea spawn in the house, he had free rein everywhere except the ring-making ritual grounds and the vigil room. Only those two areas were off-limits unless he crossed a line. Moreover, Ultraman confirmed that the basement of the Governor's residence held no value for the sea spawn. Except for two symbolic guards at the staircase, there were no monitors or protectors inside.

Villagers of Milo Village only visited occasionally, showing respect for the Governor of the Sea by not entering or leaving the building without permission.

This provided ample opportunities for Bard, the imposter Governor of the Sea.

Thinking about the expressions of Juan Oro and Lumian Lee when they witnessed the sea prayer ritual's failure again, Bard couldn't help but chuckle. He muttered in a mocking tone, You know the sea sacrifice, ring-making, and vigil happen once a year. Haven't you considered that the ancestral sacrificial ritual can only occur annually?

That dilapidated altar requires the slow accumulation of worshippers' spirituality. It takes almost twelve months to gather the necessary enchantment.

Over half a month before the basement gained serious attention, he had strategically placed an item related to one of the three pathways on the altar, openly siphoning the accumulated theft powers!

With this plan, Bard believed that, regardless of the success of the previous night's ring-making ritual, regardless of how closely Juan Oro and Lumian Lee guarded against the replacement of the Ring of the Sea Queen, it wouldn't possess the ability to steal power from the sea bottom.

Hence, the sea prayer ritual was destined to fail. The seal would further open, and the long-accumulated "volcano" inside would erupt!

Anyone attempting to stop it would perish!

Last year, the reason April Fool's took the risk of making Mad Lady a deputy host and deliberately replacing the Ring of the Sea Queen on the sacrificial ancestor's stone platform with another item arose because the theory that the high-level stealing power could only be used once a year wasn't entirely confirmed. Although Ultraman could analyze and experiment in the basement, he refrained from doing so too frequently to avoid suspicion.

Following the sea prayer ritual failure last year and the subsequent monthly experiments over the past eleven months, Bard, Ultraman, and Mad Lady were now certain that they didn't need to go through the trouble of replacing the real Ring of the Sea Queen. Instead, they could preemptively take away the theft power. Thus, they sneered at Lumian Lee's efforts, unconcerned about his actions or the need for destructive measures to avoid detection by the Earth Mother Church.

Despite their confidence, they still had to maintain appearances, including seeking help from Lumian Lee.

Bard shifted his gaze, averting it to his left hand.

This was, in fact, the item carrying the key functions of the Ring of the Sea Queen!

…

Port Santa, Solow Motel, at the entrance of the fifth-floor suite.

"Hugging" Madame Giorgia, Lugano's thoughts faltered, as if the iron gears were covered in yellow rust or lacking lubricant.

W-what's… going on?

Am I… under attack?

No… I have to hurry… I have to… get rid… of this state…

Lugano attempted to push away the woman in his arms, only to realize she had become surprisingly heavy. Using her joints subtly, Madame Giorgia prevented him from raising his arms and legs. The movements resembled a lovers' playful interaction.

Coupled with his disjointed thoughts, even a Planter like Lugano couldn't break free from Giorgia's restraints.

Panicking, Lugano opened his mouth, about to call for help.

Just then, Giorgia lifted her head, pressing her red lips against his.

Lugano was momentarily taken aback. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

In the adjacent room, Jenna, disguised as a female mercenary, held a mirror to "reflect" the situation in Lumian's living room through the glass and other items.

Seeing Lugano and Giorgia embracing and flirting, Jenna couldn't help but curse under her breath, "Dammit, can you even go into heat at a time like this? And in front of a child!"

Considering that Franca would be joined by members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Lumian tasked Jenna with secretly monitoring Lugano to figure out what was wrong with the interpreter.

As a former Showy Diva, Jenna had witnessed similar scenes and even more restrictive ones. She couldn't fathom why they chose to display such affection at the door.

At that moment, Anthony Reid, standing beside her, looked at the mirror and frowned.

"It doesn't seem like they're making out. Their actions and expressions aren't typical of people engaged in such activities."

Chapter 574 - 574 Heavy

574 Heavy

574 Heavy

Though Jenna had witnessed such scenes in the past, she hadn't delved into the intricacies of others' intimate interactions. Upon hearing Anthony's words, she promptly sided with the Spectator's perspective.

Anthony continued, "Lugano's body language indicates clear resistance. His current condition is highly abnormal."

Resisting, yet not breaking free… There's a lack of intense movements, even though Lugano is a Sequence 8 Beyonder with a strengthened physique. This situation is undeniably peculiar… What kind of Beyonder powers could cause this? Jenna swiftly sifted through the information about potential adversaries for this mission.

Most of it had been compiled by Franca, with a small section supplemented by Judgment and Madam Magician.

As these thoughts raced through Jenna's mind, a realization quickly dawned on her: Marionettist!

A Sequence 5 Marionettist from the Seer pathway!

According to Franca's description of Marionettists, these Beyonders could lurk in the shadows, silently transforming their targets into autonomous marionettes from a distance.

And Madam Magician's additional information included this: "A Marionettist manipulates a creature's Spirit Body Threads. A skilled Marionettist can establish initial control of the target's Spirit Body Threads in five to 10 seconds, slowing down thoughts, movements,

and stiffening the body."

Lugano's current state perfectly matched the characteristics of a Marionettist's initial control over the Spirit Body Threads!

Jenna lowered her voice and said to Anthony, "Loki…"

The enemy with the codename Loki was none other than a Marionettist!

Anthony immediately grasped Jenna's conjecture and nodded affirmatively.

"No need to rush. It takes a Marionettist several minutes to completely transform the target into a marionette. We have a chance to rescue Lugano."

As per the information, forcibly taking Lugano away, pushing him beyond a certain limit, or triggering him could help him break free from the Spirit Body Threads or enhance his resistance to such manipulation.

Certainly, the most direct approach would be to locate Loki's true form and launch a direct attack on the enemy, preventing him from concentrating on controlling Lugano's Spirit Body Threads.

Jenna caught Anthony's implication.

Don't hurry to rescue Lugano. Find Loki's true form while Loki hasn't detected us!

The two of them had posed as a couple and checked into Solow Motel's suite the previous night.

Once Loki was identified, dealing with a peculiar, insidious adversary with formidable abilities might be beyond their capacity. However, they could create a significant disturbance and "report" to the Fertility Order, responsible for local Beyonder matters. Lumian had already coordinated with Noelia in advance.

But in the next moment, she abandoned the idea. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Moreover, Loki was currently manipulating Spirit Body Threads.

How to locate Loki? Jenna pondered with a strong sense of urgency.

…

In the sealed waters, aboard the betrothal ship.

Lumian first witnessed the mountain-like azure waves surging, only to realize that they had frozen in the air, as if subjected to a sudden freeze. The surroundings emitted a violent aura, obliterating everything in its path.

The sea's fury? Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

Similarly, he couldn't fathom what had gone awry. It seemed that the Ring of the Sea Queen had only unlocked the first half of the seal and hadn't manifested the second half of its stealing effect.

Nevertheless, following the completion of the ring-making ritual, the ring was indeed placed on the dilapidated stone platform. Lumian and Juan Oro had retrieved it together.

Previously uncertain if the Ring of the Sea Queen had been swapped, Lumian now knew it hadn't. This was evident as the Ring of the Sea Queen had further opened the seal. A counterfeit ring, lacking the previous ritual, wouldn't exhibit a similar function.

Could it be that someone moved the Ring of the Sea Queen during the hour in the basement, preventing it from completing the eroding power's duration? Or perhaps the critical stone platform in the basement was destroyed in advance, hindering the completion of the ancestral ritual? Unlikely. How could the first scenario elude the attention of Juan Oro, me, and the sea spawn surveillance? The second scenario shouldn't be inconspicuous. It would undoubtedly be discovered by the sea spawn… As Lumian's thoughts raced, he suddenly felt a slight erosion from the destructive aura surrounding him.

His mind instantly connected to something.

Vaguely, Lumian "saw" the dark-blue seabed, nearly pitch-black. He

“saw” a peculiar object partially embedded in rocks and gravel.

The object was unnaturally massive, surpassing the Fertility Order’s cloister and the Governor of the Sea’s residence combined. It bore a silver-gray hue, with sleek lines resembling a colossal spindle missing its front segment. At that moment, the side of the object gleamed with a radiant starlight. Together, they appeared to form a circular, transparent door.

Through the door, Lumian “saw” a particular scene inside.

Silver-gray metal walls were densely covered with special holes, resembling hives.

In some nests, black foam bubbled as thin, bristle-covered Batings Black Insects crawled out. Some nests contained more than ten compartments, with a wrinkled Little Devil lying inside, seemingly deceased and disintegrating into various forms…

As this peculiar and horrifying scene etched into Lumian’s mind, he snapped out of his stupor. He couldn’t be bothered to ponder April Fool’s actions. He swiftly deliberated on how to prevent the sealed object from going berserk and breaking free entirely.

The extracted power has yet to cause any harm…

It appears to be suppressed by Juan Oro at the expense of his life…

If I can seize this window of opportunity to steal the released power and distribute it to everyone with a sea bloodline, there’s a chance of completing the sea sacrifice segment and allowing the sea prayer ritual to succeed…

Stealing…

In an instant, Lumian contemplated two solutions:

Firstly, he could immediately seek help from Mr. Fool, an expert in this area, with Termiboros as a precedent. Secondly, he could utilize the Lie earring, a mystical item that had gained the ability to steal others’ powers on the stone platform meant to honor the ancestors.

As for the second method, Lumian sensed a strong feeling of inevitability and an undeniable sense of coincidence.

Lie had recently acquired the ability to steal someone else's power—and here it was proving beneficial in a critical moment!

Without the luxury of time for careful analysis, Lumian made a swift decision.

Put aside coincidences and inevitability for now. Resolving the current predicament was the most pragmatic approach!

He then retrieved the silver Lie earring from his pocket.

Typically, such items couldn't be brought onto the betrothal ship—they would surely be discovered by the sea spawn. However, this time, Juan Oro had communicated with the sea spawn in advance, stating that he and his assistant intended to pose as deputy hosts and board the ship to guard against any potential mishaps.

The sea spawn placed their trust in the president of the Fisheries Guild more than anyone else while the traitors were still at large. Their intelligence wasn't particularly high, and they were especially protective of the sea prayer ritual.

Clutching the Lie earring, Lumian extended his spirituality.

He immediately perceived the surrounding starlight and sensed their presence.

Lumian subconsciously extended his hand and twisted his wrist.

A plethora of starlight cascaded down, rushing toward the Lie earring and enveloping him.

At that moment, a person materialized in front of him. She wore a black nun's uniform, her face expressing profound sorrow.

She appeared like a colossal whale suddenly leaping out of the sea without warning.

It's her? The source of Derangement? Lumian finally recollected

something he had forgotten.

There was indeed such a person on the ship!

In the next instant, he sensed the humanoid Sealed Artifact becoming unusually weighty, so heavy that the surrounding void slightly bent. It was so heavy that all the starlight surged toward her like the sea. The weight was so immense that the betrothal ship began to sink, and the nearby seawater was pushed aside.

Silently, Lumian witnessed the sea around him morphing into a translucent azure mountain peak, looming over them as they descended to the seabed. It resembled the walls of a deep well, and the well mouth, formed by these walls, grew more distant with each passing moment.

…

Four hours ago, at the edge of the foggy sea, Nolfi said to Charname, “You have to listen to me completely from now on. Otherwise, it will be very dangerous.”

“Sure.” Charname nodded. “But before that, we need to communicate openly.”

A smile gradually spread across his face.

Batna, who stood beside Nolfi, asked curiously, “What communication?”

Charname produced a metal canister and looked at Nolfi.

“This is an agent that can make people speak the truth. I want to know if you have a secret collaborator. If so, who is it? Don’t worry, it’s not poison.”

Charname unscrewed the lid and took a sip to demonstrate his sincerity.

Nolfi fell silent.

“If I don’t understand the corresponding details, it’ll be challenging

for me to follow your instructions," Charname began to instigate. "We're already here. We could enter those waters at any moment and destroy the underwater palace before the sea prayer ritual. Are you truly willing to give up?"

Nolfi remained silent for a moment before accepting the metal canister and taking a big gulp.

Charname's heart ached as he withdrew the bottle and patiently waited for the medicine to take effect.

Chapter 575 - 575 “Handover”

575 “Handover”

After a while, Charname reached his limit. He stared at Nolfi and questioned, “Do you have any secret collaborators?”

Nolfi gently nodded and admitted, “Yes.”

Batna and Charname anticipated this response, but it failed to dampen Charname’s excitement.

“Who is it?”

Nolfi hesitated for a moment before revealing, “It’s, it’s Juan Oro!”

Juan Oro? The president of the Fisheries Guild? Batna was caught off guard.

Charname shared the sentiment.

Could the spy be the boss? Despite his critique, he pressed on, “Are you sure it’s Juan Oro?”

While instructing Juan Oro to investigate the core members of the Fisheries Guild, Lumian, who had uncovered the Earth Mother Church’s true motives, sought similar information from Noelia of the Fertility Order, which included Juan Oro, the president.

Official reports indicated that Juan Oro’s health had been relatively stable. He had never faced serious illness or severe injury. Moreover, he hadn’t displayed any signs of losing control of his lizard form.

In essence, there was no indication that he had been possessed by Ultraman, a transmigrator.

Naturally, a definitive judgment couldn’t be made based solely on

this information. After all, when the original bodies of many Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members met unfortunate fates, there were no witnesses.

Despite growing older, Juan Oro's personality remained relatively unchanged, sans the increasingly stubborn streak and a penchant for returning to the sea.

Crucially, if Juan Oro were Ultraman, many of April Fool's disruptive actions during the sea prayer ritual would be unnecessary. It could be executed in a simpler and more covert manner.

Considering these factors, Charname had previously concluded that Juan Oro wasn't a key member of April Fool's.

Nolfi pursed her lips and disclosed, "It's him. I met him six months ago in Port Rayak."

Rayak, located north of the Dariège mountain range, served as a port under the jurisdiction of the Riston Province in the Intis Republic.

"Met before?" Charname blurted out. "Your eyes can deceive you. What you perceive doesn't necessarily reflect reality."

Unable to hold back his desire to confide, he continued, "Just like now. The me you see isn't equivalent to the real me. The difference is quite significant."

"Are you suggesting that the Juan Oro I encountered was an imposter?" Nolfi expressed disbelief. "But, he also demonstrated the ability to control the waves!"

Charname chuckled.

"Many Fisheries Guild committee members possess such abilities. What if one of them impersonated Juan Oro?"

"But, but it's too similar…" Nolfi fell into self-doubt.

Charname spoke casually, "Based on the intel we gathered, Juan Oro hasn't left Port Santa for nearly a decade.

“He’s the president of the Fisheries Guild. He frequents the association daily.”

While this information was used to persuade Nolfi, it wasn’t conclusive evidence. If Juan Oro were Ultraman, he could have enlisted Mad Lady’s help to travel to Port Rayak and return in less than two hours.

Under such circumstances, hardly anyone would notice his brief absence.

Nolfi fell silent, pondering, and muttered, “Then, then who could it be?”

“How would I know?” Charname expressed his criticism.

Appearing slightly awkward, he shifted the conversation.

“What kind of collaboration did the imposter Juan Oro seek with you? Do you have any means to obliterate the underwater palace and put an end to the sea prayer ritual once and for all?”

Nolfi’s body quivered, as if grappling with an innate urge.

After a brief pause, she struggled in response, “H-he’ll help me cover my tracks and disregard my existence. He’ll permit me to board a ship and infiltrate the sea sacrifice waters ahead of the Governor of the Sea’s vessel and conceal myself.

“Then, as the Governor of the Sea unveils the Ring of the Sea Queen and utters the words of the marriage proposal, I’ll deliver a line.

“My mother imparted that passage to me. It originated from her profound connection with the palace when she received the sea’s blessing. Its—its purpose is to trigger a self-destruct sequence within the palace.”

Nolfi’s words flowed more effortlessly, signifying that she had given up on resisting.

“Self-destruction sequence? Are you certain? Do you comprehend that language from God knows where?” Charname wore an

expression of skepticism.

“That’s what my mother told me.” Nolfi conveyed her lack of understanding of the language’s meaning.

Charname pressed on, “Does your mother comprehend that language?”

“She doesn’t, but she grasps its significance. Can you fathom it? It’s a form of spiritual communication,” Nolfi defended her mother with determination.

“Deceiving through soul-level communication isn’t out of the realm of possibility. Moreover, it’s always simpler to dupe the illiterate,” Charname muttered his internal grievances once again.

He furrowed his brow and inquired, “Did the imposter Juan Oro inform you that the sea prayer ritual failed last year?”

“No. If he had, I wouldn’t have chartered a boat at Port Santa,” Nolfi expressed her frustration on the matter.

Had she known from the beginning that last year’s sea prayer ritual had faltered, she would have anticipated heightened vigilance at Port Santa this year. Those attempting to rent a boat for a sea journey would undoubtedly be on a watch list.

Charname wore a perplexed expression.

“Wouldn’t that mean the imposter Juan Oro was expecting you to be apprehended by Lato Guiaro…”

Half a year ago, neither April Fool’s nor anyone with ulterior motives in Port Santa had foreseen Lumian’s arrival to investigate the sea prayer ritual. This suggested that Nolfi’s original role wasn’t designed to lure Lumian. It might have been part of April Fool’s initial plan until they reconsidered, opting to exploit the great adventurer’s investigations.

Under such circumstances, letting Nolfi be captured by Lato Guiaro was evidently not a mere oversight in April Fool’s plan, unless that was their intention all along.

Is Nolfi being thrown into the mix to confuse the Fisheries Guild and sow suspicion among other committee members against Juan Oro? A rift between them would hinder their cooperation. But this strategy doesn't seem cunning enough…

Is it an attempt to divert the Earth Mother Church's attention from this year's sea prayer ritual and redirect it towards Nolfi?

Or… or…

Franca, posing as Charname, had a guess.

Or perhaps, Lato Guiaro is a member of April Fool's!

The moment Nolfi arrived at Port Santa and tried to rent a boat, she was apprehended. Not only does Lato Guiaro hold complete sway over this "collaborator," but he also offers corresponding protection… Could it be that when the sea prayer ritual is on the brink of commencing, he will feign a lapse in vigilance, allowing Nolfi to escape successfully and secure a boat?

With this speculation in mind, the more Franca considered Lato Guiaro, the more something felt awry.

Whether it was the intel provided by the Knight of Swords or information from the authorities, a consistent message emerged:

Lato Guiaro had slept in separate rooms from his wife many years ago!

For transmigrators, after taking over the original owner's body, their greatest apprehension was being exposed by those around them through various details. Among these people, the ones most likely to unveil their disguises were their deeply connected parents and spouses who shared the same bed. In particular, the latter were privy to many interaction habits unknown to others. In such circumstances, opting to sleep in separate rooms was evidently a form of self-protection for transmigrators.

Initially, Franca had a fleeting suspicion when she came across this information, but she promptly dismissed it. Firstly, it wasn't uncommon for a middle-aged man and his wife to have separate

sleeping quarters. Lato Guiaro wasn't the sole Fisheries Guild committee member to adopt this practice. Secondly, Lato Guiaro had previously been forcibly controlled by the Knight of Swords and Lumian before being subjected to truth serum. During subsequent questioning, he displayed no indications of ties to April Fool's. He didn't even betray any signs of stifling laughter when discussing marrying the sea!

However, what if Lato Guiaro, who willingly transmitted Nolfi's information, had prepped in advance to elude the adventurer's detection and had cloaked a portion of his memories through Hypnosis?

The truth serum fundamentally heightened the inclination to share with others. Anything beyond the user's knowledge or comprehension remained veiled.

The pressing question now was: where did Lato Guiaro acquire Beyonders or items with similar capabilities through April Fool's channels?

Franca, increasingly convinced that Lato Guiaro was Ultraman, recalled a crucial detail: the current Governor of the Sea, Simon, belonged to the Guiaro family!

Previously, Juan Oro had heeded her advice to conduct a blood test on everyone, excluding Lumian, who boarded the ship. The aim was to confirm familial ties and unveil any outsiders attempting to infiltrate in disguise.

What if Simon Guiaro was Lato Guiaro in disguise?

This method would only affirm his identity!

…

On the betrothal ship, now resting on the seabed as if weighed down by a colossal boulder,

Simon Guiaro, positioned at the bow, appeared bewildered, his face a mixture of panic and confusion.

Yet, a faint curl formed at the corners of his mouth.

At that moment, the Governor of the Sea handover ritual from the previous night flashed in his mind.

Clad in a pristine blue suit, Simon Guiaro entered the hall, noting his predecessor, Governor of the Sea Miguel, clad in a retro white robe, observing him. Following the predetermined procedure, he uttered the prearranged words.

“I’ll leave the sea to you.” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

“It’s my honor,” Simon Guiaro responded solemnly as he advanced toward the other party.

Miguel extended his right hand, and Simon Guiaro reached out for a handshake. This gesture symbolized the departure of the former Governor of the Sea and the commencement of Simon Guiaro’s role as the present Governor of the Sea.

After the handshake, they passed each other by. As they turned their gazes in opposite directions, the corners of their lips subtly curled upwards.

Under the scrutiny of the numerous statues surrounding them, one advanced while the other exited the hall.

Chapter 576 - 576 Palace

576 Palace

The origin of this vortex was the humanoid Sealed Artifact they had “abducted” from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church!

After the exposure of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society’s internal affairs and the consecutive deaths of Loki and I Know Someone, one resurrected at the cost of a precious opportunity, while the other met a permanent end. They adjusted their initial sea sacrifice plan and activated a backup strategy to counter potential interference from the Research Society.

According to the revived Loki’s warning, Hela, the society’s vice president, had likely ascended to Sequence 4, reaching demigod status, and switched from the Death pathway to the Evernight pathway. Depending solely on Ultraman, Bard, and Mad Lady, their intricate plans would crumble before absolute strength.

Of course, they were confident if it were just Hela alone. Confidence wavered when considering President Gandalf, an enigma, and the other vice presidents, alongside the troublesome society members. Dealing with them now seemed an insurmountable challenge.

Starlight surged, revealing a sorrowful woman in black nun’s attire to everyone on the ship. Her presence felt magnetic, as if attempting to absorb everything around her.

It was akin to an unusually heavy iron ball falling from the center of a taut fishing net, dragging objects down and pulling the surrounding net with it. In these circumstances, previously still items naturally slipped away.

The most impacted was Juan Oro, with a potent sea bloodline and formidable sea power. Resisting the sea’s fury, he felt a spatial

inversion, as if his front and back had switched to up and down. Like a lost person above an abyss, he involuntarily “fell” to the bottom at an accelerated speed, where the woman in black nun’s attire awaited.

The deputy hosts, apart from Lumian, felt an unseen force tugging at them. Struggling, they staggered towards the humanoid Sealed Artifact. The sea’s power within them wavered, propelling them to the surface, revealing sparkling starry scales that hinted at losing control.

The Maidens of the Sea and the sailors on the ship struggled against the terrifying suction force, swaying on the spot. Some experienced their skin smoothing, others felt scales emerging in their flesh, and a few shifted their feet intermittently.

Lumian, though relatively unscathed, exerted considerable strength to resist the relentless pull.

As an Ascetic, he vaguely sensed the river of fate for everyone present surging toward the humanoid Sealed Artifact. Future tributaries narrowed and converged, leading inevitably to one possibility—death.

In that moment, Lumian grasped why the humanoid Sealed Artifact could use words to curse someone to death.

Lato Guiaro reached out, gripping the shipboard to resist the invisible pull from the woman.

His gaze scanned the people on the ship, then returned to the sea’s depths.

The ship descended, surrounded by a translucent wall of azure seawater. Sea creatures swam within, seemingly oblivious to the anomaly. In the distance, the spindle-shaped silver-gray object at the sea bottom, its tip embedded in rocks, came into view.

Lato Guiaro suppressed any sign of a smile.

He was nearing his destination.

The fools from the Fisheries Guild and the oblivious Earth Mother

Church might never comprehend what lay sealed at the bottom of the sea here. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

It wasn't a so-called "palace" but a spaceship!

It boasted a sci-fi dimension, housing advanced technology entwined with mystical Beyonder elements, forming the core of the entire spaceship.

The Ring of the Sea Queen, crafted by the sea spawn, served as the spacecraft's key. Only when the external seal weakened annually could it activate the spacecraft's internal power, merging the two to crack the core seal!

Lato Guiaro's gaze grew greedier as he stared at the faintly discernible silver-

gray behemoth.

His aim extended beyond temporary authority—to become the true Governor of the Sea and the spaceship's owner.

This would grant him immense power and the ability to accomplish unimaginable feats using the spaceship.

The azure sea, tinged with a hint of green, encircled the ship as if respectfully escorting them into the palace of the sea.

Seeing the sea's fury interrupted by the woman's sudden appearance, making her the most perilous element, Juan Oro wasted no time deepening his connection with the sea.

At that moment, he temporarily became the Governor of the Sea.

He resisted the terrifying suction force.

Abruptly, the humanoid Sealed Artifact "departed" from the ship, entering an empty darkness.

Resplendent stars flickered above, below, and to her left. Ahead stood Juan Oro, covered in starlight scales, deep-eyed, and with completely white hair.

Juan Oro raised his right hand, swiping his finger.

The “stars” plummeted with fiery tails, stirring up waves.

On the betrothal ship, everyone lost the momentum to rush to the same place. However, the power they used to resist the pull couldn’t be withdrawn, causing them to fall in the opposite direction.

Lato Guiaro feigned a similar state, crashing into the bow of the ship.

Seeing the silver-gray behemoth approaching, his heart leaped with joy. He was about to recite a phrase he didn’t comprehend but understood its purpose.

It was a coded order to completely open the spaceship’s door and establish an energy passageway, allowing him to enter under protection!

April Fool’s had been established for several years. Lato Guiaro’s decision to target the sea prayer ritual last year was influenced by the resolution of other voices from the Governor of the Sea, Maidens of the Sea, and certain sea spawn. This allowed them to understand the significance of the three crucial passages.

“I espouse thee, O sea…” was one of the passages, its true meaning being to inject energy into the created key and enter a password. Lato Guiaro was about to recite the second paragraph, which served as an order to initiate the spaceship.

Initially, he and Bard planned to deceive the foolish Nolfi, tricking her into reciting the words to avoid danger. Once the spaceship activated and left these waters, the sea prayer ritual would naturally conclude. There wouldn’t be any follow-up. Whether it involved self-destruction or not, it wasn’t a concern for her; she had achieved her essential goal.

However, the situation changed drastically, especially when the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society learned about the sea prayer ritual. Ultraman and Bard modified their plans, roping in external aid and reducing Nolfi’s role. Eventually, she became bait to lead troublemakers, represented by Lumian Lee and Hidden Blade.

Lato Guiaro opened his mouth and muttered the words.

As he finished speaking, he looked expectantly at the spaceship at the sea bottom.

How is this possible? Lato Guiaro's heart tightened, feeling a sudden sense of danger.

With a jolt, he saw everything disintegrate like a soap bubble, vanishing.

Lumian, transformed into Brian, had arrived near him at some point.

A dream!

He had been dreaming since Juan Oro pulled the humanoid Sealed Artifact into the Cosmic Void!

Hela! This name flashed through Lato Guiaro's mind.

He had paid attention to whether there were other ships lurking around!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, formless hands appeared around Lato Guiaro, pushing Lumian away.

Then, he saw a sailboat, clearly abandoned by time, outlined in the cavity surrounded by seawater beside the betrothal ship. Shadows clung to its canvas, and corpses stood on the observatory. The deck was littered with decaying or boneless undead creatures.

At the bow of the ship, a woman dressed as a black widow stood silently.

Hela!

…

Less than four hours ago, Franca, posing as Charname, signaled Nolfi and Batna to wait for further arrangements. Returning to the cabin, she entered the captain's cabin and addressed Hela, standing by the window.

“I’ve roughly guessed who Ultraman is, but I can’t be sure.”

“I guessed as much,” Hela replied, having overheard Franca and Nolfi’s conversation.

Franca gritted her teeth and said, “If it’s really Lato Guiaro, there will definitely be variables on the ship. I have to quickly summon Lumian’s messenger and inform him of our guess.”

“Let’s wait a little longer and time it well. We’ll send the message when the deputy hosts leave the Governor of the Sea’s residence but prior to boarding the ship,” Hela advised.

Franca confirmed succinctly, “Got it.”

She observed Hela, with her light-blond hair naturally cascading over her shoulders, and her dark eyes seemingly darker as she meticulously engraved patterns and arranged items on the captain’s cabin desk. With curiosity, she promptly inquired, “What’s this for?”

“Setting up a ritual to completely conceal the entire ship, preventing anyone from discovering it. It’s impossible for me to do this on my own. I can only achieve it through a deity’s help. And She should be very willing to help.”

Without hesitation, Hela took off the pure silver ring embedded with a black diamond from her right hand and placed it in the center of the altar.

…

On the betrothal ship, Lumian scrutinized Lato Guiaro, his body quivering with excitement.

He couldn’t comprehend how the other party had thwarted the sea prayer ritual once again. After all, he had been vigilantly observing this “old friend” of his and hadn’t witnessed any ring-switching.

Nonetheless, it didn’t matter. A well-devised plan was not a fragile creation that crumbled with the slightest mistake. It had to allow for enough margin for error!

Similarly, Lato Guiaro couldn’t fathom how Hela and the ship had approached without triggering his detection.

But it didn’t matter. If they hadn’t prepared for the interference of the Curly-

Haired Baboons Research Society and Hela, they wouldn’t have taken action this time.

Lato Guiaro’s eyes suddenly darkened, and specks of starlight illuminated.

The surrounding azure seawater froze once more.

Here, he surpassed the old-timer, Juan Oro. He had long amassed the power to temporarily become the Governor of the Sea!

In the upcoming period, he would ascend to become the god of these waters!

Chapter 577 - 577 Same Thoughts

577 Same Thoughts

The sky dimmed, and the sea approached nothingness. Illusory stars emerged among them, expanding like distant suns.

In the next moment, Lato Guiaro swiftly spoke a few words in ancient Hermes with a grave expression, “God says entering dreams is ineffective!”

With the reinforcement of the sea’s power, he neared the status of a Sequence 4 demigod. This allowed him to employ the Notary’s “God says” ability more precisely, diminishing Hela’s capacity to compel people into entering dreams.

Without this intervention, if Hela used her ability to forcefully restrain him without guiding him into an easily interruptible dream to gather information, breaking free from such a demigod’s dream would prove challenging in a short time. He would become like a feral dog under anesthesia, at Lumian Lee’s mercy.

The choice of “entering dreams is ineffective” over “sleeping is ineffective” was deliberate. The former was more specific and avoided potential ambiguity related to various abilities. Additionally, the Evernight pathway’s induced slumber originated from being forcefully drawn into a dream, not the other way around. Essentially, it was a dream, not sleep.

As Lato Guiaro pronounced the ancient Hermes phrase “entering dreams is ineffective,” his body still felt as weighty as the humanoid Sealed Artifact, though not as exaggerated.

This stirred massive waves in the surrounding seawater, attempting

to fill the void.

The sailboat manipulated by the undead creatures visibly swayed, nearly capsizing, severely impeding Hela's further movements.

Immediately after, Lato Guiaro reclined even further. A miniature, bright sun manifested in his eyes.

Simultaneously, the ethereal sky and the stars emerging from the sea emitted light of varying intensities. They interweaved, crafting a splendid and pure blazing pillar of light.

The majestic pillar of light descended, enveloping the front half of the sailboat, where Hela stood. It melted the undead creatures there as if they had evaporated, leaving no trace of darkness.

Hela became engulfed by the pillar of light.

This was the Light of Holiness, an ability of a Sequence 5 Priest of the Light of the Sun pathway. Despite not consuming a corresponding Sequence 4 potion and lacking demigod-level abilities after becoming the temporary Governor of the Sea, Lato Guiaro could elevate his acquired abilities to near Sequence 4.

Moreover, the Light of Holiness had undergone a mutation. It no longer emanated from a single sun. All the stars in the Cosmic Void contributed to its power. Coupled with the uniqueness of these waters, while not as potent as the Sequence 4 Flaring Sun of this pathway in purifying and destroying impure entities, its attack range and area of influence had significantly expanded.

Having transmigrated into a Child of the Sea and possessing substantial boons, Lato Guiaro had carefully considered the Sun pathway potion, believing it posed no risks and might integrate with his bloodline and original abilities, bringing about remarkable changes.

The outcome aligned with his expectations.

Suddenly, Lato Guiaro pivoted.

In the space behind him, Lumian's figure swiftly materialized.

He intended to exploit Lato Guiaro's engagement with Hela to "teleport" closer, followed by a Spell of Harrumph.

In Lato Guiaro's dark and profound eyes, resplendent stars reflected. Before Lumian could utter the harrumph, he plunged into the void, disappearing beneath the vast and distant cosmos.

He found an adversary like Lumian Lee repulsive. It wasn't that he couldn't be forcibly eliminated, but doing so might only exacerbate matters. He could potentially incur the indiscriminate wrath of a high-ranking individual. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

His decision was to leverage the authority of the Governor of the Sea to banish his foe into a self-created Cosmic Void, leaving him disoriented and unable to find an exit for the time being.

Once he assumed control of the spaceship and became the true Governor of the Sea, he planned to return and calmly resolve the issue.

At that precise moment, Juan Oro, entangled in a battle with the humanoid Sealed Artifact in his Cosmic Void, suddenly detected an anomaly.

His strength rapidly waned, and his dominion over the sea gradually diminished!

It seemed like his temporary authority as Governor of the Sea was being usurped.

In the blink of an eye, the tidal wave capable of shattering ships vanished from the Cosmic Void, followed by the illusory cosmos itself.

Juan Oro "reappeared" on the ship once more and "saw" the azure sea around him, towering like a mountain peak. He "saw" Simon Guiaro, closely linked to the sea.

"It's you!" His roar coincided with an involuntary bend, as if an invisible force pressed him down to the floor.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact had also returned, reinstating a

formidable weight.

Lato Guiaro gazed at her, his face covered in scales tinged with starlight. Then, he pointed at Hela's ship and spoke in a fluent language, "¥%…&*"

He didn't comprehend the exact meaning of the sentence, but he understood that it could prompt the other party to attack a designated target.

Although he harbored no fear of Hela in these waters, he remained vigilant of Gandalf and others who might be on the ship. Therefore, he had to give his utmost effort.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact's sorrow dissipated slightly, and it nodded blankly.

Her body pivoted towards the sailboat, which bobbed in the "underwater waves."

In an instant, Lato Guiaro bent down and grasped his throat.

Waa!

He ejected a slender, sticky blob of flesh.

The flesh contorted and writhed, swiftly taking on a human form.

Lato Guiaro promptly straightened up and seized the moment to command,

"Mad Lady, open the passageway to the spaceship!"

He wasn't concerned that Mad Lady might usurp the position of the Governor of the Sea and become the owner of the spaceship because she lacked the sea bloodline.

In the Cosmic Void crafted by Lato Guiaro, Lumian showed no urgency to find an exit or ascertain his coordinates. He simply "teleported" out.

Waa!

He ejected a slender, sticky blob of flesh.

The flesh contorted and writhed, swiftly taking on a human form.

…

Solow Motel, adjacent to Lumian's suite.

Recalling that Invisibility and Shadow Concealment were futile against Marionettists, Jenna pondered ways to locate Loki's true form.

Drawing on information from the Major Arcana card holders, she knew a Marionettist had to be within five meters of a target to transform individuals into marionettes. In other words, Loki was undoubtedly within a five-meter radius of Lugano.

Dammit, it's all walls. My sight is blocked. Otherwise, spotting Loki would be easier. At this hour, most guests are away, celebrating the sea prayer ritual…

Walls… If there are no walls…

An idea struck Jenna.

She glanced at Anthony and blurted out, "Did you bring enough money?"

"What money?" In a rare instance, Anthony couldn't decipher Jenna's true thoughts.

Only then did Jenna realize her words had been too abrupt.

"Money to compensate the motel owner.

"I plan to blow up the opposite side, diagonally opposite, and the rooms below. We confirmed they're empty. If anyone's there, it's Loki or his marionette!

"I'll place the detonators here. They affect rooms within a seven-meter radius. Lugano will likely be injured, but with the lady as a shield and being a Doctor, he can handle it.

“Right, the explosion will attract the Fertility Order’s combat nuns!”

Jenna’s train of thought gradually flowed smoothly as she spoke.

Are you a Hunter or a Demoness? Have you been influenced by Lumian… Anthony mused inwardly. “Do it. Time is running out. Lumian will cover the compensation; he’s loaded.”

Jenna hurriedly searched her backpack for detonators. Simultaneously, she noticed Anthony setting up a simple altar.

Her heart stirred as she asked, “Do you wish to contact Madam Justice, Madam Judgment, or Madam Magician?”

“Either one works,” Anthony said seriously as he prepared for the ritual. “Although Madam Magician won’t appear until the end to prevent Loki and his backer from noticing, she mentioned that at least two Major Arcana cards will arrive early and provide assistance at critical moments.”

“Got it.” Jenna had been uncertain about when to reach out for help and inform their Major Arcana cardholders, so she had been contemplating handling it herself.

Given Anthony’s readiness to risk the disapproval of the Major Arcana cardholders, Jenna was naturally inclined to opt for the safest choice.

As Jenna stacked the detonators and other explosives near the adjacent door, Anthony Reid erected a spiritual barrier and summoned Madam Magician’s messenger, briefing her on Loki’s appearance.

Then, he swiftly took cover in the bathroom attached to the master bedroom, about six to seven meters away from the impending explosion.

Boom!

A fierce explosion tore through the fifth floor of Sauron Motel. Glass shattered, debris scattered, and crimson flames engulfed the surroundings.

Chapter 578 - 578 Marionettes

578 Marionettes

578 Marionettes

Amidst the thunderous explosion, the partition separating the two suites and the one facing the corridor crumbled simultaneously, wreaking havoc on nearby furniture, the ceiling above, the floor beneath their feet, and the rooms opposite, swiftly enveloping them in a surging inferno.

Jenna hadn't utilized all the explosives; otherwise, the entire fifth and fourth floors of Solow Motel would have collapsed in unison. Nevertheless, a section of the roof gave way, and the floor was strewn in chaos. The epicenter of the blast unveiled the room below.

As the walls of the adjacent rooms succumbed to the onslaught, the bricks and wood propelled by the shockwave slammed into Giorgia, causing her back to buckle, and her head to split open, unleashing a flow of vivid red blood. Lugano snapped out of his intermittent thoughts and bodily stiffness, regaining his composure.

Subsequently, he experienced searing pain as the violent shockwave, mixed with flames and debris, hurled him through the air.

Had it not been for Giorgia shielding him and with his robust Planter's physique, he likely would have faced severe injuries, teetering on the brink of death. Limbs could have been severed, or vital points struck. Despite this, he ended up a battered mess, with a few bones broken, nearly succumbing to unconsciousness.

Ludwig had sought refuge under the dining table at some point—along with his food. With the advantage of distance and the makeshift "shield," he only bore the impact of the collapsed table.

Simultaneously, Jenna and Anthony burst out of the master bedroom washroom in their suite, their gazes fixed on the adjacent rooms where walls had crumbled, filling the air with swirling dust.

They vaguely discerned a figure.

The figure, bearing a striking resemblance to Rubió Paco, stood beside the upturned recliner.

Loki! Jenna wasted no time. She condensed a dark, illusory flame and sent it hurtling towards her target.

Behind her, Anthony Reid's eyes took on a golden tint, pupils dilating. He was poised to lock onto Loki, ready to unleash Frenzy—a technique that would plunge Loki into an emotionally and psychologically triggered state, rendering him incapable of rational thought and effective response.

Just as Anthony and Jenna prepared to strike, their vision darkened, and Loki vanished.

They found themselves in a void, no blue sky or white clouds above, no solid ground below—just darkness embellished with a myriad of stars.

Cosmic Void!

This semi-real, semi-false illusion was a creation achievable by a Child of the Sea at a certain level.

In the void, Jenna and Anthony beheld a widowed woman in a black bonnet with subtle wrinkles in front of them.

Martha!

The Paco family's matriarch, now a marionette under Loki's control, was hidden in the room where Loki manipulated the Spirit Body Threads.

With sufficient preparation time, how could Loki not perform with his marionettes? He had two puppets with Beyonder powers, and this was one of them. Another remained concealed, with the last slot

reserved for specific situations, adaptable at will. It could be switched once an enemy was under control.

When Loki posed as Rubió Paco, bringing Madam Martha to meet the Governor of the Sea, the family's matriarch was already a marionette. Thus, he had to ensure she stayed within his control range.

Lugano discerned Madam Martha's severe injuries primarily because a marionette was essentially comparable to a lifeless entity. A Marionettist's manipulation of her Spirit Body Threads allowed her to execute various actions, mimicking living characteristics. To a Sequence 8 Doctor, this appeared as grave injuries.

Had Lumian not infrequently observed others' luck without forming a habit, he would have realized that Madam Martha's fate was off. It was eerily still, resembling death.

Martha, a subtle smile on her face, lifted her right hand, a spectral green light coalescing at her fingertips.

The radiance morphed into a beam that streaked towards Jenna.

Having heard Lumian explain the sea bloodline's abilities, Jenna, at the sight of the spectral green light, rolled out of the Cosmic Void. Anthony followed suit. He refrained from using Frenzy on Martha since a marionette, essentially dead, wouldn't succumb to frenzy.

In the next moment, they both felt a weightiness, plummeting swiftly through the empty cosmos. They experienced the weightlessness Franca occasionally mentioned.

In the blink of an eye, Jenna and Anthony landed on the ground and steadied themselves, yet Martha was nowhere to be seen. The empty cosmos was shattering inch by inch.

They were still in Solow Motel, but they had descended from the fifth floor to the fourth.

This was because the mid- to low-level Cosmic Void resembled more of an illusion. There would be a barrier akin to a wall of spirituality around them. After falling into it, their bodies remained in reality. As they rolled and dodged, Martha nudged them forcefully with her

formless power, causing them to plunge into the floor cavity created by the explosives.

Jenna didn't hesitate. She sprinted up the wall, seized a crack, and flipped back to the fifth floor where the explosion had occurred. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

She saw Lugano tending to his injuries, and Loki and Madam Martha were absent from the room diagonally opposite.

Ludwig, who had hidden under the dining table, had vanished as well!

On Aquina Street, amid a lively folk celebration, Loki, having transformed into an inconspicuous passerby, carried Ludwig, who had "fallen asleep," through the crowd.

His other marionette, a Soul Assurer of the Evernight pathway, stayed concealed on the opposite side of Lumian's suite, ready to exert influence on the target.

Initially, Loki had dispatched his temporary marionette, Giorgia, to handle Lugano. He had manipulated the Doctor's Spirit Body Threads but refrained from deploying his more potent marionettes. It wasn't due to fear of alerting Ludwig, but rather a concern that an unseen adversary might be lurking in the shadows. After all, several lodgers in the motel hadn't left for the sea prayer ritual celebrations. A couple had returned before lunchtime next door, almost synchronizing with the target.

Moreover, a Marionettist's advancement ritual demanded a grand performance—a splendid and profound drama. Silent, unnoticed assassinations lacking a sufficient audience failed to meet the requirements.

Therefore, Loki intentionally singled out Lugano first. If there were no other foes lurking, it was akin to switching marionettes. If there were, he could draw them all to him and clandestinely manipulate the target with the other marionette nearby.

Aware that it was a sealed demigod, Loki knew its strength might be

limited, but its essence remained unchanged. It was impervious to many influences. However, he believed the Evernight pathway's forced sleep would still be effective. Since this sealed demigod could experience exhaustion, hunger, and the need for rest, food, and sleep like a true child, it implied that the seal had impacted corresponding characteristics, making him akin to an ordinary person in those aspects. At most, he would awaken faster and require less rest time.

A few seconds would be ample time for Loki to relocate and conceal himself with the target before attempting to manipulate the other party's Spirit Body Threads.

His two marionettes would act independently, confusing both enemies and the Earth Mother Church clergyman rushing over. They would lead them on a chase spanning about 100 to 200 meters, completing the corresponding performance.

As the time approached, the enemies would pinpoint his hiding spot through the marionettes' trajectory, joyfully anticipating an encounter. However, what awaited them would be a demigod-level marionette, leading to a terrifying and grim outcome.

Under the watchful eyes of the surrounding citizens, the magnificent play would conclude. Loki could consume the potion and ascend to Sequence 4, becoming a Bizarro Sorcerer!

…

On the betrothal ship, within Lato Guiaro's Cosmic Void.

This was fundamentally different from lower-middle-level abilities. It was both an illusory realm and an alternate space that could cause people to lose themselves and become abnormally fragile. It was akin to the Bottle of Fiction augmented with hallucinations.

The sticky blob of flesh Lumian had expelled squirmed rapidly, stretching and expanding into a discernible figure.

Cloaked in blood-red fabric with a matching hood obscuring its face in shadows, the figure revealed itself as none other than Mr. K of the Aurora Order.

To counter April Fool's machinations, Lumian had chosen the strategy of overwhelming force. He accomplished this with overt and imposing power, complemented by meticulous arrangements.

This plan allowed for a fair margin of error. Even if Lumian made a miscalculation, as long as April Fool's didn't have Angel-level helpers or three or more Saints, he could salvage the situation by retaining at least one or two key members.

To enhance their odds, Franca extended invitations to Hela and Gandalf. The Fertility Order also notified the higher-ups, ensuring the presence of a Saint overseeing Port Santa during the sea prayer ritual. The Tarot Club had two Major Arcana card holders positioned nearby. When April Fool's key members felt secure, Madam Magician, the Angel of Stars, would cross a long distance and descend as they prepared to depart!

For extra precaution, Lumian utilized Mr. K's finger to get him to Port Santa. Morphing with the Rose Bishop's power, he turned into a fleshy blob, and was concealed in Lumian's stomach to infiltrate the betrothal ship.

Mr. K glanced up, his eyes taking on an otherworldly illusion, as if concealing hidden doors.

Swiftly scanning the Cosmic Void, he identified an escape route.

"Follow me," he said to Lumian in a hoarse voice.

Nodding, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag, extracting the Flog boxing gloves and preparing to don them.

If you guys still have a backup plan or if a few powerhouses don't appear in time, I'll draw the attention of the evil gods and create chaos. We'll all face the danger together. Early exits? Forget about it!

Chapter 579 - 579 Energy Passage

579 Energy Passage

579 Energy Passage

On the betrothal boat, the humanoid Sealed Artifact ascended, her form suspended in the air. Striding through the atmosphere, she advanced toward the sailboat.

With the weight akin to a massive stone sphere, she manipulated the surrounding space, causing the target ship to shift automatically. The two factions drew near.

Concurrently, the vacant eyes of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, adorned in a black nun's attire, suddenly sparked with madness and chaos. Minute blood vessels protruded from the whites of its eyes, swiftly converging.

Accompanying her "affliction," the Maidens of the Sea, deputy hosts, and sailors on the betrothal ship, unaware of what transpired, stood motionless. Their expressions blank, eyes vacant, they succumbed to the same state as the humanoid Sealed Artifact.

In that moment, within the lingering Light of Holiness on the sailboat, which had traversed the void and approached the origin of Derangement, a light abruptly vanished, swallowed by the profound darkness.

In the darkness, a tranquil voice resonated, as if reciting a beautiful poem.

The expression of the humanoid Sealed Artifact softened significantly. The chaos and madness in her eyes dissipated, and her steps slowed.

The other individuals on the betrothal ship also entered a state of tranquility and drowsiness. Juan Oro felt the intangible force suppressing his body instantly dissipate.

Straightening up abruptly, he glared angrily at Simon Guiaro, positioned at the bow of the ship.

The president of the Fisheries Guild had a rough idea of the other party's identity. After all, not many comprehended the entire sea prayer ritual and knew the intricacies of the Ring of the Sea Queen. Combined with the fact that he hailed from the same family as Simon Guiaro, there was only one answer: Lato Guiaro!

"You traitor!" Even the distant chanting from the darkness couldn't pacify Juan Oro's anger. Although no longer the temporary Governor of the Sea, he still possessed considerable strength and could be deemed formidable at sea.

Splash!

The seawater at the bottom of the betrothal ship surged, part of it threatening to hurl everyone back to the surface, while others formed into towering peaks and crashed down on Lato Guiaro, masquerading as Simon Guiaro.

Lato abruptly pivoted, fixing his gaze on Juan Oro.

The azure "peak" poised to strike him froze in midair, its descent arrested. The water's attempt to push the betrothal ship out of this area also ceased its endeavors.

Reflected in Lato Guiaro's eyes was the figure of Juan Oro. The corners of his mouth curled up slightly as he stated a fact in a composed tone, "I am now the Governor of the Sea."

"Your abilities, especially those affecting these waters, are completely suppressed by me. They are useless!

The incantation from the darkness targeted the humanoid Sealed Artifact. Everything else was secondary. As the interim Governor of the Sea, Lato Guiaro couldn't help but be affected. However, thanks to the feedback from the sea and the sharing of the burden, it didn't

reach a profound level. He only became more tranquil, devoid of the desire for intense combat and direct killing.

Compared to Juan Oro, he was more concerned about whether Gandalf was on the sailboat besides Hela. He was more concerned about whether Mad Lady had opened the spaceship's passageway in time.

Juan Oro's heart sank as he witnessed the azure wave suspended in midair and Lato Guiaro, seemingly indifferent to him.

At that moment, Lato turned to Mad Lady, who had reverted to her human form, and addressed his companion, clad in an unusually flamboyant blood-

colored dress,

"Hurry up."

Mad Lady wasn't particularly tall, standing at over 1.6 meters. Her dark-blond hair was disheveled, influenced by the heaviness effect. None of it fluttered wantonly, pointing towards the seabed.

Her face concealed by pure flesh, making it challenging to discern her original appearance. She wore a ring on each hand.

On her left hand, there was a rose-gold ring embedded with a gem resembling crimson blood, and on her right, a simple, pure silver ring.

Mad Lady responded to Lato Guiaro with a smile, "So there are times when you're anxious."

Only then did she cast her gaze at the silver-gray behemoth embedded in the seabed not far away.

This lunatic… Lato Guiaro cursed inwardly.

I Know Someone had an extremely nasty personality and subsequently succumbed to mental illness due to other reasons and was admitted to an asylum, but in contrast, Mad Lady had displayed an abnormal state of mind from the very beginning. In the past, she

relied on I Know Someone's regular treatment to barely maintain her rationality, but now, she was becoming more and more insane.

Lato Guiaro took a deep breath, focusing on the peculiar sounds emanating from within the spaceship, resisting the distant chants echoing in the darkness.

Swiftly regaining his will to fight, he redirected his gaze to the sailboat, raising his right arm.

Upon witnessing this, Juan Oro's sense of despair deepened.

The white-haired old man clenched his fist, slamming it against his chest.

With a snap, his sternum broke, and his flesh tore open, releasing a torrent of blood that painted his body and the betrothal ship's deck red.

As life ebbed away, Juan Oro's white hair defied the heaviness effect, floating upwards.

His steps grew burdensome, each movement pressing down like a mountain on the ground.

Just as Lato Guiaro was poised to unleash the surrounding seawater, submerging the sailboat, he suddenly realized that the sea wasn't as obedient as before.

His Governor of the Sea position teetered on the brink of collapse.

Lato Guiaro turned his head once more, narrowing his eyes at Juan Oro, now covered in blood.

"Traitor, the sea will punish you!" Juan Oro's dark-green eyes focused, emitting a beam of blue light.

Accompanying this attack, he also intensified Lato Guiaro's heaviness, rendering him unable to move normally.

Two beams struck Lato Guiaro simultaneously, penetrating him and sinking into the sea.

Lato Guiaro's aura weakened slightly, but he wasn't as severely injured as Juan Oro believed.

Sunlight burst forth from the April Fool key member who used "Ultraman" as his code name, eradicating the residual corrosive powers and altering his body structure.

He lifted his chin slightly and uttered three words with strange pronunciations.

"%%&("

This was also the language employed to activate the spaceship. The implication was likely akin to granting access, equivalent to obtaining a certain amount of Governor of the Sea power without "melding" with the sea after opening a crack in the seal. Lato Guiaro's usage now was to help him seize all authority back from Juan Oro.

Hmph, foolish fellow, a group of fools. They hadn't studied the sounds heard during every sea sacrifice after so many years. They guarded the treasure but failed to excavate it!

Sacrificing your life? Sacrificing yourself?

It's meaningless!

Brains and strength are the foundation!

Juan Oro, still bleeding from his chest, was surprised to discover that the authority of the Governor of the Sea had shifted again. He stared at Lato Guiaro in confusion and horror, as if looking at a true devil.

Why? Why does the sea favor him more?

Why does the sea favor this traitor more?

At that moment, Mad Lady, on the other side of the bow, completed reciting the incoherent order.

The silver-gray behemoth at the bottom of the sea trembled slightly, increasing in magnitude, causing the entire seabed and all the

seawater to quake.

Inside, beams of pure light converged and shot out from the open entrance, landing at the edge of the betrothal ship, forming a transparent tunnel-like energy passageway.

Mad Lady didn't immediately leap into the pure light. This chapter is updated by nov(e)(l)biin.com

She understood that as the spaceship opened and activated further, the power accumulated in the depths of the seal would erupt. Everyone present, except the Governor of the Sea, would be torn apart.

But it didn't matter. She had a solution. The plain silver ring on her right hand, a gift from Bard, held the boon from honoring the ancestors. It could steal that power and distribute it, sharing the burden with all the Children of the Sea in Port Santa.

Of course, those present would receive more. Whether they could endure it or not depended on fate.

When the moment arrived, the Fisheries Guild members would believe the sea prayer ritual had succeeded, celebrating with joy. Little did they know that their "sea" had been stolen. The irony delighted Mad Lady.

Just as she was about to use the ring, a strong sense of Danger Premonition hit her.

In a flash, her figure vanished, reappearing a few steps away.

A shadow rose from the deck where she had stood, but it failed to envelop her.

Mad Lady then spotted Mr. K, draped in a blood-colored cloak and hood, and Lumian Lee, wearing the Lie earring but yet to revert to his original appearance.

…

Port Santa, Governor of the Sea's residence.

Bard stood by the window, gazing at the weeds outside. Silently calculating the time, he waited for the sea prayer ritual to progress.

If the sea's boon arrived with a delay and cheers erupted from Milo Village, he would openly leave this place, abandoning those who had been deceived.

When the moment arrived, anyone attempting to stop him would be torn apart by the power of the sea.

In the absence of a delayed collective boon, but with the sky and sea undergoing ominous changes, as if a catastrophe had struck, Bard could wait for the spaceship or Mad Lady to pick him up.

Of course, he wouldn't wait indefinitely. If there were no further developments from the sea prayer ritual within ten minutes, he would use his abilities to forcefully exit, shift positions, and conceal himself.

The early-stage abilities of the Marauder pathway weren't formidable. Bard had developed the habit of remaining vigilant as he advanced step by step.

As the weeds swayed in the bright sunlight and mild wind, Bard suddenly heard faint footsteps.

The sound emanated from the corridor outside, so subtle that it seemed almost like an illusion.

Chapter 580 - 580 Theft

580 Theft

580 Theft

Bard pivoted on his heels, fixing his eyes on the door.

A moment lingered in silence, but no one rapped against the wooden barrier. The once-present soft footsteps in the corridor had now faded into nothingness.

As a seasoned Beyonder, Bard dismissed the notion of hallucination. Returning to the servant's bed, he grabbed the backpack containing the spoils of the year, feigning an escape from the Governor of the Sea's residence before confirming the outcome of the sea prayer ritual.

Such precautions were only sensible. Not everyone placed full trust in Juan Oro's promises.

Bard slung the backpack over his shoulder and slyly opened the window, aiming to slip into the weeds below.

Suddenly, a figure, standing over a meter tall, emerged from the shadows in the corner. Its disproportionately large head and wrinkled face identified it as one of the Little Devils from the sea spawn.

The Little Devil gestured for Bard to close the glass window.

Just a bunch of creatures with low IQs, Bard thought, mocking them inwardly. Despite generations, they have yet to master Highlander and can only barely communicate like dogs…

Maintaining a timid expression, Bard closed the window.

Having tested the waters, he had a rough idea of where the sea

spawn responsible for monitoring him were hiding.

None of them appeared to have any connection to the soft footsteps echoing in the corridor, nor did they seem aware of them.

…

On the betrothal boat, Mad Lady, draped in a blood-colored dress with a portion of her face showing pure flesh and blood, instantly vanished upon spotting Mr. K and Lumian. She swiftly changed her position.

Simultaneously, a figure materialized behind and to her side—Lumian and Mr. K.

Employing their teleportation abilities, they blocked Mad Lady.

After Mad Lady shifted to the opposite side of the deck, the corners of her mouth, made of pure flesh and blood, curled up. Her grayish-green eyes gleamed with anticipation and excitement.

Come and attack me. Chase me. This way, no one will use the item that honored the ancestors to steal the deep power about to erupt. Let's see who reacts the fastest and 'teleports' out of these waters when the time comes!

For those unable to escape in time, they would undoubtedly be torn to pieces by the violent power, much like the fate that befell others on the ship!

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Mad Lady swiftly turned transparent, evading Lumian's crimson near-white fireballs and Mr. K's light-green wind blades.

Amidst the rumbling explosion, Ultraman Lato Guiaro was equally infuriated by Mad Lady's actions. If he were still the temporary and complete Governor of the Sea, he wouldn't fear the impact of the potent power in the spaceship. He hadn't intended to release Mad Lady and use Bard's silver ring.

However, the situation had changed. Juan Oro, burning his life and sacrificing flesh and blood, had contested him for the authority of the

Governor of the Sea.

In this state, Ultraman couldn't be certain if he was fully protected or if he would suffer some level of damage. Furthermore, not being a true demigod, he wasn't sure if he could withstand such a blow, one that left him only injured.

He couldn't help but urge Mad Lady with his eyes, but his companion was 'teleporting' and didn't have time to meet his gaze. The humanoid Sealed Artifact remained immersed in distant chanting in the darkness, oblivious to the impending sea's fury.

In the blink of an eye, corporeal starlight surged from the silver-gray behemoth at the bottom of the sea. It followed the condensed energy passageway and struck the betrothal ship with a tsunami-like sound, aiming to devour everything around it.

"Here it comes!" Mad Lady eagerly prepared for her extreme escape.

Confronted with the immense wave of starlight, Lumian's initial reaction was, Why is there another sea's fury?

Relying on his combat instincts, he immediately extended his spirituality to the Lie earring on his left ear, activating the high-level stealing power attached to the mystical item.

The starlight in his eyes took on a more tangible form, as if it had materialized.

Lumian's raised left hand subtly twisted his wrist.

The starlight surging from the silver-gray behemoth changed its course, rushing towards Lumian in waves, engulfing the sky and the sea.

This was even more terrifying than the previous sea's rage. At that moment, Lumian felt as if an apocalypse had descended.

He knew very well that he couldn't absorb all the stolen power himself. Doing so would render him unable to endure, crushed into rotten meat on the spot, indirectly aiding Termiboros in escaping His predicament. Fortunately, the stolen power linked to "honoring the

ancestors" had the ability to disperse the boon obtained and share it with everyone present and all those with the sea bloodlines in Port Santa, similar to every successful sea prayer ritual.

Though a bit greedy and reluctant, Lumian restrained himself. Without hesitation, he opened his left hand, seemingly grasping something, and twisted his wrist in the opposite direction.

Suddenly, the starlight that had darkened the sky and sea seemed to explode from within, scattering radiant starlight in every direction.

"The stars are raining…" Franca, concealed in the cabin on the sailboat, lamented.

She tightly clutched the Major Arcana card belonging to Judgment in her hand.

This wasn't a plea for Madam Judgment to descend directly. After all, this wasn't within her jurisdiction. It was to signal the location for the Major Arcana card holders who had already gathered nearby.

The beams of starlight left dazzling trails as they penetrated the bodies of those nearby and soared towards the bloodline connections farther away.

Lumian couldn't control this process, so he could only sense a portion of the starlight landing on him, causing his left chest to burn and corrode his flesh. Simultaneously, he witnessed a significant amount of starlight being drawn towards the potent sea bloodline and the authority of the Governor of the Sea, surging towards Ultraman and Juan Oro.

Undoubtedly, the humanoid Sealed Artifact received the most boons.

Like the eye of a vortex, she incessantly absorbed the surrounding starlight. Even the starlight heading towards Hela's sailboat diminished noticeably.

Ultraman experienced a replenishment, breaking free from his weakened state after Juan Oro's two beams, swiftly reclaiming the authority of the Governor of the Sea.

In his moment of elation, Ultraman Lato Guiaro felt intense surprise and confusion.

Why can Lumian Lee also steal the spacecraft's power?

That requires a high-level stealing ability…

Hasn't Bard's ring already been placed on the altar to honor the ancestors? And we've confirmed its corresponding effects.

Isn't the enchantment only possible once a year?

Amidst the echoing shock, Lato Guiaro couldn't be bothered to ponder the answer. His instinctive reaction was to swiftly crush Juan Oro. Otherwise, who knew what he, now strengthened, would do!

At that moment, Juan Oro felt a surge of regained strength. He observed his cracked chest and hazy flesh, now covered in starlight scales, with blood flowing out dyed in a resplendent "color."

Gazing at Lato Guiaro, he suddenly smiled—a smile of relief, yearning, and evident anger.

His body underwent a rapid transformation, eyes turning vertical, scales growing, and limbs thickening. In the span of a breath, he morphed into a humanoid lizard. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

During this process, Lato Guiaro condensed a dark-green light that descended on Juan Oro in a series of rays.

Juan Oro made no attempt to dodge; he endured it.

His aura rapidly weakened, precisely as he desired.

His lizard-like form faded, growing increasingly translucent, as if condensed from starlight.

Then, Juan Oro merged into the void representing the sea and spoke to Lato Guiaro with a complex expression, "I've returned to the sea. Come quickly too…"

At the last few words, Juan Oro gnashed his teeth, not concealing his deep-

seated hatred.

Every Child of the Sea was prepared to return to the sea, and Juan Oro was no exception. However, he hadn't anticipated doing so in this manner.

His sole desire now was for Lato Guiaro to join him!

Juan Oro's figure dissipated, becoming entirely a part of the "sea."

Ultraman Lato Guiaro immediately sensed a growing animosity between his title as Governor of the Sea and the waters. The harmony that once existed had given way to a resistance emanating from the Power of the Sea.

This indicated that the Governor of the Sea authority he had acquired wouldn't be complete for some time.

Damned old fellow! Lato Guiaro cursed inwardly, but he remained composed.

He had realized that Hela was the sole demigod on the sailboat. The humanoid Sealed Artifact, having received a boon from the sea and escaped the influence of the chanting, was sufficient to hold off the opposition for a while.

Though uncertain why Gandalf and the others hadn't arrived, Ultraman Lato Guiaro welcomed this turn of events.

It allowed him to focus on dealing with Lumian Lee and his ally!

Despite being an incomplete Governor of the Sea, he possessed enough strength to control adversaries below the demigod level briefly and gain entry to the spaceship first. Moreover, Mad Lady's assistance added to his advantage.

Having received the sea's boon, Lumian contemplated his newfound capabilities.

Now, I seem qualified to contend for the authority of the Governor of the Sea…

Although I can't be considered to possess the sea bloodline and only wield some power of the sea lasting a week, far inferior to Ultraman, my fake level is high enough. I'm at the Angel level!

Just as Ultraman Lato Guiaro and Lumian responded swiftly, the gray sky suddenly brightened.

Thick bluish-green vines descended, shrouding the two ships and the surrounding area in torrential rain. Soon, they intertwined into a giant-like forest growing above the sea.

Chapter 581 - 581 Gap

581 Gap

Upon witnessing the descent of the thick bluish-green vines, Lumian marveled as if a real carriage could traverse their expanse. It felt like a journey back to a scene from a few years ago when he would listen to his sister's nighttime fairy tales.

The dazzling, dreamlike scene and boundless imagination seemed to materialize in reality at that very moment.

Ultraman Lato Guiaro sensed imminent danger.

The individual capable of such an effect couldn't be a Low- or Mid-Sequence Beyonder; they had to be a Saint who had unlocked the door to godhood. Perhaps even beyond Sequence 4!

Another formidable demigod had entered the scene!

Who could it be? Where had they emerged from?

This certainly wasn't Gandalf. While others might be unaware, Loki had thoroughly investigated the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, discovering he was a Beyonder of the Warrior pathway—a Warrior who had a penchant for research and mysticism.

In the blink of an eye, Lato Guiaro spotted a black shadow racing down the thick green vines. It was an enormous pumpkin drawn by numerous gray mice.

A hole atop the orange pumpkin resembled a coach. Within, a vaguely discernible woman sat, adorned in a purple robe, with crystalline heels adorning her feet.

A pumpkin coach, mice-drawn carriage, crystal heels—WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT!? Who could it be? Lato Guiaro's pupils dilated, and he couldn't help but inwardly curse with the same words he used most frequently before transmigration.

Isn't that Cinderella?

Did Roselle actually pen this fairy tale? Why hadn't it gained traction, remaining unknown to most?

For a fleeting moment, Lato Guiaro grappled with uncertainty, unable to discern whether the newcomer was a demigod aligned with another faction or a concealed powerhouse within the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.

Regaining his composure, he cursed his ill fortune and prepared himself for a confrontation with the enigmatic demigod.

Luckily, being the Governor of the Sea, he could at least temporarily impede the other party in these aquatic surroundings.

Prior to the impending clash, Ultraman Lato Guiaro turned his gaze towards Mad Lady.

He didn't have time to speak, but his eyes expressed the unspoken message: "Hurry up! No time for games!"

Mad Lady swiftly grasped Ultraman's urgency and, with a blink, positioned herself at the entrance of the energy passageway. However, instead of materializing precisely there, she outlined her presence.

This decision was prompted by the sudden appearance of Mr. K and Lumian, seemingly having "teleported" nearby, with their sights set on the energy passageway's entrance.

Splash!

Whether from the imposing weight of the humanoid Sealed Artifact or Lato Guiaro raising his right arm, conjuring a mountainous azure wave, the water around the cave visibly swayed, teetering on the brink of collapse.

In that critical moment, “Cinderella,” seated in the pumpkin carriage, pushed open the door and rose to her feet.

She extended her arms, and a massive iron-black cross materialized behind her.

The weight of the cross proved challenging for “Cinderella” to bear, as though it carried the concentrated sins of the entire world.

A cross? Ultraman Lato Guiaro was caught off guard as an empty room materialized before him.

Within the room, candlelight flickered, revealing a long table adorned with flesh and blood.

On either side of the table, three obscure figures hunched over, gnawing and feasting on a gruesome banquet.

Abruptly, the three figures turned their heads, fixing their gaze upon Lato Guiaro.

He stood frozen, as if their gazes had penetrated his deepest secrets, dismantling them into the essential components of spirit and flesh.

A chilling sensation surged from the depths of Lato Guiaro’s heart, immediately alerting him to an intense and terrifying malice.

However, the source of this malevolence wasn’t the newly arrived demigod but the silver-gray behemoth trapped at the sea’s bottom—the very spaceship Lato Guiaro sought to obtain harbored ill intentions towards him!

In the blink of an eye, the silver-gray behemoth retracted its authority.

Lato Guiaro’s status as the Governor of the Sea plummeted. Despite gaining a new boon, he couldn’t ascend to the demigod level.

The spaceship had betrayed him.

This treachery was a result of the spell Cinderella had just unleashed —the Feast of Betrayal. Its purpose was to temporarily awaken or

bestow intelligence on a target item, compelling it to commit an act of “betrayal.” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Lato Guiaro had seamlessly melded with the surrounding waters, harnessing the authority of the Governor of the Sea on a temporary basis. The spaceship now stood as an entity he had yet to fully master.

Objects beyond his full control were prime candidates for betrayal!

“Cinderella” astutely sensed this vulnerability, initiating the Feast of Betrayal from the outset.

Simultaneously, the sealed environment provided the perfect conditions for her to unleash this magic—an act she might not dare attempt elsewhere.

In that moment, surprise and fear flooded Lato Guiaro. It felt as though a frigid cascade had drenched him, sending shivers through his entire being.

Since merging with the sea and gaining the Governor of the Sea’s authority, Lato Guiaro had believed that ordinary Sequence 4 or even Sequence 3 demigods—commonly referred to as Saints—couldn’t swiftly overpower him in this realm.

This belief created a sense of parity, but it hinged on him remaining within the waters to fully unleash his strength.

Yet, “Cinderella’s” mere magic stripped him of the Governor of the Sea’s authority, relegating him to Sequence 5. Without godhood, mastery over the sea slipped from his grasp.

Despite being a dual Sequence 5 of a potion and boon system with numerous unique abilities, Lato Guiaro harbored doubts about facing a genuine demigod.

A demigod temporarily shaped from an item proves fragile in the face of a true demigod. So brittle that, once targeted, they wouldn’t endure even a breath… Lato Guiaro grappled with the stark realization of the fragility of a true demigod and sank into deep regret and despair.

At that moment, the silver-gray behemoth trembled violently, causing the energy passageway at the entrance to flicker and cast its luminance upon Lato Guiaro.

With a whoosh, Lato Guiaro found himself hurtling uncontrollably into the spaceship through the pure energy conduit.

This was a facet of the spaceship's calculated "betrayal," aiming to turn the recent "authority holder" into a mere nutritive substrate within a petri dish!

Lato Guiaro was initially startled, but soon a wave of joy washed over him.

An opportunity had presented itself!

It allowed him to infiltrate the spaceship, wrest control, and set it in motion

—a chance to escape!

His misfortune and despair had suddenly transformed into this golden opportunity!

Observing the unfolding scene, Lumian wasted no time. He employed Spirit World Traversal once more, reaching the entrance of the energy passageway. Stepping in, he soared into the silver-gray behemoth.

Mad Lady trailed closely behind, and Mr. K didn't intervene; instead, he followed suit.

…

Milo Village, Governor of the Sea's residence.

Bard, strategizing an escape plan, was abruptly interrupted by cheers.

Cheers… Bard's heart stirred, prompting him to dash out of the servant's room towards the nearest glass window overlooking the dock. There, he observed the gathered villagers.

Not a single sea spawn hindered the former Governor of the Sea during this process.

Many villagers raised their hands, seemingly welcoming the waves. As they praised the sea, an almost invisible glow descended, dispersing like water to different individuals.

The nearby children joyfully shouted, “The sea prayer ritual has succeeded! The sea prayer ritual has succeeded!”

That’s right, it has “succeeded”… Bard smiled.

From the looks of it, Ultraman and Mad Lady have succeeded.

The April Fool’s key member adjusted the collar of his crisp white shirt and hoisted a brown backpack onto his shoulders. With an unabashed smile, he strolled into the grand hall of the Governor of the Sea’s residence, smoothly making his way out.

This time, he encountered no resistance. The guards stationed at the entrance knelt on the ground, expressing gratitude to the sea for its boon.

Bard took a detour to the docks, reveling in the genuine joy and praise for the sea. Every time he heard the townsfolk praising the sea and witnessed genuine smiles, his spirits lifted.

These fools!

They are treating a catastrophe as a cause for celebration!

This is a prank, a prank on everyone in Port Santa… Bard closed his eyes in satisfaction and weaved through the crowd, heading deeper into Milo Village. His ultimate destination: the peaks of the Pyraez mountain range.

As a former Swindler, Bard orchestrated the sea prayer ritual operation, serving as its main planner. The plan’s success naturally brought him satisfaction.

Crucially, despite taking the most pivotal step in the entire operation, he assumed the least risk and exposure, avoiding direct

confrontations.

Navigating through the mix of ancient and modern structures in Milo Village, Bard's brow furrowed slightly.

A sense of unease settled upon him.

Per the initial plan, Ultraman—unhindered by strong opposition—was supposed to use the second command to open the energy passageway. Relying on his temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea, he aimed to secure safety for himself and Mad Lady within him. Seizing the opportunity, he planned to eliminate all present and inflict severe injuries on potential demigod adversaries.

If powerhouses like Hela emerged and proved resistant to the humanoid Sealed Artifact, Ultraman—the interim Governor of the Sea—would leap into action, confronting the formidable foes head-on. Mad Lady, wielding her enchanted ring, would harness the potent energy emanating from the spaceship, transforming it into a boon for everyone present, extending its reach to all the Children of the Sea in Port Santa's vicinity. This strategic move not only allowed them to sidestep danger but also granted them access to the spaceship, enabling them to activate it.

Despite the fact that the people had already received the sea's boon and a few minutes had elapsed, the spaceship remained dormant, and the sky showed no signs of change.

What had transpired during this interval?

With this lingering question, Bard hastened his steps.

Tap, tap, tap.

Behind him, the faint sound of light footsteps echoed once again.

Chapter 582 - 582 Efficient Person-Locator

582 Efficient Person-Locator

582 Efficient Person-Locator

Port Santa, in the city.

Loki and the unconscious Ludwig had already sought refuge in an apartment that Loki had rented many days earlier. He began manipulating the sealed demigod's Spirit Body Threads.

As for his two marionettes, they lurked within a radius of 100 to 200 meters, with Loki as the center, blending in with the various celebrating and passing crowds. They waited to be discovered by Lumian Lee's teammates and the clergyman of the Church of Earth Mother.

This was unavoidable. A Marionettist couldn't allow a marionette to wield their Faceless powers. As for the mystical item of the Seer pathway, it was in the possession of either Bard or Mad Lady.

In the partially destroyed suite of Solow Motel, Jenna and Anthony encountered Noelia, the combat nun, and her teammates, who had hurried over.

Before this, Lumian had covertly introduced the disguised Jenna and Anthony to Noelia. Hence, the nuns didn't unnecessarily question or apprehend them; they only carefully confirmed each other's identities.

"Rubió Paco is a fake. He's disguised by a Marionettist. He has captured Louis Berry's godson. He possesses two marionettes. One is Madame Martha, the Paco family's matriarch. The other's identity

and abilities are unknown," Jenna recounted the recent events.

She assumed that the Fertility Order was familiar with the term Marionettist and didn't delve into unnecessary explanations. Their primary duty was to guard against the Intis Republic to the north, and many official Beyonders of Bureau 8 in the Intis Republic belonged to the Seer pathway. The two sides must have had considerable interactions.

Marionettist… Indeed, upon hearing the Sequence name, Noelia frowned slightly. Is Intis sending spies to disrupt the sea prayer ritual?

"That's a traitor from Intis's Bureau 8," Jenna explained, her allegiance to Intis stronger than Lumian's.

Noelia understood that time was of the essence and she couldn't discuss unrelated matters. She asked the key question, "Why seize Louis Berry's godson? Is he held as a hostage, or does he possess some extraordinary significance?"

Jenna thought for a moment and revealed the limited information she had just learned.

"It's a sealed demigod, a creature.

"Loki will need substantial time to transform him into a marionette, not just a matter of minutes."

A demigod? A sealed demigod? That child with the insatiable appetite is a sealed demigod? Noelia's mouth hung open in surprise and astonishment. She almost questioned the reliability of her own ears.

The supposed godson of the adventurer Louis Berry is, in fact, a sealed demigod creature?

What's his backstory? Why is he wandering around with a sealed demigod creature?

Moreover, there's talk of a humanoid Sealed Artifact, rumored to be at Grade 1, that recently surfaced in Port Santa. It's on par with a

sealed demigod creature. Despite extensive searching, no one has been able to locate it.

If not for the disparities in appearance, gender, and age, Noelia might have suspected Ludwig to be the humanoid Sealed Artifact that the Eternal Blazing Sun Church had “misplaced.”

Now, an absurd idea echoed in her mind.

Is it the current trend to stroll around with sealed demigod creatures?

Regaining her composure, Noelia promptly addressed her team members, “Cemilie, quickly return to the Order and inform the dean. Ask her to deploy all available personnel to the city. Locate them as soon as possible. Yes, Madam Martha or Louis Berry’s godson, Ludwig.

“After finding them, unless the situation is exceptionally urgent, refrain from acting recklessly. Report first and await assistance.” This chapter is updat𝑒d by nov(e)(l)biin.com

Considering that the Marionettist had likely altered his appearance and height, and the identity and appearance of his other marionette were unknown, Noelia concentrated her search on Madam Martha, who had become a marionette, and Ludwig, who had been abducted.

“Yes, Captain!” In a bid to save time, the brown-haired Cemilie darted through the shattered glass window. Utilizing the stone bricks and wood protruding from the outer wall, she leaped from the fifth floor to the street.

The dean Noelia referred to was the head of the local cloister, the clergyman overseeing the Fertility Order in Port Santa—the Fertility Order’s headquarters in Torres, the capital of Gaia Province.

Just as Cemilie took a few steps and was about to explore the nearby streets, Jenna, Anthony, Noelia, and the others witnessed a massive bird soaring through the air.

The bird’s body was grayish-black, its feathers were tough and lacked softness. Its eyes appeared to be adorned with two rubies.

The grayish-black bird flapped its wings and glided to the collapsed fifth-

floor outer wall of Solow Motel.

Only then did Jenna and Anthony realize that the grayish-black bird was sculpted from stone. It was weighty, substantial, and unyielding, yet it emanated a vibrant vitality.

Perched on the back of the lifelike grayish-black bird was a woman in a brown clergyman's robe. She wore a nun's wimple with wheat patterns and seemed to be in her thirties, but she exuded a maternal aura, as if she had nurtured many children.

The brown-haired, brown-eyed, mature, and stunning clergyman turned her gaze to Noelia and succinctly stated, "Details."

Noelia swiftly echoed Jenna's words. She positioned herself with a slight spread of her legs and raised her hands.

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!"

The clergyman was none other than the archbishop of the Church of Earth Mother's Gaia diocese, Agrippina.

Agrippina nodded gently and uttered, "I know Martha from the Paco family. I didn't expect her to meet such a fate. Sigh, may the Earth Mother embrace her soul, and may the flower symbolizing her bloom again next spring."

The archbishop delicately shifted her right foot, conveying a signal to the massive bird sculpted from grayish-black stone.

The stone bird, pulsating with vitality, flapped its wings and ascended dozens of meters into the air.

Agrippina extended her right hand and scattered a handful of dark-black seeds the size of rice grains.

With a flutter, the port's white-headed seabirds flocked in, covering the sky. Each one gripped a seed in its beak and circled around.

They formed a circle within a 300-meter radius.

Observing this spectacle, the jubilant citizens of Port Santa, assuming that the seabirds had joined in the celebration of the successful sea prayer ritual, erupted in cheers of delight.

After two to three minutes, a solitary combat nun spotted Madam Martha. The marionette was concealed on the other side of Aquina Street.

Upon receiving the information, Agrippina turned her head and fixed her gaze into the air.

Soon, the white-headed seabirds released the rice-sized seeds from their beaks.

Agrippina withdrew her gaze and folded her arms across her chest.

Each seed that touched the ground instantly sprouted and grew rapidly, morphing into thick dark-green vines.

Simultaneously, Jenna, Anthony, Noelia, and the others, who were scouring the street for Ludwig and Loki, witnessed the sky darken, as if night had prematurely descended or a colossal creature had eclipsed the sunlight.

Vaguely, they sensed the presence of a massive pitch-black wing covered in a membrane, casting an illusory aura.

In the next moment, a crimson full moon ascended from the night, hanging high in the sky. It seemed as though a tall, slender figure was slowly advancing.

Crimson moonlight bathed the area surrounded by the dark-green vines, captivating all the citizens like statues.

Nourished by the moonlight, the dark-green vines swiftly expanded, swiftly encasing the streets around Aquina Street in a “forest.”

Dark-red flowers blossomed in the “forest,” densely clustered and ubiquitous.

The flowers emitted a faint, sweet fragrance that intermingled, gradually intensifying the scent.

Upon inhaling this fragrance, the residents of Port Santa, as well as the rats and bedbugs in the corresponding area, entered a stupor, swaying and collapsing to the ground.

Dammit! Jenna understood that Archbishop Agrippina of the Church of Earth Mother was employing indiscriminate tactics to influence the area, aiming to locate and control Loki, but she still cursed internally.

This gaseous anesthetic jogged unpleasant memories.

In the past, she had nearly fallen victim to a similar gas used by that Bliss Society pervert.

Yet now, in the diffusing gas with a noticeable difference in smell but a similar effect, her head started to spin, and her body felt uneasy.

The same was true for Anthony and Noelia. One bore dragon-like scales on his skin, while the other held her breath.

At that moment, three white-headed seabirds descended from the sky, each clutching a metallic bottle, circling Jenna and the others.

Noelia glanced at Archbishop Agrippina, who was hovering in midair, and received a nod. Without hesitation, she took the bottle from a white-headed seabird's claw and gulped it down.

She swiftly regained consciousness, no longer affected by the gaseous anesthetic.

Observing this, Jenna and Anthony accepted the metal bottles and consumed the sour agent.

They no longer felt dizzy and weak.

The three white-headed seabirds weakly ascended again, landing by the roadside one after another, and dozed off.

In the area surrounded by the dark-green vine "forest," only a marionette remained standing at that moment, impervious to the

gaseous anesthetic. Its presence was immediately exposed.

In the apartment he had pre-rented, Loki was taken aback to discover that controlling the sealed demigod's Spirit Body Threads was much more challenging than he had anticipated.

This wasn't a problem that could be resolved in ten minutes. According to his initial estimate, it would take at least an hour!

Given the time, the Church of Earth Mother could turn these streets upside down!

As the gaseous anesthetic created by the dark-green vines and dark-red flowers permeated the room, Loki's initial impulse was to craft an air straw nearly 30 meters long and extend it high into the air to breathe fresh air. However, he quickly dismissed the idea.

Perhaps the demigod of the Church of Earth Mother was waiting to detect similar traces to pinpoint his location!

Moreover, Loki had realized that there was more than one demigod in the sky!

If there was only one, he could rely on Sealed Artifacts, bestowments, and other means to concentrate. He could conceal himself in the shadows and contend with them to see if he could endure until the marionette-making process was completed. However, there were at least two demigods observing.

More importantly, he could endure for about ten minutes, but an hour was out of the question!

After weighing the pros and cons, Loki abandoned his original plan to conduct the ritual today and advance to Sequence 4 Bizarro Sorcerer.

In any case, as long as he could restrain the sealed demigod, he could find another opportunity in the future. There was no need for him to perform today!

Why would it take an hour or more? Is this a demigod's Spirit Body Threads? Amidst Loki's confusion, he didn't intend to recall the two marionettes. He planned on using the mystical item to "teleport"

away.

From his pocket, he retrieved a bracelet made of different-colored gems.

Just as Loki was about to activate a diamond, he heard the sound of swallowing.

Loki instinctively lowered his head and looked into his arms, realizing that Ludwig had awakened at some point.

With a sincere expression, the boy spoke with a hint of eagerness, “I’m hungry…”

Chapter 583 - 583 Celestial Worthy's Revelation

583 Celestial Worthy's Revelation

583 Celestial Worthy's Revelation

Around the betrothal ship and sailboat, thick turquoise vines cascaded from the sky. They entwined, creating a "road" leading to various destinations.

"Cinderella" returned to the orange-yellow pumpkin coach, pulled by gray mice swiftly descending through the vines. They approached the energy passageway formed by pure light, as if about to enter the silver-gray behemoth embedded in the seabed.

Abruptly, the mischief of gray mice came to a halt. "Cinderella," adorned in a purple robe, wore a solemn expression, purple spots dancing in her pupils.

"Cinderella" sensed an unusually perilous presence deep within the silver-

gray behemoth. It remained motionless, as if in a deep slumber or long dead. However, in either case, her intuition warned her not to approach, lest she suffer severe corruption or similar effects.

Staring at the energy passageway where Lumian and company had vanished, she deliberated for a few seconds before shifting her focus to the sailboat.

With Mr. Fool's seal on the Seven of Wands and the sealed evil god's angel, he didn't have to worry about the problem that even she had to be wary of—as long as he didn't directly see those things, hear its voice, or enter the core area.

As for the other one, he seemed to be a Shepherd, so he didn't mind being even crazier.

"Cinderella" observed the mast and shipboard of the sailboat cracking under the terrifying suction of the humanoid Sealed Artifact's "heaviness" characteristic. She was ready to make her move when she retrieved a Roselle chess piece from her dark-purple coin bag and hurled it at the target in the black nun's attire.

Amidst the howling wind, the Queen chess piece soared towards the humanoid Sealed Artifact, accompanied by various miscellaneous items.

As it descended, the humanoid Sealed Artifact's steps towards the sailboat slowed, as if time itself was warping around her.

This was one of the spells of "Cinderella"—the Chessboard of Ages.

It had the power to decelerate the target as if they had entered an area where time moved at a different speed.

Seizing the opportunity presented by the sluggish movement, "Cinderella" closed her eyes and transformed into a humanoid phantom, collapsing into the invisible coffin.

The eyelids of the humanoid Sealed Artifact drooped, as if she might succumb to sleep at any moment.

Sleeping Beauty magic!

Witnessing this, Hela, aboard the sailboat, once again activated the Evernight pathway's ability to forcibly drag people into a dream.

Although the notarization wouldn't immediately expire with Ultraman Lato Guiaro's loss of the Governor of the Sea authority, it would still last until the end. However, the ability to be invalidated by notarization wasn't entirely ineffective. It would only be weakened, and its effects would be significantly reduced. Now, the humanoid Sealed Artifact was already fatigued, swaying and on the verge of falling asleep.

In this state, entering a dream was undoubtedly much easier.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact, donned in a black nun's attire, finally closed her eyes and plunged into a deep slumber. She entered a somewhat sorrowful dream, causing her face to contort slightly as she frowned.

On the sailboat, a dense darkness surged once more, enveloping the humanoid Sealed Artifact, resonating with a distant voice that brought peace and tranquility.

It was akin to a mother reciting a poem to lull her child to sleep, fostering a serene slumber.

The humanoid Sealed Artifact, still in her black nun's attire, hovered in midair with her eyes tightly shut. She descended slowly, landing gracefully on the deck of the sailboat.

Her brows gradually relaxed, her face softened, and crystalline water droplets formed at the corners of her eyes.

The Maidens of the Sea, deputy hosts, and sailors, blessed by the sea and adorned with starlight scales, swiftly settled in the darkness, succumbing to sleep amidst the enchanting chanting.

Franca, within the sail cabin, was taken aback by the unfolding battle.

I-isn't that Cinderella?

I-isn't that Jack and the Beanstalk?

What manner of magic is this?

I-isn't that Sleeping Beauty?

Who is this? Have I arrived in a fairyland?

I have to admit, it's truly dreamlike…

Two demigods working together are undoubtedly formidable. They swiftly subdued the humanoid Sealed Artifact…

I also wish to become a demigod!

A Demoness demigod would do too…

Regaining her senses, Franca concealed herself and sprinted out of the sailboat. Utilizing her run-up and an Assassin's Feather Fall, she elegantly leaped onto the betrothal ship, intending to approach the energy passageway at the bow.

…

Within the silver-gray behemoth.

After Lumian traversed the energy passageway, he found himself not in the metal beehive he had seen before.

Walking on the silvery-white metal floor, he noticed a hall dozens of meters long and 20 to 30 meters wide ahead.

In the middle of the hall, Ultraman Lato Guiaro stood, donning Simon Guiaro's face, and shouted in delight, "*(… ¥ #)"

This represented the first half of the command to activate the spaceship by entering the password and gaining access.

However, there was no response from the spaceship.

Crap… It still holds ill intentions towards me and isn't willing to grant access… This malice stems from that demigod's ability. It shouldn't last long. As long as I can stall for time, I should be able to regain control… Can the humanoid Sealed Artifact hold back two demigods? Or can I rely on the spaceship's internal layout to play "hide and seek?" A series of thoughts raced through Ultraman's anxious mind.

At that moment, through the translucent metal wall to the side of the hall, he saw "Cinderella" in the pumpkin coach come to a halt near the energy passageway, seemingly apprehensive about something.

As expected!

She doesn't dare to enter!

Exhilaration surged from Ultraman Lato Guiaro's heart.

Before the mission kicked off, Loki had set up an altar and sought guidance from Celestial Worthy through divination. The response he got was: Contains a high risk from high-ranking individuals. Avoidable by entering the spaceship.

Loki decoded this as a warning about Hela and Gandalf from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, as well as the Saint from the Church of Earth Mother overlooking Port Santa. These high-ranking figures were the primary threats. However, if he could take the reins of the mystical sci-fi spaceship first, he believed he could outmaneuver these formidable opponents.

Now, Lato Guiaro noticed that even without absolute control of the spaceship, the new demigod hesitated, as if haunted by an unseen fear.

Facing something capable of unsettling a demigod left Lato Guiaro uneasy. However, armed with the spaceship's command and password, he could soon turn potential threats to his advantage. There was no need for fear.

As Lumian was on the brink of "teleporting" behind Ultraman Lato Guiaro, they both heard a metallic clang.

A silver metal door descended, sealing off the hall's entrance and exit completely.

The walls, ceiling, and floor transformed as metal surfaces shifted and revealed dark pipe openings.

Out gushed cerulean-blue gas.

Poison gas! Lato Guiaro's heart raced as he grasped the situation.

The spaceship, still imbued with malice, not only resisted control but also emanated lethal intent, seeking to eliminate him before its animosity subsided.

The magic of the demigod outside is malicious indeed!

Lumian perceived this as an instinctive strike from the silver-gray behemoth against intruders. Swiftly, he tapped into the power of the

sea, aiming to invoke the temporary authority of the Governor of the Sea to counter the threat.

He could sense that Ultraman had lost the Governor of the Sea's position after the attack from the "Cinderella" demigod, with no immediate prospect of reclaiming it. With no contenders for the authority, Lumian anticipated an easy acquisition.

Yet, the "waters" resisted, refusing Lumian the temporary position of Governor of the Sea.

Its malice seemed directed at anyone attempting control!

Undeterred, Lumian shifted his focus back to Ultraman Lato Guiaro, a crucial member of April Fool's.

Lato Guiaro's heart stirred as he shouted, "Do you want to fight here? If we don't break out and waste no time, we'll all die!"

In this dire moment, a plan to escape the hall and relocate became paramount. The malice wouldn't linger for long.

Seek vengeance in a safe space. If we perish here, who will assist in eliminating the others?

Lumian nonchalantly flexed his wrists, donning the Flog boxing gloves, and grinned, stating,

"I don't care about my own death. All that matters now is one thing: Ending you!"

As the words left his lips, crimson flames, bordering on white, erupted from his entire being, as if he were cloaked in a fiery shroud.

…

Not far from Lumian and Lato Guiaro, Mad Lady and Mr. K found themselves in the beehive-like metal room, unable to enter the hall ahead.

Surveying the surroundings, Mr. K's gaze swept across the incubating Batings Black Insect, Little Devils, and other creatures. He nodded in

satisfaction.

“It’s indeed the power of an evil god, spawn of an evil god. Well done, Lumian! Well done! This is all part of God’s arrangement!”

Amidst the hoarse voice, the Aurora Order Oracle turned his gaze back to Mad Lady. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Mad Lady wasn’t intimidated. Instead, she applauded in agreement with Mr. K.

She spoke as if they were on different frequencies.

“That’s right, it’s cool, right? This is a spaceship!”

In the next moment, Mad Lady and Mr. K vanished simultaneously and reappeared behind where the other party had been standing, as if they had negotiated a position switch beforehand.

Chapter 584 - 584 “Helper”

584 “Helper”

584 “Helper”

Inside the underwater spaceship, in the silvery hall.

Lumian, enveloped by crimson, nearly white flames, transformed into a fireball and hurtled towards Ultraman Lato Guiaro.

The key April Fool’s member remained composed. Holding his breath, he thrust forward with his left palm.

Lumian instantly sensed an invisible force resisting him, causing the blazing crimson fireball to decelerate abruptly, akin to a trapped insect in transparent amber.

Seizing the moment, Lato Guiaro raised his right hand, clenching it into a fist.

A ball of blazing white pure sunlight condensed and compressed, swiftly morphing into a thick, formidable laser aimed at Lumian, fused with the crimson near-white fireball.

This ability resulted from merging the Sun pathway and the Sea boon, utilizing the power of the Sun pathway to propel the Sea boon’s Weakening Ray. Though it no longer altered the target’s body gradually, causing various negative symptoms, its penetration and melting effects were significantly enhanced, capable of directly injuring or even killing the target.

In the enclosed, poisonous gas-filled environment with the constant threat of malice, Lato Guiaro sought to conclude the battle swiftly rather than wait for Lumian Lee to weaken gradually. Thus, he opted for Sun Ray instead of Weakening Ray.

At laser speed, Sun Ray struck the crimson fireball, melting a substantial hole into it.

The fireball lost its structural integrity and exploded, scattering like rain.

Yet, Lumian was nowhere among the remnants. He seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Simultaneously, behind Ultraman Lato Guiaro, Lumian's figure, adorned with the Lie earring, swiftly materialized.

Initially, Lumian transformed into a fireball and soared towards Lato Guiaro, intending to force him into using Beyonder powers and counterattack. This allowed him to "fix" his original location, not shifting prematurely, creating an opportunity to "teleport" behind the target in the fireball state for a surprise attack.

Having faced bestowed of the sea before, Lumian was aware of Lato Guiaro's ability to manipulate the weight or floatation of objects using the power of the land and stars, altering their speed.

To successfully use Spirit World Traversal in his fireball form, Lumian borrowed Lie's Flame Controlling ability.

As his figure materialized, he promptly opened his mouth and hissed at Ultraman Lato Guiaro, less than two meters away.

"Ha!"

A pale-yellow beam, resembling gas, shot towards the April Fool's key member.

Lato Guiaro didn't have time to turn around, sensing the impending danger through his fate perception, a skill obtained from deciphering the Language of the Stars Beyonder powers.

Specks of starlight emerged in his eyes. He identified several "passages" in the silver hall suffused with cerulean-blue gasses, imperceptible to ordinary humans. Hastily choosing one, he pounced over—a navigating ability bestowed by the sea.

Simultaneously, uncertain of evading the attack from behind, Lato Guiaro infused the surroundings with layers of golden light.

This was the Purification Halo of a Sequence 5 Priest of Light of the Sun pathway.

Amidst the harrumph, the pale-yellow beam swept past Lato Guiaro's back, hidden somewhere in the void.

The key member of April Fool's, code name Ultraman, fainted, but his momentum remained. He continued into the illusory passageway, hidden from ordinary eyes, traversing space and dimensions.

Lumian, within two meters, couldn't "teleport" away in time and was enveloped by the Purification Halo.

His heart ached, as if something sought to tear his body apart and crawl out.

Faintly, he heard the illusory ravings of the entity known as Inevitability, Mr. Fool, or both. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Unclear but unsettling, they made Lumian's brain feel pulled out of his skull by an invisible hand.

Despite an Ascetic's endurance, Lumian couldn't help but groan in pain. Collapsing to the ground, he curled up.

A similar experience occurred in his Cordu dream, a reaction after being sprinkled by Valentine's holy water. Lato Guiaro's Purification Halo, an advanced Sun Halo, had evolved from harmless to a partial Sun Holy Water effect. It could exorcize evil spirits and purify the evil power within a target's body.

As Lato Guiaro lay unconscious, the Purification Halo vanished in a flash, only partially dispelling the poisonous gas.

Similarly, the unconscious Lato Guiaro couldn't progress through the illusory passageway, breaking free and falling three to four meters in front of Lumian. The impact left him in pain, slowly regaining consciousness.

At that moment, Lumian slowly recovered from the intense pain induced by the Purification Halo.

Lato Guiaro, just waking up and still uncertain of the situation, instinctively re-entered the illusory passageway to increase the distance between himself and Lumian Lee. This move aimed to avoid another strike from Lumian's Psychic Piercing-like ability or any other unforeseen attacks.

Upon crawling back to the hall through the exit of the illusory passageway, Lumian had already raised his head and regained his composure, though his forehead was soaked in cold sweat.

Observing this, Lato Guiaro felt neither pity, disappointment, nor regret. Instead, he was pleasantly surprised.

It's effective!

Purification Halo is effective against Lumian Lee!

After confirming that the adventurer Louis Berry was indeed Lumian Lee, Lato Guiaro contemplated how to strategize if he were to engage in a battle with him.

It was simple with the authority of the Governor of the Sea. He could repeatedly cast the other party into the Cosmic Void, making him lose himself over and over. Without the Governor of the Sea's authority, he had to consider how to exploit Lumian Lee's vulnerabilities.

Lumian Lee's unique characteristics were clear—possessing a sealing power of the same origin as the Celestial Worthy, with a high-ranking creature sealed within him.

Beyonders in this state often had false high-level statuses and enjoyed numerous conveniences, but they were susceptible to the Sun pathway's abilities.

Lato Guiaro wasn't certain about the effectiveness of the Sun Halo, Cleave of Purification, and other abilities, nor was he sure of the Purification Halo's potency. The only certainty lay in the effectiveness of the Sun Holy Water he could create.

Therefore, if the Purification Halo proved ineffective against Lumian Lee, he would swiftly produce Sun Holy Water and sprinkle it on him.

Looking at Lumian, Lato Guiaro smiled, once again dyeing the surroundings golden as layer after layer spread out.

This sealed environment was ideal for employing the Purification Halo. It denied Lumian Lee a chance to distance himself or “teleport” closer. The entire hall was essentially enveloped by the Purification Halo!

Furthermore, in the spaceship, there was no fear of Lumian Lee losing control and transforming into a monster, unleashing the high-level creature within his body. An intruder at this level would inevitably trigger the spaceship’s automatic defense system targeting him. Lato Guiaro might then seize control of the spaceship!

Didn’t your sister tell you something Emperor Roselle once said?

If you rely on something to obtain specialness and become stronger, you will definitely be punished because of it!

Upon seeing the surging layers of golden light, Lumian raised his right hand and vanished.

Where is he “teleporting” to this time? As long as he’s in the hall, he can’t avoid the Purification Halo! Lato Guiaro watched the other party’s struggle with certainty and a smile.

Unless Lumian Lee chose to leave the hall, it was impossible for him not to be affected by the Purification Halo. With the spaceship’s barrier raised, the door closed, and the place sealed, and using the unique power of the sea, if he wanted to “teleport” out, he had to first destroy the surrounding walls or metal doors to create an exit.

This was also advantageous for Lato Guiaro.

No one knew what the spaceship would unleash in this hall next!

Layer after layer of Purification Halos rapidly “drowned” Lumian’s original location, but nothing happened. Lumian’s figure was nowhere to be seen in the silver-white hall.

Wh… Lato Guiaro's pupils constricted.

Where did Lumian Lee go?

Is his teleportation ability unaffected by the sealed interior of the spaceship?

Or has he gone into hiding?

Lato Guiaro's heart skipped a beat; he extended his right hand and pulled.

The void in the hall stirred, unveiling an abnormal area nestled between two walls, flanked by dark holes emitting cerulean-blue gas.

Creating an unstable space and hiding inside to avoid the Purification Halo? That's true. The Purification Halo's purpose is to exorcize, purify, warm, and provide courage. Without substantial offensive power, it can't destroy the structure of that space… Lumian Lee actually possesses such an ability. Lato Guiaro quickly saw through Lumian's trick. Calmly raising his right hand, he condensed a penetrating dark-green ray.

Simultaneously, he harnessed his basic control over gravity to pull at the fabricated space.

The dark-green ray struck the spot where it had been pulled, instantly penetrating and obliterating the structure.

Silently shattered, the dark-green ray continued forward, hitting a silver-

white full-body armor with its back turned to Lato Guiaro.

The dark-green ray, now weakened to a certain extent, faded away.

The silver-white full-body armor suddenly pivoted, and two pairs of eyes appeared to lock onto Lato Guiaro from within the vacant helmet.

In the next moment, it charged toward the April Fool's key member, forming a broadsword of light in its hand.

As the silver-white full-body armor rushed out, Lumian's figure emerged in the corner.

He had utilized the terrain there to arrange a simple Bottle of Fiction, using the large hole that emitted poisonous gas as a symbolic window. His goal was twofold: first, to evade the influence of the Purification Halo, and second, to position the Pride Armor with its back facing Lato Guiaro.

Yes, this cursed armor might only target someone standing a certain distance behind it, but it might not. What if that person not only stood more than ten meters behind it but also attempted to attack it by stabbing it in the back?

The answer was clear!

Now, Lumian had a capable helper unafraid of the Purification Halo.

Chapter 585 - 585 Repeated “Betrayal”

585 Repeated “Betrayal”

585 Repeated “Betrayal”

At a distance of just over ten meters, the Pride Armor covered the ground in two powerful strides, positioning itself in front of Ultraman Lato Guiaro. A broadsword, condensed from radiant light, slashed down with deadly precision.

Lato Guiaro had a momentary opportunity to utilize his Navigator ability, escape through hidden passageways in the void and dimensions, and evade the impending attack. However, the sight of the silver-white full-body armor caught him off guard; he hadn’t anticipated an aggressive move before Lumian Lee could even don the armor!

This momentary hesitation cost him. The silver-white full-body armor, resembling a relentless steam locomotive, collided with him before he could vanish into the hidden tunnel. By then, it was too late, and the looming threat of being cleaved apart became imminent—a grim fate of upper and lower halves separated.

In this dire circumstance, he was no earthworm with regenerative abilities; his fate seemed sealed.

Facing the approaching silver-white armor and its raised broadsword of light, scales formed from starlight protruded from various parts of Lato Guiaro’s body.

The air quivered around him, as if an invisible tide were roaring, amplifying the tension.

As per the intel gathered on April Fool's, the power derived from the "sea" without the Governor of the Sea's authority corresponded to a Sequence 5 at most, known as Tidal Scholar—the current state of Lato Guiaro.

Enveloped by an ethereal tide, Lato Guiaro swung his fist, resembling a colossal wave crashing down.

Thud!

His formidable punch collided with the side of the broadsword of light, forcefully diverting its trajectory.

Simultaneously, Lumian materialized behind him, left hand raised.

Indeed! I knew you'd seize this chance to teleport behind me and launch a sneak attack! Lato Guiaro was ready. Evading the silver-white full-body armor's second strike, he imbued the surroundings in a warm golden hue.

Purification Halo!

As layers of golden light surged towards Lumian, he deftly twisted his left wrist.

Even before that, the silver-white Lie earring on his left earlobe emitted a subtle glow, revealing various blobs of light and colors on Ultraman's body. Among them, a golden ball emitted a warm glow—the representation of the Purification Halo ability.

With a flick of his wrist, the golden ball detached from Ultraman's body and swiftly flew to Lumian.

Steal!

Lumian successfully "stole" Ultraman's Purification Halo!

The number of times the Ring of the Sea Queen could "steal" after the standard process remained unknown to Lumian. However, he was certain that Lie's "stealing" effect persisted for half a month, unaffected by his "stealing" of the sea's power.

After Lie's transformation on the ancestral altar in Milo Village, Lumian diligently experimented with Steal, honing his proficiency to ensure he could deploy it effectively in critical moments. Thus, he had become relatively adept at stealing and dispersing the power of the sea.

Simultaneously, Ultraman's Beyonder powers of the Sun pathway were well-

documented by the Tarot Club's information, making Lumian fully aware of what he aimed to Steal this time. With a solid foundation in mysticism knowledge, he felt prepared.

However, the challenge lay in his lack of experience "stealing" a Priest of Light's abilities. He feared that locating the corresponding symbols for Purification Halo and Holy Water Creation might take too long, leaving him vulnerable to Lato Guiaro's attacks.

Anticipating the Pride Armor's frontal assault, Lumian strategically teleported four to five meters behind Lato Guiaro, enticing him to use Purification Halo.

The distinction between the abilities Lumian used and those he refrained from was clear, providing him with instant recognition.

Before initiating the teleport, he activated the Lie earring and raised his left hand, ensuring he didn't linger in the dangerous area for a moment longer.

The Purification Halo, despite being "stolen," persisted and continued to surge, enveloping Lumian.

However, it didn't reach its intended target. A formidable formless force emanated from Lumian's body, acting as a barrier that thwarted the encroaching halo.

The power of the sea!

You have the power of the sea, and so do I!

During the Steal process, Lumian had reserved a portion of the sea's power for himself. Although not on par with Ultraman's, it proved

sufficient to repel the Purification Halo for a brief moment.

Calmly activating the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian vanished from the warm golden area, teleporting to the farthest corner from Lato Guiaro.

The Purification Halo pursued relentlessly, but it reached its limit, visibly weakening.

Reacting swiftly, Lumian harnessed the power of the sea once more, watching as the warm golden barrier rapidly dissipated.

Meanwhile, Lato Guiaro's heart skipped a beat.

Intuitively, he sensed the loss of his Purification Halo ability, suspecting it had been "stolen"!

Lumian Lee's item with the Steal effect is still operational? Lato Guiaro couldn't dwell on it. Dodging the Pride Armor's heavy slashes, he fell to the ground, rolling to evade the attacks. Facing the sky, he raised his right hand, clenching it.

Pure and blazing sunlight condensed rapidly, forming a thick ray that struck the silver-white armor's chest.

It paused momentarily, unable to penetrate, only burning and dissolving into tottering black marks.

Witnessing this and recognizing Lumian Lee as his adversary, Ultraman Lato Guiaro entertained the idea of fleeing. He decided to disengage, cease the confrontation, and seek an escape route.

At that critical moment, instead of launching a barrage of attacks, the Pride Armor shifted its focus toward Lumian.

Lumian, who had previously utilized Spirit World Traversal on the betrothal ship and within the hall, found himself affected once again by the Purification Halo. His spirituality teetered on the brink of depletion, leaving him visibly fatigued and weakened.

Any ordinary human in such a state near the Pride Armor would face indiscriminate attacks.

Wh… Lato Guiaro keenly perceived the shift in dynamics.

Though unaware of the specifics, he sensed an advantage.

Rising abruptly, he directed his attention to Lumian.

In the next instant, the Pride Armor raised its radiant broadsword and charged towards Lumian.

Haha, your Sealed Artifact has betrayed you! Lato Guiaro mocked internally as he closed in, intending to exploit the silver-white full-body armor's attack to create Sun Holy Water and sprinkle it on Lumian Lee.

Undeterred, Lumian took a resolute step forward.

Tapping into his Ascetic powers, the accumulated strength and spirituality within his body surged, replenishing his drained spirit. His body underwent a sudden transformation, growing by seven to eight centimeters and bulking up by two sizes, causing his loosely fitting deputy host's robe to strain.

The advancing Pride Armor abruptly halted, pivoting to face Lato Guiaro, who had followed closely.

Lato Guiaro's pupils contracted, and an instant heaviness enveloped his body, bringing him to a natural halt.

Simultaneously, his gaze locked onto the unusually tall figure of Lumian Lee.

The enemy teleported right in front of him, mere inches away. Their eyes locked, reflecting each other in an intense confrontation.

With a swift whoosh, Lumian swung his right hand, adorned with the Flog boxing gloves, through the air.

Lato Guiaro's "heavy" state naturally exerted a suction force on his surroundings, a downgraded version of the humanoid Sealed Artifact's characteristic. Lumian's punch encountered no repulsion; instead, it accelerated towards its target.

Unperturbed by the close-range attacks, Lato Guiaro harbored concerns about Lumian's Psychic Piercing ability. Unable to dodge or employ other abilities in time, he unleashed a retaliatory fist resembling a thousand tonnes of seawater, causing the sound of surging tides to echo.

Bang! Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Lato Guiaro blocked Lumian's attack and swiftly rolled to the side, evading a surprise assault from the Pride Armor.

At that moment, a strong sense of greed surged within him, overshadowing his initial plan to escape.

Seizing the opportunity, Lumian retreated and retrieved a black bone flute with red holes from his Traveler's Bag.

Symphony of Hatred!

While Lato Guiaro resisted the Pride Armor, Lumian brought the flute to his mouth and played a sharp, intense melody.

Lato Guiaro's mind buzzed, freezing him in place.

Bright blood oozed from the cracks in the starlight scales on his body.

Emotional Detonation!

Pfft! The Pride Armor struck Lato Guiaro's shoulder, splintering scales, bone, and flesh.

Closing the distance with two brisk strides, Lumian approached the nearly collapsed Lato Guiaro, his face twisted in pain. He raised the black bone flute in his hand.

In the moment that Lato Guiaro used the pain from the Pride Armor strike to break free from the detonated emotions, he witnessed Lumian Lee thrusting the bone flute toward him with a fierce expression.

Pfft!

The bone flute effortlessly pierced Lato Guiaro's left eye, akin to cutting through butter.

The eyeball of April Fool's key member exploded, and a gruesome mix of blood and other fluids streamed out through the gaps in the black bone flute.

Even if the Symphony of Hatred only struck an ordinary part, it was tantamount to hitting a vital point. Striking a true vital point meant either instant death or a prolonged period of social death. In this case, Lato Guiaro's left eye and brain were undeniably vital points.

His remaining eye widened and protruded, life force rapidly draining as he slumped to the ground.

Lumian seized Ultraman's neck, lifting him up. Releasing his right hand, which held the black bone flute, he delivered a heavy slap to Lato Guiaro's face. With a fierce expression, he growled in Intisian, "Did you go to Cordu Village to confirm the situation?"

Chapter 586 - 586 Gnawing

586 Gnawing

Ultraman Lato Guiaro, his life rapidly slipping away, fell into a daze. Even his thoughts of self-preservation became blurred.

In the haze, he vaguely saw Juan Oro, the wrinkled old man, standing in the middle of the sea, waving with a mix of joy and mockery.

At that moment, Lumian's voice resonated from the horizon, faint, ethereal, and elusive.

"Did you go to Cordu Village to confirm the situation?"

Cordu Village? The time Mad Lady and I visited Nolfi, and went there just out of convenience? Lato Guiaro lost focus, and Lumian's figure reflected in his closed eye.

With the intent to annoy, he spoke his last words in Highlander.

"I've been there… with Mad Lady. It was… simply for fun… but Loki… seemed to… have ulterior…"

Don't you want to know what happened back then? Sure, I'll speak in Highlander. It's your problem if you don't understand. Your fault for not taking this language seriously in the past!

Lato Guiaro knew his actions wouldn't practically affect Lumian Lee. This was because Lumian Lee could find someone to perform dream divination, hypnosis, or undergo a real dream when he returned. From there, he could memorize the Highlander he spoke and find a way to translate it into Intisian or ancient Feysac.

Still, he just wanted to annoy the other party. About to die, he

couldn't care less about future developments.

"Motives…" Lato Guiaro uttered his last word as his life extinguished.

In that final moment, he seemed to hear Lumian Lee speaking to him in Highlander, "Thank you."

The "thank you" flowed naturally, carrying a strong sense of mockery.

Ultraman Lato Guiaro's intact eye bulged even more, his expression freezing on his face, his breath coming to a complete halt.

Lumian's right hand gripped the Symphony of Hatred once more. Simultaneously, he released his left hand, watching Ultraman's key member's head rapidly detach from the black bone flute with red holes, revealing a sinister and deep blood-red hole.

Thud!

Ultraman collapsed to the ground. The sticky blood on the black bone flute coalesced and dripped onto his body.

After the person who had backstabbed it suffered a fatal wound, Pride Armor stopped moving and stood nearby, resembling an ordinary silver-white full-

body armor without any special characteristics.

Loki had ulterior motives? A motive other than helping the Sinners and pulling a prank? As Lumian recalled Ultraman's confession before his death, he bent down to check what items this April Fool's key member had.

Of course, he didn't hold much hope. Ultraman Lato Guiaro had disguised himself as the incoming Governor of the Sea, Simon Guiaro, to board the betrothal ship. Carrying no items, his belongings should have been handed over to Mad Lady, allowing her to conceal them using flesh and blood magic in his stomach. However, Mad Lady clearly didn't have the time or opportunity to return the items to Ultraman.

This was one of the reasons why Lumian could eliminate Ultraman, a powerful dual pathway Beyonder, in such a short period.

If Juan Oro hadn't tipped off the sea spawn on the bridal boat beforehand, Lumian would've been forced to stash his Traveler's Bag temporarily with Mr. K.

At that moment, Lumian observed a strange transformation in the corpse of Ultraman Lato Guiaro.

It swiftly faded, morphing into a semi-translucent, semi-flesh state. Then, like it was being disintegrated by countless tiny creatures, it oozed into the silver metal floor and gradually vanished.

Soon, the remnants of flesh, starlight, and sun-like fragments left by Lato Guiaro were absorbed by the silver metallic floor, leaving behind only a Sea Governor ceremonial robe, shrouded in a faint grayish-white fog.

In the blink of an eye, the grayish-white fog got absorbed by the silver metallic floor and the mysterious structure.

Lumian attempted unsuccessfully to "reclaim" something.

Is this what it means to return to the sea? But why did this peculiar structure absorb the Priest of Light's Beyonder characteristic? Just as Lumian pondered, the sound of metal grinding surrounded him.

The pitch-black holes in the surrounding walls, ceiling, and floor once again got concealed by rotating, protruding metal. No more cerulean-blue poisonous gas spewed out, saving Lumian the energy to engulf his body in a layer of crimson, almost white flames.

Amidst the clanking sounds, two metallic doors ascended, revealing two tunnels leading to different destinations.

With the target of the betrayal now gone, the silver-gray behemoth reverted to its "normal" state.

Lumian peered into the depths of the tunnel ahead, his heart involuntarily racing.

Badump! Badump! He felt inexplicably nervous and uneasy.

…

In Port Santa, the apartment Loki was hiding.

The moment Ludwig declared, “I’m hungry,” he swiftly bowed his head and sank his teeth into Loki’s hand, gripping the gemstone bracelet as if devouring the marrow from a chicken wing.

An intense wave of pain surged through Loki’s mind. His immediate instinct was to deploy Paper Figurine Substitutes, a desperate attempt to break free from the current situation.

Yet, he hesitated, fearing that such a move might create an insurmountable distance between him and the sealed demigod, eliminating any chance of regaining control.

Amidst the gruesome symphony of bones crunching and flesh tearing, Loki snatched the falling gemstone bracelet with his free hand and forcibly pried open his mouth.

Bang!

A rush of air slammed into Ludwig’s head, akin to a bullet fired from the latest steam rifle, ripping through flesh and hair to reveal a ghastly white skull.

However, Ludwig remained unfazed. Gnawing on Loki’s left hand, he had already severed five fingers and devoured half of the palm.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Air Bullets relentlessly pounded the boy, leaving him mangled and disfigured. Yet, Ludwig persisted in his attentive nibbling on Loki.

Crack, crack. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

He had already crunched down on the other party’s wrist bone, a crisp sound echoing through their intertwined flesh.

As Loki nearly blacked out from the pain, he roughly grasped what was happening.

The sealed demigod possessed incredible vitality. Ordinary attacks and Beyonder powers couldn't cause significant harm. In simpler terms, he could put him to sleep or manipulate his Spirit Body Threads to knock him out, but killing him with regular means proved challenging. It couldn't even seriously injure him.

In such circumstances, even if the sealed demigod couldn't utilize any abilities, lacking sufficient strength and speed, merely devouring the other party's flesh and bones with all his might posed an abnormal challenge for many Mid-Sequence Beyonders.

Loki abandoned the idea of retrieving other mystical items and substituted himself with a paper figurine.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Ludwig, his head covered in signs of Air Bullet destruction and almost devoid of human form, raised his head. Beside his bloodstained mouth was a piece of white paper that quickly swept into his mouth alongside the blood-colored flesh.

Ludwig's eyes reflected Loki's outline in the corner of the room. Something beneath his torn skin and flesh seemed to squirm slowly, attempting to break free, but to no avail.

Loki assessed the situation and the items on him. With the Soul Assurer marionette unable to return in time, he sensibly chose not to confront the sealed demigod creature. He would flee first before considering the future.

At that moment, a crimson moonlight streamed through the window.

The moonlight bathed the apartment, wrapping around Loki.

Loki heard a fleeting voice.

"A strong smell of blood…"

As the moonlight faded, a grayish-white and pitch-black paper figurine appeared on the ground.

Loki's figure materialized a few hundred meters away, outside a vine forest.

It was a boon bestowed by the Celestial Worthy during a prayer some weeks before this operation. It had been attached to a pre-prepared paper figurine, forming such a potent substitute that bordered on godhood.

Drip, drip. Blood still dripped from Loki's bitten left wrist.

He activated the diamond on the bracelet and swiftly faded away, preparing to teleport.

…

Port Santa, Milo Village.

Tap, tap, tap.

The soft patter of footsteps reverberated in Bard's ears, causing him to tense.

Bard surveyed his surroundings, finding nothing amiss.

He sprinted, weaving through several buildings, yet the rhythmic tapping of footsteps persisted behind him.

Attempting to force open a door and seek refuge in a villager's house in Milo Village,

Bard was met with an unexpected sight. Instead of the familiar kitchen, tables, chairs, and household items, his eyes beheld a decrepit stone platform enveloped in darkness.

The stone platform! Bard's pupils widened, as if he had entered an unreal illusion.

He found himself back at the residence of the Governor of the Sea and the altar where Milo Village's inhabitants paid homage to their ancestor.

Something crawled out from a crack in the worn stone platform.

A translucent worm, adorned with multiple rings, swiftly expanded, transforming into a young man donned in the attire of a sea prayer

ritual’s deputy host, monocle in place.

Seated on the weathered stone platform, the man grinned at Bard.

“Do you comprehend?”

Bard suddenly grasped the meaning behind the question. Swallowing hard, he replied, “Understood.”

Since the altar had an owner and Beyonder creatures residing there, the so-

called rule that it could only be enchanted once a year for the Ring of the Sea Queen clearly didn’t hold true!

The other party could affix the power as many times as desired!

The young man, clad in a dark-blue deputy host’s sacrificial robe, toyed with the monocle in his right eye and smirked.

“Over a millennium, I’ve molded the rule that the Steal ability can only be conferred once a year. Little did I expect to deceive you all in the end.”

Chapter 587 - 587 “Deceived”

587 “Deceived”

Upon hearing the young man’s words, Bard felt his blood rush to his head.

Crafting a seemingly valid rule over a millennium to deceive others?

What kind of lame antique Swindler is this?

Bard blurted out, “The patterns on the altar and the surrounding arrangements are also fake?”

The young man in the dark-blue deputy host robe chuckled. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“If it wasn’t real, would you have been deceived?

“Furthermore, I occasionally venture out. When I do, it grants Steal powers on my behalf. Of course, with the spirituality produced by the surrounding worshippers, it can indeed only bestow once a year.”

As the young man spoke, the smile on his face widened.

Bard’s forehead throbbed as he listened, feeling like he had been mocked.

According to the other party’s claim that the Steal powers could be bestowed at will, the Ring of the Sea Queen should have been complete and equipped with all its functions. So, why did the success of the sea prayer ritual experience such a significant delay?

Unable to comprehend the situation, Bard turned around and sprinted towards the exit.

It wasn’t that he hadn’t considered begging for mercy and

surrendering on the spot, but these things could be done later. For now, he wanted to take a gamble, betting that the other party's claim of occasionally venturing out was a lie. In essence, he believed he was trapped in the altar, unable to venture anywhere and influence the people around him. If he allowed himself to be intimidated and didn't dare to escape, he would fall into the other party's trap, cheated of his freedom and future.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Bard reached the staircase in a few steps and ran up.

The more he ran, the happier he became. The monocle-wearing young man didn't stop him.

I made the right bet!

He's the core of that altar. There's no way to leave!

Thud! Thud! Thud! Bard witnessed the scene on the first floor illuminated by sunlight.

Amidst his ecstasy, his thoughts suddenly shattered. He felt the darkness around him being pierced by the light, shattering into pieces.

Bard bolted upright, alarmed to find himself lying in the servant's room at the Governor of the Sea's residence. He hadn't left.

He surveyed his surroundings and heard cheers and crackers from outside.

I just had a dream? Did it stem from a spirituality warning, helping me discover a problem with the plan? As Bard pondered these thoughts, he immediately dismissed the corresponding judgment. No, how could I have fallen asleep during the sea prayer ritual? Did I start dreaming after hearing soft footsteps in my room?

Bard rolled to his feet, slung his backpack over his shoulders, and tentatively pushed open the door, entering the corridor.

No longer smug with the plan that required minimal risks or combat, Bard realized he couldn't share in the distribution of items. He

couldn't teleport away directly, nor could he return to his original appearance or disguise himself as someone else.

Upon reaching the corridor, Bard noticed the Little Devils leaving the shadows and performing a strange celebratory dance.

He hadn't "communicated" with these sea spawn and knew their intelligence was roughly equivalent to that of ordinary dogs. They could be tamed and controlled, but direct communication was beyond them. However, the amazing thing was that Little Devils had the ability to record and recreate human words, even if they weren't sure of their meanings. Moreover, they could receive signals from their collaborators within a 100-meter radius.

The Little Devils ignored Bard as well. The sea prayer ritual had succeeded. According to their prior agreement, the fake Governor of the Sea could leave on his own.

Bard left the Governor of the Sea's residence and realized that the guards at the entrance weren't kneeling to thank the boon like before. The villagers of Milo Village at the docks were the same. Apart from a few who sincerely shouted that the sea prayer ritual had succeeded, the rest merely echoed what was happening and expressed their joy, with many preferring to release crackers.

Indeed, it was a dream. The villagers' reactions in the dream were too exaggerated… I should know that based on past experiences with sea prayer rituals, only the committee members of the Fisheries Guild and a few people with strong sea bloodlines can sense the arrival of the sea's boon. Others with sea bloodlines wouldn't have a tangible sense. They'd slowly realize they've become stronger, or the changes are too weak to detect. Otherwise, the failure of the sea prayer ritual last year wouldn't have escaped the notice of Port Santa's citizens and would have only circulated within the core circle. Bard used the environment to quickly confirm the essence of his previous encounter.

He didn't dare relax, nor did he "again" head to the docks to admire the villagers being fooled. Instead, he turned to the road leading to Port Santa's city district.

Just as he stepped out of the ancient village, Bard spotted a figure ahead.

The man stood over 2.4 meters tall, clad in a simple linen robe and a hood, holding a thick staff.

“Gandalf…” Bard’s heart tightened as he shouted.

With the dream just now, he thought he had been exposed, so he didn’t pull off any act.

Gandalf, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, was taken aback and let out a deep chuckle.

“You’re really fake.”

H-he’s not sure of my identity? Bard was taken aback, wishing he could slap himself.

…

Inside the underwater spaceship, in a metallic room reminiscent of a beehive.

Having failed to capture Mad Lady twice in a row, Mr. K’s body underwent a sudden transformation, expanding to nearly three meters in height.

Fortunately, he wasn’t adorned in actual clothes. The blood-colored cloak draped over him had morphed from his flesh and blood. Otherwise, even the loose robe would have succumbed to the drastic change.

Concurrently, Mr. K’s skin darkened, assuming the appearance of thick and formidable armor. Crooked goat horns adorned with sinister patterns sprouted from his head, and a pair of bat-like wings, encircled in crimson and blue flames, emerged from his back.

A pungent smell of sulfur hung in the air.

Being a Sequence 5 Shepherd of the Secrets Suppliant pathway, Mr. K possessed the core ability of Grazing. This allowed him to fuse other

people's souls with Beyonder characteristics or boon powers and utilize them uniquely. It was akin to grazing lambs for a deity.

Each Shepherd could graze up to seven souls, controlling only one at a time. In this state, Shepherds could employ their Beyonder abilities and three abilities corresponding to the souls. These were chosen during Grazing and remained fixed thereafter.

The most formidable aspect of Shepherds was their ability to Graze demigod-

level spirits, enabling them to contend with Saints for a limited duration.

Presently, Mr. K was using a Grazed Devil. He had selected Devil Transformation, Sulphur Fireball, and Sword of Lava in the past.

Mr. K deliberately chose to forgo Devil's most distinctive Danger Premonition because he believed it to be effective only when commanding the Devil's spirit. Under normal circumstances, he couldn't activate Grazing continuously. In any case, if grave danger loomed, a divine revelation would be provided by God. Failure to receive such guidance indicated wrongdoing, warranting divine punishment.

As the expansive bat wings on Mr. K's back unfolded, light-blue fireballs condensed, numbering almost twenty.

They indiscriminately bombarded every corner of the metallic beehive, creating an all-encompassing barrage to counter Mad Lady's elusive "flashes" throughout the space.

Rumble!

The explosion, a mix of fire and poison, wreaked havoc on the metallic hive, tearing apart the incubating Batings Black Insect, Little Devils, and other creatures.

Mad Lady abruptly halted as the Sulfur Fireball condensed.

Cloaked in a blood-colored dress, with grotesque flesh lumps on her face, an illusory, slowly flipping book materialized in her eyes. Faint

recitations echoed around her.

Drawing a dagger, she genuflected and drove it into the metal floor of the hive.

Dawn-like light ascended, forming an almost invisible wall around her.

Rumble!

The shockwaves from the Sulfur Fireball's explosion and the poisonous pale-

blue fireball relentlessly struck the invisible barrier, causing it to sway, yet it stood resilient.

This was Protection of a Warrior Sequence 5.

Record, the core ability of a Sequence 6 Scribe of the Apprentice pathway, allowed the "recording" of others' abilities for use, each recording usable only once. Scribes could even record Beyonder powers with godhood effects, but the success rate was minimal.

After the explosion's aftershocks subsided, Mr. K, donned in a blood-colored cloak and resembling a colossal Devil, wielded a broadsword composed of crimson lava and pale-blue flames. He surged towards Mad Lady in two steps, slashing down.

The nearly invisible wall around Mad Lady couldn't withstand the onslaught and finally shattered. As the illusory book in her eyes flipped, a robust and sharp Sword of Dawn materialized in her hand.

Excitedly, she swung her two-handed light sword.

Clang!

Mr. K's strike sent Mad Lady, lacking a Warrior's physique and strength, flying.

Though Mr. K hadn't anticipated her determination to engage in close combat despite her limitations, the battle's tempo remained unaffected. He advanced, wielding the lava broadsword once again.

Poof! The Mad Lady he struck suddenly thinned, transforming into a paper figurine consumed by sulfurous flames.

Paper Figurine Substitutes!

Mad Lady reappeared beside a demolished metal hive, her illusory book flipping once more.

She then stretched her arms, allowing a pure and magnificent blazing pillar of light to descend from the sky and strike Mr. K, who had attacked the paper effigy.

Priest of Light's Light of Holiness!

Chapter 588 - 588 Degree of Madness

588 Degree of Madness

Mr. K shifted instantaneously, tapping into the Grazed Traveler's soul. His eyes took on an otherworldly glow, as if concealing doors to different realms.

His form faded, and in an instant, a luminous white column surrounded by flames emerged, shrouding him within its fiery embrace.

In the ensuing moment, Mr. K, stripped of his Devil guise, materialized in a corner of the metallic beehive. His form liquefied, his flesh resembling dripping candle wax.

The Secrets Suppliant pathway symbolized corruption, its influence curtailed by the Sun pathway's capabilities.

Half-melted flesh and blood cascaded onto the metal floor, seeping into it in a bizarre manner. Soon, it was absorbed by the spaceship Mad Lady had earlier detailed. Even Mr. K felt the weight of an unseen force, as if an invisible hand pressed him down. His attempts to extricate himself from the metallic floor proved futile, and he continued sinking gradually.

Mad Lady, with grayish-green eyes gleaming, teleported near Mr. K.

Despite his blood-colored wax-drenched visage, Mr. K faced Mad Lady without a trace of fear. His focus remained fixed on the evil god's aura emanating from the metal hive—his ultimate target.

He switched the Grazed soul to an Arbiter pathway Beyonder, with two bolts of lightning gathering in the depths of his darkened eyes.

Psychic Piercing!

Mad Lady refrained from teleporting. The illusory book within her eyes flipped open, revealing the kaleidoscope of colors on Mr. K's body and the shifting hues of light during his Grazed soul transitions.

Excitement illuminated Mad Lady's face. Raising her right hand, she prepared to delicately twist it clockwise.

Steal!

This was an ability she had Recorded from Bard.

A sudden, intriguing notion captivated Mad Lady's thoughts—she yearned to witness the aftermath of stealing the Grazing ability from a Shepherd.

It was crucial to understand that her Steal ability was limited to just one from a target, devoid of any connections to the abilities that came with it. In essence, after snatching the Grazing ability, the soul, characteristics, and powers under Grazing's influence would persist within Mr. K's body.

In this state, Mad Lady pondered whether Shepherds would grapple with internal conflicts, the fusion of characteristics, or a loss of control akin to the switching between non-adjacent pathways.

Excitement bubbled within Mad Lady as she deliberately Blinked near Mr. K, compelling him to switch Grazed souls. She observed keenly, eager to discern which light aligned with Grazing.

As for Mr. K's reaction, she cared little.

You continue your fight; I continue my steal. Whoever dies first loses!

Simultaneously, the metal floor, saturated with Mr. K's flesh, quivered unexpectedly. A previously concealed door within the metal hive withdrew, unveiling a passageway that hinted at a silver metallic hall beyond.

A formidable suction force emanated from that direction. While her attempt to steal Mr. K's Grazing ability was underway, Mad Lady—

lacking the strength—was propelled into the air. Dark-blond hair whipped around wildly as she soared toward the origin of the anomaly.

Meanwhile, Mr. K remained “locked” to the metal floor. Though his body swayed precariously, on the verge of being pulled away, he held his ground, unsteady yet resilient.

The face of the blood-colored wax-streaked Aurora Order Oracle betrayed an anxious expression.

The enemy was on the verge of escape!

The source of the evil god corruption had revealed itself!

Mr. K swiftly switched back to the corresponding Devil spirit, summoning a broadsword forged from crimson lava and pale-blue flames. Targeting his body adhered to the metal floor, he executed a slashing motion.

Beneath his calf, flesh promptly separated from his main body, the incision undergoing a mesmerizing melding of half-melting and half-reforming.

Having relinquished a portion of his flesh, Mr. K allowed pale-white, moist, and freshly-formed limbs to squirm out from the severed stump. Concurrently, he harnessed the formidable suction force to pursue Mad Lady and draw closer to the source of corruption.

In midair, he witnessed Lumian, disguised, clutching the door frame in a struggle against the menacing suction. He observed the motionless silver-

white full-body armor seamlessly blending with the floor.

Mad Lady surged ahead, on the verge of “flying” past Lumian.

With a wave of her right hand, she emitted a greeting-like “hello”, her face radiating excitement and anticipation.

Lumian’s pupils constricted. Disregarding his precarious state, he harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot forth from his nostrils, accurately aimed at Mad Lady but influenced by the tangible and enigmatic suction force. They bent and “plunged” deeper into the tunnel.

At that moment, Lumian’s grip on the silver metal door frame neared its breaking point, blood seeping from the strain.

Faintly, he sensed an abundance of flesh and skin deep within the tunnel, intertwining to shape a colossal structure resembling a pear-shaped bird’s nest.

Suspended in midair, fleshy ropes, as thick as two or three adult arms and covered in a translucent membrane, extended, linking the distant wall, the ceiling above, and the metal on the ground.

Within these flesh and blood tendrils, specks of starlight and a mysterious dark substance flowed into the massive pear-shaped object.

The bird’s nest-like structure was contracting inward, its various parts deeply sunken, delineating lines that hinted at a substantial disk.

The terrifying suction force, capable of manipulating both reality and mystery, emanated from this pear-shaped object composed of skin, flesh, and blood.

At that moment, the outlines on the pear-shaped object quivered, and all the indentations bulged and expanded.

With this transformation, fragments of starlight spilled from the fleshy bird’s nest, rushing into every cabin within the spaceship.

This event resembled the prior two releases of the sea’s power, yet lacked the grandeur and vastness, lacking the potential to rend apart anyone obstructing its path.

Lumian could already envision the repetitive expulsion, understanding that the silver-gray behemoth had amassed a power capable of threatening the seal. Year after year, it required the extraction of this accumulated pressure.

As the abundance of starlight scattered, the formidable suction force

dissipated.

With two thuds, Mad Lady and Mr. K collided with the ground. One found herself in the tunnel leading to the fleshy “bird’s nest,” while the other lay in the silver hall where Lumian and Ultraman had previously battled.

Lumian released his grip, landing on the ground. His gaze swiftly fixated on the April Fool’s key member, adorned with clumps of flesh and blood on her face.

Mad Lady sprang up, exclaiming to him and Mr. K, “Did you see that? Did you see that? That’s an incubating deity. Yes, it should be a deity!”

Despite the intense fluctuations in Mad Lady’s emotions, Mr. K discerned no sincerity in her tone.

Her mention of “deity” sounded more like “powerful and terrifying monster,” a mere description.

In the next instant, Lumian materialized behind Mad Lady, who promptly vanished on the spot, “Blinking” closer to where the starlight had scattered.

Lumian, sensing danger instinctively, felt his heart quicken involuntarily.

He hesitated to delve too deeply into the tunnel, avoiding proximity to the flesh and blood “bird’s nest” he had vaguely “seen” before. Unimaginable horrors were certain to unfold.

However, Mad Lady sprinted in that direction.

Let her venture deeper and potentially meet her end? Lumian’s thoughts raced, torn between decisions.

Another second passed, and Mr. K teleported in front of Lumian, fervently pursuing Mad Lady.

In that moment, Lumian, who had often considered himself a bit eccentric, found himself yearning for a bit more normalcy from the

duo ahead of him.

While he could comprehend Mr. K's choices and actions—rooted in unwavering faith in God and the pursuit of divine will, coupled with a hint of extremism—Mad Lady's conduct exceeded his expectations.

Drawing from I Know Someone's confession and Mad Lady's previous behavior, Lumian detected no signs of her fanatical devotion to the Celestial Worthy. Simultaneously, due to the ongoing conflict between the Celestial Worthy and Mr. Fool, she couldn't always rely on protection.

This raised a question for Lumian. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.com for the best novel reading experience

If Mad Lady consistently courted danger, how had she managed to survive to this day?

April Fool's lacked the strict hierarchy and coordination seen in the Aurora Order. Most of the time, members operated independently with minimal interaction. Protecting Mad Lady from the start, allowing her to grow steadily with such a mindset, seemed implausible.

Could it be that I Know Someone had once overseen the treatment of Mad Lady's mental and psychological issues? After his demise, did Mad Lady's problems exacerbate? Lumian quickly formulated a plausible explanation, but considering Mad Lady's conduct on the betrothal ship, her current state struck him as abnormal.

On the betrothal ship, faced with the impending release of the sea's power in the energy passageway, Mad Lady, though eager and seeking excitement, had an escape route. As long as she didn't delay until the last moment, she could teleport away, avoiding the actual risk of death.

Now, whatever lurked in the depths of the tunnel made Lumian, despite his feigned high level, intuitively uneasy. He believed it represented an almost certain death sentence. Yet, Mad Lady persisted in her attempt to approach!

Could there be a reason compelling her to make contact with that object? Lumian wondered. He suspected that Mad Lady's actions might be part of the Celestial Worthy's scheme, convincing her that she could confront the provocation head-on and escape in time.

I can't let her and that Celestial Worthy succeed… Besides, personally, I look forward to ending her myself rather than witnessing her being swallowed by that dangerous object… Lumian's eyes narrowed, the desire to teleport forward and intercept Mad Lady compelling him.

However, preventing a Traveler from reaching a specific location in such a manner was clearly impossible. Lumian hesitated, unwilling to genuinely approach the flesh-and-blood "bird's nest" deep within the tunnel.

Suddenly, an idea struck him.

The peculiar structure's rejection of outsiders seems to have lifted, and with Lato Guiaro, a person possessing a potent sea bloodline, deceased. Could I attempt to gain temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea to halt Mad Lady's progress?

With that in mind, Lumian embarked on his endeavor.

Activating the power of the sea within him, he allowed his Astral Projection to merge and swiftly expand outward.

Chapter 589 - 589 Object Within the Nest

589 Object Within the Nest

589 Object Within the Nest

As Lumian's Astral Projection expanded with the power of the sea, he immediately sensed the presence of the "waters."

This wasn't a genuine ocean but a fantastical sea created by radiant starlight. At its core lay the projection of the silver-gray behemoth.

Empowered by an ample supply of the sea's power, Lumian's Astral Projection surged forward, merging seamlessly with the phantom.

A burning sensation radiated from the left side of his chest, as if some form of acknowledgment had been received.

His consciousness extended boundlessly, taking command of the dreamlike illusory sea.

In the course of this process, he glimpsed the phantoms of Juan Oro, Ultraman Lato Guiaro, and unfamiliar apparitions.

Those who have returned to the sea? They seem to have transformed into water droplets in the sea… Lumian withdrew his gaze from the joyful Juan Oro and the pained Lato Guiaro, redirecting it toward the depths of the tunnel ahead. From a considerable distance, he spotted Mad Lady.

The silver-gray behemoth harbored entities nurtured within the flesh and blood "bird's nest." With the Batings Black Insect, Little Devils, and other extraterrestrial life forms, it was inevitable that they coexisted in the spirit world. However, this spirit world was entirely

severed from the external realm. Consequently, Beyonders skilled in summoning creatures from the spirit world for assistance found themselves bereft of their primary reliance. Teleportation executed through the spirit world, however, retained some semblance of normalcy. Departing directly, however, proved impossible. The only avenues were through the energy passageway at the entrance or by breaching the outer wall to connect the inner and outer spirit worlds.

Simultaneously, the closer one approached the flesh-and-blood "bird's nest," the more peculiar the spirit world became. It was as though the air gradually thickened, becoming almost tangible and impeding the approach of "birds."

In such an environment, coupled with the absence of a flesh-and-blood "bird's nest," Mad Lady found herself unable to teleport directly. Her only recourse was to Blink incrementally, expending her spirituality with each maneuver.

Having focused on Mad Lady and the space in front of her, Lumian suddenly extended his right hand and clenched it into a fist.

The air surrounding Mad Lady immediately grew dense, as if assuming a tangible form. This transformation caused the illusory curtain to bend, compressing the corresponding area into a dark and transparent sphere.

Once more, Mad Lady's form disappeared, but a formless force, shaped by the bending area, yanked her out and sent her plummeting.

Under the authority of the Governor of the Sea, the spirit world within the sphere and the spirit world within the silver-gray behemoth were forcibly separated!

However, this effect was contingent on the peculiar environment. In the external world, given Lumian's current level and mastery of the power of the sea, completely isolating an area from the expansive and genuine spirit world proved challenging. He could merely employ Cosmic Void to create an exit path and a door symbolizing an escape route, a tactic vulnerable to counteraction by a Traveler's abilities.

Mad Lady attempted another Blink, yet found herself unable to escape the dark sphere's confines.

She halted in place, seriously contemplating her Recorded abilities and the items in her possession that might alleviate her current predicament.

Observing her struggle, Lumian couldn't suppress his yearning for demigod-

level powers.

As the temporary authority-wielding Governor of the Sea—essentially a faux demigod incapable of withstanding a single spell from the "Cinderella" demigod—Lumian had ensnared Mad Lady in an inescapable dilemma. She proved challenging even for Mr. K to subdue in a brief timeframe.

Mad Lady gazed into the depths of the metal tunnel, representing the flesh and blood "bird's nest," her face aglow with unrestrained eagerness, anticipation, and excitement.

Confined within the dark sphere, she yearned for escape, dissatisfied with her inability to reach the desired destination.

Head over there, quick! Head over there, quick!

I want to go over!

The longing in her heart intensified, nearly manifesting as a tangible desire.

The desire surged into her chest, seeking to rupture the restraints and liberate her from this predicament.

Mr. K, having switched to a Traveler's soul, swiftly caught up and saw Mad Lady.

Instinctively, an illusory book materialized in his dark eyes.

Positioned in front of Mr. K, the book flipped through its pages while chanting in a low voice, "I came, I saw, I record."

In an instant, Mr. K underwent a transformation, manifesting as a two to three-meter-tall half-giant donned in cold black armor, brandishing a dark, straight broadsword.

Having Grazed a Traveler, he had selected three Beyonder powers: Blink, Record, and the Traveler's Door, encompassing teleportation or travel. Additionally, with Record, he had acquired an ability capable of influencing godhood from a Saint of the Aurora Order. While only half as effective as the original, it proved sufficient to contend with Mad Lady, who had yet to approach the threshold of godhood.

Mr. K advanced confidently, wielding the dark, straight broadsword, prepared to strike.

At that moment, Mad Lady's chest was overwhelmed by an intense surge of desire.

Then, she experienced a sharp, piercing pain.

She didn't need to lower her head. From the corner of her eye, she witnessed the flesh on her chest tearing apart inch by inch, the white bones snapping one by one. A grayish-white fog, mingled with fragments of flesh, surged forth, coalescing into a humanoid figure resembling her. In an instant, it leaped out of the dark "sphere" created by Lumian and darted into the depths of the metal tunnel.

Don't be in a hurry to leave! Unfazed by the situation, Mad Lady's face reflected excitement and a hint of regret.

Pfft!

Mr. K's dark broadsword cleaved through the dark sphere, diagonally bisecting Mad Lady.

Wearing the ring imbued with flesh and blood magic, Mad Lady didn't succumb immediately. Her two halves of flesh and blood writhed, attempting to reunite, but all endeavors were obliterated by the profound darkness left in the wake of the broadsword. The flesh and blood failed to reestablish a connection.

Come on, come on… Mad Lady's relatively intact head sought to aid her body, but she swiftly perceived the annihilation of her soul.

Her vision darkened, and her unevenly separated bodies crumpled to the ground.

Unperturbed by the fate of the April Fool's key member, Mr. K and Lumian redirected their focus to the grayish-white figure hurtling into the depths of the metal tunnel.

Comprising half fog and half flesh, the figure existed in a realm between reality and illusion.

The temporary Governor of the Sea, Lumian, once again honed in on the target and its surroundings, intending to marshal every ounce of sea power at his disposal.

At that moment, the grayish-white figure collapsed to the ground.

The flesh and blood originally belonging to Mad Lady seeped into the metal floor, and the grayish-white fog was on the verge of being absorbed.

Abruptly, the entire tunnel trembled. Lumian once again "saw" the pear-

shaped object fashioned from flesh and skin.

The flesh membrane on its surface buckled once more, outlining a disc-

shaped contour.

A formidable suction force erupted. Whether Lumian—the temporary Governor of the Sea—or Mr. K, they found themselves irresistibly propelled into the depths of the metal tunnel, as if an invisible hand seized them and drew them toward the core of the silver-gray behemoth.

Mad Lady's dismembered corpse and her belongings soared into the air, propelled towards the destination she had fervently yearned for in life.

The humanoid form outlined by the grayish-white fog seeped deeper into the metal floor, absorbing a portion.

In that moment, Lumian, wielding the temporary authority of the Governor of the Sea, employed his enhanced perception to “see” the flesh-and-blood “bird’s nest” deep within the metal tunnel more distinctly than before.

The pear-shaped object’s flesh and skin caved in, and the starlight and dark matter emanating from the surrounding flesh ropes accelerated their flow.

Through the taut skin and flesh, Lumian vaguely sensed the object nurtured within the pear-shaped structure.

It resembled a pitch-black vortex capable of devouring all colors and light. While not overly large, it featured a disc-shaped outer edge.

Wh… Lumian instinctively recalled scientific concepts and simplified scenes his sister Aurore had once explained. He identified a term that matched his observations: A black hole!

Did the Abraham family’s ancestor seal a black hole with Amon? A black hole that has yet to fully form and is still nurtured within a mother’s body from a mystical standpoint? Lumian found the idea absurd, straddling the line between scientific and mystical.

Simultaneously, he sensed a connection between the “black hole”-like object and another place. A profound, weighty, dense, and terrifying aura loomed over the world.

With a buzzing sensation, Lumian teetered on the brink of losing consciousness. Not only was his physical form being drawn towards the flesh and blood “bird’s nest,” but even his thoughts, Spirit Body, and destiny converged in that direction.

It was the same for Mr. K.

One after another, Mad Lady’s fragmented remains and a few belongings floated between them.

Beyond the silver-gray behemoth, Franca and the others felt an ominous suction emanating from the seabed. It seemed as though a colossal vortex was forming, ready to engulf everything in its vicinity.

Splash! Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

The mountainous azure waves and jade-green seawater collapsed, filling the seabed.

Abruptly, resplendent starlight descended from the sky.

Madam Magician materialized, adorned in a deep-black Warlock robe embroidered with shimmering silver stars.

The wielder of a Major Arcana card extended her right hand toward the silver-gray behemoth at the seabed. Her figure appeared in a state of overlap, intermittently clear and blurry.

Each radiant starlight transformed into an illusory door, seamlessly “melding” with the suction force, merging into the silver-gray behemoth.

Chapter 590 - 590 The Truth Behind the Seal

590 The Truth Behind the Seal

590 The Truth Behind the Seal

The surface of the massive silver-gray behemoth ignited with illusory doors, casting a star-like brilliance that darkened the sky above the sea.

This existing seal, triggered by Madam Magician, no longer resided in a nadir due to celestial shifts.

Starlight descended, swiftly repairing the temporary damage inflicted upon the seal.

Inside the behemoth, half of the grayish-white fog composing Mad Lady's human form was absorbed by the metal floor, appearing as if it would sink further.

In that crucial moment, starlight permeated the walls, floor, and ceiling, materializing resplendent doors of various shapes. These doors manipulated the void, thwarting the menacing suction and expelling the grayish-white fog.

Abruptly, Lumian felt the formidable suction force from the metal tunnel's depths dissipate.

He "saw" the dented flesh and blood "bird's nest" expanding again, releasing a copious amount of resplendent starlight.

The torrent surged through different parts of the silver-gray behemoth like a flood breaching a dam.

Lumian, Mr. K, Mad Lady's remains, and the items undulated with the sea's waves. As they were propelled forward, they encountered resistance and erosion from the sea's power.

Meanwhile, the fleshless, corporeal grayish-white phantom swayed in the vast starlight, growing fainter before gradually dissipating.

Unlike previous instances, the sea's power did not erupt from the ocean depths this time. Madam Magician had severed the energy passageway, successfully resealing and reinforcing the seal.

Madam Magician, her form seemingly illusory, raised her right hand and pointed at the betrothal ship and sailboat, her eyes mirroring the corresponding scene.

The two ships, along with Hela, Franca, the "Cinderella" demigod, the humanoid Sealed Artifact, the Maidens of the Sea, the remaining deputy hosts, and the sailors, vanished from the underwater cavity, instantly reappearing on the sunny, calm, turquoise sea beyond the seal. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Crash! Mountain-like azure waves and jade-green seawater resembling well walls slammed down, filling the underwater cavity.

Madam Magician's gaze then shifted to Lumian, Mr. K, Mad Lady's corpse, Pride Armor, and other items.

Just as she was about to relocate them, Lumian, still donning the Flog boxing gloves, suddenly felt a heavy, dense, terrifying, and brilliant aura "looking" at him from another place connected to the black hole in the flesh and blood "bird's nest."

Crack, crack. Lumian heard his bones shattering, his skull caving in, ribs snapping, and flesh compressing layer by layer.

After unleashing the Ascetic's accumulated strength, he, now taller, was instantly compressed into a short, thin, and dense form.

Intense pain flooded his mind, and his brain began to passively contract.

After a moment, Lumian broke free from the gaze and floated into

the gradually calming air.

Before Madam Magician, an illusory book rapidly flipped, emitting a faint glow full of vitality. It bathed Lumian's body in light, reconstructing his broken bones and swiftly enlarging his compressed flesh, rescuing him from his near-death state.

Then, Madam Magician tossed Mad Lady's rose-gold ring embedded with the crimson gem to Lumian, allowing him to reassemble his flesh and blood and return to his original appearance. He was no longer a short, thin, and heavy peculiar human.

Simultaneously, in Port Santa, Loki's figure faded as he entered the spirit world, preparing to teleport away.

However, a dark, formless barrier appeared in front of him, blocking his path.

Loki's pupils dilated as he realized that at some point, he had been ensnared in a dark and transparent "sphere," seemingly bent from the void, with "walls" everywhere, and a hidden door.

High up in the spirit world—near the seven pure lights—Madam Magician hovered, adorned in a deep-black Warlock robe adorned with stars.

Loki's presence registered in her eyes, and an illusory book rapidly flipped before her.

She had strategically waited until the last moment to prevent Loki from receiving the Celestial Worthy's warning, providing her an opportunity to capture him alive.

Loki's lips curled into an exaggerated smile upon understanding the situation.

Rumble!

His body erupted from the inside out, as if a self-controlled bomb had been embedded in his flesh beforehand.

Loki's bizarre suicide succeeded; flesh and blood splattered, and his

aura dissipated.

Madam Magician promptly lifted the seal on the area, capturing the information Loki had imprinted in the spirit world.

The spirit world served as a repository for all information. Divination often entailed revelations from the spirit world, and the matter of resurrection inevitably left corresponding information.

As long as she found relevant information in time, Madam Magician could trace Loki to his resurrection spot and pinpoint the ancient castle documented in the Secret Order records.

Soon, Madam Magician obtained something.

Her figure vanished from the spirit world's heights, navigating the endless darkness adorned with symbols.

In the next moment, a vast grayish-white fog materialized before her eyes.

Magician halted, gazing at the seemingly endless expanse of grayish-white fog.

…

Under the silent, dusky sky, above the calm blue sea.

Using Mad Lady's ring embedded with a crimson gem, Lumian adjusted his internal organs, flesh, and bones to their original state.

Treading on the corporeal wind, Lumian removed the ring that enabled the use of flesh and blood magic and anxiously inquired of Madam Magician, "How's the situation on the other two fronts?"

As he spoke, he sensed a mystical and indiscernible flicker from Madam Magician.

Magician smiled.

"Loki has just been killed by me, but I couldn't prevent his resurrection or seize the opportunity to locate his ancient castle.

“Bard has been captured by Gandalf, whom you intentionally sent to Milo Village. He’s alive.”

Phew… Lumian instinctively heaved a sigh of relief.

Though he hadn’t captured Loki, wasting one more of Loki’s resurrections meant he had achieved his objectives.

Furthermore, Ultraman and Mad Lady had been completely eliminated, and Bard had been captured alive. The results were satisfactory.

Initially, Lumian hadn’t confirmed Bard’s identity. He didn’t even know if Bard had participated in the sea prayer ritual. However, he had a few suspects, including the fake Governor of the Sea and Juan Oro’s grandson, Fernandez. Since most of the suspects were in Milo Village, he had Gandalf closely monitor them.

Madam Magician continued, “I relocated everyone else from these waters. I sent Mr. K of the Aurora Order back to his rented room in Port Santa. Mad Lady’s corpse and items are floating here.”

The Major Arcana card holder opened her palm, shrouded in darkness, forming a small box. Inside, Mad Lady’s dismembered corpse and other items had “shrunk” to the size of mosquitoes, drifting as if in another world.

Lumian was taken aback. He looked at the bottom of the azure sea and asked, “Is it over?”

He had anticipated gaining control over the silver-gray behemoth eventually.

“Otherwise? Back then, even two Kings of Angels couldn’t clean up the mess. How is our Tarot Club going to handle it—unless Mr. Fool awakens,” Madam Magician replied in an amused tone.

Lumian recollected the items in the flesh and blood “bird’s nest” and nodded in agreement.

He asked in confusion, “Is it true that sealed at the bottom is a black hole? Uh… Do you know what a black hole is?”

“I do,” Madam Magician chuckled. “And I also know that the silver-gray thing down there is a spaceship.”

Spaceship… Lumian was taken aback.

Upon reflection, he realized that the silver-gray behemoth bore a striking resemblance to the spaceship described in his sister’s bedtime stories!

Madam Magician not only knew about spaceships but also grasped the concept of a black hole!

Never underestimate high-ranking individuals. The time-transcending knowledge possessed by transmigrators might not be foreign to them… Lumian sighed with emotion.

At that moment, he noticed that Madam Magician’s mystical flickering had vanished.

The Major Arcana card holder gazed at the seabed and explained, “It’s a black hole, ready to form, personally created by an evil god. Constantly absorbing surrounding matter and energy, it strengthens itself, eventually becoming a true black hole.

“In the Fourth Epoch, the evil god seized an opportunity to send the embryonic black hole through the spaceship at the bottom of the sea. The plan was for it to rapidly develop, tear apart, and devour our planet, causing the barrier to lose support and disintegrate prematurely. True gods and angels could escape, but without the barrier’s protection, who knows what would happen.

“Fortunately, Mr. Door and Amon discovered the threat in time and took action. Yet, They couldn’t obliterate the already developing black hole. Any attempts to destroy or destabilize it would only make it stronger. The only viable solution was to seal it and patiently wait for it to weaken through repeated radiations until it ultimately evaporates.

“Alternatively, they could transport it and the spaceship into the cosmos, abandoning it in desolate areas. However, this would require Mr. Door to leave the safety of the barrier and shadow the threat

continuously to prevent accidents. Moreover, it remained under the vigilant gaze of that entity, which periodically replenished its energy through their connection. The danger was evident."

That explains it… Lumian finally grasped why it had been sealed rather than destroyed.

Intrigued, he echoed a term, "Mr. Door?"

It bore a striking resemblance to Mr. Fool.

Chapter 591 - 591 Information Gap

591 Information Gap

591 Information Gap

Upon hearing Lumian's inquiry, Madam Magician's tone carried a subtle emotion.

"Mr. Door is the ancestor of the Abraham family, the top duke among the five great nobles of the Tudor Empire. It was He who sealed this spaceship. Amon, on the other hand, designed the ritual that regularly siphoned power from the black hole to alleviate the pressure caused by the natural decay of the seal and hasten the black hole's demise."

Higher in rank than Amon… In the Tudor Empire, Mr. Door was second only to the Blood Emperor? He listened intently.

Madam Magician sighed softly at that moment.

"In a way, Mr. Door can be considered my mentor."

A mentor? Your mentor is a Fourth Epoch King of Angels and the top noble in the Tudor Empire? A figure from almost two thousand years ago… Lumian hadn't anticipated Madam Magician having such a profound background.

No wonder she earned the position of the Angel of Stars beside Mr. Fool's throne. No wonder she held a Major Arcana card in the Tarot Club!

Madam Magician glanced at Lumian, teasingly adding, "It's true that Mr. Door guided and 'supervised' me in advancing along the divine

path, but the method wasn't as virtuous as you might imagine. It was far from good."

Far from good… Lumian was surprised before connecting the dots.

Combining his experiences, he made a guess.

Madam Magician had once fallen under the corruptive influence of Mr. Door but received assistance from Mr. Fool. Did she join the Tarot Club because of this?

However, from Madam Magician's words, it seems she reconciled with Mr. Door? Otherwise, she wouldn't refer to Him as her mentor. How intriguing and surreal. Just like how I might say in the future that the Angel of Inevitability, Termiboros, was my mentor, Lumian mused inwardly and probed, "Is Mr. Door still active?"

Is He as lively as His peer, Amon?

Madam Magician shook her head.

"He has perished."

I see… Lumian cast his gaze toward the deep, bottomless sea.

"April Fool's objective is to acquire that spaceship? But it seems they are unaware of the nascent black hole sealed inside…"

It was a formidable entity that not even a true god could completely neutralize. Once released from its seal and allowed to develop, it would compress and absorb everything in its vicinity. Why did the key members of April Fool's, who weren't even at the demigod level, believe they could confront it without fear?

Relying on the spaceship to contain it? That seemed improbable. Only the evil god who created the black hole or an entity at Mr. Fool's level could control it…

Mad Lady even believed that within the seal was an incubating deity or monster of a comparable magnitude…

With these thoughts in mind, Lumian's heart stirred as he inquired in

a deep voice, “Were the key members of April Fool’s misled? Is the Celestial Worthy’s objective to unleash the black hole and trigger an apocalyptic catastrophe ahead of schedule?

“As long as Beyonders corrupted by Him enter the spaceship, He stands a chance of achieving His goal?”

He really doesn’t seem to value the lives of Ultraman, Mad Lady, Bard, and Loki…

However, that is also typical of April Fool’s modus operandi. They don’t take lives other than their own seriously!

Lumian suddenly felt like laughing. His satisfaction from finishing off Ultraman and Mad Lady intensified.

Madam Magician nodded thoughtfully and remarked, “If you hadn’t used all your resources and handled this matter with absolute strength, or if I had arrived ten to twenty seconds later and the grayish-white fog from Mad Lady’s body had fully permeated the spaceship, the outcome might have been entirely different. We wouldn’t be able to be here and discuss this matter so calmly.”

Lumian reflected on the events that had transpired and muttered thoughtfully to himself, “If I hadn’t gained temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea and restricted Mad Lady’s teleportation, she might have approached the flesh-and-blood ‘bird’s nest’ incubating the black hole before your arrival. She wouldn’t have manifested a humanoid form made of grayish-white fog to infiltrate the spacecraft. If that had occurred, the situation might have been even more challenging to handle…”

The reason he obtained temporary authority as the Governor of the Sea was because he utilized Lie to pilfer a portion of the sea’s power. This allowed him to resonate with the sea and possess a counterfeit yet highly elevated status.

The ability to use Lie to steal a portion of the sea’s power was granted by the Seer pathway’s mystical item, which had been imbued with a high-level power of Steal when placed on the ancestor-honoring altar in Milo Village.

The altar could bestow high-level Steal powers on items because it was constructed by Amon… Constructed by Amon…

Lumian's thoughts suddenly cleared up. He grasped that it wasn't just him and the others sabotaging April Fool's; there were also influential figures in the shadows who didn't want the Celestial Worthy to succeed!

Madam Magician chuckled.

"Have you figured it out? I recognized what was happening when I saw Lie, now endowed with the power of Steal.

"Some time ago, I spied on the altar beneath Milo Village and confirmed its purpose—to gather the spirituality of worshippers and accumulate enough power to trigger the bestowment of the Steal ability. Given Milo Village's population and the number of individuals with the sea bloodline, it can only be bestowed once a year. It can't last more than half a month each time, and it can only be used once or twice.

"Lie's enhanced power far surpasses that."

Lumian furrowed his brow and asked, "Are you suggesting that the 'Steal' on Lie was directly granted by Amon?"

This hypothesis struck him as absurd, comical, and surreal.

In the past few months, Amon had been a source of terror, causing him mental distress. He nearly perished in the Samaritan Women's Spring. Subsequently, he informed the Tarot Club and aided the Angel of Time in eliminating most of the Amons in Trier. He also wrested a substantial debt from Amon's parasitic form.

Their relationship? It was one of deep-seated enmity! The sentiment was likely mutual.

Yet now, he was being told that Amon had covertly assisted him?

While Lumian understood that Amon's aid wasn't driven by benevolence but rather to thwart the Celestial Worthy's objectives, he couldn't shake the feeling that the world had taken a bizarre turn.

Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Madam Magician chuckled and explained, “Perhaps, back then, there was an Amon residing within the altar.

“Truth be told, I didn’t anticipate that those who once instilled awe, fear, and vigilance in our discussions would occasionally collaborate with us. Of course, don’t become complacent. While we may be teammates when facing the evil gods beyond the barrier, that doesn’t extend to all matters. Even when dealing with the evil god’s followers, it depends on the specific circumstances. They might believe they can handle it alone and use the opportunity to set a trap that could harm you.”

“Alright…” Lumian resisted belief, but he had no choice but to acknowledge the reality before him. The truth was laid bare.

Having been briefed, Lumian mentally reconstructed the sea prayer ritual, refining the spiderweb-like thought pattern without any critical deficiencies.

The corresponding experiences and lessons surfaced in Lumian’s mind:

April Fool’s biggest failure was not knowing that Franca and I are also members of the Tarot Club, apart from being part of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Moreover, the Tarot Club places great importance on matters related to the Celestial Worthy…

There’s also an information gap between them and the Celestial Worthy, leading to their downfall…

Have they not considered that their goals might not align with the Celestial Worthy’s?

Despite me lacking information as well, I wasn’t careless. I didn’t underestimate any visible or hidden enemies. Even a lion uses its full strength to hunt a rabbit…

Of course, the crucial aspect is that those holding key information and concealing it are on my side in this operation. What if they become my enemies next time? How should I deal with them…

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian sensed that his digestion of the Conspirer potion had significantly advanced, thanks to the successful hunt and the questions he had formulated. Seizing this opportunity, he summarized his third acting principle: “One of the keys to a conspiracy is information. A good Conspirer must be adept at exploiting information gaps and even take the initiative to create information gaps.”

Closing his eyes to assess his body’s condition, Lumian felt that another major, successful conspiracy and a period of daily accumulation should allow him to completely digest the Conspirer potion.

And that major conspiracy could be combined with the ritual to advance to Sequence 5 Reaper. No further planning was needed.

The Reaper ritual required a conspiracy to capture a target whose Sequence was higher than his—alive.

When Lumian opened his eyes, Madam Magician transmitted the darkness in her palm to him.

“You’ll be in charge of distributing these items. This is something a Hunter needs to learn and do well to advance to a demigod.”

“Alright.” Lumian was accustomed to distributing spoils of war.

He then added, “But before that, I’d like to meet Bard.”

That, too, was a spoil of war.

…

In the ancient and dilapidated palace in the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian, Franca, Hela, and Gandalf materialized one after another.

They were adorned in their usual attire for Gatherings, with Lumian now assuming the guise of Muggle Aurore.

Gandalf unceremoniously tossed Bard to the ground, not bothering to restrain him.

Bard surveyed the familiar surroundings, devoid of any notions of escape or resistance.

This was the concealed Nation of the Evernight, isolated from the outside world. How could he possibly flee?

And against two demigods, how could he even attempt resistance?

Bard swallowed hard and spoke preemptively, “I was also bewitched by Loki!”

All he could hope for now was that, leveraging his Sequence experience as a Swindler, he could successfully “convince” the two demigods.

Noticing the silence from Hela and Gandalf, Bard added, “I can lead you to Loki’s ancient castle. I know a clue, really!”

At that moment, Lumian Lee, masquerading as Muggle, spoke in a deep voice, “Just kill him and channel his spirit.”

Chapter 592 - 592 Bluff

592 Bluff

Kill him and channel his spirit?

Bard stared at Lumian Lee, masquerading as a Muggle, a chill running down his spine as his hair stood on end.

He sensed the unmistakable killing intent emanating from Lumian, causing fear to grip him.

However, a suspicion lingered in Bard's mind; he believed Lumian was trying to manipulate him, deliberately showcasing his anger and hatred to break his psychological defenses.

His suspicion arose because spirit channeling wasn't the optimal solution.

Celestial Worthy possessed a higher level than many evil gods, and the corruption of those evil gods could lead to a failed spirit channeling, what's more someone with the Celestial Worthy's bestowment.

Recognizing this, Bard's heart settled.

As a Swindler, he maintained a terrified expression, stepping back two paces as he looked at Lumian.

"I'll spill it all, no lies. You can verify it! Don't kill me!"

Lumian approached him step by step, brandishing a dagger.

Bard turned to Hela, Gandalf, and Franca, pleading in a "panicked" tone,

"He's lost his mind, and you're just going to let him be? Spirit

channeling isn't all-powerful!"

Bard deliberately used "him" as a pronoun, signaling that he knew Lumian wasn't Muggle, as if urging them not to play along.

In two steps, Lumian arrived in front of Bard, casting his gaze at the April Fool's key member, who couldn't temporarily change his appearance back. He raised the dagger in his hand.

Bard sneered inwardly, growing more convinced that Lumian Lee wouldn't actually end his life for spirit channeling—at least not yet.

If his current actions weren't an act, Gandalf and Hela would have intervened no matter what. They wouldn't just stand by! New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Bard strained his throat and shouted, as if terrorized, "I'll genuinely cooperate with you! I'll assist you in locating Loki and his ancient castle! See, I didn't even use my powers to resist in such a situation!"

As Bard shouted, he fixed his gaze on Lumian and the dagger's tip, attempting to convey evasion and pleading through his eyes. The former conveyed fear, and the latter was a plea for mercy.

Throughout this process, Bard's heart was filled with mockery, almost void of panic.

Trying to deceive a Swindler?

What a ludicrous notion!

I bet you'll stop after I count to five!

Five, four, three…

Pfft!

Bard's vision suddenly turned blood-red as the dagger thrust into his left eye, piercing through the gap in the eye socket and into his brain.

Impossible!

Absolutely impossible!

Is he truly going to kill me?

Intense pain overwhelmed Bard's mind, prompting him to instinctively raise his right hand and press it against his face. He fought in the opposite direction, striving to put some distance between himself and the dagger, the source of the agonizing damage.

Lumian reached out with his left hand, pinning Bard in place and making his struggles futile.

Then, Lumian leaned forward slightly and whispered into the ear of the April Fool's key member.

Bard glimpsed Muggle's beautiful face, her rosy lips moving as she whispered

—a whisper filled with satisfaction and mockery, "My godson has gnawed on half of Loki's arm and knows a lot about him. I believe that knowledge surpasses yours…"

Surpasses mine… If I had known earlier, I would have utilized my powers… Even in the midst of pain and struggle, Bard was momentarily stunned, feeling frustration, despair, and embarrassment.

Soon, these emotions dissipated. Lumian gripped the dagger embedded in Bard's eye socket and twisted it a few times, crushing the frontal lobe.

Observing Bard, who had now calmed down, Lumian nodded in satisfaction. He withdrew his dagger and earnestly assisted the other party in stemming the bleeding and bandaging the wound, though he skipped the disinfectant.

Only then did Franca approach and click her tongue.

"I thought you were just scaring him."

That's why she didn't intervene. She had watched as Lumian advanced toward Bard, dagger in hand, witnessing Bard's pleas for

mercy.

She believed Hela and Gandalf had similar expectations.

When the dagger pierced Bard's eye socket, Franca was taken aback. It was only then that she realized Lumian was serious!

No, Lumian didn't truly intend to kill Bard. Instead, he planned to employ the April Fool's created prank to deal with him, recreating the original state of I Know Someone.

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Franca asked curiously, "When did you master lobotomy?"

Lumian wiped the blood off the dagger with a white strap and smirked mockingly.

"I learned it from watching the doctor perform surgery on I Know Someone.

"It's such a simple procedure. As a Beyonder skilled in action, if I can't memorize and imitate it after watching it once, it only proves that my brain has been corrupted by the potion."

Impersonating Muggle, Lumian deliberately spoke in his sister's voice, as if she were still alive.

Franca looked at Aurore's face under the hood and listened to her voice. She wasn't angered by the mockery. She only muttered, "The surgery isn't just about inserting and stirring a few times. There are still many key points before and after the procedure. Even during the surgery, if you insert it just a bit deeper, the outcome will be entirely different."

"So be it. If he really dies, we'll commence the spirit channeling." Lumian casually poured the remaining truth serum into the mouth of the stunned Bard, who offered no resistance.

After completing this task, he added, "Madam Hela mentioned that this place can minimize the influence of evil gods."

"It's only minimal, not zero. Besides, what if the problem lies in his

spirit, and he self-destructs?" Franca instinctively retorted. This was why Hela hadn't directly pulled Bard into a dream to extract his true answers. After all, the dream might present scenes that shouldn't be seen. This was even more dangerous than simple verbal descriptions.

Only then did Gandalf, draped in a linen robe and a hood, sigh softly.

He couldn't bear to witness Bard's suffering, but he didn't discourage the actions taken. He wasn't the one who had been harmed by April Fool's. He wasn't in a position to criticize the victim's family for their extreme actions.

Before this operation, Hela had briefed Gandalf on Muggle's demise and Lumian Lee's role. The president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society sympathized with the siblings' plight, but he also blamed himself. He believed that the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had been unrestrained. As president, he bore a heavy responsibility.

After a moment, Bard, who had undergone a "requiem" and gradually recovered from his pain, started addressing the queries of the people present.

The first to inquire was Gandalf. He peered down at the Dream Stealer and asked, "How did you come to believe in that Celestial Worthy?"

Gandalf and Hela had already gathered intel on Celestial Worthy from Franca and Lumian, and they deemed it crucial.

Bard responded calmly, "From the beginning. I used to be a cultural relic thief and acquired a batch of ancient items. While studying their history to ascertain their value, I deciphered the meaning of some inscriptions…"

Abruptly, Hela cut Bard's narration short and said coldly,

"You don't have to explain the full meaning. Just mention a few keywords."

Bard had no intention of arguing. He remained as docile as a sheep.

“Keywords include: Deception, Fooling, Door of All Doors, Lord of Mysteries…

As Bard finished speaking, the ancient palace they were in suddenly became misty and unclear.

Simultaneously, Lumian’s left chest burned again.

In the next moment, the night sky outside the palace darkened even more, and all the mist vanished.

“Why did I feel like worms were growing in me just now?” Franca felt a lingering fear.

Merely a few names, incomplete honorific names, made her inexplicably uneasy. Every inch of her flesh seemed to come alive, about to transform into worms crawling out of her skin.

One of Bard’s initial plans was to answer Lumian and company’s questions dishonestly and without reservation. Then, he would take the initiative to reveal all the details regarding Celestial Worthy. He wanted to see if he could secretly corrupt his enemies and shake the Nation of the Evernight’s concealments to create a “door” to escape.

“If I could really use this to corrupt Gandalf and Hela, why would they kill me when we’re all Celestial Worthy believers? We would definitely work together to deal with Lumian Lee!”

Of course, Bard no longer harbored such thoughts. He had obtained an inevitable peace.

“Descriptions of high-level existences often indicate danger. In this world, ignorance might not be a bad thing.” Gandalf sighed and assessed what had just happened.

He then inquired about the follow-up.

Bard’s expression remained unchanged as he said, “After deciphering the words, I lost consciousness. When I woke up, I had already transmigrated to this world.

“After adapting to my new body, I instinctively recalled my previous

encounters and the words I had deciphered. Then, I saw a thin gray fog emanating from my surroundings and received a revelation from the Celestial Worthy.

“In other words, you believed in that Celestial Worthy as soon as you transmigrated, before the establishment of the Research Society?” Gandalf probed further.

“Yes.” Bard’s emotions lacked any fluctuations. “Back then, I thought that if I didn’t choose to submit, believe in Him, or follow Him, I might die on the spot. When that happened, I might not have a chance to transmigrate and revive. Later, I gradually realized His greatness. He could even fool the Nation of the Evernight and prevent our problems from being discovered.”

Gandalf pondered for a moment and asked, “How did Loki come to believe in that Celestial Worthy?”

Chapter 593 - 593 Fooled

593 Fooled

In response to Gandalf's question, Bard recounted the past with a directness that left little room for ambiguity.

"I don't know. He didn't tell me. After the founding of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, I began to notice the guy's actions and demeanor mirroring the influence of the Celestial Worthy. Likewise, he saw the same in me, prompting a mutual inquiry. Eventually, we confirmed each other's intentions, and assembled an April Fool's team."

Gandalf and Hela probed about the Celestial Worthy, but with no breakthroughs, Lumian, disguised as a Muggle, shifted his gaze to Bard and asked, "What was your crew's aim in disrupting the sea prayer ritual?"

"To control the underwater spaceship. It's our ticket to traversing the cosmos and holding our ground against Angels to some extent…" Bard revealed April Fool's plan.

Lumian's lips curved upward.

"Do you know what's sealed in the depths of that spaceship?"

At this revelation, Franca suddenly grasped the core issue.

Spaceship?

The thing at the bottom of Port Santa is a spaceship?

Isn't this too sci-fi and not mystical enough?

Does this world have everything?

To expedite the interrogation of Bard, a key member of April Fool's, Lumian and Franca had entered the Nation of the Evernight without much communication.

"Spaceship…" Gandalf echoed the term, his tone brimming with unmistakable yearning.

Hela maintained a silence akin to the depths of night.

Bard responded to Lumian's inquiry, "According to our interpretation of the language and the insights from the Celestial Worthy, that spacecraft functions as both a petri dish and an incubation chamber. It's nurturing a high-level creature. Control the spaceship, and you control it. Without that control, the spacecraft alone won't stand a chance against an Angel."

The smile of "Aurore" became even more alluring.

"Ever wondered why the ancient Angel who sealed the spaceship didn't take control of it? Why didn't They command the high-level creature or destroy it outright?"

Bard fell silent momentarily before articulating, "It might take a considerable time for the high-level creature to mature. Taking control of the spaceship would halt everything. Patience is required until the recent few years—just before the creature is due—before it can be managed."

Lumian's smile beneath the hood grew brighter.

"If that's the case, the ancient Angel who sealed the high-level creature will definitely reappear. Did you have the confidence to resist an Angel and win the spaceship? Or do you believe the Angel either didn't try to decipher or couldn't decipher the true meaning of those commands?"

"It's been so many years—They might have already perished…" Bard paused.

In his dream, a creature on the altar, potentially the avatar of an ancient Angel, hinted that the Angel might still be observing Milo Village and those waters.

“Why didn’t we think to confirm it before embarking on the entire plan…” Bard voiced his doubts, his emotions showing no apparent shifts.

Lumian replied with a smile, “I can tell you that the spaceship isn’t sealed with a high-level creature. It’s an incomplete, nascent black hole. Once unsealed and piloted away, it will absorb the mystical body housing it, suck you guys in, and completely take shape, tearing apart and devouring the current world.

“Back then, the ancient Angels didn’t attempt to control it because it was dangerous, idiot!”

Bard was once again taken aback, as if he had never considered such a possibility.

After a moment, he hesitated and said, “We… might have… been fooled…”

Though Bard’s emotions remained unchanging, the blood-colored liquid that trickled from the simple bandage down the bridge of his nose painted a tragic and mournful picture.

Lumian burst into laughter, his back bending slightly.

“Do you only now realize that you’ve all been fooled by that Celestial Worthy? He provided revelations to mislead you. Through your deaths, He could open the seal and destroy this world to achieve His goals!

“Haha, April Fool’s, indeed an organization of fools!”

Bard fell into silence once more, then candidly expressed his thoughts.

“We’re fools, truly fools…”

Meanwhile, Gandalf and the others had varied reactions.

Dammit, a black hole? Destroy this world? Franca had thought the news of a spaceship was explosive enough, but she hadn’t expected something even more terrifying to follow.

And an entity creating a black hole?

Franca, lacking direct understanding of top-level powers, realized the magnitude of such a great existence.

Previously, she felt she had a sufficient understanding of the world. Now, she admitted frankly, I'm still a f*cking elementary school student!

Gandalf took a deep breath and said, "If I become a god, it would be so convenient for me to conduct research… Black holes…"

Hela retrieved a metal flask from her black widow clothes and took a sip, her thoughts inscrutable.

Lumian's laughter echoed for a moment, providing a brief respite. However, underlying pain still gripped his heart, resonating in the shadows within. It couldn't be eradicated or dismissed.

In the presence of the key members of April Fool's, memories of his sister Aurore's tragic fate couldn't be ignored.

Bard stood there, a silent reminder of a fact deliberately overlooked.

Hence, Lumian couldn't help but utter, "kill him and channel his spirit," resorting to action in a half-truth manner.

Looking at Bard, Lumian inquired, "Do you know if Ultraman and Mad Lady have been to Cordu?"

"Yes," replied Bard. "Part of our original plan was to find Nolfi's child, the sea maid. She lived in Intis's Riston Province. A stopover at Cordu was intended to confirm Muggle's situation and the final outcome of the prank."

At the mention of "prank," a vein on Lumian's forehead throbbed.

"How could you be so sure that Muggle was already dead?"

Hearing Lumian, disguised as a Muggle, pose this question, Gandalf let out another inaudible sigh. Franca sighed inwardly.

Bard shook his head.

“I’m unsure. Mad Lady and Ultraman went. They informed me the village was wiped out. No chance for anyone to make it out alive. They might have even employed divination, spirit channeling, and such to be sure.”

“Impossible for anyone to survive?” Lumian smiled. “Am I not human?”

Bard glanced at him and spoke his mind.

“You might not even pass as human anymore.”

That’s not wrong. I’m now a humanoid Sealed Artifact with self-awareness and fate… Lumian made a self-deprecating remark before adding, “The number of survivors is greater than you can imagine. A certain madame, her husband, butler, and maidservant had fled.”

Without giving Bard a chance to respond, Lumian inquired further,

“What was Loki trying to achieve with the Muggle incident?”

“I wasn’t deeply involved. Just tossed in a few ideas; not much in the loop,” Bard admitted honestly. “Ultraman might have a clue. He and Loki teamed up in other ventures.”

“In what ventures?” Lumian persisted.

Bard shook his head slowly.

“Not entirely sure about the specifics. It’s tied to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.”

Connected to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church? Ultraman, a Sequence 5 Priest of Light on the Sun pathway… The humanoid Sealed Artifact lost by the church on the betrothal ship… Lumian’s instincts kicked in.

“Any key April Fool’s members that are not transmigrators?”

They had previously misconstrued April Fool’s as a gang of

degenerated transmigrators. Yet, as an organization, it naturally expanded.

After all these years, April Fool's likely harbored more key members!

Bard nodded.

"Yes."

As expected… Lumian shot a glance at Franca, garbed in Assassin attire, seeking confirmation from Bard.

"One of them is a Purifier from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, and he holds a decent status?"

"Yes," Bard confirmed again. "Thanks to him, we got wind of a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact we could utilize when we altered our plan. He even assisted in its escape from the seal."

"And who might this person be?" Franca inquired, stepping in for the absent 007.

"It's a one-way line to Loki," Bard indicated, revealing his lack of knowledge about the member's true identity.

Franca chuckled, saying, "If the Eternal Blazing Sun Church launches an inquiry, they might stumble upon some leads."

Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts weren't just lying around. They couldn't be pilfered casually!

Lumian, noting Gandalf and Hela had no more queries, turned to Bard.

"What intel do you have on Loki's ancient castle?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"It goes by the name Dylan—a charming name," Bard began. "Loki once told me it's a concealed ancient castle. Impossible to discover or see under normal circumstances. In simpler terms, you can't pinpoint its location through appearance or history.

“I’ve always envied Loki inheriting such a treasure after transmigration—an ancient castle. Later, he relied on the Celestial Worthy’s revelation and the corresponding boon to succeed. I once tried to swindle Castle Dylan for myself, but I failed.”

Chapter 594 - 594 Execution

594 Execution

Franca almost chuckled in exasperation at Bard's remark.

April Fool's not only deceived outsiders but also themselves. If they didn't believe in Celestial Worthy, cooperation wouldn't be on the table.

Bard delved into his knowledge about Castle Dylan.

"That ancient castle used to be the domain of a secret organization known as the Secret Order. Loki became a member of the organization when he transmigrated. The story goes that the initial leader of the Secret Order personally constructed the ancient castle and concealed it over a century ago."

Curious, Franca inquired, "Who's leading the Secret Order now?"

Bard shook his head slowly.

"Loki is in the dark about that too. Only those who've become Bizarro Sorcerers or Sequence 4 demigods within the Secret Order can meet the leader and establish a connection with him. Others merely follow the orders of their direct superiors.

"Loki once contemplated murdering his mentor, his immediate superior in the Secret Order, to gain the Bizarro Sorcerer Beyonder characteristic and stage a grand performance. Yet, due to his comprehension and fear of Bizarro Sorcerers, he never solidified this idea into a concrete plan. Eventually, he gathered all the Bizarro Sorcerer potion ingredients in Castle Dylan and entirely abandoned his initial scheme.

"Do you think a hidden place like Castle Dylan, with its long history,

would be quiet, cold, and sinister? Contrary to expectations, Loki informed me that it's quite lively, featuring a grand performance every day."

A grand performance… Hela recalled the pitch-black ancient castle she had glimpsed in Loki's dream, along with the wax-statue-like guests inside.

Deep in thought, Lumian asked Bard, "How do you suggest we locate Castle Dylan?"

"I'm still missing crucial clues," Bard admitted sincerely. "If finding Castle Dylan were that straightforward, the current leader of the Secret Order would have seized it and ousted Loki. No, he would've turned Loki into his puppet."

Lumian intended to inquire more thoroughly with Ludwig later, seeking any information he might have gained after consuming half of Loki's arm.

"What about Hisoka? What insights do you have on Hisoka?" Lumian inquired.

Bard seemed to recollect something.

"That guy doesn't quite fit in. He prefers going solo. The rare instances of collaboration are mostly with Mad Lady.

"We all sense his emotions are pretty unpredictable, swinging between joy and anger. Mad Lady, however, remarked that he's not pure enough.

"He's highly dangerous—on par with Loki. His specific path remains a mystery. I've witnessed him using his abilities twice, both times involving mystical items. It's a poker card that can change its face, showcasing the attributes of Frost and Cut respectively. Word has it that Hisoka sought out an Artisan outside the Research Society to customize it after hunting a Beyonder."

Regrettably, Mad Lady is dead, and there's no means to commune with her spirit. She undoubtedly held more information about Hisoka… Does not being pure enough mean that Hisoka isn't as

unhinged as he appears? Is his occasional madness a deliberate facade? Lumian pondered with a twinge of regret.

Even though Lumian had obtained Mad Lady's remains, her spirit had been severely corrupted by Celestial Worthy. Some of it had even been "washed away" by the power of the sea, completely obliterated.

Lumian sighed quietly and shifted the conversation to a different topic.

"Do you have insights into the sea's power on Ultraman?"

"Indeed." Bard shared his findings candidly. "I played a role in deciphering the extraterrestrial language, although the Celestial Worthy provided crucial revelations. Additionally, the power of the sea is not exclusive to the offspring of Port Santa. I once encountered two heretics in Lenburg with similar abilities, and I managed to extract corresponding knowledge from them.

"This information greatly aided my decryption efforts, revealing that this pathway is not solely tied to the sea. In fact, only a small portion of it involves the sea.

"The power primarily emanates from the stars and the land beneath our feet. As you all are aware, our world is, after all, a planet.

"The corresponding Sequence 9 is known as Astronomy Aficionado. It focuses on acquiring knowledge of the cosmos, related information, an initial perception of reality, and enhancing one's physique.

"Sequence 8, named Star Worshiper, can decipher the Star Language or the Language of the Stars and receive insights into fate.

"Sequence 7, called Star Sacrificer, gains true powers through sacrificial rituals involving the stars. This encompasses Gravity Abnormality, Weakening Ray, Electromagnetic Attraction, and Cosmic Void.

"Sequence 6 is Navigator. They possess a deeper understanding of space and dimensions, allowing them to locate hidden passageways in the void and navigate and adjust routes between the stars. Navigating ships at sea becomes a straightforward task for them.

Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

“Sequence 5, Tidal Scholar, further masters gravity and can whip up massive waves capable of shattering ships and demolishing docks.

“As for Sequence 4, it’s known as Heavybringer. Unfortunately, I’m not too certain about their specific abilities.”

Lumian remained silent, taking a couple of steps back and signaling for Franca and the others to continue questioning.

His primary concern centered around Loki’s connection to Hisoka; anything else seemed less crucial.

Franca studied Bard for a moment before inquiring, “Have you recruited other members into April Fool’s?”

“Yes,” Bard admitted without hesitation.

After detailing what he knew about the April Fool’s members outside the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Franca asked with curiosity, “Why did you choose the nickname Bard? Considering your past identity and current class, wouldn’t Kaitō or Kid be more fitting?”

Bard responded calmly, “My current body was a bard, a wandering artist who often dabbled in thievery and swindling. He met his end when discovered trying to cheat others out of their money, suffering a severe beating.”

Cheat, swindle, and steal—Franca thought. You know everything; it suits you quite well.

Franca turned to Hela and Gandalf, stating, “I have no further questions.”

“Neither do I,” Gandalf acknowledged, recognizing that Bard’s life was approaching its end.

Muggle’s brother wouldn’t let him off the hook!

“Neither do I,” Hela added.

Lumian raised his right hand, generating a dark-green glow at his fingertips.

The light transformed into a strange ray, penetrating Bard's chest.

Weakening Ray!

Lumian still had access to a week's worth of sea power, approaching the level of Sequence 5.

Bard's face contorted, muscles and nerves reacting instinctively.

His chest, close to his neck, rapidly melted and peeled, exposing the flesh beneath.

Seeing this, Gandalf sighed again.

Gandalf sighed, condensing a straight sword with Sunrise Gleam and driving it towards Bard.

The light blade impaled Bard's head, and he crumpled to the ground with a thud, held down by the sword.

Bard writhed like a skinned insect, convulsing as life left his body.

Lumian observed in silence, refraining from intervening as Gandalf freed Bard.

When Bard's breath ceased, and he lay motionless, Lumian turned to Gandalf and Hela.

"Thank you for your assistance."

"It's our duty. We're all accountable for the harm April Fool's caused to the other members of the Research Society," Gandalf responded gravely.

Lumian didn't contest. Instead, he disclosed, "Before the operation, I mentioned joining a secret organization before assuming my sister's identity. To seek revenge, I invited members of that secret organization to assist. I believe you all have seen or sensed their presence."

He strategically linked the appearance of the Tarot Club to himself, safeguarding Franca's identity as a Minor Arcana card holder.

"And which organization is that?" Gandalf inquired curiously.

As per Hela's account, the secret organization exhibited Angel-level power, and the demigod "Cinderella" who appeared at sea was equally formidable.

"The Tarot Club," Lumian revealed truthfully.

"You're one of the Minor Arcana card holders?" Gandalf deduced.

He had heard about the Tarot Club.

Lumian nodded without denying it.

Curiosity piqued, Franca asked, "Which card represents that 'Cinderella' demigod? And why does her magic have such a dreamy quality? Moreover, it resembles fairy tales from before our transmigration!"

She maintained her role while genuinely expressing curiosity.

Lumian recalled Madam Magician's guidance and grinned.

"Major Arcana card, The Hermit."

Pausing momentarily, he added, "I'm uncertain about why she can transform your fairy tales into magic. What I do know is that she's closely tied to Emperor Roselle's descendant."

"Descendant of Emperor Roselle's eldest daughter, Bernadette?" Franca and the others, having read numerous entries from Roselle's diary, immediately speculated.

"Perhaps, but it's not Bernadette herself," Lumian honestly disclosed.

That was the extent of his knowledge.

"Is that so…" Franca, Gandalf, and Hela felt enlightened.

So, it was connected to Emperor Roselle's faction!

It made sense for the Emperor to create fairytale magic.

After a brief pause, Lumian suggested, “You should probably prevent the Research Society from disseminating those fairy tales.”

“Understood,” Gandalf agreed.

Lumian pondered for a moment before stating, “I’ve concluded my involvement with the Research Society and have joined another secret organization. It’s no longer suitable for me to participate in the Research Society’s gatherings. You may find an opportunity to reveal the truth to the other members.”

Gandalf and Hela exchanged glances and proposed, “You can continue playing the role of Muggle and acquire resources and assistance from the Research Society. We owe it to your sister.”

Chapter 595 - 595 Spoils of War

595 Spoils of War

Lumian wasted no time with pleasantries and accepted Gandalf's invitation without hesitation.

Firstly, within the vast expanse of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were numerous pathways. Besides the relatively scarce Devils, he gained access to a wealth of knowledge and various items. While these might not surpass what he already possessed in strength, they held the potential to unexpectedly shine in specific situations.

Secondly, this decision provided him with a pretext to continue assuming the role of Aurore as a Muggle. It created the illusion that his sister still existed somewhere in the world.

After the quartet concluded their discussion about the events in the peculiar waters, Bard's lifeless body underwent a startling transformation. Ephemeral lights coalesced in the corpse's right hand, causing both flesh and bones to crumble simultaneously.

Eventually, the palm resembled that of a baby—small and pallid.

The pale hue swiftly shifted, adopting a darker shade reminiscent of the ancient palace's surroundings.

It was a Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic.

Lumian focused his attention and detected a faint grayish-white fog within the shrunken palm.

He approached Bard's corpse, crouching down to search for additional items.

With this task accomplished, Lumian retrieved the spoils obtained

from Mad Lady and Loki from his Traveler's Bag, placing them on the decrepit stone slabs of the ancient palace.

These included: a transparent, almost ethereal crystal, a bracelet with three diamonds flanked by four different-colored gems, a rose-gold ring adorned with crimson, blood-like gems, a simple silver ring, a dark-gold mask capable of concealing the entire face, a featureless small doll bound with white cloth, an intricate but exquisite mechanical music box, and a grayish-white brooch with a metallic gleam resembling lightning.

Accompanied by a relatively thin blank painting album and the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic, the total count reached ten items.

Lumian then looked up and addressed Hela and Gandalf, "You can choose—

one each."

"It's our duty," Gandalf asserted, signifying the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's commitment to rectify past errors.

Speaking in Aurore's tone, Lumian, shrouded in his hood, remarked,

"Duty doesn't preclude the choice of spoils. Just because official Beyonders must protect citizens doesn't mean they can't receive rewards."

Gandalf pondered for a moment before turning to Hela. Seeing her lack of objection, he sighed and conceded, "Fine."

Lumian's lips formed a smile as he pointed to each item, providing a concise introduction.

"The illusory transparent stone is a Traveler Beyonder characteristic left behind by Mad Lady, but it's severely corrupted. The thin gray fog emanating from it serves as evidence of this.

"The Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic is similarly corrupted by that Celestial Worthy, but the severity is not extreme. It's slightly less severe than the remains of most heretics after their deaths.

“That bracelet comes from Loki, known as the Seven-Stone Bracelet. Each diamond corresponds to a teleportation, and each colored gem corresponds to a ten-second Blink. Once used, it’s gone. The drawback is that you hear random sounds when you wear it—ranging from a man having an affair to sounds from an unknown creature.

“This golden ring, named Blood Gold, bears an engraved inner loop with a brief sentence—’Controlling flesh and blood means controlling everything.’ Its function enables the wearer to control their flesh and blood like a Rose Bishop. Additionally, they can employ three flesh and blood magics—Flesh Bomb, Flesh Cloak, and Flesh Blood Fusion. The drawback is repeated use may lead to dependence. Ceasing to wear it results in the body collapsing into a pile of flesh and blood, unable to maintain human form. Continual wear may lead to madness and loss of control.

“That silver ring is a semi-finished Ring of the Sea Queen, possessing a high-

level Steal ability usable only once. The drawback is that an ancient Angel will take notice of you.

“The dark-gold mask, a possession of Loki, survived his self-destruction. Its exact function remains unknown. Sensing it, one might feel an intense desire to wear it, believing it would grant abnormal power. Let’s call it the Demon Mask.

“This featureless white cloth doll, a creation of Mad Lady, corresponds to the Faceless of the Seer pathway. When affixed to your shoulder, adjusting its facial features and figure is akin to altering your own appearance. Simultaneously, it empowers the wearer to master the ability to create Paper Figurine Substitutes. However, only the first paper figurine proves effective. Beyond these functions, it allows the wearer to employ flames for a dynamic leap and develop a certain premonition of danger. Be warned, though—

carrying it around brings weak bad luck. Moreover, one day, you may realize that its face mirrors yours, and you will cease to be yourself.”

“This mechanical music box, discovered on Loki’s corpse, is from an

unknown pathway or Sequence. It's rumored that the music it plays has the potential to either kill or drive anyone who hears it into madness. However, a prerequisite exists—you must hear the music for at least ten seconds."

"I just found this blank painting album from Bard. Its precise effects and drawbacks remain unknown, but based on my experience, the depictions on its pages may come to life or exhibit special effects. Notably, only nine pages remain, showing signs of tearing."

"This brooch, belonging to Mad Lady, appears crafted in anticipation of the loss of the Governor of the Sea's authority and the sea's berserk state. It grants the wearer fish scales, mitigating damage and enabling underwater breathing and movement akin to a fish. Each strike carries the effect of Electric Shock, with a near 100% probability of triggering natural lightning strikes in thunderstorms. Aligned with Sequence 6 or 5 of the Sailor pathway, the negative consequence is a heightened likelihood of being struck by lightning on rainy days, coupled with increased irritability and anxiety after wearing it."

Lumian concluded the introduction of the spoils of war, his knowledge derived from Madam Magician.

It was evident that for the success of the sea prayer ritual, April Fool's had entrusted most of their mystical items to Mad Lady. Bard had only left behind an ordinary-looking blank painting album. On the other hand, Loki, the leader of April Fool's, had seemingly retained his items privately. Whether it was his nature or a deliberate choice to retrieve them for hunting Ludwig remained unknown.

Gandalf looked at Hela. "Take your pick first."

Hela approached Lumian, carefully inspecting the ten items

before singling out Mad Lady's Traveler Beyonder characteristic.

"It's severely corrupted. Whether you decide to keep it or have an Artisan craft items, it's quite dangerous. Leave it to me."

In other words, she suggested that she had a method to handle it and mitigate potential harm.

“Alright.” Lumian didn’t object.

He respected the wishes of each individual and allowed them to choose whatever they wanted. Of course, the order of selection mattered too. His team would be last, and he would be last.

Hela extended her right hand, and the night outside the ancient palace seemed to stir.

The illusory crystal shrouded in grayish-white fog vanished.

After Hela returned to her spot, Gandalf made his selection.

Franca’s heart skipped a beat as she observed the president scrutinizing the remaining nine items. She whispered,

Don’t choose the Seven-Stone Bracelet, don’t choose the Seven-Stone Bracelet…

That was the teleportation she had been longing for!

The Traveler Beyonder characteristic was too dangerous. She didn’t dare to set her sights on it. Although the Seven-Stone Bracelet was an expendable item, its advantage lay in its many uses and its relatively manageable negative effects.

Gandalf’s intense gaze fixed on the dark-gold mask, his mutterings barely audible,

“I’ve got a burning desire to delve into its powers and potential…

“But it’s too risky. I’m itching to put it on now…

“Yes, the Blood Gold ring aids my experiments into dangerous matters. The blank painting album requires further exploration…

“The high-level Steal ability is also worth studying… But being noticed by an ancient Angel is no small matter…”

After thorough contemplation, Gandalf turned to Hela and spoke, “Can I leave the silver ring here? I want to arrive half an hour early to study it before every gathering.”

“Alright,” Hela agreed to Gandalf’s request.

Thus, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society opted for the half-finished Ring of the Sea Queen.

Franca let out a sigh of relief and grinned at Gandalf.

“President, you really should’ve gone down the Reader pathway. You suit their style perfectly.”

Why did he have to pick Warrior just to live up to the title of Gandalf?

Gandalf, the half-giant in a linen robe, glanced at Franca, smiling without uttering a word. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian stowed the remaining items back into his Traveler’s Bag, not affording Franca an opportunity to choose first.

…

At Port Santa, near Solow Motel, inside Loki’s rented room.

Lumian received a response from Madam Magician:

“Even I can’t decipher the intricate abilities of that dark-gold mask, indicating its exceptional nature. Inquire with Mr. K if he desires it. If not, leave it in my care for now. I’ll seal it and await the opportune moment. It might prove useful when the time comes.

“Ma’am Hermit has her eyes on the mechanical music box. Other items hold little significance for her, but this one, at least, is exquisite.

“Mr. Moon expresses interest in the faceless doll; as for the reason, I remain in the dark.

“I’ll entrust you with distributing the rest.”

Chapter 596 - 596 Lord's Revelation?

596 Lord's Revelation?

In Mr. K's temporary apartment in Port Santa,

Lumian unpacked the remaining spoils of war from his Traveler's Bag, placing them on the coffee table.

He shot a glance at Mr. K, who, now adorned in a black robe with a deep hood, spoke first, "These are the gains from the operation. Perhaps there's a revelation from the Lord among them."

Mr. K nodded subtly, diverting his attention to the items, his gaze fixating on the dark-gold mask.

In a deep, hoarse voice, he mused, "I sense something special about it. This should be a revelation from the Lord."

With a swift motion, Mr. K extended his right hand, pulling the strange dark-

gold mask into his grasp amidst a sudden gust of wind.

However, the Aurora Order Oracle didn't put the mask on; instead, he discreetly stowed it away in a hidden pocket within his black robe.

Witnessing this, Lumian was momentarily taken aback.

He had been contemplating how to subtly carry out Madam Magician's instructions, aiming to inquire if Mr. K desired the dark-gold mask. Surprisingly, he had spontaneously fabricated a Lord-given revelation as an excuse. Before Lumian could specify which item it was, Mr. K had chosen the dark-gold mask himself.

Could it genuinely be a revelation from the Lord? Hiss… Lumian took a deep breath.

Had Madam Magician sent me to ask Mr. K because she foresaw something or glimpsed something?

These high-ranking figures always prefer to communicate through hints and revelations. Couldn't they be more direct?

Amidst his thoughts, Lumian stowed away the remaining items and earnestly addressed Mr. K,

"I didn't expect the matter to escalate like this. I initially believed that with you and my sister's friends from her past, it would suffice to seek vengeance. Yet, it spiraled into something of a much higher magnitude. Thankfully, my sister's allies were vigilant and leveraged their connections."

The sincerity in the first half of Lumian's statement contrasted with the second half, which explained the influx of demigods, even Angel-level forces, this time. He subtly shifted the blame to Franca and Aurore's associates.

Lumian sensed a high likelihood that Mr. K might not fully buy into his explanation. Disregarding the possibility of the Aurora Order's Oracle Grazing a relatively high Sequence Spectator, Lumian believed that the intentional arrangements and subtle traces left behind by the entity he believed in were sufficient evidence of constant watching, listening, and awareness. As for Sequence 8 of the Shepherd pathway, known as Listeners, they often received revelations from that figure.

Nevertheless, Lumian needed a plausible excuse. He couldn't just tell Mr. K outright, "Yes, I am a member of the Aurora Order, part of the Tarot Club, and also affiliated with the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. My Major Arcana card holder is an Angel, and I know countless demigods who can lend a hand. Besides worshiping your Lord, I also believe in Mr. Fool. Occasionally, I praise the Sun and say By Steam…"

Wasn't this equivalent to provoking him in his face?

Unspoken truths didn't always need to be voiced.

Mr. K subtly nodded.

"Good job. Dealing with matters involving evil gods demands all your strength."

Then, he added, "After learning that your adversary is tied to an ancient evil god, I've already reported it to the higher-ups. At that time, our Aurora Order's Angels were likely keeping an eye. If anything truly occurred, one or more would have definitely descended."

"…" Lumian's expression froze.

Did the Aurora Order's Angel also observe the spaceship back then?

Isn't this setup too exaggerated? April Fool's isn't even an organization with a single demigod!

Is Celestial Worthy such a taboo when it comes to Madam Magician and the Aurora Order?

It's understandable for the Tarot Club to give it significance, especially considering its connection to Mr. Fool's awakening. But why does the Aurora Order behave as if they're confronting a formidable adversary…

Lumian pushed aside the issue of inviting an Angel and four demigods for his revenge. He couldn't help but sigh at the Aurora Order's exaggerated reaction.

Mr. K fixed his gaze on his subordinate and delivered a passionate lecture, "Just because high-ranking individuals are keeping an eye on us doesn't mean we can be lax and handle things half-heartedly. These individuals have numerous crucial matters to attend to. They might only cast an occasional glance our way. If we don't put in enough effort and work diligently, it could easily lead to complete failure. And in that scenario, death won't be sufficient to atone for our sins."

"Yes, yes, you're right," Lumian echoed Mr. K without any intention

of arguing.

…

Upon returning to Loki's rented apartment, Lumian gathered the remaining five spoils of war and grinned at Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

"It's finally our turn to choose."

Not wanting to tease the eager Franca any further, Lumian pointed to the dining table where the items were laid out.

"Take your pick first."

"Hehe." Franca smiled sheepishly, shamelessly picking up the Seven-Stone Bracelet. She exclaimed excitedly, "I can teleport too!"

"Aren't you afraid of overhearing something you shouldn't?" Lumian teased.

Franca had already considered this issue.

"It's not like I'll wear it forever. I'll only use it when I need it. And teleportation takes only a short time. If I really hear an unknown voice, the impact will be minimal. I should be fine if I remove it in time.

"Don't worry. The negative effects of Beyonder items similar to charms aren't strong. They can even be considered weak."

Lumian scoffed dismissively.

"Have you forgotten what you have on you?

"Primordial Demoness figurine! Mirror World Fragment!"

What if she heard the Primordial Demoness's ravings?

Franca cleared her throat and said, "I'm now a member of the Demoness Sect and a believer in the Primordial Demoness. What's wrong with listening to the voice of God? At most, it'll make me

excited. When the time comes, heh heh…"

She glanced at Lumian and Jenna, keeping her thoughts to herself.

"I'll get your help!"

Franca immediately added, "Furthermore, my Primordial Demoness figurine and the Mirror World Fragment are stored in the Traveler's Bag. They won't be taken out unless absolutely necessary. It's as if they're sealed."

Lumian remained silent. He turned to Jenna and Anthony, asking, "Which one of you wants to go first?"

"Anthony. He played a more significant role than me this time," Jenna replied politely.

Anthony smiled.

"Are you disregarding me as an Intisian man? I still believe in 'lady's first.'"

Considering Jenna's usual Showy Diva demeanor, she might have typically responded with something like, "Those Intisian men who claim 'lady's first' only want to get them in bed. Are you having such thoughts about me too?"

Jenna, despite her lack of overt actions, had a knack for teasing in a crude manner.

However, at this moment, after exchanging glances with Lumian and Franca, she turned to Anthony with sincerity.

"I'm in a dilemma. I want you to help me eliminate an option."

Anthony didn't decline and assessed the remaining four items.

"The Blood Gold ring enhances my survivability and strengthens my direct attacks. However, whether it's dependency or madness, it's something a Psychiatrist should avoid. Furthermore, I'm now a Hypnotist. I can use Psychological Invisibility and have the protection of Dragon Scales.

“Apart from underwater mobility, this brooch can only be used in close combat. Why would a Hypnotist like me engage in close combat?

“The Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristics and blank painting album aren’t bad. If the former is crafted into a mystical item with weak negative effects, it should be very useful. However, that’s not a certainty for the moment unless I find a very good Artisan…”

Anthony decided on the blank painting album.

“As an information broker, I’m adept at sketching. Such an item that can create different effects is very suitable for a Hypnotist to observe first before taking action.”

Without needing Madam Magician’s explanation, Franca had already used Magic Mirror Divination to confirm the function of the blank painting album: “The objects drawn on it might become alive and stay so for a short period of time. They might also have different effects. The painting paper will lose its mystical effects after being used once. The negative effect is never to respond to the knocks coming from the painting paper.”

Lumian and Jenna agreed that it was very similar to the abilities of Pixies.

After Anthony stored the painting paper, Jenna seized the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic without hesitation.

“Why?” Lumian inquired with amusement.

Jenna looked at him and grinned happily. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

“It’s the most valuable! Among the remaining three items, only it corresponds to a Sequence 5. Even if it fails to become a mystical item, it can be sold for a large sum of money.”

I still owe Franca 45,000 verl d’or. In the future, I might even purchase the Demoness of Pleasure potion formula from her.

“An excellent reason.” Lumian casually glanced at the remaining two

items and placed the grayish-white lightning-shaped brooch on his chest. “I want this. In the future, call it the Fury of the Sea.”

He chose the brooch over Blood Gold because, as an Ascetic, he could bear impatience and other emotions. Pure madness was too dangerous for him, given the darkness in his heart.

Lumian tossed the Blood Gold ring to Franca.

“Put it in your Traveler’s Bag. Anyone can use it whenever needed. It shouldn’t be used often.”

“You won’t give it to Madam Magician?” Franca asked in puzzlement.

“Do you think she’ll take a fancy to it?” Lumian stuffed the Fury of the Sea into his Traveler’s Bag and chuckled. “Her spoils of war are naturally the humanoid Sealed Artifact, but she might return it to the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.”

With that, Lumian turned to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, “Next, I’m going to do something unsuitable for others to see. Do you want to watch?”

Chapter 597 - 597 Too Dirty

597 Too Dirty

Franca's curiosity was piqued by Lumian's words.

"Is there anything we can't see?"

"Are you sure you want to watch? I'm afraid it will deal a strong blow to your mind," Lumian asked in a teasing tone.

Amused, Franca pointed at herself and retorted, "Me? I'm not a minor. My mind is very mature. Why wouldn't I dare to look? Heh, I'm much more knowledgeable than you, boy!"

Jenna nodded in agreement, silently endorsing Franca's claim.

Without further persuasion, Lumian left the apartment and headed to the room he had rented with a fake ID to monitor himself.

Lugano was staying there with Ludwig.

Franca followed with Jenna and Anthony, muttering, "I thought it was something major. Isn't it just going to your godson? What impact on the mind…"

Lumian signaled for Lugano to retreat temporarily. Then, he retrieved two gruesome items from his Traveler's Bag, forming a humanoid figure with them.

Maintaining an unchanged expression, Lumian looked at Ludwig and pointed at the two parts of Mad Lady's corpse.

"Is it edible?"

Edible… Franca was taken aback.

Her gaze shifted between the repulsive corpse parts and Ludwig's boyish appearance. Suddenly, she felt a wave of nausea, as if her mind had been corrupted by the imagined scene.

Indeed, Lumian's godson gained knowledge or abilities by consuming specific creatures, including humans. Memory, after all, was a form of knowledge!

Franca couldn't suppress her urge to retch, regretting her decision to witness the cannibalistic act.

To make matters worse, she knew the person who had been consumed—Mad Lady. She had interacted with her before.

Jenna's face contorted, clearly struggling to contain her churning stomach acid. Anthony, a seasoned veteran accustomed to witnessing scenes of gore, subconsciously frowned.

Ludwig scrutinized the two bloody corpse parts in Lumian's hands for a moment before slowly shaking his head.

"It's too dirty."

Dirty? Could it be a reference to the severe corruption of the Celestial Worthy? Even you won't dare to swallow it for fear of something happening? Lumian threw Mad Lady's two corpse parts to the ground with regret, summoning a crimson fireball that was nearly white.

Rather than exploding, the fireball adhered to Mad Lady's corpse, burning and compressing it into charred dust.

Amidst the dancing flames and the burning fragrance, Franca and Jenna breathed a sigh of relief.

Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down, addressing Ludwig, who was nonchalantly nibbling on a cupcake, "Wasn't that person's arm dirty?"

He was referring to Loki.

"Just a little. The dirtiest part isn't on the arm," Ludwig commented casually, as if discussing which fish were poisonous and how they

should be consumed.

Only then did Lumian get to the point.

“What did you gain from that person’s arm?”

“Some knowledge,” Ludwig replied, nonchalantly nibbling on a sponge cake covered in light cream, as if he preferred not to be disturbed while eating.

Lumian, feigning indifference, asked bluntly, “What are they?”

Ludwig’s voice alternated between clarity and muffled tones as he replied, “Sequence Knowledge about his pathway… There are two other terms… One is Dylan… and the other is Orville…”

Dylan? Is that the name of Loki’s ancient castle? And what’s Orville? Lumian’s curiosity peaked, prompting him to interrupt Ludwig.

“Apart from the name itself, is there any relevant knowledge?”

Ludwig seized the opportunity to take another bite of cake. After chewing and swallowing, he said, “No, but… these two terms seem to be connected. Orville should be the name of a place, and Dylan is the castle’s name.”

Connected… Name of a place… Castle Dylan is in Orville? Where is Orville? Lumian turned to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, realizing they were clueless, shaking their heads in ignorance.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian spoke in a deep voice,

“Our next priority is to find information about Orville and Dylan through our respective channels.”

Getting nods of agreement from Franca and the others, Lumian asked Ludwig again, “Anything else?”

“His spirituality is quite abundant, and his quality isn’t bad. He doesn’t like hard liquor or drinking freely. He only drinks champagne and occasionally has coffee. He’s a loyal advocate of tea leaves. He’s healthy, has good bowel movement, and urinates normally. He hates

the smell of the washroom…" Ludwig shared the information obtained from the half arm.

Franca listened with keen interest, and just as Lumian was about to interject, Ludwig divulged another piece of valuable information:

"He owns Castle Dylan, but he doesn't reside there. He only returns occasionally. He's not the sole proprietor yet. Many areas there aren't accessible to him. Recently, he unlocked a room and acquired a dark-gold mask.

"That mask will grant him immense power, but once he wears it, he'll face terrifying matters."

Could that dark-gold mask be a relic from the original owner of Castle Dylan? Perhaps a memento from the previous leader of the Secret Order? Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

To him, this information wasn't particularly crucial as the dark-gold mask had already been handed over to Mr. K. Thus, he had no reason to be concerned about it.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony prepared to return to Trier after the Q&A session with Ludwig, having confirmed that they had gleaned all they could.

Of course, Lumian took responsibility for their return journey. Franca couldn't bring herself to use one of the Seven-Stone Bracelets at the moment.

"By the way," Lumian looked at Franca, pondering for a moment. "Contact the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and see if they're willing to exchange information about the humanoid Sealed Artifact and its corresponding story. We'll make efforts to facilitate this transaction."

ention that he was uncertain about his human status, Lumian realized his resemblance to the humanoid Sealed Artifact. However, Bard retained his rationality and clarity, possessing a relatively independent fate. Otherwise, he could be deemed a walking Grade 0 humanoid Sealed Artifact. This sparked Lumian's curiosity about the humanoid Sealed Artifact, wanting to uncover what had happened to

her and why she had transformed in such a manner.

Franca nodded and instinctively said, “But, uh, that lady only mentioned the possibility of returning it, nothing definite.”

“We’re merely striving to facilitate the transaction. It’s not guaranteed either.” Lumian chuckled.

He quickly sent Franca, Jenna, and Anthony back to Trier Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative before entering Aquina Street. Strolling among the citizens still immersed in the afterglow of the celebration, he made his way towards Solow Motel.

Half of the motel’s fifth floor had collapsed, and the fourth floor was severely damaged. Otta, the owner, observed the scene with sorrow and helplessness. He wanted to cry, but the tears wouldn’t come.

At a certain point, Noelia of the Fertility Order approached Louis Berry, the adventurer overseeing Solow Motel. She spoke in a formal tone, “Your partner said you’d be responsible for the compensation.”

Lumian retrieved 10,000 gold risot from his Traveler’s Bag and handed it to Noelia.

Noelia glanced at his black coin bag and sighed with emotion.

“That’s good stuff.”

The combat nun then counted the compensation.

“10,000 risot? That’s enough to build two motels like this!”

“How generous. Just as expected from an adventurer who recently bagged a bounty of 300,000 gold risot.”

Lumian brushed off Noelia’s teasing and continued, “This is the reward from the Paco family’s commission.”

“The Paco family…” Noelia fell silent.

The Paco family’s matriarch, the current family head, and his wife—all perished in this conflict.

Lumian pressed on, weaving through the crowd as if on a leisurely stroll.

In the dusk's afterglow, he heard singing, seabirds chirping, and citizens animatedly discussing the past few days. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Did you see that? In the morning, seabirds came to pay their respects to the Governor of the Sea!

"Is this year's sea prayer ritual that successful?

"That's right. Back then, many vines grew crazily. Many people fainted from joy. This is Earth Mother's recognition of the sea prayer ritual!

"No, that's not right. It represents a bumper harvest. It means this year's fish harvest will fill ship after ship!

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!

"Praise the Governor of the Sea!

"…"

Though Lumian wasn't privy to the Church of Earth Mother's method to make citizens view the morning mysticism roundup as a miracle, he sensed joy and delight in everyone's hearts.

Leisurely, he thought, I wonder if the remaining committee members of the Fisheries Guild have finalized the choice for the fake Governor of the Sea. Sure, the real Simon Guiaro is the top contender. However, it doesn't matter who takes the role this year. The power leaked by the spaceship is now in my possession. In the next year or even two, there won't be frequent catastrophes in these waters. The sea creatures will reproduce faster thanks to the 'watering'…

Heh heh, from a certain perspective, I'm the true Governor of the Sea —for just a week…

In the midst of the lively parade and numerous street vendors, Lumian casually located a bar and ordered an undiluted Manzan and

a large cup of locally brewed dark-gold malt beer.

Placing the Manzan glass across from the small round table, he lifted his beer, clinking it. Then, he muttered with a smile, “Did you see that? Did you hear that? Their dance, their singing, and the sound of fish multiplying.

“Isn’t this the future you desire?”

With that said, Lumian downed a mouthful of dark-gold beer.

Chapter 598 - 598 Confrontation and Reconciliation

598 Confrontation and Reconciliation

The night draped the land in darkness, and stars adorned the sky above Port Santa. The festive crowd had dispersed, leaving behind the remnants of celebration—discarded litter and the lingering scent of alcohol.

With the official end of the holiday, the city would soon buzz with work again.

Lumian lingered at the bar until closing time. As he stepped out, the deserted streets welcomed him, illuminated only by sporadic gas lamps.

The late-night air hinted at the approaching winter's chill. Lumian breathed it in, feeling the crisp freshness entering his lungs. The rhythmic crash of waves against the shore added to the night's serenity.

In seemingly high spirits, Lumian, slightly tipsy, walked past the aftermath of the celebration with hands in his pockets, unnoticed in the silent surroundings.

He made his way back to the room rented under a false identity.

Upon opening the door, he found Lugano pacing anxiously in the living room.

"Still up?" Lumian raised an eyebrow.

Lugano, looking like he'd recovered from a serious injury, spoke with a complex expression,

“An hour ago, Captain Noelia of the combat nuns paid you a visit. Not in armor, but a stunning dress. She has quite the figure…”

“And then?” Lumian inquired, a smirk on his face.

Lugano replied with envy, “She left disappointed when I told her you weren’t around.”

Lumian chuckled, “What’s it got to do with you? Why are you still awake after an hour?”

Lugano coughed awkwardly, “I had a sudden contemplation about my future. Should I return to Trier and pursue a medical career, or should I opt for a different path?”

Ignoring the Doctor’s musings, Lumian, with a smile, washed up briefly and retired to his room, succumbing to sleep.

In his dreams, recent events blended into a chaotic tapestry, weaving stranger and more bizarre stories.

At precisely 6 a.m., Lumian awoke and promptly sat up.

His thoughts sharpened as he recalled the dream. Suddenly, a detail struck him:

Disregarding the possibility of the Aurora Order having covertly observed the situation, the crucial aspect of the sea prayer ritual was Amon’s utilization of the altar in Milo Village to discreetly imbue Lie with a “Steal” ability.

Without this intervention, the opening of the spaceship’s energy passageway would have led to a reversal. Deprived of the sea’s power, he couldn’t have ensnared Mad Lady with the authority of the Governor of the Sea, delaying her until Madam Magician’s arrival.

However, Celestial Worthy, positioned at the pinnacle of the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways, should possess an in-depth understanding of Marauder abilities. It seemed unlikely that He hadn’t considered the possibility of an Amon hiding at the altar, granting “Steal” powers.

It made sense that He hadn't shared this knowledge with April Fool's; they were expendable tools, and excessive information might weaken their resolve during the operation. But the overall plan shouldn't have crumbled due to this.

Were Celestial Worthy's intentions more intricate than they seemed? Had He secretly achieved a goal, or did Amon and His unseen ally orchestrate events in advance?

Had Amon truly kept watch over the altar in Milo Village without pause, last year's sea prayer ritual might not have failed. There remains the prospect that He wanted to derive amusement from April Fool's antics.

The chaos wrought by April Fool's last year was perhaps understandable. Shouldn't the most straightforward approach this year involve discreetly allowing the completion of the Ring of the Sea Queen during the ancestor honoring ritual? Subsequently, events could unfold with Ultraman assuming the guise of the incoming Governor of the Sea, only to be dumbfounded when the sea sacrifice ritual succeeded!

Why the convoluted path? What was the purpose behind these seemingly unnecessary steps?

There must be something I'm missing…

Lumian massaged his temples and rose from the bed.

The revelation didn't surprise him. It would be abnormal if he quickly unraveled the true motives of every participant in such complex scenarios involving high-level entities.

Regardless, his goal was accomplished, and the perilous black hole in the spaceship remained sealed. The rest was not his concern. If he could decipher it, great. If not, he could always write to Madam Magician to provide a timely reminder.

After a jog around the still-slumbering Port Santa, Lumian penned a letter to Madam Magician, detailing his reflections.

As Lumian finished, Lugano, who had been out gathering breakfast

for Ludwig, returned to his quarters. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Taking a moment to contemplate, Lumian handed over 1,000 gold risot to Lugano. With a composed tone, he stated, “I’ll be away for a few days. Take care of Ludwig. When I return, this commission will be completely over.”

When the time came, Lumian planned on taking a boat to the Southern Continent. Lumian intended to conspire and make preparations along the way. His aim was to be ready for the final conspiracy and advance to Sequence 5 upon reaching his destination in the Southern Continent.

Without prying into his employer’s destination, Lugano nervously asked, “W-

will there be any danger in the next few days?”

“It’s done,” Lumian replied with a smile. “If any other danger arises, go to the Fertility Order and seek protection. Isn’t that what you’ve been anticipating?”

Lugano grinned sheepishly, reassured by Lumian’s demeanor.

Under the shining sun of Port Santa, with delicious food and passionate women, staying a few more days seemed like a pleasant prospect!

…

A two-story relay carriage raced through the village towns scattered across turquoise pastures, making its way towards the base of the Pyraez mountain range.

Maintaining his disguise as the adventurer Louis Berry, Lumian occupied a window seat in the carriage, silently observing the passing scenery.

Each turquoise pasture was adorned with flocks of sheep, resembling scattered clouds. Shepherds, clad in practical and mobile robes, strolled amidst the grazing animals.

Some had their own shacks, while others utilized small, wheeled shepherd's huts for mobility.

Occasionally, local villagers attempted to drive away the incoming shepherds, only to be met with sly smiles or placated with money and supplies.

Faced with determined locals, the shepherds, arriving from the mountain pass, reluctantly moved to more desolate areas, contending with the watchful eyes of wild wolves and other creatures…

The scenes spoken of by the Cordu shepherds presented themselves vividly to Lumian, searing a memory in his mind.

Two days later, the relay carriage halted at the foot of the Pyraez mountain range, pausing in a small town outside the mountain pass.

Lumian changed into a black tweed coat, preparing to venture into the mountain alone.

As he ascended the mountain ridge, the cold wind intensified, rendering the wilderness almost devoid of life.

Navigating the sparsely vegetated mountainous terrain, Lumian followed the trails left by shepherds and merchants. Under the birdless gray sky, the desolate landscape featured withered trees and a meager stream. Winter's solitude permeated the air.

In the cold solitude, it took him nearly three days to traverse the Dariège mountain range and reach the river outside Cordu.

Circling the towering forest, Lumian promptly spotted the blood-colored pillar, emanating the aura of a mountain peak despite its modest height.

As Lumian gazed, footsteps approached from ahead.

A middle-aged man, clad in a leather coat and clasping his hands together, appeared.

Trembling in the cold wind, the forest ranger shouted, "Don't go any further. That village is gone!"

Lumian's eyes moved beyond the ranger to the collapsed and burned structures in the distance.

After a brief pause, he inquired in a deep voice, "What happened to that village?"

The forest ranger glanced around and lowered his voice, "They said they believed in demons. The villagers went crazy, burned down their houses, and walked into the abyss.

"Look, would a normal village be like this?"

Lumian fell silent for a long time.

Seeing this, the forest ranger sincerely said, "In any case, those old men instructed me to prevent anyone from entering this village. They said that it's bad luck; it would provoke the demons."

Lumian remained silent, refraining from further inquiry.

Staring at the unfamiliar yet oddly familiar ruins, he turned away from the village entrance. Step by step, he approached the nearest alpine pasture, the wind howling around him.

The grass here had completely withered, blown away by the wind, leaving behind barren patches of brown soil.

Lumian surveyed the ruins of Cordu, then located a shack abandoned by the shepherds. Inside, he lay down, closing his eyes and remaining motionless.

If only everything that had transpired before could be dismissed as a dream.

When he woke, the alpine pasture was vibrant green once more, birds returned to the sky, and Ol' Tavern bustled with farmers and herdsmen. His sister persistently urged him to study, while Reimund, Ava, and the others pondered uncertain futures, unaware of the life awaiting them…

…

The sun shone brightly, yet the air in Port Santa had begun to carry a chill.

Abruptly, Lumian stood before Lugano and Ludwig.

“You’re finally back!” Lugano exclaimed, relief evident in his voice, as if he had encountered a savior.

Ludwig’s appetite had surged once more, and the 1,000 risot had disappeared faster than anticipated.

Another week, and Lugano would have to contemplate using his own funds.

He couldn’t allow the child to go hungry; he might resort to eating him!

Lumian chuckled in response, saying, “The commission is over. I’ll pay the balance now. Do you want my help to teleport back to Trier, or do you prefer taking a boat yourself or crossing the Dariège mountain range?”

Lugano fell silent, seemingly grappling with a decision.

Chapter 599 - 599 If You Have “Power,” Use It

599 If You Have “Power,” Use It

Lumian didn’t hurry Lugano. He preferred to observe the Doctor’s decision-

making.

After a pause, Lugano gathered his courage and inquired, “Will you be bringing Ludwig along in the future?”

“Of course,” Lumian replied, glancing sideways at Ludwig, who was devouring a roasted octopus.

Had he not received the 0-01 information from the Church of Knowledge, he wouldn’t have considered keeping such a child around. However, Ludwig had proven his usefulness.

In the future, he might serve as another Loki trap.

Lugano swallowed and offered, “I can assist you in caring for Ludwig, so you won’t need to factor him in when dealing with matters—unlike how you could simply leave whenever you pleased in the past.”

As anticipated… Lumian wasn’t taken aback by Lugano’s proposal.

He raised his chin slightly and inquired, “Reason?”

Lugano smiled sheepishly and explained, “During this journey, I’ve witnessed much and faced attacks. It made me realize that Sequence 8s are still insignificant in the mysticism world. They’re ill-equipped to handle risks. Yes, if I return to Trier and discreetly wield my

Doctor powers, I'll undoubtedly attain middle-class status. It's not inconceivable to ascend to high society, but I fear that garnering too much fame will draw the attention of official Beyonders. Trier isn't as lenient as Port Santa, which is more accommodating to wild Beyonders.

"Furthermore, those dangerous Beyonders are always lurking around us. I refuse to be defenseless the next time I'm targeted."

"If you refrain from participating in mysticism gatherings and solely run a clinic as a doctor, you wouldn't be entangled in dangerous affairs. You could easily handle ordinary thieves and bandits," Lumian countered nonchalantly.

Lugano shook his head.

"The Beyonder who left me his relics, enabling me to become a Planter, once warned me that once I enter the mysticism world, escape is impossible. Beyonder incidents will always surround us. If I'm fortunate, I might survive until natural death, but if I'm unlucky, I'll end up like him.

"At first, I didn't fully believe it, but the events of the past six months have increasingly convinced me of its truth. I did nothing, yet Rue Anarchie collapsed, and a peculiar tree sprouted. Before you hired me, I dreamed of becoming a figure in a painting, unable to return to reality. Upon waking up, I found myself wanted. This time, all I did was care for Ludwig, staying clear of any involvement, yet I was still senselessly attacked…"

Mm… Lumian's expression grew more peculiar as he listened.

I seem to be the common denominator in all your tales…

Yet, you persist in following me…

Is this another instance of Beyonders encountering mysticism incidents? You didn't encounter those incidents, but me…

Lugano continued,"I've also witnessed Beyonder powers like teleportation and tsunamis. Being just a Sequence 8 no longer satisfies me. I believe I'll find more opportunities by following you."

Lumian gazed at Lugano, unsure if someone had influenced him to insist on following or if Ludwig had somehow "tamed" him to be his "nanny."

Initially, Lumian thought Lugano, as a Beyonder of the Planter pathway, had ties to the Church of Earth Mother. However, despite paying close attention, he hadn't observed any additional communication between his guide and the Fertility Order or the Church of Earth Mother's clergyman. Furthermore, Lugano seemed like a stranger.

Seeing Lumian stay silent, Lugano smiled ingratiatingly and proposed, "I have a gift for languages. I can self-learn Dutanese from the Southern Continent. As long as you pay me 300 verl d'or a month and promise me a share of the spoils, I can continue to be your guide, private doctor, child caregiver, and be half a fighter."

"Sure." Lumian handed over a total of 10,000 verl d'or. "This is the final 5,000 verl d'or from before. Additionally, you were attacked. As per our agreement, I'll pay you an extra 5,000 verl d'or, making it a total of 10,000."

Lugano gladly accepted the payment and began packing.

Lumian seized the moment to count his cash, confirming he still possessed 1,000 verl d'or in gold, 76,000 verl d'or in gold coins, along with other coins, banknotes, and the remaining 2,000 gold risot yet to be spent.

As long as he refrained from acquiring Beyonder characteristics, potion formulas, mystical items, or high-end mysticism knowledge, the money he carried could sustain him for a considerable time.

The following morning, Lumian boarded the ship bound for Feynapotter, adopting the guise of the adventurer Louis Berry. Approaching the first-class suite, he turned to Ludwig, posing a thoughtful question, "In your memories, or rather, Loki's memories, are there any peculiar creatures? They resemble lizards but are quite small. They can crawl into a human's mouth, appearing transparent and blurry, suspected to be Spirit Body. They have brownish-

green scales and dark-green eyes."

This description deviated significantly from the Starlight Lizards transformed by the Children of the Sea.

Ludwig shook his head.

"No, it's not in the Batings Black Insect's memories either."

Lumian fell silent, observing Lugano as he opened the suite door with the mannerisms of a servant.

Another hour passed, and amidst a whistle, the ship departed Port Santa.

After nearly two hours of sailing, the weather gradually worsened. The waves surged, and the strong winds compelled passengers on the deck to retreat to their cabins.

Observing the dusky sky, the dark clouds stirred by the wind, and the rising waves, many passengers, sailing for the first time, felt a sense of anxiety.

Noticing the confidence of the sailors beside them, they sought reassurance, "This is a common occurrence at sea. It's not dangerous, right?"

A Port Santa native, working as a sailor, replied with a smile, "It's relatively common, but it can be a bit dangerous. If the storm intensifies, we might need to seek shelter in a nearby port. But don't worry. This year's sea prayer ritual was a success. The current Governor of the Sea will protect us and prevent any shipwrecks!"

Governor of the Sea… The passengers became even more uneasy upon hearing the sailor's response.

They had taken part in various sea prayer rituals and celebrations in Port Santa. While enjoyable, they didn't truly believe that the Governor of the Sea could exert any significant influence on the waves.

Amidst their unease, they were astonished to find that the rising

waves suddenly subsided.

Despite the dark clouds and strong winds, the seawater seemed to be pressed down by an invisible force, showing no noticeable fluctuations.

The Port Santa natives erupted in cheers.

“Long live the Governor! Praise the Governor of the Sea!”

Witnessing this, the passengers exchanged glances, momentarily speechless.

In the first-class suite, Lumian relaxed in a recliner, sipping undiluted Manzan. On his lap lay a Southern Continent Dutanese introductory textbook.

Clenching his right hand into a fist, he pulled it downward.

A section of the dark clouds in the sky descended, forming a formidable funnel.

Sunlight penetrated the massive hole, brightening the cabin and highlighting Lumian’s book.

Retracting his right hand, Lumian flipped through a page of the book. He found the Governor of the Sea’s abilities truly advantageous at sea.

Unfortunately, he could only use it for one more day.

…

Late at night in Trier, Angoulême returned to his residence and habitually switched on the radio transceiver.

Before long, a telegram arrived.

Upon seeing “Hidden Blade,” Angoulême frowned.

“Two bits of good news and a spot of bad news. Which one do you want first?

“I know. You must want to hear the good news first. I’ll get straight to it.

“The first piece of good news is that the humanoid Sealed Artifact has been located and secured. You don’t have to worry about the business trip to Feynapotter. You can focus on investigating the Mirror People matter in peace.

“The second piece of good news is that after communication, we’ve confirmed that the faction controlling the humanoid Sealed Artifact might return it to you. We’re willing to facilitate the matter, but you’ll need to provide all the information about the humanoid Sealed Artifact in exchange. Of course, it’s just a possibility, nothing set in stone. You won’t need to make a substantial payment until we reach an agreement. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Bad news. Heh heh, there’s a traitor in your Church. The humanoid Sealed Artifact was lost because of a mole! We’re certain of this.

“Go, 007. Your chance to render meritorious service has arrived!”

After reading it in one go, Angoulême felt a sense of relief. This was because after the humanoid Sealed Artifact was lost, the Church’s upper echelons suspected a traitor and conducted an investigation, but to no avail. There was indeed an issue with the case leading to the loss of the humanoid Sealed Artifact, but the five Purifiers in charge of that case had been cleared of any wrongdoing during the investigation. They hadn’t performed well back then and had merely encountered an accident.

It seems that the mole has concealed himself well… Angoulême muttered to himself.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca sat by the bed and chatted in the telegram group, waiting for Jenna to return.

Her female companion would visit the Quartier de la Maison d’Opéra

once a week to watch a theater performance and only return at midnight. However, the exact day she went was uncertain. Furthermore, she would disguise herself to prevent others from noticing her travel patterns.

Anthony, who lived nearby, had been busy infiltrating a circle of psychology enthusiasts, hoping to come into contact with a true Psychiatrist.

I seem to be the only one with time on my hands. I haven't received any feedback about Mirror People… Franca wasn't the kind of person who insisted on having something on her hands. She excelled in finding joy in life.

While Franca thought about Jenna, Jenna—who had just finished watching the last play—put on a hat with a black veil and stood up to leave the theater, where many spectators were still lingering.

At the exit, she patiently queued up and moved out.

Suddenly, Jenna sensed a slight tremor from one of the items on her.

Instinctively, she reached in and realized that it was the Mirror World Fragment from the Tamara family's tomb.

Chapter 600 - 600 Correct Reaction

600 Correct Reaction

Has something happened to the Mirror World Fragment? Jenna was taken aback for a moment before she tensed up.

This was unprecedented. The Mirror World Fragment had never exhibited such behavior before, leaving Jenna puzzled as to its sudden activity. Her mind raced, attempting to decipher its significance.

Could there be a disturbance in the special Mirror World itself?

Or perhaps someone in close proximity to me is closely involved with the special Mirror World?

Could this be a lead in Franca's Mirror People investigations?

Jenna's instincts urged her to scan her surroundings, searching for the source of the Mirror World Fragment's disturbance.

Jenna controlled herself just in time as a realization hit her: If this phenomenon was caused by someone closely tied to the special Mirror World, there was a high chance that the "sensation" was mutual. In simpler terms, while the fragment trembled slightly, there should be some anomaly on the person's body, detectable only by themselves. They, too, were searching for the source of the problem.

Under such circumstances, hastily surveying her surroundings might lead to discovery by the other party. A thunderous strike might follow.

Maintaining her composure, Jenna slowly moved out the door, her

eyes fixed on the road ahead.

During this process, like many spectators, she turned her head slightly and glanced at the wall clock in the theater's foyer to confirm the time: 11:05 p.m.

After noting the time, Jenna returned to the foyer through the exit.

The spectators around her dispersed, and the place gradually became less crowded.

Jenna's Mirror World Fragment fell silent, no longer trembling abnormally.

Just now, there was no one in the foyer, and the Mirror World Fragment didn't tremble when I watched the theater performance… This means that for the abnormality to happen, both parties need to be close to each other, no more than five meters apart, like when we were squeezing for the exit in the foyer. Now, is everything back to normal because the distance between them has widened again? Jenna's thoughts raced as she fully displayed her theatrical acting skills. Like ordinary spectators, she left the foyer and arrived on the street. She boarded a rental carriage belonging to the Imperial Carriage Company and paid 2.5 verl d'or in advance, her heart aching.

If the subway and public carriages were still running at this hour, she wouldn't have taken a rental carriage back to Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative from Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra.

…

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Jenna recounted her encounter to Franca and asked, "Did the Mirror World Fragment on you tremble slightly around 11:05?"

"No," Franca replied with unusual certainty.

Without waiting for Jenna to make a judgment, she smiled awkwardly and quickly added, "I don't think so. As you know, my

Mirror World Fragment is stored in my Traveler's Bag. Even if there's a tremor, I can't sense it."

As Jenna couldn't help but roll her eyes, Franca tersely acknowledged and said,"Do you suspect that the abnormality in the special Mirror World caused a general change? If that's the case, even if the item is in the Traveler's Bag, I should be able to sense it spiritually. It's impossible to completely ignore it."

"Besides, when we put these two fragments together, there's never been a tremor. The probability of me encountering a Mirror People is very high. Or is it a member of a specific branch of the Tamara family?" Jenna said as she walked to the full-body mirror in the living room. She stroked the surface and whispered the secret subject she wanted to inquire about.

The full-body mirror's surface quickly darkened, surging with illusory water waves.

Jenna began Magic Mirror Divination.

"At approximately 23:05 last night, the area within a ten-meter radius of me…

"At approximately 23:05 last night, the area within a ten-meter radius of me…

"…"

After repeating it three times, the deep, dark mirror lit up.

In the light, Jenna saw herself in a bonnet, the theater exit connected to the theater foyer, and the audience and attendants standing within ten meters of her.

The spirit world faithfully recorded all this information.

The reflection in the mirror held a dynamic quality, not static or rigid. Jenna swiftly observed a woman standing a few meters ahead, abruptly turning to survey the people around her.

Donned in a black veiled hat, the lady, seemingly in her thirties,

sported light eyebrows, bright yellowish eyes, and a white complexion from makeup. While not conventionally beautiful, she exuded elegance through her well-chosen attire.

Despite her refined appearance, the lady appeared to lose her composure, scanning the surroundings as if searching for a lost lover.

“There’s something off about her. She reacted to the Mirror World Fragment,” Franca remarked as she joined Jenna, analyzing the image in the full-body mirror. “But it’s been over an hour, and she hasn’t initiated any counter-divination. Is she careless or utterly unfamiliar with the process?”

Jenna nodded.

“Can you discern anything else?”

“Nothing more.” Franca suddenly slapped her forehead. “Gosh, we should’ve asked Anthony to take a look. A Spectator would surely glean more information.”

“You’re right…” Jenna was caught off guard.

They still weren’t used to seeking Anthony’s assistance.

Jenna suggested, “Let’s get Anthony tomorrow morning. Calling him over this late might lead to misunderstandings. Besides, it’s not an urgent matter.”

“Yes, he might get the wrong idea,” Franca quickly realized.

The next morning, after observing the scene through the Magic Mirror Divination, Anthony pondered and commented, “Her clothes were custom-

made, suggesting a well-off family background… Despite looking a bit lost after surveying the surroundings, she may lack knowledge about the Mirror World and its corresponding fragments. This contradicts her ability to make the Mirror World Fragment tremble. The answer often lies in the point of contradiction… Her walking style indicates good etiquette training, but her status at home isn’t particularly high.”

Franca couldn't help but twitch her lips as she listened to the newly advanced Hypnotist dissect the target layer by layer. It felt like she had no secrets left from him.

Spectators are truly terrifying!

On the other hand, Jenna listened attentively, finding similarities with character analysis in drama acting class but more concrete and detailed.

In a daze, she felt transported back to Théatre de l'Ancienne Cage à Pigeons, listening to her teacher's lecture.

"These characteristics won't help us locate her directly. They can only offer certain clues," Anthony concluded.

"Understood. Character profiling," Franca replied in a professional tone.

Anthony took out a piece of paper, picked up a pencil, and began sketching based on his impressions, intending to track her through various channels.

Casually, Franca asked, "How did you deduce that the lady's clothes were custom-made?"

Having once been a man and transformed into a woman with a potion, she remained fixated on the beauty of clothing and dresses. She didn't care about the store or tailor.

Jenna couldn't tell either, as before becoming a Witch, she hadn't reached the level to customize her clothes.

Anthony looked up at the two Demonesses.

"After becoming a Spectator, especially as an information broker, I've deliberately honed my observation skills. I recognize the materials and characteristics of most of Trier's ready-to-wear shops and the styles of many famous tailors. The lady's dress clearly doesn't come from any ready-to-wear shops."

Franca and Jenna revealed somewhat embarrassed expressions.

Fortunately, Anthony was engrossed in his sketch and hadn't noticed their reactions.

…

Port Santa.

Nolfi, clad in a blouse and a light-colored jacket, escorted Batna to the dock.

Batna, sporting a half top hat, adjusted his rapier and cautiously inquired, "Are you really planning to stay here?"

Nolfi calmly responded, "I'm already a combat nun of the Fertility Order.

"It's just now dawning on me that the sea prayer ritual isn't about gaining power and making a pact with an evil god. It's about protection. It's an act of self-sacrifice.

"In the past, members of the Fisheries Guild used their influence and wealth to entice others into becoming the Governor of the Sea and Maidens of the Sea. Now, they've pledged to the Earth Mother's Church and the Fertility Order. Going forward, they'll inform potential candidates of the possible challenges and consequences beforehand, allowing them to make their own choices. I want to stay here and oversee this."

"That's good too." Batna sighed. "Unfortunately, my destiny lies in sea adventures, and I can't remain in one place."

The lovely and endearing Nolfi nodded.

"I understand."

She asked sincerely, "Do you wish to have a child here?"

"No, n-never mind," Batna stammered. "I'm not mentally prepared to be someone else's father."

He didn't want his child to turn into a humanoid lizard in the future.

Nolfi expressed regretfully, “Alright.” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Waving her hand, she turned around and walked away from the dock.

After a few steps, she abruptly turned back, revealing a bright and beautiful smile.

“Regardless, I’m grateful that you could accompany me out to sea.”

Without waiting for Batna’s response, Nolfi redirected her gaze and hastened her pace, leaving the dock.

Batna stood there, Nolfi’s final smile lingering in his mind. Her words of joy echoed in his ears, and he suddenly felt a sense of loss.

After Nolfi’s figure vanished from the dock, the adventurer slowly boarded the ship returning to Port Farim.

…

In the evening, inside the ship’s bar, Lumian raised a glass of amber sugar wine and addressed the patrons at the bar counter, “Ladies and gentlemen, I’m actually a magician. I can showcase an illusionary magic trick for you right now.”

He gestured towards the window.

“Look outside.”

Instinctively, the patrons glanced out the window and noticed that the surrounding waves had surged to a height of more than ten meters at some point, resembling a mountain.

Just as they blinked, the terror-inspiring scene disappeared once again.

Clap! Clap! Clap! The patrons applauded Lumian’s brilliant magic trick.

Chapter 601 - 601 Strange Patient

601 Strange Patient

Late at night, amidst another round of cheers for a magic trick, Lumian downed the candied wine in his hand and exited the bar with a smirk.

He could already picture Aurore—if she were around—scoffing, “You’re so lame. You’re actually using the Governor of the Sea’s authority and power to pull off a magic trick. Deceiving those drunkards with the real thing. Is this your prank? You’re sure having a blast.”

Lumian responded silently, Being able to utilize superpowers and the Governor of the Sea’s authority for such matters, rather than in battle, should be what you desire, right? Isn’t this the joy and future you yearned for?

In the corridor, illuminated by kerosene wall lamps, Lumian stepped on the creaking floor, making his way back to the first-class suite in the silent, empty surroundings.

Snores and moans occasionally penetrated the walls on both sides. Near the stairs, a room stood open, reflecting the dim yellow light of the fire.

As Lumian passed by, he turned his head and observed the Sacred Emblem of Life, representing Earth Mother, engraved on the wall deep in the room. It portrayed a simple infant amidst wheat ears, flowers, spring water, and other symbols.

In front of the Sacred Emblem of Life stood a man in a brown clergyman’s robe. He was less than 30 years old, with clean eyebrows

and a light brown beard. Holding a thick book, he preached to the men and women seated in different parts of the room.

Lumian knew this was a prayer room, akin to a small, mobile cathedral with a dedicated clergyman in charge. Common in countries that believed in only one deity, be it on long-distance ships or steam locomotives, they considered the need for believers to quietly pray and listen to teachings.

Lumian, who could already understand Highlander, memorized the words, “Life’s precious embrace, the harvest’s grace.” Retracting his gaze, he entered the corridor, ascending the stairs step by step.

Simultaneously, Lugano, having just finished attending to Ludwig’s supper, heard a knock on the door.

“Who is it?” Lugano was surprised and intrigued.

This couldn’t be his employer. He possessed the key and would simply open the door.

Moreover, it was nearly 11 p.m. Who would visit at such an hour?

Could it be that a woman overheard my boasting on the deck, believed me, and came to share a pleasant night?

As Lugano started to indulge in fantasies, he heard a feeble male voice.

“I’m here to see Dr. Lugano.”

Seeking a doctor… Lugano couldn’t help but frown, but he still opened the door.

Outside stood a man wrapped in a thick tweed coat, a stark contrast to Lugano’s linen shirt and thin pants.

Lugano scrutinized the visitor.

“I’m Lugano. What’s the matter?”

The man’s face was pale, his eyes dark, revealing little vitality.

Though young, in his early twenties, he exuded a lifeless aura.

The man took a deep breath and weakly said, “You can call me Enio. I heard that you helped several people on the deck discover the true cause of their illness and quickly improved their condition. I want you to treat me.

“I have the money to pay for the consultation.”

Observing the fellow’s sickly appearance, Lugano sighed and replied, “Come in. Keep your voice down. As you know, I’m the private doctor of a prominent figure. He doesn’t appreciate strangers disturbing him.”

Once Enio settled on the sofa, Lugano, out of habit, inquired about his condition to conceal his subsequent mystical diagnosis.

“What’s wrong with your body?”

Enio paused for a moment before saying, “Since half a month ago, I’ve become sensitive to the cold and weak. No appetite. Runny nose, repeated coughing, and my condition is worsening.”

“Mm…” Lugano nodded, raising his right hand and tapping his forehead, as if contemplating the significance of the patient’s narrative.

In reality, he seized the opportunity to activate his Spirit Vision, preparing to discern the other party’s illness from the color, brightness, and thickness of his Ether Body.

With a swift glance, Lugano nearly jumped out of his skin.

Is the patient sitting in front of me still alive?

In Lugano’s eyes, the once white glow shrouding Enio’s Ether Body, signifying overall balance, had turned a somber grayish-black. It was a dire indication of his severe illness, teetering on the edge of death.

Yet, it wasn’t this revelation that left Lugano shocked and bewildered. What truly sent shivers down his spine was: the orange glow, symbolizing the health of excretion, detoxification, and other

vital organs, had dimmed into complete darkness. No vestige of brightness remained, signaling the complete cessation of their functions!

Likewise, the yellow hue representing the digestive system, the green indicating the heart and regulatory system, and the blue denoting the throat and part of the nervous system had all dulled and lost their radiance.

Enio's remaining hues were red on his limbs and purple on the surface of his head.

W-what does this "diagnosis" imply?

This meant that Enio was a person with a silent heart, a dormant stomach, and internal organs that had relinquished their functions. Yet, he could still think, move, and speak!

Son of a bitch, where did this monstrosity come from! Lugano, facing such an unprecedented "patient," inwardly cursed, his frame trembling slightly.

He dreaded the moment when the other might unexpectedly utter, "Doctor, I'm cold. Let me borrow your skin. Doctor, I'm hungry. Let me borrow your stomach and intestines…"

Noticing Lugano's silence, Enio anxiously inquired, "Doctor, what illness am I suffering from?"

Illness? Lugano muttered to himself urgently, Snap out of it! Your heart has ceased beating; the absence of flowing blood naturally brings about a chilling sensation!

Those with non-agitating stomachs certainly won't have much of an appetite!

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lugano pondered for a moment and declared,

"Your condition is grave. I require further analysis and observation to draw conclusions. Can you visit me tomorrow morning?

“Before that, I need to draw some of your blood for research.”

“No problem.” Despite Enio’s lack of confidence in Lugano, he extended his right hand with the mindset that attempting something was better than nothing.

Armed with the necessary tools, Lugano extracted some blood from Enio’s body using a needle, rubber hose, and a glass blood collection bottle. Despite their darkened hue, he noted a basic vitality still present. Subsequently, he listened to Enio’s heartbeat and detected faint, but existing, beats.

Curious… Lugano seized the opportunity of the consultation and prescription to subtly cast a faint light upon his palm, providing Enio with a simple treatment.

Enio’s spirits lifted, and a semblance of strength returned.

“Thank you, Doctor. Your massage and medicine are effective. I appreciate it!” Enio left the suite with a cheerful expression.

None of the previous doctors he had consulted had made the slightest improvement in his condition. This time, he intended to set sail to the south, take a steam locomotive to the Church of Earth Mother’s headquarters for treatment.

Baffled, Lugano observed as Enio left. Soon after, his employer returned.

He quickly recounted the encounter to Lumian, concluding with, “I’ve secured his blood. Can you find someone to divine the truth?”

“Divination?” Lumian chuckled as he received the blood-filled bottle and knocked on Ludwig’s child’s room.

“Take a sip and see what knowledge you can glean.” Lumian handed the bottle to Ludwig, ensuring no avenue of exploitation slipped by.

Ludwig’s expression remained stoic, as if sipping bedtime milk. He drank down the liquid in the bottle without flinching.

Lugano was bewildered, his eyes reflecting surprise and confusion.

After tasting the blood, Ludwig spoke at an adequate pace, “Absent stomach, absent small and large intestine, absent lungs, absent liver and pancreas…

“It’s akin to a deceased person relying on mystic forces to persist…

“He won’t last a week…”

Wh… Lugano was taken aback that Ludwig not only imbibed human blood but also made somber judgments with a straight face. He was also shocked to learn that Enio truly lacked those organs.

Initially, he believed it was just a loss of corresponding function.

According to Ludwig, wasn’t Enio essentially a dead man?

What had he stumbled upon?

“What should we do?” Lugano turned to Lumian.

Lumian couldn’t help but chuckle softly.

“What can we do? Locate the captain, the ship’s security supervisor, or the priest in the prayer room, and report this matter. They’ll handle it.”

Lugano nodded and tentatively asked, “But won’t this expose me as a Beyonder?”

“Tell them you’re Louis Berry’s servant,” Lumian advised calmly.

“Alright.” Lugano was fine with being a servant. After a moment’s thought, he asked in puzzlement, “Did you hear any strange sounds at night? I occasionally hear a baby crying.”

“Baby?” Lumian asked, shaking his head. “I didn’t hear it.”

Lugano pondered aloud, “Is there a baby crying on this floor?”

Then, he looked at Lumian.

“Shall I go find the captain now?”

Lumian's eyes flickered as he smiled and said, "Tomorrow morning."

"Alright," Lugano agreed without hesitation.

He preferred waiting for dawn and sunlight before addressing such a peculiar issue. Reporting it at night made him sense an impending, unexpected event.

The sun provided a reassuring sense of security!

Lumian didn't question or provide further advice. He entered his room, freshened up, and went to bed.

However, sleep eluded him. Instead, he half-closed his eyes, anticipating something. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

After an indeterminate period, Lumian heard a faint creak.

The door to one of the rooms opened softly.

Lumian swiftly sat up, silently approaching the door, cracking it open.

He saw a figure leisurely walk out of Lugano's servant's room.

It was Lugano, clad in a linen shirt. His eyes were open but oddly vacant and unfocused, his face devoid of expression.

As if sleepwalking, Lugano made his way to the suite's door.

Chapter 602 - 602 “Surgery”

602 “Surgery”

Lugano’s eyes remained open as he swung open the door to the suite, his gaze vacant. He stepped into the deserted corridor, where only the sound of crashing waves reverberated.

In this moment, everyone, save for the sailor on night duty, succumbed to slumber.

Lugano moved forward, the kerosene wall lamps around him casting an ethereal glow that mingled with the encroaching darkness.

He reached the end of the floor and halted in front of a vivid vermilion wooden door.

Creak. The door groaned open, and the darkness within seemed to swallow every trace of light.

Lugano traversed the obscurity with a blank expression, entering the room. Behind him, the vermilion door was pulled shut by an imperceptible force.

It was a suite. The living and dining areas lay shrouded in darkness, devoid of any candlelit glow. The faint crimson moonlight filtered through the curtains, offering minimal visibility.

At the dining table stood two shadowy figures. One of them appeared aged, with mostly gray hair and dark, deep blue eyes that seemed to absorb the night.

Despite the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, the elder’s skin remained well-maintained, adorned in a loose, dark-black robe.

Beside him stood Enio, the brown-haired, brown-eyed patient who

had intruded upon Lugano that night, his pale face devoid of life. His vacant gaze fixated on the unadorned table.

Lugano, as if sleepwalking, stood next to Enio, unusually quiet.

The elder in the loose black robe turned his head, fixing his gaze on Enio.

The patient ambled towards the dining table, climbed on it, and lay completely motionless.

The blond elder brandished a sharp scalpel, unfastening Enio's tweed coat, cashmere sweater, and cotton shirt. He pressed the razor-sharp blade against Enio's chest, producing a ripping sound as he sliced through layers of flesh, creating a long wound.

As Enio's chest and abdominal cavity lay exposed to the crimson moonlight, a void greeted the eye.

No stomach, no lungs, no small or large intestines, liver, or kidneys. Only a weakly beating bright red heart, accompanied by a few blood vessels extending from it.

With a swift motion, the old man in the dark-black robe manipulated the scalpel, his other hand flickering with a faint light as he pressed down.

In a sequence too rapid for the eye to follow, he withdrew the still-beating heart in his left hand.

Enio's chest and abdomen, now empty, displayed only a few non-bleeding blood vessels.

The old man closed the incision with a tight squeeze, sealing it with a flickering light.

Enio's stomach returned to its original state, devoid of any scars.

Throughout this extraordinary procedure, the special patient's eyes remained open, as if untouched by the surgical ordeal.

In that moment, he rolled off the dining table, ambled to the door,

and exited the room. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The old man opened his suitcase, revealing glass jars containing pale amber liquid, each cradling various organs: spleen, lungs, liver, kidneys, stomach, and intestines…

Placing these items on the dining table in a peculiar order, surrounding the still gently beating scarlet heart, the old man in the loose black robe took a step back. He recited an ancient, malevolent, yet strangely intimate language.

As the unknown murmur resonated, the internal organs ascended slowly, upheld by an invisible force.

Their final positions varied, resembling the internal organs of a standing human.

The heart, liver, spleen, lungs, and kidneys emitted a faint glow simultaneously, outlining a form on the dining table. It lacked a head, limbs, or bones, merely a corporeal essence that grew more defined.

A baby's cry echoed, faint yet tangible.

However, the body distorted, squirmed, and disintegrated in the end.

The old man in the loose black robe sighed with regret.

Strangely, the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes were noticeably reduced, and much of his white hair had reverted to light gold.

In an instant, he appeared seven or eight years younger.

Sensing his good condition, the elder turned his attention to Lugano.

Lugano, seemingly summoned, approached the dining table and lay down, awaiting with open eyes.

The elder unbuttoned Lugano's linen shirt, took up the scalpel, and gestured as if deciding where to make the incision.

Suddenly, a loud bang reverberated.

The vermilion door swung open, crashing into the wall.

Crimson flames surged, illuminating the room, climbing the walls and ceiling, transforming the place into a fiery inferno.

Lumian, adorned in black hair, green eyes, a golden straw hat, a cotton shirt, a black vest, and dark pants, materialized at the door and entered the suite.

He calmly addressed the old man in the loose black robe, “Don’t you know he’s my servant?”

The elder’s eyes narrowed as he readied the scalpel to descend towards Lugano’s neck.

However, his right hand refused to budge, seemingly restrained by an invisible force pushing it upward.

In the midst of the rising crimson flames, Lumian paused, displaying no urgency to act. He spoke with intrigue,

“That surgery was quite fascinating—extracting internal organs while leaving the person alive, albeit gradually dying.

“And you used those organs for a ritual, rejuvenating yourself. Meanwhile, you nearly brought forth a peculiar lifeform.”

Surprise flickered in the elder’s dark-blue eyes.

“How do you know?”

Haven’t you just arrived in pursuit of your servant?

And no one entered before you!

Lumian emitted a soft chuckle.

“You don’t need to know.”

I still have a few hours of Governor of the Sea authority. Isn’t it easy to ‘see’ something in these waters?

Sensing Lumian’s confidence, certainty, ease, and absence of hostility,

the elder fell silent briefly before expressing, “Life is the most precious, so life becomes the finest sacrifice and ingredient.”

He refrained from divulging details about the surgery or ritual, choosing instead to expound on his philosophy and the truth he sought.

Praising and blaspheming life simultaneously? Lumian arched his eyebrows, finding it vaguely reminiscent of Lady Moon, Madame Night, and the bestowed of the Great Mother.

Carefully assessing the black-robed elder behind the dining table, Lumian, upon confirming his gender, temporarily set aside his sudden anxiety.

Gazing down at the motionless Lugano on the dining table, Lumian casually inquired, “How did you control my servant?”

The elder fixed Lumian with a penetrating gaze, as if probing the depths of his intentions. He pondered, weighing the decision to preach the truth or engage in a confrontation to eradicate the issue.

After a brief silence, he spoke in a resonant voice,

“He’s a Blessed of the Great Mother. He heard the cries of the Son of God.”

Great Mother? Lumian’s scalp tingled at the term.

Had it not been for the Sea Governor’s authority, Lumian would have launched a full-scale attack without allowing the elder a moment to react or explain.

Regardless, even if he eliminated the elder, spirit channeling remained a viable option. Moreover, the elder could be fed to Ludwig!

Though taken aback by the elder’s possible reference to Lugano as a Blessed of Earth Mother, Lumian swiftly dismissed the apparent meaning.

He was certain that Lugano was human and harbored no unusual

bloodlines.

Following Lugano's injury at Solow Motel, Jenna collected his splattered blood and conducted Magic Mirror Divination according to Lumian's subsequent instructions.

In an instant, Lumian deciphered the elder's true meaning.

The Beyonders of the Planter pathway are all Blessed of the Great Mother?

Where does Earth Mother stand? Planter is the main pathway of the Church of Earth Mother…

Could it be… the Great Mother reigns over multiple pathways, akin to the Celestial Worthy and Mr. Fool? Planter and Sower? The names bear a striking connection…

As Lumian's thoughts raced, his focus intensified on the existence of the Son of God. Cordu's empty infant cradle and the honorific title of Lady Moon nurturing a deity flooded his mind.

Dammit, why is it that the Great Mother seems entwined with children, Sons of God, and babies? Does that entity have a penchant for offspring? Lumian smirked superficially.

"It seems your Son of God hasn't truly been born."

The old man in the loose black robe suddenly became fervent.

"He's already born in the spirit world, but He's yet to step into the real world.

"Don't you see? Just revealing His form made me a few years younger. If He were truly born, I'd instantly regain my youth!"

Who knows what malevolent creation you've unleashed… Lumian criticized and said, "You plan to shape the Son of God's body with just this fragment of life?"

The elder was taken aback.

“This is a ritual bestowed by the Great Mother’s revelation. It’s undeniably effective!”

Lumian smiled.

“That Enio is unmistakably an ordinary person. The ritual’s effects won’t bode well. If it were a Beyonder with a robust life force, the outcome might be entirely different.”

The elder instinctively concurred, “Indeed. That’s why I intended to examine your servant’s internal organs…”

At this juncture, the elder halted, casting a wary glance at Lumian.

With a beaming smile, Lumian proposed, “Have you ever thought of sacrificing your own internal organs?

“If you don’t offer yourself as a sacrifice, how can you showcase your devotion to the Great Mother and your reverence for the Son of God?

“Don’t fret; the Son of God will revive you and bestow youth upon you!”

As he concluded his words, a dark-green light condensed in Lumian’s right hand.

Chapter 603 - 603 Organs Again

603 Organs Again

The dark-green light morphed into a beam, slamming into the old man's chest and sinking into the loose black robe, akin to sunlight, unstoppable.

Already appearing seven to eight years younger, the old man's expression twisted, and every inch of exposed skin displayed signs of melting.

His aura rapidly waned.

Simultaneously, a burst of vigorous life force erupted from his body. Under the melting skin, flesh and blood writhed, resisting the mutation.

The black-robed old man's eyes darkened, and he abruptly faded away.

In an instant, a hazy face emerged from the armchair at the dining table, blending with the brown wood, about to gain clarity.

At that moment, a cascade of flames descended from the crimson-flame-covered ceiling, soaking the armchair and swiftly setting it ablaze.

Before the brown face could fully materialize, it succumbed to the raging flames, forced to retreat.

Lumian lost sight and sense of the black-robed elder subsequently.

While surveying the surroundings, Lugano, lying on the dining table, suddenly sat up and jumped down. He stared at Lumian with vacant eyes, like a wandering zombie.

Lumian chuckled, raising his right hand and pointing at Lugano.

With this gesture, specks of brilliance shimmered in his eyes, as if the cosmos had descended.

Lugano found himself in an empty night sky, surrounded by twinkling stars.

He stood rooted to the ground in a daze. Without any subsequent actions, he resembled a machine that had lost its energy and controller.

Having settled his servant, Lumian surveyed his surroundings once more.

Yet, his eyes brimmed with flowing and burning crimson flames, and the black-robed elder's figure remained elusive.

Lumian's expression remained stoic as he splayed the five fingers on his right hand, clenching them into a fist.

His body suddenly grew heavy, and the flames surrounding him surged towards him like a river converging into the sea, drawn by an invisible force.

Bottles, organs from various body parts, and lightweight items in the room soared towards Lumian.

On the wooden coat rack near the door, the transparent figure of the black-robed elder protruded, pulled away by an unseen force.

He fought with all his might, but he couldn't resist the pull towards Lumian. It was akin to a piece of wood caught in a flood or a thin leaf fluttering in a fierce wind.

Lumian's left hand was already raised, and the crimson, nearly white flame in his palm rapidly turned white under the intense suction force, forming a minuscule ball.

Layers of compressed white-hot fireballs were unleashed, and the weighty and fearsome suction force dissipated.

Pa! The black-robed elder finally landed on the floor, his vision completely engulfed by the blazing white fireball.

Rumble!

The blazing white fireball collided with the Beyonder conducting the sinister surgery and strange ritual. The explosion's sound echoed into the distance but was muffled by the darkness shrouding the room, preventing it from permeating.

In the midst of such a violent explosion, no one on the ship heard or sensed anything awry.

Rumble!

The black-robed elder's body was shredded by the devastating explosion. Countless corpse fragments were instantly charred or consumed by bright flames, scattering across every corner of the living room and dining room.

With spirit channeling at his disposal and Ludwig providing support, Lumian reveled in the authority of the Governor of the Sea and the nearly demigod-level power it bestowed. He cared not for what the enemy might transform into.

Incredible. Is this what it's like to be a demigod? Even if it's just an illusion… Sadly, it won't last beyond six in the morning… Lumian sighed, directing his gaze at the burning corpse fragments.

A quick inspection revealed that the black-robed elder's flesh had rapidly charred or turned to ashes. It was as if frost had met magma from a volcanic eruption.

In a matter of seconds, only the heart, liver, spleen, lungs, kidneys, intestines, and stomach remained in the room, along with a grayish-white half-charred brain.

Wh… Even with his feet, Lumian could tell that something was awry.

Except for the brain, the remnants of the enemy were all internal organs.

The malevolent surgery he had just completed involved extracting someone's internal organs to let them live as if nothing happened!

At the same time, the peculiar ritual he performed utilized the complete set of internal organs to attempt to reconstruct the so-called Child of God's body!

All internal organs—it was hard for Lumian not to draw a connection.

Could it be that this fellow's internal organs were extracted before, and he survived by piecing together others' internal organs, becoming a Beyonder? What's this called? Human alchemy? If it's true, who took his internal organs? Lumian pondered silently.

The stars in his eyes swiftly dissipated, and Lugano returned to the real world.

From a distance of four to five meters, Lumian raised his right hand and smoothly swung it.

Smack!

Lugano felt the impact of an invisible force against his face.

With a sudden jolt, his eyes gradually cleared of their blank stare.

The first sight that greeted Lugano was the crimson flames falling around him, extinguishing before causing any havoc.

Then, he noticed charred body parts, scattered internal organs, glass jars filled with light-amber liquid, and organs soaked in them.

Am I still dreaming? Is this a nightmare? Just as this thought crossed Lugano's mind, the image of his employer, Louis Berry, with black hair and green eyes, appeared before him.

Son of a bitch, this dream took an unexpected turn! Lugano shuddered and involuntarily inquired, "What happened?"

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, "What dream did you just experience?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

What dream? Lugano confirmed his wakefulness and recollected, “I dreamed of my childhood. My mother stood at the door, urging me to come home for dinner. She even sang a nursery rhyme from my hometown…

“She’s been gone for almost ten years. I miss her dearly. I kept walking towards the door, but I couldn’t reach her…”

At that moment, Lugano realized that this wasn’t their suite. He exclaimed in shock,

“What happened?”

With a smile, Lumian responded, “You slept until midnight and suddenly sleepwalked all the way here. An old man had plans to operate on you, remove your kidneys, and slowly turn you into a patient like Enio.”

The more Lugano listened, the more fear gripped him. Earlier, he had wondered how someone like Enio, who had lost most of his internal organs, could still be alive, albeit turning weak—only to realize that he was so close to turning into a similar figure!

“Hiss…” Lugano gasped and asked with trepidation, “Where’s that old man?”

“That’s all that remains.” Lumian gestured at the internal organs and the grayish-white, half-charred brain on the ground.

Without giving Lugano a chance to sigh, Lumian instructed, “Bring Ludwig here.”

It was also almost time for his midnight snack.

Lugano hastily left the suite, grateful for choosing to follow Lumian to the Southern Continent.

Otherwise, he would be at the mercy of such situations elsewhere!

Lugano believed this matter had nothing to do with Lumian. He had brought it upon himself. If it were Trier, he might have encountered a similar patient who had lost internal organs.

Lumian watched him leave, raised his right hand, and stroked his chin.

Simply hearing the infant's cries from the failed ritual can influence Beyonders of the Planter pathway to sleep and act in a sleepwalking state, receiving corresponding orders?

Isn't this too exaggerated? It's an absolute suppression on the Planter pathway…

I could understand a similar phenomenon if that ritual had succeeded, and the Child of God was truly born. Yet, it's already this powerful despite being a failed product?

Even with the limitation of its range, it's still terrifying… Is there a key reason I don't know?

Moreover, can only Beyonders of the Planter or Sower pathways hear the Child of God's cries? Can the Apothecary pathway, which can interchange with the Planter pathway, also hear it?

Amidst Lumian's thoughts, Lugano led Ludwig into the suite.

Faced with this gruesome scene, Ludwig pressed his hand to his mouth and yawned.

"Where's the food?"

Lumian didn't make any immediate requests. Instead, he turned to Lugano.

"Guard the door."

With the prior experience of the blood-drinking incident, Lugano could vaguely guess what was about to happen. He didn't dare face it directly. Upon hearing Lumian's instructions, he heaved a sigh of relief and jogged to the corridor, closing the vermilion door behind him.

Only then did Lumian gesture towards the scattered internal organs on the ground.

“Do you need me to roast it for you?”

Ludwig shot a quick glance at Lumian.

“Don’t you find it irksome? These are all human organs.”

Lumian emitted a soft chuckle.

“In my eyes, this is already on par with a monster’s insides.”

He then wore a self-deprecating expression.

“Moreover, isn’t directly consuming Beyonder characteristics to advance a Beyonder equivalent to eating someone?”

Ludwig remained silent, taking a few steps to the side. He squatted down, picked up the old man’s heart, stuffed it into his mouth, and began to chew.

Crimson blood slowly trickled from the corner of his mouth.

Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down, patiently waiting for Ludwig to finish his meal and digest.

After seven to eight minutes, Ludwig retrieved a white handkerchief from his coat pocket and wiped his mouth.

“These internal organs belong to different people. Some are Beyonders, some are ordinary folks, some old, some teenagers…

“There are traces of human refinement. The aura of life is rather mixed and impure…

“They will be controlled and influenced by the refiner…

“Having been refined, the person doesn’t know that he’s been through this.

“He has complete memories of the past. This is something that can’t be achieved by refining an ordinary body.

“He followed Enio on board, hoping to extract the remaining organs and complete the ritual before Enio reached his destination…”

Ludwig recounted the knowledge and memories he had absorbed in a straightforward tone.

Chapter 604 - 604 School of God's Descent

604 School of God's Descent

Under the glow of the crimson moon, Ludwig, clad in a two-piece pajama set and a small coat, recounted the memories and knowledge he had absorbed from the black-robed elder's half-charred brain and internal organs. He did so methodically, like an emotionless time-reporting machine.

"Only the brain belongs to him. His name is Prinpino.

"Due to his advanced age and weakened body, he delved into mysticism. Unwittingly, he drew the attention of the Great Mother and acquired a wealth of secret knowledge, evolving into a Beyonder…"

Upon hearing this, Lumian muttered with a mix of mockery and fear, Despite gaining the Great Mother's attention, did he not turn pregnant?

Are you truly a follower of the Great Mother?

Ludwig continued, "I'm uncertain when Prinpino started losing his internal organs. I failed to absorb the pertinent knowledge and memories.

"Similarly, the time he became a human refinement product remains unknown.

"His philosophy is:

"Humanity, once the favored and proudest children of the Great Mother, fell into folly, aging, and weakness due to their detachment

from her.

“Only by allowing the divine son of the Great Mother to descend into the world can humanity be saved. They can enter Paramita and regain their original form.

“When the time arrives, the Great Mother will return to the real world she governs.”

Using the gender-oriented pronoun “she” to refer to the Great Mother instead of “She”… This implies that, in the eyes of individuals like Prinpino, pregnancy and childbirth are still feminine matters. A mother must be a “she”… This differs from the Nightstalkers… Lumian glanced at Ludwig and nodded approvingly.

Ludwig calmly detailed Prinpino’s attempts and some of his abilities.

“The birth of the Child of God requires a specific body composed of various people’s internal organs…

“This isn’t the entire descent ritual. It lacks a crucial component…
Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“Prinpino possesses potent self-healing abilities. As a product of human refinement, he’s immune to the influence of many Beyonder powers.

“He can indirectly control humans corrupted by the Child of God or specific Pathway Beyonders who have had direct contact with special patients. The range is 100 meters, and they must be unconscious…”

Upon hearing this, Lumian suddenly recalled a Sequence 7 Vampire of the Apothecary pathway.

Such Beyonders wielded formidable self-healing abilities and could craft Blood Slaves resembling their own marionettes!

Lumian refrained from interrupting Ludwig, patiently awaiting further details.

“He’s adept in surgery and can directly heal others. He knows a ritual enabling a human to survive for a period even without internal

organs.

“He can merge with trees and wooden articles for concealment, acquire a sturdy shell, and evade detection.

“He can stimulate the growth and reproduction of creatures, including but not limited to rats, fleas, bedbugs, fungi, and various plants. However, it drains his vitality. His vitality can be replenished through an unsuccessful Child of God descent ritual. Every nine rituals necessitate a batch of internal organs to be replaced…

“He can also inflict curses upon others, summon malevolent creatures, consume his life for the casting of a few nefarious arts…”

As Ludwig concluded, Lumian realized Prinpino’s Beyonder powers were diverse. He possessed partial Vampire abilities and embodied certain traits of the Earth pathway’s Planter, Doctor, and other Sequences. Simultaneously, he wielded a limited grasp of dark arts, expending vitality for their execution.

It’s akin to the amalgamation of the Apothecary, Planter, and Heretic Spellmaster pathways, yet it’s not exhaustive… Such a boon exists? The Great Mother truly reigns at the apex of these three pathways… Lumian reflected momentarily before taking Ludwig’s hand and departing the suite.

He instructed Lugano, stationed at the door, “Summon the priest from the prayer room and inform him of all pertinent details you are aware of.”

After issuing his directive, Lumian deliberated before appending, “Locate the captain first, then seek out the priest.”

“Alright,” Lugano assented reflexively before inquiring, “And yourself?”

“Of course I’m going back to bed. Should they seek an audience with me, they may wait until tomorrow morning.” Lumian gestured dismissively, guiding Ludwig along the dimly illuminated corridor to his suite.

Am I solely accountable? Lugano mused to himself.

He suddenly noticed he stood alone at the suite's threshold, surrounded by scattered internal organs. A shiver traversed his spine, prompting him to hasten toward the captain's quarters.

…

Ten minutes later, inside the black-robed old man's suite.

The priest named Montserrat and the captain, Pedro, scrutinized the situation while listening to Lugano's detailed account.

Nervously, Lugano disclosed to them that he was a Beyonder, a Doctor of the Planter pathway. Enio sought him out due to his exceptional skills in treating patients. Later, during the late night, he experienced a sleepwalking episode. When he reached the suite, he found his internal organs almost removed. Fortunately, he was rescued by his employer.

Throughout the entire narrative, Lugano only omitted Ludwig's consumption of blood, sharing everything else he knew.

Pedro, the captain with the handsome brown beard, quipped half-seriously,

"Could it be that your employer killed a passenger in this suite and deliberately scattered his internal organs everywhere, concocting such a sinister Warlock tale to deceive us?"

Uh… Lugano found himself momentarily speechless.

Indeed, this possibility couldn't be entirely dismissed!

Father Montserrat, garbed in a brown clergyman's attire, shook his head.

"After confirming Enio's physical condition, we'll determine the veracity of this story."

"I concur." Captain Pedro stroked his beard and gazed at Lugano. "What's your employer's name?"

"Louis Berry," Lugano truthfully replied.

“Louis Berry…” Pedro’s eyes narrowed. “The adventurer who hunted down the Demon Warlock, Louis Berry?”

Montserrat’s eyes widened slightly.

“The one collaborating with the Church in Port Santa to covertly thwart malevolent forces disrupting the sea prayer ritual, Adventurer Louis Berry?”

Wh… My boss’ reputation is so renowned? Did the Church of Earth Mother inform all the clergy that Louis Berry is a friend and collaborator? Yes, this ship departed from Port Santa. The priest on board must have been the first to be informed… Lugano had considered it, but he hadn’t expected his employer’s name to be so impactful.

Without hesitation, he affirmed, “It’s him, Adventurer Louis Berry.”

Just as Lugano concluded his account, the entire ship was abruptly sent airborne, landing atop a wave dozens of meters tall.

No dark clouds or torrential rain accompanied the phenomenon, and there were no violent winds or lightning.

After vaulting between the pitch-black waves several times, the steamship gently descended onto the sea’s surface, restoring calm to its surroundings.

Captain Pedro surveyed the wrecked suite and the sliding windows, then turned to Lugano with a deep inquiry, “Is this the power of your employer? I heard stories of someone practicing sea wave magic at the bar tonight. Was that a genuine wave?”

“Yes.” Although Lugano was uncertain about the events unfolding, he attributed the display of nature’s power to his employer.

He added, “He’s extending his greeting.”

Captain Pedro and Father Montserrat fell into contemplative silence.

After more than ten seconds, Pedro addressed Father Montserrat, who seemed to be in his thirties,”Does the Church possess knowledge of

such surgeries and rituals?”

Montserrat glanced at Lugano, indicating that the conversation need not be private.

The priest reflected for a moment before responding in a solemn tone, “There exists a faction of misguided Mother believers who contend that the decline of the modern world and the debasement of humanity result from their estrangement from the Mother.

“They are determined to employ any means to usher in the so-

called Child of God into the real world and invoke the Mother’s descent through the return of the Child of God.

“We refer to them as the School of God’s Descent.”

Unconvinced, Lugano inquired, “You can summon a Child of God simply by using the internal organs of ordinary people?”

While he lacked knowledge about the specific surgery and ritual, he could deduce that internal organs were a crucial component.

Montserrat contemplated the remaining human organs in the suite and responded gravely,

“The Child of God is the Mother’s child, and humans are also Mother Goddess’s children.”

Does this imply that, fundamentally, no one is superior or inferior, and they can serve as ingredients with quantity compensating for any shortcomings? Lugano grasped the essence of the priest’s statement, realizing how many rituals involving blood sacrifices could be explained by this theory.

Father Montserrat offered no further explanation and turned to Lugano.

“Convey to your employer that we will take charge from here. Assure him not to worry.”

“Very well.” Lugano sighed with relief.

…

The next morning, Lumian woke up promptly and realized he no longer possessed the power of the sea, preventing him from tapping into the Governor of the Sea's authority.

He took a regretful sip of his light beer and commenced writing to Madam Magician, detailing the issues with the School of God's Descent and the purported birth of the Child of God in the spirit world.

Swiftly, the messenger returned, carrying Madam Magician's response:

"Encountering the School of God's Descent—I can't ascertain whether the issue lies with you or Lugano.

"The so-called Child of God has already been born in the spirit world—it's merely propaganda, you understand? Similar to the Church of The Fool's Holy Bible—just listen but don't take it seriously.

"Nevertheless, comparable incidents are unfolding, and they are brewing and evolving. This actually ties back to you. It originated from Cordu's empty cradle, the child Madame Pualis 'lost.'

"Additionally, based on various sources, Madame Night didn't perish in Fourth Epoch Trier. She encountered or acquired something that advanced the matter of the Child of God.

"Besides her, the Sinners' Voisin Sanson managed to escape Fourth Epoch Trier for unknown reasons. What he encountered remains unknown…

Voisin Sanson is still alive? Lumian was initially taken aback by the revelation in the middle of the letter, but a smile soon crept across his face.

At that moment, a knock echoed on his bedroom door.

"Who is it?" Lumian, aware that it was Lugano outside, asked casually.

Lugano replied fearfully through the wooden door, “I-I heard a baby crying again!”

Chapter 605 - 605 Lingering Effects

605 Lingering Effects

Hearing the cries of a baby again? Is he pestered by the so-called Child of God? Lumian held Madam Magician's reply, unfinished, and adjusted his sitting posture with amusement. He gazed at the door and said, "Come in."

Lugano turned the handle and cautiously pushed open the door, uncomfortably stopping in front of Lumian.

His actions and demeanor, combined with his thick eyebrows, large eyes, and square face, made him appear rather comical.

"Isn't that evil Warlock, the old man n-named Prinpino, already dead? Why can I still hear the cries of a baby?" Lugano inquired with concern, his tone reflecting it.

Having consulted the just-awakened Ludwig, he had received an answer that he hadn't heard the baby's cries.

Lumian playfully shook the letter in his hand and chuckled.

"There are two possibilities. One is that Prinpino's accomplices on the ship also possess the ritual to summon the Child of God. The other possibility is…

Lugano pressed impatiently, "What is it?"

Lumian glanced at the Doctor and grinned.

"Perhaps the unborn Child of God has taken a liking to you and wants to choose you as his surrogate mother. Thus, even though

Prinpino is already dead, he's unwilling to leave you and continues to linger by your side. Normally, he can't be seen or sensed."

Lugano's scalp tingled as he listened. Ignoring the question of why he was a mother and not a father, he stammered, "W-what should I do?"

"No rush." Lumian smiled.

"There's no need to hurry in such circumstances." Lugano felt like his internal organs might be devoured by the so-called Child of God at any moment, leaving only an empty cavity.

"Of course," Lumian said in a relaxed state. "Aren't you still alive? Since you're not dead, it means the situation isn't very serious. You can take it slow. There's no hurry."

That seems to be the case… Lugano, caught up in the conversation, nodded and asked in confusion, "Must I die before the problem becomes serious enough for it to become urgent?"

Lumian chuckled and said, "No, it means there's zero need to rush.

"If you're already dead, what's the hurry? Can I revive you?"

In short, there's no need to rush? Lugano was taken aback.

Though he harbored doubts, his employer's ability to crack jokes and play pranks reassured him.

Evidently, his employer didn't view the baby's cries as a grave concern!

Only then did Lumian unveil his true speculation.

"There's a third possibility. The corruption you suffered upon contact with Enio won't dissipate so quickly, and it's highly likely that it won't vanish naturally. Consequently, you'll still form a connection with the unborn Child of God."

"Then, how do I eliminate the corruption?" Lugano accepted this explanation and believed that a solution existed.

Lumian didn't immediately respond to his question. He let Lugano stand in front of him as he perused the rest of Madam Magician's reply.

"Considering your link to the Child of God and the evil god's angel sealed within you, encountering a member of the School of God's Descent isn't a mere coincidence.

"However, your interpreter and guide are of the Planter pathway—that raises other issues. It's only natural for you to encounter matters connected to the Great Mother.

"As for the problem, ponder it and inquire within yourself. I won't spoon-feed you the answer. Conspirers need to employ their brains more…"

Observing this, Lumian looked up at Lugano without uttering a word. The Doctor's body tensed, and a thin layer of sweat trickled down his back.

"Is—is there any other problem?" Lugano stammered.

Lumian reclined in his chair and said contemplatively, "Clearing corruption is an entirely separate course in mysticism. I need to grasp the specifics before providing an answer."

Having underscored the significance, he inquired, "Have you encountered similar situations before? Like peculiar infant cries, mystical occurrences linked to births, sorcery entwined with mothers, and so forth."

Lugano dared not be careless, fearing that if the corruption wasn't rectified promptly, he might end up as an organless being.

He meticulously sifted through his experiences over the years. After a moment, he tentatively said, "There's something I'm not sure if it's relevant…"

It was clear that he was reluctant to discuss the matter.

"How am I supposed to know if it's relevant if you don't tell me?" Lumian didn't care about privacy.

After a brief pause, Lugano cleared his throat and said, “Didn’t I mention that I became a Beyonder by obtaining a friend’s relic?”

“Yes, did you murder that friend?” Lumian inquired deliberately.

Lugano hastily shook his head.

“No, he committed suicide.”

“Suicide?” Lumian raised his eyebrows, finding this matter intriguing.

Lugano finally gathered the courage and spilled it out in one go, “When I worked as a bounty hunter, I utilized the hidden mountain ranges in the Dariège mountain range for smuggling operations. I moved things back and forth, making a decent sum. I even aided some wanted criminals in escaping overseas. Tanko was one of them, but his escape wasn’t from Intis to Feynapotter. Instead, he fled from Feynapotter to Intis.

“Eventually, he discovered a secluded valley deep within the mountain range and built a field of his own. He cultivated crops, tended to livestock, and kept to himself. I regularly visited, supplying him with essentials like salt, sugar, fabric, and other goods. In return, Tanko imparted mystic knowledge.

“I never imagined leading an ordinary life, with me out there adventuring and becoming a bounty hunter. Mysticism held a strong allure for me, and the teachings imparted by Tanko seemed invaluable at times.

“Tanko could be an enigma. Sometimes, he’d fall into brooding silence, his temper as hard and unyielding as stone, as if wrestling with inner demons. Other times, he’d be buoyant and loquacious, curious about everything around him.

“Every so often, he’d confess to straying from the Mother’s teachings, descending into the depths of darkness. He’d lament how he drifted further from his true self, suffering the consequences. Occasionally, he’d voice suspicions about the Church, believing it to be deceptive, claiming the true Mother had departed long ago…”

In that moment, Lugano couldn’t help but draw parallels between

Tanko's cryptic musings and the philosophy of the School of God's Descent, as recounted by Father Montserrat. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Was this encounter a foreshadowing, planted in the past? Lugano drew in a deep breath, sensing an ominous shiver down his spine.

He rushed out his words.

"Last autumn, I revisited Tanko. We sipped his brew and discussed various things beyond the mountain.

"Out of the blue, he spilled that he couldn't endure his decadent, sinful self any longer. The demon lurking deep within him was gaining control. Tanko wanted to end his life before it consumed him entirely. His dying wish? I deliver his stuff to Torres, the capital of Gaia Province, and hand it over to a Church of Earth Mother clergyman, preferably a Blessed.

"I pretended to agree, talked him out of it, and thought he had abandoned the idea. But the next morning, I found him dead in the field where he'd harvested grain. Golden wheat ears sprouted from his body. And, get this, he had several female reproductive organs.

"I was freaked out. Felt like I was dealing with a monster.

"Now, for us bounty hunters, a dead monster is a good monster. It's material for a paycheck.

"Summoning courage, I went through Tanko's things. Found a golden blob, like a grain seed, but half the size of a fist, next to him.

"Based on Tanko's mystic know-how, I suspected this blob was the root of his Beyonder powers.

"After much internal wrestling, I debated whether to stick to our agreement and send this relic back to the Church. But in the end, greed got the better of me, and I devoured the blob.

"I'm a guilty man. Broke my promise. Hoping the Sun forgives me."

Lumian listened in silence, a chuckle escaping his lips.

“You just ate it like that?”

Lugano grinned sheepishly and explained, “Yep, that’s right. I only learned potion formulas after becoming a Beyonder and diving into mysticism. I didn’t want a repeat of that experience, so I got obsessed with buying formulas.”

“You’re lucky. A few years earlier, and surviving that would’ve been tough. We might’ve crossed paths in the Dariège mountain range, you as a monster and me as a monster hunter,” Lumian recalled President Gandalf’s research and mocked Lugano.

Internally, Lumian muttered, Emperor Roselle was right. The ignorant are fearless… Something’s obviously off with Tanko. He probably got tangled with the evil god’s faith, corrupting the Beyonder characteristic he left behind. Eating it directly… no wonder you encountered the School of God’s Descent and heard baby cries. Easy to be corrupted and influenced, encountering patients like Enio.

Uneasy, Lugano asked, “Was the Planter ingredient I consumed the root of the problem?”

He had ingested it a year prior, and even advanced. Was there no resolution to the problem?

Lumian, seemingly avoiding Lugano’s beseeching gaze, feigned deep consideration as he perused the concluding segment of Madam Magician’s response.

“I’ve pondered your earlier caution and have some theories, but presently, I cannot divulge them to you. I can only hint that Amon and the person behind Him must have orchestrated something beforehand to divert the Celestial Worthy’s attention from the pertinent issue.

“In essence, this situation seems advantageous for you and the rest of us. For now, it’s best to feign ignorance and refrain from delving into it.

“If troubled by infantile cries, seek aid from a clergyman of the Church of Earth Mother.”

Wh… Did Madam Magician anticipate Lugano's lingering effects in advance? It seems so. She could discern the root cause of Lugano's plight… Lumian looked up, offering Lugano a reassuring smile.

"The remedy to purge the corruption lies in seeking aid from Father Montserrat."

That's it? After all my exposition? If there's truly no alternative, I would've taken my chances with the priest… Lugano's lips twitched as he mustered a strained smile.

"Very well, thank you, sir."

Chapter 606 - 606 Faith Conversion

606 Faith Conversion

At 8 a.m., in the prayer room on the third floor of the cabin, Lugano stepped in. Father Montserrat, draped in a brown priest's robe, was already preaching. Five or six individuals were scattered in the rows of chairs before the Sacred Emblem of Life.

Without disturbing the sanctified ambiance, Lugano chose a spot at the front, near a supplicant.

As Father Montserrat concluded his sermon and closed the Holy Bible, the supplicants rose, spread their feet, and raised their palms high, chanting in unison, "Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!"

Lugano instinctively turned his head, noticing a tightly-wrapped up supplicant with brown eyes and a pale complexion in the same row—Enio, the special patient who had lost his internal organs.

H-he's not dead? Wait, isn't the evil warlock, Prinpino, supposed to be dead? Why is Enio, the special patient, still alive? Lugano was stunned, almost convinced he'd encountered a ghost. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Being a Sequence 8 of the Planter pathway, he was ill-equipped to handle ghosts.

But then, Lugano observed that Enio's face wasn't as deathly pale as before. The brilliance in his eyes had returned, and vitality coursed through him.

Wh… Lugano raised his hand, tapping his glabella to activate his

Spirit Vision.

He observed Enio's Ether Body, no longer as ashen as before. Whether it be the yellow hue symbolizing the digestive system, the orange hue denoting detoxification and organ excretion, or other shades, they had reverted to a semblance of normalcy, albeit faint and thin.

Is that even possible? Hadn't he lost his heart, liver, spleen, lungs, intestines, stomach, and kidneys? Lugano stared at Enio as though he were an aberration until Enio pivoted and pleasantly recognized him.

"Doctor, your treatment works wonders. I feel like I'm recovering!" Enio exclaimed joyously.

And this was just the initial treatment sans pinpointing the specific cause!

Lugano's lips twitched stiffly.

"That's reassuring, indeed."

"Are you also a follower of Earth Mother?" Enio beamed, pleasantly surprised.

I'm not. Spare me the talk of Mother God or Mother… As an Intisian, how can I subscribe to the Earth Mother faith? Lugano gestured toward Montserrat, evading a direct response.

"I need to discuss matters with the priest."

Enio nodded.

"When can I seek further treatment in the morning?"

You don't require treatment anymore. It's time for recuperation and repose… Lugano grumbled, forcing a smile.

"In about an hour."

"Thank you, Doctor!" Enio waved, exiting the prayer room.

When only Lugano and Father Montserrat remained, Lugano hushed his voice, gesturing toward the door.

“H-how was he healed?”

Father Montserrat, still relatively youthful with sincere eyes, smiled and responded, “Thanks to Earth Mother, his fortune was favorable.

“As a Doctor yourself, you must be aware that internal organs can be transplanted as long as they maintain a certain level of vitality. For the ritual to succeed, Prinpino utilized his Beyonder powers to sustain the vitality of those internal organs. Moreover, the set he employed was extracted from Enio, eliminating the need to consider transplant rejection effects.

“Furthermore, Enio remained alive, relying on mystical power to uphold a certain level of vitality. This was a crucial factor.”

“Did you perform surgery on him last night and transplant all his internal organs back?” Lugano was enlightened.

Father Montserrat nodded.

“For regular surgeons, this is an operation with nearly zero chances of success. Even if successful, keeping the patient alive long enough to navigate the most perilous stage is challenging. However, for us, it falls within our capabilities.”

Indeed… Compared to ordinary surgeons, Beyonder Doctors like us wield mystical powers akin to miracle-workers… Lugano sighed, dismissing further concern about Enio. Turning to Montserrat, he inquired with worry, “Father, I heard a baby crying again.

“Has that so-called Child of God set his sights on me?”

Father Montserrat reassured him, “Fear not. It’s an inevitable repercussion of the corresponding corruption. It will gradually dissipate over time. If you’re concerned about any unforeseen events or accidents on your path, I can help you eliminate them now.”

Is that so? You’re merely a Sequence 8 Doctor. Do you possess the capability to rid me of the remaining corruption? Set up an altar and

seek Earth Mother's aid? Lugano remained skeptical.

"Thank you, Father!"

Montserrat gestured toward Lugano's previous spot.

"Follow the believers' example. Close your eyes, listen to my preaching, and simultaneously, pray to Earth Mother. Remember, it's specifically to Earth Mother, no other deity."

"Understood." Lugano resumed his seat, crossed his arms, and shut his eyes.

As Father Montserrat delivered his sermon, Lugano silently echoed the verses of the Holy Bible. Gradually, his thoughts blurred, and amidst the discourse, Lugano discerned a mother's gentle murmur and felt the comforting warmth of her embrace.

His tense heart eased, reminiscent of seeking solace in his mother's arms after childhood bullying.

It was a blend of dependency, reliance, and a sanctuary for the mind.

Unbeknownst to him, tears trickled down Lugano's cheeks, as if purifying his body and soul.

Slowly, his emotions settled, dispelling the fear and unease.

"Done." Father Montserrat's voice seemed to waft from the distance, reaching Lugano's ears.

Opening his eyes, Lugano raised his right hand, wiping away the tears.

Standing up, he lifted his hands.

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!"

It was an almost reflexive response.

In that moment, sunlight streamed through the window, casting a faint golden glow upon the prayer room, as if heralding forthcoming

abundance.

Father Montserrat nodded in satisfaction.

“Earth Mother has purged the corruption from your body. Tonight, pay attention and see if you still hear the baby’s cries.”

“Alright, Father!” Lugano replied, his body and mind now at ease.

The next morning, he awoke with a sense of happiness.

Throughout the night, he experienced no dreams of a beckoning mother, nor did he hear the cries of the so-called Child of God.

Filled with joy, Lugano, after serving Ludwig breakfast, hurried to the prayer room to share the uplifting news with Father Montserrat.

Father Montserrat gazed at him for a moment and asked with a smile, “Are you interested in embracing Mother Earth?”

“Me?” Lugano hesitated before inquiring, “Are you willing to accept the conversion of a heretic?”

Father Montserrat smiled and replied, “In the Mother’s eyes, there are no heretics. There are only children who are or are not willing to return home.”

Lugano’s heart wavered, reflecting on his past actions of merely going through the motions in cathedrals—praying, listening to preaching, and attending Mass. He hadn’t truly believed in any deity, and the Church hadn’t provided substantial assistance.

Moreover, if I truly become a believer in Earth Mother, I might gain access to subsequent potion formulas and Beyonder ingredients from the Church or the three Orders… Even if not, I’ll surely receive corresponding mysticism guidance… Lugano hesitated, finding various excuses to convince himself.

Father Montserrat patiently waited, not pressuring him. He simply smiled, anticipating Lugano’s decision.

Eventually, Lugano raised his hands.

“Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

He responded to Father Montserrat’s proselytization in this manner.

Father Montserrat’s smile broadened as he extended his arms.

“Welcome home.”

Those words oddly warmed Lugano’s heart. It felt as though, after years of wandering and adventuring, he had finally returned home.

Fatigue lifted, and a sense of grounding enveloped him.

“Praise Mother Earth.” Lugano crossed his arms over his chest.

Father Montserrat nodded and commenced his true preaching.

“You believe in the source of life, the mother of all things, the propagation of the fertile land, the symbol of the crimson moon and reproduction, as well as the destination and the starting point of everything…”

Lugano listened attentively, committing the information to memory.

Though not devout yet, this might become his future sanctuary. He recognized the importance of presenting his good side at all times.

…

Upon returning to the first-class suite, Lugano glanced nervously at Lumian, who was engrossed in studying the Southern Continent’s Dutanese, and stammered, “I-I’ve changed my faith to Earth Mother.”

As a fellow Intisian, would he despise and scorn me?

Lumian looked up and chuckled.

“Then make sure to radiate maternal brilliance. Ludwig is counting on you for some fresh fish.”

He doesn’t mind at all… Lugano mumbled, not willing to let Ludwig go hungry. He embarked on a busy day.

Late at night, after tending to Ludwig until bedtime, Lugano pondered briefly and decided to visit the prayer room.

If the door was still ajar, he intended to offer a prayer before retiring for the night.

He had to make a good impression right from the beginning!

Lugano treaded the dimly lit stairs, approaching the prayer room with cautious steps on the creaking floor.

His footfalls grew hushed, wary of disturbing those engaged in prayer and potentially interrupting Father Montserrat's embodiment of Mother Earth's teachings through reproductive activities with a female believer.

Reaching the door quietly, Lugano extended his right hand, gently pushing it open.

The wooden door eased ajar, revealing a small gap without a sound.

It's not shut tight… Is he truly in the midst of reproduction? Lugano cautiously peered into the opening.

He observed the crimson moonlight enveloping the prayer room and Father Montserrat, draped in a brown priest's robe, standing before the Sacred Emblem of Life. Folding his arms, Father Montserrat swayed gently, as if cradling a newborn child.

However, there was nothing within his embrace.

Chapter 607 - 607 Smell of Food

607 Smell of Food

Lugano's scalp tingled as he found himself in a surreal encounter with Father Montserrat, bathed in the glow of the crimson moonlight. The sight of the priest, cradling an invisible child in his arms, sent shivers down Lugano's spine.

Is he carrying a child?

An invisible child?

The so-called Child of God?

Frightened by the association, Lugano tried to quickly shut the door before the owner noticed, as if he had wandered into the wrong room. He slipped away without making a sound.

Suddenly, Father Montserrat's voice echoed in the air.

"Are you here for prayer?"

Lugano's eyes tightened, and like a startled wild cat, he swiftly turned and sprinted towards the staircase.

All he could think about at that moment was his formidable employer!

However, what met his eyes was utter darkness. No staircase with a wooden floor in sight.

In the shadows, clusters of pitch-black weeds, with plump wheat, swayed in eerie silence.

Lugano's body tensed, uncertain about the unknown that awaited him in this abyss of darkness.

“Why did you run?” The weeds parted, revealing Father Montserrat, holding an invisible baby. Behind him, an illusionary, unusually massive oak tree stood tall.

Next to the weeds, the oak tree was covered in abnormal growths, forming a chillingly simple and ominous Sacred Emblem of Life.

As Father Montserrat, clad in a brown priest’s uniform, appeared less than three meters away, Lugano swallowed hard, offering a feeble excuse.

“It’s late. I didn’t want to disturb you.”

Father Montserrat remained cradling his arms, wearing a faint smile.

“What did you see?”

Every hair on Lugano’s neck stood on end, and cold sweat broke out on his back.

Struggling, Lugano pointed at Father Montserrat’s empty embrace, asking with difficulty, “Why are you doing this?”

Father Montserrat responded with a significant tone, “We’re all Mother’s children.”

Lugano didn’t dare to delve further and nodded repeatedly.

“Yes, yes, yes. We’re all Mother’s children.”

Father Montserrat didn’t allow him to navigate through with platitudes. He deliberately added,

“The child of the Great Mother.”

Great Mother… Although Lugano had anticipated this answer, his heart almost skipped a beat, and his mind went blank upon hearing it.

Seeing that Father Montserrat had made it explicit, Lugano had no choice but to inquire,

“Aren’t… aren’t you a follower of Earth Mother?”

Father Montserrat felt no remorse about betraying the Church of Earth Mother. He maintained a warm smile and explained, “Earth Mother is a facet of the Great Mother, a projection. In this role, she watches over the lands of betrayal and the children who have strayed from the Mother’s embrace.”

Gulp… Lugano instinctively swallowed, uncertain about how to counter Father Montserrat.

Having joined the Church of Earth Mother just a day ago and attended only two sermons, he lacked the profound theological knowledge to challenge such heretics.

He could, of course, outright deny it. After all, Montserrat’s explanation sounded ominous. If the priest’s words were true, with the Earth Mother Church’s resources and factions, the so-called Child of God should have already been born in the real world, and the Great Mother would have returned. Yet, that hadn’t happened.

The current scene and the invisible pressure silenced Lugano, refraining from outright denial.

What if he enraged Father Montserrat completely?

Father Montserrat continued, “All creatures in this world are the children of the Great Mother. Some were conceived by her, some are descendants of these deities, and some, like you and me, were directly transformed from the flesh and blood of the Great Mother. We share the strongest connection with her!”

Internally, Lugano couldn’t help but retort, I was born by my mother, not transformed from the flesh and blood of the Great Mother… However, his smile remained, more grimacing than joyous.

“Don’t you find the Great Mother’s believers sinister and terrifying?”

Father Montserrat smiled and reassured, “There’s no need to fear the return of the Great Mother. How can a mother hate her child?

“You might not know, but there are many worlds beyond ours. The

creatures in those places flourish under the watch of the Great Mother, constantly reproducing and growing. I've never heard of any species being eradicated. Instead, their numbers are increasing.

"Moreover, it's the Great Mother who granted us life. It's her prerogative to reclaim the life she bestowed upon us. We should cooperate willingly."

Cooperate my rear end, you son of a sow! Lugano wasn't bewitched. Suddenly, he drew his concealed revolver and fired two shots at Father Montserrat.

Without confirming the effectiveness of the shots, he swiftly turned and sprinted toward the dark expanse filled with black weeds.

Though the destination within the dark depths was unknown, perhaps harboring great peril, staying here seemed even more hazardous!

"Waaa!"

Abruptly, Lugano heard an almost ethereal cry of an infant.

It was exactly the same as the sounds he had heard several times before.

Lugano's expression froze, and his pace slowed as he ran.

His eyes gradually filled with emptiness, and he turned around. Step by step, he approached Father Montserrat, who was cradling an invisible baby, and the illusory, colossal oak tree.

"That's our mother…

"The mother who gave us life…

"She's willing to accept anyone who repents, every child who returns home…

"If she wants to take back the life she bestowed upon us, then let her. She has the prerogative to reclaim what she gave…"

Listening to Father Montserrat's abnormally ethereal yet seemingly close voice, Lugano gradually developed a strong and heartfelt acceptance.

Yes, that's my mother…

Why would she harm me?

She can take back what she had given…

Lugano walked faster and faster until he stood beside Father Montserrat.

Instantly, he felt warmth and relief. It was the scent of a mother's embrace.

Gradually, he experienced an indescribable moist sensation, as if a kitten were being licked by a female cat.

How comforting… Lugano half-closed his eyes.

At that moment, he heard his mother's favorite nursery rhyme

—from behind him.

Why is Mom behind me? Shouldn't she be in front? Lugano wondered vaguely.

Then, he heard his mother shouting behind him, "Don't go over!

"Don't move forward!

"Danger!"

Don't go over… Don't move forward… Danger… Lugano shuddered, his vacant eyes regaining a certain vigor.

He saw where he was—the illusory colossal oak tree and moist, warm, squirming flesh petals sprouting from it. Half of his body was already enveloped in the flesh petals, slowly pulling inward.

This was the motherly embrace he had just experienced.

Lugano's pupils dilated, and a chill ran down his spine, causing his hair to stand on end.

He exerted strength against the viscous liquid-covered flesh with both hands, swiftly pulling away.

Father Montserrat, cradling an invisible baby, appeared beside Lugano, wearing a warm smile.

"Return. Return to the Mother's embrace and revert to our original form."

Despair gripped Lugano.

He wanted to confront the priest, but sadly, having consumed two potions—Planter and Doctor—he realized that, apart from enhanced strength and proficiency with farming tools and a scalpel, he lacked Beyonder powers directly applicable in combat. These powers included predicting the weather, identifying and nurturing seeds, treating ailments, healing wounds, stitching up souls, bestowing life, or possessing outstanding surgical abilities.

In the past, Lugano had relied on the combat techniques and marksmanship learned as a bounty hunter to match a Planter's strength and firearms.

Nevertheless, not resisting at a moment like this meant certain death. Lugano, an adventurer with a history of killing, faced immense fear as he fired at Father Montserrat and drew a sharp scalpel.

…

In Lumian's first-class cabin suite,Lumian, still engrossed in the Dutanese textbook under the kerosene wall lamp, heard a knock on the door.

Perplexed, he stood up, opened the door, and found Ludwig.

Ludwig, clad in grayish-white checkered pajamas top and pants, spoke gravely,

"Lugano has encountered an accident. Hurry up and save him."

An accident? Lumian arched his eyebrows.

Knowing that Lugano could still hear the baby's cries, Lumian had discreetly heightened his surveillance and attention on the servant, including just now.

But how could an accident occur when Lugano had entered the Earth Mother Church's prayer room?

Ludwig continued, "I couldn't sense his scent after he entered the prayer room."

"What scent?" Lumian inquired casually, already forming a vague suspicion.

Ludwig responded nonchalantly,"The smell of food."

Lumian stretched his neck and wrists, regarding Ludwig thoughtfully.

"You deliberately sniffed his scent."

Ludwig's chubby cheeks displayed an expression that said, "What's so odd about that?"

"If he perishes and you're busy elsewhere, who will assist me in gathering food?"

"That's a valid point." Lumian grinned.

…

In the darkness, enveloped by black weeds, Lugano's scalpel sliced through the air as he attempted to strike Father Montserrat.

"Waaa!"

The baby's cries echoed once more, leaving Lugano in a momentary daze, teetering on the edge of losing control.

With the invisible baby cradled in his arms, Montserrat manifested on the colossal illusory oak tree and smiled down at Lugano. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

“Don’t resist. We originated from the Mother, and we shall return to her.”

Just as the priest, with clear eyes and a warm smile, finished speaking, a knock on the door reverberated in the seemingly endless darkness, echoing among the weeds with abundant wheat.

Upon hearing the polite knock on the door, Lugano had an inexplicable thought.

How polite—to knock at the door in such a situation…

Chapter 608 - 608 The Way to Find Prey

608 The Way to Find Prey

The rhythmic thumping echoed only three times before escalating into a resounding bang.

As the sturdy wooden door flung open, the corridor bathed in the glow of kerosene wall lamps revealed a darkness entwined with overgrown weeds. Crimson flames surged forth, casting an eerie illumination.

In Lugano's gaze, the illusion of the oak tree abruptly dissipated, along with Father Montserrat, cradling an unseen infant in his arms.

Amidst the fiery chaos, the weeds withered, and the shadows dispersed. Lugano found himself "returned" to the humble prayer room, now aglow with the crimson moonlight.

Lumian, sporting a golden straw hat, emerged at the entrance. His eyes scanned every nook, yet Father Montserrat remained elusive.

Powers akin to the Paramita world merged with other traits, albeit incapable of creating a sufficiently independent world separate from reality. It resembles Demon Warlock Burman gaining unique abilities through a forceful transition of pathways… Where is he hiding now? Drawing from Ludwig's knowledge from his food, Beyonders of the School of God's Descent can conceal themselves in woodwork. Although I can't confirm Father Montserrat's corrupted affiliation with the School, the influence of the Great Mother is evident… Lumian swiftly assessed the unfolding scenario.

The lack of resistance from Father Montserrat, who refrained from fleeing or hiding, didn't surprise Lumian.

Performing the wave magic in the ship's bar had been a casual display, not wanting to waste the temporary Governor of the Sea authority. However, the subsequent use of the colossal wave to "greet" Captain Pedro and Father Montserrat wasn't mere showmanship.

Unaware if the School of God's Descent incident had concluded or if hidden Great Mother devotees lingered on the ship, Lumian deliberately showcased the might of a demigod Governor of the Sea to instill fear!

If there were no other Great Mother adherents or lurking threats, his "greeting" actions could be seen as showmanship. But if danger lurked, it would make the elusive elements cautious, forcing them to retreat deeper into hiding. Lumian planned to let the ship reach the next port, leaving the Church of Earth Mother authorities to deal with them.

Father Montserrat, seemingly unwilling to face the adventurer Louis Berry head-on and his demigod prowess, opted for concealment, biding his time until the ship docked.

Had Lugano not luckily or unluckily stumbled upon the priest cradling the unseen infant, Father Montserrat might have continued portraying himself as a competent clergyman of the Church of Earth Mother, avoiding any confrontation with Louis Berry.

"F-Father Montserrat is a believer in the Great Mother! He was cradling an invisible baby!" Lugano hastily reported to Louis Berry, now realizing the gravity of the situation.

Cradling an invisible baby… He could be hiding within the ship's woodwork. Lumian scanned the surroundings, inspecting chairs, the floor, and the Sacred Emblem of Life adorning the wooden wall.

In an abrupt realization, he felt a stir in his heart as he approached the Sacred Emblem embodying Earth Mother.

Adorned with symbols of wheat, flowers, and spring water at the periphery, at its core lay a simple depiction of a baby.

A baby!

Advancing further, crimson flames radiated, setting the wooden floorboards and chairs ablaze.

Coming to a halt before the Sacred Emblem of Life, Lumian extended his right hand, gently caressing the baby's face.

The wood instantly deteriorated, exuding a yellowish pus.

It seemed that the depiction of a baby surrounded by wheat and flowers had long decayed, shedding tears of blood.

There's a huge problem with the Church of Earth Mother… Lumian narrowed his eyes.

While unable to pinpoint the elusive Father Montserrat, he unearthed decay and darkness lurking beneath the veneer of the Church of Earth Mother.

Observing the charred remains of the woodwork and finding no trace of Father Montserrat, with more wooden hiding spots on the steel steam ship, Lumian turned and addressed Lugano, "Take me to the captain's cabin."

"Alright." Lugano visibly relaxed.

Exiting the prayer room, the crimson flames within swiftly extinguished, ceasing their advance.

Inside the captain's cabin, Pedro, spotting a handsome brown beard, grimaced as adventurer Louis Berry approached.

Experienced as he was, he knew that there might be trouble on the ship.

During the School of God's Descent incident, Adventurer Louis Berry had only dispatched a servant to explain matters. Now, here he was personally visiting!

What did this signify?

It pointed to a more severe complication!

Without awaiting the captain's inquiry, Lumian calmly asserted, "Father Montserrat has succumbed, aligning himself with an evil deity. He likely colluded with the School of God's Descent's evil warlock."

Captain Pedro's mind jolted as if struck by a rod, momentarily buzzing and going blank.

After a brief pause, he cautiously inquired, "Have you already killed him?"

"Not yet," Lumian truthfully responded. "He escaped the prayer room and is now in hiding. Dispatch a telegram promptly, reporting this to the Church of Earth Mother and the Feynapotter government. My servant will provide the details."

In the face of Louis Berry's authoritative directive, Captain Pedro yielded without resistance. He shifted his attention to Lugano, absorbing the account of his conversion and Father Montserrat's description, cradling an invisible infant.

Upon hearing the revelation, Pedro wore a bitter expression and admitted, "I did sense something amiss with Father Montserrat, but I never anticipated it to be this grave."

"What's the issue?" Lumian inquired. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Pedro sighed, explaining, "He's a Favored, a Beyonder of the Earth pathway, the most orthodox clergyman. Typically, he needs a Blessed's help to conduct Mass, preach to believers, and guide others into the Church. However, he's the only Favored on this ship without a Blessed."

"I initially thought the shortage of staff in Port Santa was due to the sea prayer ritual, so I didn't pay much heed. But now, with Father Montserrat's fall…"

Only with the assistance of a Blessed can one conduct Mass and preach to believers. There's no Blessed following him… Lumian had

previously learned that Favored of the Church of Earth Mother needs at least one second-in-command Blessed for their decisions to be considered valid. Otherwise, it risks being perceived as an influence of an evil god or a demon… An evil god… That Great Mother? Wh… Combined with recent events and his prior knowledge, Lumian suddenly grasped why the Church of Earth Mother maintained two distinct systems—

Blessed and Favored—rather than merging them.

Madam Magician of the Apprentice pathway had mentioned occasional influence from the Celestial Worthy, unsure if it was a revelation from Mr. Fool.

Similar to the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings overseeing the Apprentice, Seer, and Marauder pathways, the Great Mother likely stood atop the Planter, Apothecary, and Villain pathways.

As a result, Favored Beyonders of the Planter and Apothecary pathways would also be under the influence of the Great Mother. The origin of the revelation, whether from Earth Mother or the Great Mother, remained unclear. Confirmation required the input of Blessed from pathways outside these two. Simultaneously, Blessed monitored the status of the Favored!

That explains it… Indeed, there's a profound and serious reason behind this seemingly absurd, wasteful, and unreasonable system design, Lumian concluded. Without further words, he instructed Captain Pedro, "Send the telegram."

After the captain relayed Father Montserrat's situation to the Feynapotter government and the Church of Earth Mother, Lumian contemplated how to locate Father Montserrat.

Considering the vast sea surrounding them, unless Father Montserrat possessed teleportation or exceptional underwater travel abilities, he could only be hiding somewhere on the ship.

Lumian dismissed the idea of involving his Major Arcana card holder for such a trivial issue and resolved to devise a solution himself.

Could I use the ship's megaphone to insult the Great Mother, provoking Father Montserrat to reveal himself? The challenge lies in the inability to lock onto a target, potentially yielding less-than-optimal results…

Burning all the ship's woodwork? Seems like a last resort due to the presence of valuable goods in wooden crates…

Borrowing a bottle of Prophetic Concoction from Franca? It requires a fresh corpse. Additionally, if Franca is involved, I could get her to directly employ Magic Mirror Divination…

Playing the Symphony of Hatred bone flute and informing passengers to cover their ears prior to that? But it only reduces damage without averting the effects…

Right, ask Ludwig if he recalls Father Montserrat's small…

Also… Yes, I can give it a try!

Lumian quickly came up with several solutions and decided to systematically test each one, reserving seeking help as a final option.

He bid farewell to the captain and, under the cover of night, led Lugano back to the first-class cabin suite.

"Do you recall Father Montserrat's scent?" Lumian inquired of Ludwig.

Ludwig shook his head.

"No direct contact."

"Fair enough." Lumian turned around, offering a reassuring smile to Lugano. "I have an experiment in mind. Work with me."

"What kind of experiment?" Lugano asked, a tremor of fear evident.

Lumian gestured towards the window.

"Go to the deck. It's more open there."

Uneasily, Lugano descended to the deck, bathed in the crimson moonlight. His employer pulled out a full-body silver armor from his Traveler's Bag, revealing an inscrutable smile.

Lumian recalled the Pride Armor's particular disdain for items from the Earth and Evernight pathways.

What if it wasn't an item but a Beyonder?

How would it react?

Could this hatred be harnessed to pinpoint Father Montserrat's location, given he was at least a Doctor, at a certain distance?

Lumian wasn't entirely sure, but he intended to experiment with Lugano, a fellow Beyonder of the Earth pathway, to explore the possibilities.

Chapter 609 - 609 Useful Armor

609 Useful Armor

Lumian shot a quick smile at Lugano and fixed his gaze on the Pride Armor, carefully observing its reaction.

“What experiment? To test the effects of this armor?” Lugano questioned, a mix of apprehension and confusion in his voice.

As soon as he finished speaking, the air on the dark deck, bathed in the crimson moonlight, suddenly solidified.

In the next instant, the empty armor produced a radiant broadsword, and an unseen force locked onto Lugano.

Wh… Before Lugano could react, the silver-white full-body armor surged forward, the gleaming broadsword poised to strike.

In a split second, Lumian positioned himself in front of Lugano. His body expanded abruptly, almost tearing his linen shirt and black pants.

Bang!

Lumian’s massive fist collided with the Sword of Dawn, creating a metallic clang that resonated through the air.

Only then did Lugano shake off his bewilderment. Though unsure why the empty armor attacked him, he instinctively turned and sprinted away.

After covering some ground, the Pride Armor halted and stood silently.

The Sword of Dawn, fashioned from light, dissipated, turning into beams of light that dispersed the crimson moonlight, casting a dawn-

like ambiance upon the dark deck.

This sensation vanished in the blink of an eye.

Lumian, not daring to turn his back on the Pride Armor, repositioned himself and gauged the distance between the armor and Lugano.

About 20 meters… factoring in Lugano's running speed, the sensing range is approximately 15 meters… Lumian swiftly concluded. His body reverted to its original form, and a confident smile returned to his face.

It was enough. A fifteen-meter range sufficed on the ship!

He stowed away the Pride Armor and addressed Lugano, who was still making his way to the bow, "The experiment is over."

Huh? Lugano came to a sudden halt, realizing that Lumian had already stashed the peculiar silver-white full-body armor back into the mystical item cleverly disguised as a coin bag.

Relieved, he jogged back, curiosity etched on his face as he inquired, "Did the experiment succeed?"

"Very successful," Lumian replied, sporting a radiant smile.

Though Lugano didn't grasp the experiment's significance, he had a hunch that Lumian might be exploring a way to locate Father Montserrat.

Upon reaching the first-class suite, Lumian promptly instructed Lugano, "Go to the captain and ask him to gather all the Beyonders of the Earth pathway on the ship. Oh, and the Beyonders of the Apothecary pathway. I'll be back after capturing Father Montserrat. It doesn't matter if they don't show up. They'll bear the risk themselves."

Unsure if Captain Pedro was aware of every unstable element on the ship and every Beyonder, Lumian planned to monitor the Pride Armor later to prevent it from targeting hidden wild Beyonders. Allowing Pedro to handle this process first would lighten his load.

As Lugano left the suite, Lumian turned to Ludwig, who had resumed his meal.

“Keep an eye out later and see if there’s any ‘food’ secretly lurking here.”

Ludwig, mouth full of cake, signaled his agreement.

Waiting for the captain’s arrival, Lumian patrolled the cabin’s top floor with the Pride Armor in his arms, but Father Montserrat remained elusive.

Before long, Pedro entered the suite with the suspected security supervisor and a passenger in a low hat.

Lumian didn’t delve into details and gestured toward the sofa.

“Wait for me here.”

Without waiting for a response, he pressed down on his golden straw hat and exited the room.

Upon reaching the staircase, Lumian “pulled” out his silver-white full-body armor. Gripping the Sealed Artifact’s armpits firmly with both hands, he methodically patrolled each level of the cabin.

Whenever he approached a distance less than 15 meters from his suite, Lumian exercised extra caution, yet the Pride Armor refrained from attacking anyone.

Could it be that, beyond five meters and with several layers of obstruction, the armor wouldn’t exhibit any additional reactions? Lumian speculated as he descended floor by floor.

After nearly half an hour, he descended to the cargo cabin at the bottom.

Before maneuvering past stacks of wooden crates, the Pride Armor in Lumian’s grasp suddenly quivered, breaking free from his control.

The silver-white full-body armor morphed a radiant broadsword. Advancing in two strides, it swung at a wooden box tucked in the

corner.

With a resounding clang, the wooden box splintered, and a handful of steel ingots spilled out.

At the same moment, Montserrat's clean, youthful visage emerged from the broken box, materializing his entire body.

Confronted by the gleaming broadsword of light once more, the priest's initially sturdy frame bulked up, as if transforming into a formidable brown bear.

Bang! With a powerful palm strike, he sent the Sword of Dawn hurtling, landing atop a wooden crate of goods behind him.

This strength rivaled that of a true giant bear!

As Father Montserrat skillfully parried the Pride Armor's onslaught, Lumian, donned in a linen shirt, black vest, and a golden straw hat, materialized swiftly beside a stack of wooden crates behind him.

"Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot from Lumian's nostrils, hitting Father Montserrat before he could even react.

Instantly, the priest's gaze lost focus, and he crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

With this turn of events, vitality surged through his body like a steam engine operating at full throttle.

The robust vitality manifested as an incredibly potent self-

healing ability, swiftly restoring Father Montserrat's spirit.

The Spell of Harrumph bore a resemblance to Psychic Piercing, both targeting the Spirit Body and proving challenging to defend against. However, while the latter induced uncontrollable pain, trapping the target, the former added a sleep-inducing or unconscious state to the Spirit Body—a different form of harm.

Since it was an injury, it could be healed.

Empowered by the vigorous vitality's transformation, Father Montserrat's closed eyelids twitched as his eyeballs moved beneath them.

He nearly woke up before hitting the ground!

Yet, for Lumian, a mere second of restraint from the Spell of Harrumph was sufficient.

Considering that Father Montserrat might also be a product of human refinement, some abilities might not be effective. Lumian lunged at him, extending his right hand.

In his open palm, crimson flames coiled and compressed, forming a solid-looking sphere.

Simultaneously, the Pride Armor raised the Sword of Dawn once more.

Just as Father Montserrat opened his eyes and instinctively regained balance, he caught sight of Louis Berry's jade-green eyes, the dangerous crimson fireball almost white, and the broadsword of light slashing toward his head from the corner of his vision. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

With only a moment to react, he twisted to the side to evade the Sword of Dawn, but Lumian pressed the crimson, nearly white fireball against him.

Boom!

In a resounding explosion, Father Montserrat was sent hurtling through the air.

Flesh and blood erupted from his right shoulder to his abdomen, bones fractured, and squirming internal organs were laid bare.

His right arm dangled, on the verge of detachment.

Yet, the robust vitality within Father Montserrat persisted. Flesh and

blood wriggled within the gaping wound, miraculously healing.

Thud!

Father Montserrat crashed to the ground, accompanied by the heavy footsteps of the Pride Armor and the luminous slash of the broadsword.

Lifting his finger, the blood and flesh expelled from his body during the explosion swiftly coalesced, transforming into a blurry, thin blood-colored figure.

This figure lunged at the silver-white full-body armor, enveloping it and infiltrating its form.

Abruptly, the cargo hold was bathed in Sunrise Gleam. The blood-colored figure dissolved, gradually fading away.

The Sunrise Gleam was gentle, sparing Father Montserrat the instinctive need to shut his eyes. Consequently, his gaze reflected crimson, nearly white flaming ravens.

A dozen or so Fire Ravens circled Lumian, who casually kept one hand in his pocket. Their eyes fixed on Montserrat, tracing distinct trajectories as they soared.

Their aim was clear—to shred the target's body and set each piece of flesh ablaze, preventing recovery even with his potent self-healing abilities.

When each fragment was spaced 20 to 30 centimeters apart, their self-healing powers struggled to reunite them!

This wasn't flesh and blood magic!

Father Montserrat's pupils dilated, and his mouth instinctively opened, emitting a sinister yet intimate voice.

With the accompanying voice, a dense darkness descended, and wheat-filled weeds sprouted, devouring the Sunrise Gleam that bathed the warehouse.

In the darkness, some of the crimson, nearly white Fire Ravens lost their way, unable to traverse the “distant” space. Gradually, they dissipated—only a fraction successfully reaching Father Montserrat.

Amidst thunderous explosions, Father Montserrat’s form turned translucent, giving rise to a colossal illusory oak tree in its place.

The oak tree stood unscathed amid the explosion and flames, and amidst the aftermath, the mangled form of Father Montserrat materialized on a branch adorned with mistletoe. He cradled his arms, as if holding an invisible infant.

Gazing at Lumian, he wore a genuine smile.

So you’re not a demigod…

“Waaa!”

For the first time, Lumian heard the ethereal, hollow cry of the baby.

“Wah wah wah!”

Amidst the relentless cries, Lumian felt his vitality draining away. Gradually weakening, even his consciousness began to waver.

The depleted vitality seemed to flow towards the invisible baby in Father Montserrat’s embrace, transforming into its nourishment.

Chapter 610 - 610 “New Life”

610 “New Life”

In the face of the infant’s cries, which gradually weakened him, Lumian teleported immediately to Father Montserrat’s side, launching a powerful attack to disrupt the impending impact.

Yet, in that very moment, he observed the Pride Armor freezing in place upon hearing the infant’s cry. Suddenly, it crouched down and plunged the Sword of Dawn into the ground covered in dark weeds.

Dammit! Directly employing Hurricane of Light? Lumian’s scalp tingled. Without bothering to confirm, he shifted the teleportation destination, vanishing into the darkness of the illusory oak tree, and reappeared on the ship’s deck.

He had long recognized that Father Montserrat’s weed wilderness was inferior to the Madames’ Paramita. It failed to sever the deep connection between the inside and outside, nor could it prevent teleportation. Its sole capability was restraining various sounds and the aftermath of battle, akin to the Bottle of Fiction, if not less. Nonetheless, this wilderness had unique abilities.

As Lumian’s figure faded into the dark wilderness, the Sword of Dawn embedded in the ground by the Pride Armor shattered, transforming into countless light fragments, creating a formidable storm that engulfed the area.

The plump wheat-filled weeds were sliced into pieces, leaving the ground barren.

Father Montserrat, perched on the oak branch, couldn’t dodge in time. He only managed to manifest his body into something resembling wood before being consumed by the Hurricane of Light.

The illusory, hollow cry of a baby abruptly ceased.

When the Hurricane of Light subsided, Father Montserrat stood frozen in place.

In the next moment, his wood-like body, covered in brown bark, split open, revealing deep crevices.

Pa, pa, pa. Father Montserrat's body fell to the bottom of the oak tree, piece by piece. The incisions were smooth, and blood seeped out.

Flesh and blood were instantly absorbed by the illusory oak tree's roots, leaving nothing behind.

In the middle section of the oak tree, the bark split open. Squirming, moist flesh grew out, expanding into a hole.

A human head appeared, squeezed and ejected.

In the blink of an eye, the naked human was "born" by the illusory oak tree. It was Father Montserrat.

He retained his adult form, his body wet and partially covered in a dirty, translucent white membrane.

New life!

With the aid of the weed-covered darkness, the illusionary oak tree, and the invisible baby, Father Montserrat found a new lease of life!

His brow smoothed, and his eyes regained a youthful gleam. Enormous bat-like wings, shrouded in dark skin, erupted from his back, propelling him from the heart of the colossal oak to his silver-white full-body armor.

The Pride Armor rose, summoning light into its hand, forging a sharp spear.

Launching the elongated lance with relentless force, it sliced through the air, embedding into Father Montserrat's chest.

Father Montserrat's bat-like wings enveloped him, and his form shattered into palm-sized black bats.

In a mesmerizing dance, the bats circled behind the Pride Armor, reforming into Father Montserrat, adorned with a grimy membrane.

Father Montserrat's body expanded, morphing into a colossal bear. From his palms sprouted sharp claws etched with enigmatic patterns.

With a forceful swipe, he etched five deep gouges onto the Pride Armor's back, unveiling its hollow interior.

The Pride Armor froze, and the air itself seemed to still.

Before Father Montserrat could launch another assault, he noticed the silver-white full-body armor pivoting without warning.

Condensing hammers, axes, and flails made of light, it slashed at Father Montserrat frenziedly.

Father Montserrat lowered himself, shrinking to the cleared ground, inching towards the illusionary oak tree.

The ground beneath him caved, forming a rift.

In that moment, Lumian, sensing the end of the Hurricane of Light, teleported back into the darkness.

To his surprise, Father Montserrat stood unscathed, devoid of the brown priest's attire.

Undeterred, Lumian retrieved the Symphony of Hatred bone flute from his Traveler's Bag.

Seizing the moment while the Pride Armor entangled Father Montserrat, preventing the transmission of sound to the outside world, Lumian aimed to play a melody learned from Port Santa's various celebrations—composed by a Church of Earth Mother Saint for a bountiful harvest.

Typically, Lumian would don the Flog boxing gloves, "teleport" closer, stimulate some desire or emotion in Father Montserrat

through a punch, and then play the Symphony of Hatred to trigger Flog's aftereffects. However, Lumian abandoned this well-practiced routine.

The peculiar illusionary oak tree on the battlefield gave him pause. Father Montserrat had carried an invisible baby, possibly a Child of God. Wearing the Flog boxing gloves could attract attention and danger.

If the Great Mother perceived it and allowed the Child of God to breach the illusory-reality barrier to confront him, the consequences would be dire!

Moreover, Lumian suspected that heretics like Montserrat harbored evident psychological issues, making their mental states unpredictable. Playing the Symphony of Hatred directly could exploit this vulnerability, much like how he and Mr. K detested hearing others play the Symphony of Hatred.

Uncertain about which weakness might be triggered or the ensuing changes, Lumian planned to roll with the uncertainties.

Just as Lumian raised the Symphony of Hatred to his lips, an eerie chill crawled down his spine.

"Waaa!"

The spectral baby's cries reverberated, mere inches from him.

"Hehe, hehe."

The baby's cries morphed into laughter, as if engaged in an intriguing game with Lumian.

An inexplicable stiffness gripped Lumian, freezing him momentarily.

A cold aura infiltrated his body, spreading gradually to his abdomen.

As his life began to ebb away, merging with the cold aura, the baby in his ear oscillated between mournful wails and gleeful laughter.

Without hesitation, Lumian plunged his consciousness into his right

hand, activating Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's residual brand.

A violent and frenzied aura erupted from Lumian, enlarging him without relying on his Compression strength. Tangible bloodlust filled the air.

The invisible baby's cries and laughter abruptly ceased, and the coldness invading Lumian's body dissipated under the searing sensation. The dark wilderness swayed, casting a faint glow.

Lumian, in control, terminated the activation and blew into the black bone flute with blood-colored holes.

A noticeably jubilant melody echoed, stunning Father Montserrat locked in battle with the Pride Armor.

His face twisted in indescribable agony.

Witnessing the silver armor wielding a staff of condensed light, Father Montserrat instinctively reached out, pointing at the adversary's feet.

Countless vines, weeds, and tree branches sprouted rapidly, entwining the Pride Armor and impeding its movements.

Amidst the cacophony of crashing branches and tearing vines, the Pride Armor advanced laboriously, slowed by the entanglement.

Father Montserrat locked eyes with Lumian and, in a pained plea, shouted,

"Run!

"The Child of God can't be killed!"

Run? Wh… Lumian realized Father Montserrat seemed more grounded than before. The warmth in his gaze, the familiarity of home, replaced by agony and conflict.

"Run!

"Repent to Mother Earth on my behalf!"

Father Montserrat screamed in hysteria.

His naked form underwent an abnormal transformation. Organs, symbolic of creation and incubation, sprouted under the translucent, filthy white membrane, intertwining in a horrific display.

Repent to Mother Earth? Lumian vaguely understood Father Montserrat's current state.

His corruption appeared incomplete, retaining a side that clung to faith in Earth Mother, resulting in a split personality. Typically, the normal persona remained suppressed by the corrupted one.

Is this the problem that the Symphony of Hatred triggered, allowing Father Montserrat's normal personality to temporarily gain an advantage and regain control of his body? Lumian sighed, but this didn't prevent him from condensing crimson fireballs that were nearly white, launching them towards the mutated Father Montserrat.

Montserrat's countenance shifted between frigidity and anguish. His body alternated between evasion and restraint.

With all his might, he exclaimed, "The Child of God cannot be killed, only banished!"

As Father Montserrat spoke, the crimson fireballs, nearly white, exploded upon him. The silver-white Pride Armor breached the obstruction of vines and branches, charging forward with a light-conjured staff.

Rumble!

Upon the fireball's detonation, the fallen Father Montserrat wrested control of his body, attempting to retreat underground.

In that instant, Lumian materialized behind him, brandishing the black bone flute.

Lumian teleported into the explosion's epicenter, unconcerned about the potentially severe injuries from the formidable shockwave! Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

The fireball was a decoy. The true lethal strike he primed was the Symphony of Hatred!

Pfft!

Lumian thrust the black bone flute with blood-colored holes into Father Montserrat's diminishing neck.

Rumble!

The expanding flames engulfed them both.

Chapter 611 - 611 True Name

611 True Name

Rumble!

As Lumian's body was ripped apart by the explosion, he drew upon an Ascetic's tolerance for pain and a Pyromaniac's resistance to burning, activating the black mark on his right shoulder once again.

Alongside Father Montserrat, whose neck had been pierced by the Symphony of Hatred, he vanished into the swirling flames, reappearing at the edge of the dark wilderness.

His linen shirt, black vest, and dark pants lay in tatters. The exposed parts were mangled and charred, revealing white bones in some places.

Father Montserrat, close to death, had the filthy, translucent white membrane on his body torn and burned away by the explosion. The mutated naked body with various organs below was dented and charred, with flesh and blood constantly peeling off.

Snap.

As the first piece of flesh landed on the edge of the weed-covered darkness, it suddenly seeped in, as if absorbed by the soil.

Witnessing this, Lumian's heart stirred. He grabbed Father Montserrat's body and activated teleportation once again.

They left the dark wilderness and materialized on the deck bathed in crimson moonlight.

Simultaneously, the illusory oak tree in the depths of the cargo hold shed its bark, revealing moist, slippery flesh.

The blood-filled flesh began to squirm, but only a palm-sized figure emerged.

The figure, nearly the same size as the blob of flesh that had dropped from Father Montserrat and been absorbed by the wilderness, had clear eyes and a youthful appearance, resembling Father Montserrat, who had shrunk countless times.

Father Montserrat's eyes were glazed, and his expression was rigid, showing no signs of intelligence.

The silver-white Pride Armor rushed over and swung the re-condensed light hammer down, flattening the pixie-like Father Montserrat and turning him into a bloody pulp.

Dawn lit up, melting the meat paste quickly.

The illusory colossal oak tree instantly became more transparent, and the black wilderness with weeds rapidly disintegrated.

In the blink of an eye, the abnormal scene vanished. The cargo hold returned to its original state, but many wooden boxes had shattered, and the steel walls and floor bore obvious depressions and deep marks.

Elsewhere, Lumian drew the Symphony of Hatred's black bone flute and observed as Father Montserrat's blood dripped onto the steel deck without soaking in.

Just as he breathed a sigh of relief, he heard Father Montserrat, who had fallen to the ground and entered a dying state, weakly but persistently shout, "To banish the… Child of God… you must grasp… His true name!

"His true name is…"

Suddenly, Father Montserrat's voice vanished, but his mouth continued opening and closing.

The illusory, hollow cry of a baby echoed in Lumian's ears once more.

Unlike before, the cries were distant, as if in another world. Lumian's body didn't stiffen or turn cold, rendering him immobile.

Is the invisible Child of God still wary of the Blood Emperor's aura? Is this instinctive fear? Lumian quickly surveyed the surroundings and realized that the crimson moonlight on the deck, or rather, around him, had vanished.

The area became abnormally dark, preventing even the sound of seawater splashing.

"Waa! Waa! Waa!"

The baby's cries persisted, growing louder and clearer.

Lumian abruptly lowered his head, fixing his gaze on the breathless Father Montserrat and the stomach of the corpse before him.

At some indeterminate moment, the stomach bulged, as if something writhed within. Despite the already gaping wounds, a demonic blood-red glow emanated from the belly.

Lumian's eyes narrowed slightly as he knelt on one knee. Extending his right hand, which grasped the Symphony of Hatred, towards Father Montserrat's distended stomach.

Slash!

A gentle stroke of the black bone flute cleaved open the blood-red stomach, revealing blood-stained intestines and internal organs. There was no sign of the so-called Child of God or a moist, filthy baby.

Poof! A substantial amount of transparent, pale-yellow liquid spewed out from the ruptured blood-colored stomach, splattering the surrounding deck.

"Waa! Waa! Waa!"

The baby's cries intensified, piercing and shrill, drawing closer to Lumian.

He seemed to be gradually overcoming His fear of the Blood Emperor's aura out of anger and hatred. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

I need to find a professional to banish this invisible Child of God… Lumian, whose current spirituality allowed him two uses of Spirit World Traversal, planned on seeking assistance.

Hunters weren't experts in such matters!

Yet, after activating the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian realized he couldn't sense the spirit world or the coordinates he had once held.

The abnormal darkness induced by the Child of God's cries appeared to seal off this area.

This was closer to Paramita!

I can't find help, summon a messenger, or pray to high-level existences… Lumian's eyes narrowed as his heart sank.

At that moment, the invisible Child of God's cries drew nearer, causing Lumian's body to stiffen and turn cold once again.

As panic surged, Lumian, a Conspirer, swiftly devised a new plan: Exorcism Spell!

One of the five ritualistic magics from Alms Monk, capable of dispelling wraiths and evil spirits.

The unborn Child of God, invisible in the real world, bore a resemblance to wraiths or evil spirits.

Lumian, untroubled by the need for a specific target in his Exorcism Spell, could firstly use his name. Secondly, he could pray to Mr. Fool. The proximity-based response of the seal on his chest, due to the severed connection with the outside world, would provide the necessary level and strength!

An Ascetic, Lumian could simplify parts of the Exorcism Spell for a quick completion.

The hitch was the requirement for the target's real name and an item frequently carried. Lumian lacked both.

His gaze shifted to Father Montserrat's open and deflated stomach, searching for something relevant.

If unsuccessful in a minute, he planned to unleash Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's aura, attempting to scare away the invisible Child of God and break through the abnormal darkness for an indirect banishment.

After scanning the area a few times, Lumian's gaze fixed on the chaotic, blood-stained intestines.

Amidst them lay a short, flesh-colored, bloodstained strip, clearly not fully developed.

Wh… An incomplete umbilical cord of the Child of God? If it's truly an umbilical cord, it's closely tied to the Child of God. Connected to His flesh and blood. I don't even need to know His true name to succeed in the Exorcism Spell… Lumian retracted the Symphony of Hatred and tore off the suspected incomplete umbilical cord.

The illusory baby's cries intensified.

Lumian shuddered and chuckled.

"Thank you for confirming it for me."

He held the incomplete umbilical cord and danced a rhythmic, distorted, primitive dance.

As Lumian danced, he constantly bent down, using the umbilical cord to draw corresponding symbols on the deck with Father Montserrat's blood.

He simplified the patterns he needed to complete, straightened his body, and pressed his left palm, creating a crimson, nearly white flame on the symbol.

Then, he placed the umbilical cord into the flames.

There was a strong symbolic meaning behind this, representing expulsion, incineration, and purification!

“Waaa!”

The baby’s cries heightened, sending a shiver down Lumian’s spine, causing his body to tremble slightly.

Swiftly, he positioned a lit candle atop the flame and umbilical cord. Stepping back, he recited in Hermes, “The Fool that doesn’t belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…”

As the honorific name of Mr. Fool echoed, a wispy gray fog enveloped the surroundings. The unseen baby’s cries diminished, echoing in a haunting hollowness.

Feeling a burning sensation in his left chest, Lumian advanced two steps with a determined expression. He grasped the smoldering umbilical cord, flicked it thrice, and returned it to its place.

He continued, “I beseech your assistance. I implore you to banish the object connected to this umbilical cord…”

In an instant, the crimson, nearly white, flames tainted the gray fog, burning more intensely. The umbilical cord swiftly charred, revealing Father Montserrat’s transparent face marked by explosions and blood. The hollow baby’s cries faded into the distance.

Father Montserrat’s spirit involuntarily retreated, relief evident on his pained face.

He was also connected to the umbilical cord, and he was now a ghost!

With difficulty, Father Montserrat raised his hands and shouted, “Life’s precious embrace, the harvest’s grace!

“Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

His transparent Spirit Body rapidly dissipated into the darkness. The invisible Child of God emitted a shrill cry filled with hatred and

curses.

The cry echoed in Lumian's head, making him feel as if he had endured Psychic Piercings repeatedly. He became extremely weak, his thoughts consumed by the pain in his soul, losing perception of the outside world.

Upon recovery, the abnormal darkness on the deck had vanished, and the crimson moonlight returned.

The symbols on the ground and the gray fog-colored flames disappeared, leaving only the quietly burning candle and the charred umbilical cord.

After a brief pause, Lumian bent down to extinguish the candle flame. Pressing his hand to his chest, he whispered, "Thank you, Mr. Fool."

After stowing away the remnants of the umbilical cord and the ritual candle, Lumian cast a glance at Father Montserrat's still uncharacteristic corpse. He unleashed his Compression power.

His spirituality restored, weakness eased, Lumian finally felt confident enough to return to the cargo hold. Silently, he packed the Pride Armor into his Traveler's Bag.

Completing this task, he changed into tattered clothes and tended to his exposed wounds briefly.

Enduring the pain, he returned to his suite as if nothing had occurred. Addressing the captain, Pedro, and the others, he declared, "The problem has been resolved. Father Montserrat's corpse is on the deck. His belongings will be handed over to the Church of Earth Mother. Right, a Blessed."

Lumian harbored no intention of claiming the Church of Earth Mother's items.

Captain Pedro and the others departed in bewilderment to verify the deck situation. Lugano approached Lumian and whispered,

"Is Father Montserrat really dead?"

“You can take a look at his corpse,” Lumian replied with a “smile,” intending to instruct the servant to provide treatment.

Lugano frowned and said, “But I vaguely heard his voice earlier. He seemed to be shouting the name of the so-called Child of God.”

Shouting the so-called Child of God’s name? Back then, Father Montserrat had indeed shouted the Child of God’s true name, but due to special reasons, it hadn’t reached the real world. Only Beyonders nearby corrupted by the Child of God could hear it? Lumian pondered and said to Lugano, “That was before Father Montserrat’s death. What name did he call out?”

Lugano heaved a sigh of relief and recalled, “I think it was… I think it was…”

Finally, he remembered and recited the pronunciation.

“Yes, Omebella.”

Chapter 612 - 612 Daybreak

612 Daybreak

“Omebella.”

Termiboros’s resonant voice reverberated in Lumian’s ears as He echoed Lugano’s words.

“You’ve heard of that?” Lumian hadn’t anticipated Termiboros, who had maintained silence for a considerable time, mentioning a name that left no impression on him.

“No, I’ve never heard of it before today.” Lugano thought it was a question directed at him.

Termiboros fell silent, offering no response.

From the looks of it, it seems there is something off about the Child of God’s true name… And it sounds like a woman’s name. Considering the Villain pathway’s progression to Sequence 5 Banshee, where they transition to women, and the inherent female inclination of the Earth pathway’s Sequence 0, Earth Mother, along with the influence of the Great Mother Herself, it’s quite plausible that the Child of God is a woman. It’s a logical deduction… Lumian glanced at Lugano and smiled.

“It’s fortunate you weren’t aware of this earlier. Otherwise, you might have found yourself linked to the so-called Child of God.”

As Lumian spoke, his attention shifted to Ludwig, who had silently moved to the living room’s balcony. Lumian approached him at a measured pace, his gaze following Ludwig’s toward the deck where Captain Pedro and others were examining Father Montserrat’s lifeless form.

Lumian asked thoughtfully, “Is it edible?”

He meant whether Father Montserrat’s corpse was edible.

While Lumian had abstained from claiming the Church of Earth Mother’s possessions, including Father Montserrat’s Beyonder characteristics, he hadn’t committed to preserving the corpse intact.

In the heat of battle, it was customary for bodies to sustain damage!

Ludwig shook his head. “Not yet.”

“Very well,” Lumian sighed, retracting his gaze with a tinge of regret.

Thus, the mystery of Father Montserrat’s inexplicable connection with the invisible Child of God remained unsolved. A peculiar umbilical cord had even taken root in his stomach, leaving Lumian unable to confirm if Prinpino was a byproduct refined from Father Montserrat’s remains.

Indeed, Father Montserrat bore signs of severe corruption, though Lumian hadn’t anticipated his corruption to rival that of Mad Lady’s.

Of course, it paled in comparison to the state of the Mad Lady’s corpse; even Ludwig found it too dirty.

As for spirit channeling, Lumian understood that a spirit banished by the Exorcism Spell couldn’t be summoned for a specific duration, rendering communication impossible. Once this period lapsed, spirit channeling became futile.

Upon returning to the living room, Lumian sank into a recliner, casually unbuttoning his black vest and linen shirt. Turning to Lugano, he remarked, “Come and treat me.”

Lugano’s eyes surveyed the makeshift bandages and the oozing wounds, expressing surprise.

“It’s that serious?”

Lumian, with a hint of amusement, responded, “Do you think dealing with Father Montserrat is a walk in the park? If I hadn’t taken risks, I

might have been the one lying dead."

Lugano instinctively denied the suggestion, "Not what I meant. Why are your clothes and pants unscathed after such serious injuries?"

Lumian, enduring the pain, replied casually, "I obviously changed before coming back."

His Traveler's Bag proved invaluable, holding nearly a dozen identical shirts, vests, and pants, albeit varying in vest colors.

The only casualty was the golden straw hat, consumed in the explosion, now burnt to ashes.

However, this setback hardly fazed the great adventurer, Louis Berry, who had stocked up on identical replacements before leaving Port Farim.

This was the benefit of having a Traveler's Bag. Otherwise, how could he have the space to store so many useless items with just a suitcase?

Lugano, choosing not to pry further, focused on tending to his employer's injuries.

Originally considering a more intricate procedure, like cutting off charred skin, Lugano's plans were halted by Lumian, opting for a simpler approach.

Lumian had no intention of enduring the agony of anesthesia-free surgery, knowing that he would revert to his original state at 6 a.m.

With the pain and injuries now manageable and showing significant improvement, Lumian made his way back to his room. There, he unfolded a letter and began recounting the events involving Father Montserrat and the true name of the Child of God, diligently reporting to Madam Magician.

Lumian consistently regarded matters related to evil gods and the so-called Child of God with great gravity. He believed such concerns should be left to his superiors, acknowledging the importance of involving higher authorities.

Had Mr. K possessed a messenger, Lumian would have promptly dispatched a modified copy to inform the Aurora Order Oracle of the situation. The next course of action wasn't within the purview of an ordinary member like him or Minor Arcana; it was a concern for others to address.

Observing a shared stance between the Tarot Club and the Aurora Order in combating evil gods, especially those breaching the barrier, Lumian recognized his responsibility as both a minor Arcana card holder in the Tarot Club and an official member of the Aurora Order.

After meticulously recording the details, including Termiboros's reaction, Lumian summoned the "doll" messenger.

Engaged in a recent dispute with Ludwig and being in proximity to the other party, the "doll" messenger swiftly arrived and departed. It seldom lingered, avoiding casual conversations.

…

In a clean and refreshing bedroom of Loen Kingdom, Backlund, Madam Magician lay peacefully in bed, immersed in a restful slumber. Abruptly, she sat up, a puzzled expression crossing her face.

Spirituality warning?

Is something significant about to unfold?

Madam Magician, having just poured a glass of Sonia blood wine and not yet delved into her astromancy, was surprised to see the "doll" messenger materialize on her desk. It placed a folded letter next to a dark-red fountain pen. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Lumian's letter… Has he unearthed the issue with the Earth Mother Church's priest? I didn't guide him in vain… Madam Magician mused, letting the glass float in midair. She picked up the letter and unfolded it.

As she read, her expression underwent a sudden change, and she softly repeated the name,

"Omebella?"

The true name of the invisible Child of God is this? Was my spiritual warning connected to it?

This is something worth discussing at the Tarot Club's regular gathering…

After a moment, Madam Magician used astromancy to indirectly verify the information. She then seated herself and observed as the dark-red fountain pen levitated. Removing the cap, she began to inscribe her thoughts on the faux goatskin: "Omebella is a name shrouded in the fog of history. It carries a potent symbolic meaning in mysticism…"

…

"Using Omebella as the Child of God's true name. I don't know if it's tied to the mysteries of the Second Epoch when the ancient gods, predating the Ancient Sun God, ruled the land, or if the Great Mother is employing intense mystical symbolism to gradually erode Earth Mother's authority and even Earth Mother Herself.

"If we can unravel the secrets of the ancient era, we might find an answer.

"The one the Aurora Order believes in might know something."

As Lumian read the response inked on faux goatskin, he sensed a subtle suggestion from Madam Magician, hinting at him to inquire with the Aurora Order through Mr. K.

He continued reading.

"Simply put, Omebella belongs to the ancient giant race. Once known as the Goddess of Harvest during the era when ancient gods held sway. I can't divulge more at this time. No need to delve into this matter specifically. If you come across the Earth Mother Church's Favored, Nightstalkers, or members of the School of God's Descent, keep a vigilant eye. We'll handle the follow-up. Of course, when the time comes, we might assign you one or two minor missions."

The Goddess of Harvest… indeed linked to the Earth pathway… Lumian pondered as he burned the letter with crimson flames.

Returning to bed, he feigned sleep, attuned to the ship's movements.

With the sunrise, his body swiftly healed, and the day unfolded without unexpected incidents.

Lumian returned to the living room and addressed Lugano, who had been awake for an hour, showing signs of a restless night.

"Still hearing the baby crying?"

"No," Lugano replied, a mix of joy and uncertainty evident in his response.

Lugano believed he needed more time to observe before drawing a final conclusion.

Lumian chuckled.

"As expected, seeking Father Montserrat's help is the only way to completely resolve your aftereffects."

Lugano nearly choked on his words.

So, that's why you wanted me to seek help from Father Montserrat?

Killing him is the equivalent of completely resolving the aftereffects I suffered?

Lumian approached the balcony and instructed Lugano, "Find Enio later and use a follow-up consultation as an excuse to confirm his condition."

Right, Enio was saved by Father Montserrat's surgery. Since there's something wrong with Father Montserrat, he, too, might be problematic… Lugano had concerns seeking the patient, fearing potential danger. However, as he observed the sunlight gradually brightening and the horizon turning red, a sense of relief washed over him.

At 9 a.m., Lugano returned, informing Lumian that the special patient had recovered exceptionally well. There were no signs of surgery failure or hidden dangers, nor indications of corruption.

Around the same time, Captain Pedro approached Lumian, sharing news that the ship would temporarily dock to allow the Church of Earth Mother's personnel to collect Father Montserrat's corpse and relics and remove relevant individuals.

Notably, the adventurer and his servant were explicitly excluded from this directive by the Church of Earth Mother.

Lumian smiled, offering no response to the captain's words. His demeanor radiated confidence and certainty.

Around noon, several combat nuns and a priest in a brown robe boarded the ship, escorting Enio and others away.

On the balcony, Lugano observed Enio being "invited" off the ship, his expression a mix of daze and fear, powerless to resist. Lugano sighed.

"If he's fine, why capture him?"

Lumian emitted a soft chuckle.

"Do you think it's nonexistent just because you say so? Be optimistic—after the Church of Earth Mother confirms there's no issue, he might secure a clerical position within the Church, interacting with combat nuns daily."

Lugano fell silent, then after a few seconds, he remarked, "But that also means losing his freedom. He's a victim…"

"Freedom?" Lumian scoffed. "The prerequisite for freedom is not endangering others."

Despite his stance, as he witnessed the terrified and nervous Enio and recalled the deceased Father Montserrat in his normal persona, Lumian couldn't help but recall a peculiar phrase his sister would occasionally utter: "All living beings suffer."

Ooo!

With a whistle, the ship prepared to set sail once again.

Chapter 613 - 613 New Commission

613 New Commission

A few days later, Lumian lounged on a recliner on the suite's balcony, soaking in the sea breeze, reveling in the sunlight, and sipping an undiluted Manzan. From his Traveler's Bag, he retrieved the incomplete umbilical cord from Father Montserrat.

After the Exorcism Spell, the umbilical cord lost its vitality. Moreover, lacking Beyonder characteristics, it couldn't function as a mystical item or a main ingredient for charms, agents, weapons, or any other artifacts.

All it retained now was its distinct uniqueness.

In simpler terms, it mirrored the mark left on Lumian by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor. Devoid of power and incapable of emitting the fearsome aura of the Great Mother's Child of God, Lumian couldn't wield it to intimidate and temporarily intimidate a specific target.

Lumian surmised that it could only play a role in two scenarios.

Firstly, it could act as a casting ingredient, enabling specific spells to wield power beyond ordinary standards or aiding Warlocks in utilizing special spells beyond their usual repertoire.

Secondly, it could serve as a supplementary ingredient incorporated during the crafting of mystical items, charms, agents, or Beyonder weapons, imparting unique effects to the final product.

Naturally, Lumian also believed that such an umbilical cord fragment could prove valuable in the presence of the Great Mother's bestowed. For instance, even without Provocation, he could provoke intense

animosity from those individuals.

Regrettably, Witches share similarities with Pyromaniacs. They are restricted to utilizing various black magic bestowed by potions, unable to delve into spell study and master new incantations like Warlocks. Among these black magics, only one, the Bloodline Curse, can be paired with an umbilical cord as a casting ingredient. However, the invisible Child of God has yet to manifest in the real world, rendering the curse ineffective against Him. Cursing the Great Mother is also off the table, as Franca and Jenna might find themselves with giving birth right there and then…

Yes, at the next meeting at the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society or any other mysticism gathering, I could aim to acquire a mystical item tied to a Warlock Sequence, then amass potent spells that employ umbilical cords or high-level items as casting ingredients. Uh… isn't this creating several complications? In Aurore's terms, it's akin to raising a sheep for a plate of coarse salt—nurturing it only to be eventually slaughtered and roasted…

I've not needed to seek out an Artisan for crafting mystical items lately, and the absence of primary ingredients complicates matters. Alternatively, should I transform it into a Beyonder weapon with limited use?

This isn't ideal. There's a contamination risk if an insufficiently skilled Artisan incorporates it as a supplementary ingredient. It's not worthwhile enlisting the help of a high-level Artisan for what seems like a practically useless item…

What about fashioning charms and agents myself?

Lumian scrutinized the charred short umbilical cord for an extended period, grappling with indecision. Eventually, he returned it to his Traveler's Bag.

Then, Lumian reached into his pocket, where a finger from Mr. K sat.

In the past two days, he had undertaken a special "return" to Trier to brief Mr. K about Father Montserrat and the invisible Child of God. He received unreserved approval and praise from Mr. K.

The enthusiasm and fervor led Lumian to suspect that Mr. K might, in the next moment, sever his own arm and offer it to him.

His fingers seemed insufficient to convey the depth of his emotions!

Mr. K expressed great satisfaction with his decision to permit Lumian to leave Trier and pursue his adversaries. He perceived it as the Lord's revelation and commended Lumian's peculiar affinity for heretics and incidents involving evil gods, seeing him as a walking calamity for the fallen.

How could a Beyonder of such stature confine himself to Trier? It was imperative to explore various locations in the Northern and Southern Continents!

While Franca and Jenna were already acquainted with the Sowers of the Villain pathway, the connection with Father Montserrat left them feeling like they were hearing a horror story, traumatized by the bestowed of the Great Mother.

Unconsciously, he gently stroked his stomach.

After conveying his sentiments, Lumian returned to the ship contentedly, resuming his journey to the southernmost part of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

Knock, knock, knock.

Lumian had just flipped through the Dutanese textbook for a few minutes when a series of knocks echoed on the suite's wooden door.

Lugano, ever diligent, played the role of a servant, making his way to the door and peering through the peephole.

In the past few days, the absence of baby cries had eased his anxious heart.

This incident only heightened his gratitude for choosing to stay with his employer rather than returning to Trier.

Lugano believed that if the issue stemmed from the Beyonder ingredients left behind by Tanko, even if he hadn't boarded this ship,

he would have encountered a similar situation sooner or later. Moreover, the wait wouldn't be long — perhaps a year or even half a year. Without the aid of a powerful Beyonder like Lumian Lee, his fate would have been quite clear.

Spotting Captain Pedro outside, Lugano turned to Lumian, who was on the balcony, and informed him, "Boss, the captain is looking for you!"

Why would the captain seek me out? Shouldn't we tacitly overlook what happened? Lumian closed the Dutanese textbook and returned to the living room, bathed in bright sunlight.

Pedro, sporting a handsome brown beard, entered the suite and exchanged pleasantries. Clearing his throat, he said, "Mr. Berry, are you interested in taking on a commission? It's a straightforward one and won't consume much of your time."

Straightforward? I doubt it would remain so after being entrusted to me… After various experiences, he gained a better understanding of his unique constitution: As a Beyonder of the Hunter pathway, harboring an evil god's angel within him and concealed remnants of the Blood Emperor's aura, he naturally attracted calamities, prematurely unveiling problems that might have remained hidden.

Lumian couldn't foresee how a supposedly simple commission would unfold.

Seated in an armchair, Lumian smiled and responded, "What commission? I'll listen to the specifics before deciding whether to accept it."

Pedro sighed, beginning to explain, "The destination of this voyage is Port Colla, my hometown. My wife and children live there.

"At the start of the year, my beloved eldest daughter, Salah, fell in love with a young man. She was passionate and eager to marry him.

"As you're aware, in Feynapotter, marriage and family are held in high regard. We must approach marriage cautiously and maintain it responsibly. Blindly rushing into the cathedral isn't our way."

“Is that lad displeasing to you and your Matriarch? Are you hiring me to silence him?” Lumian teased. “Honestly, there’s no need for such trouble. A captain like you surely has plenty of ways to handle inexperienced young people. For instance, give him an opportunity and entice him into the sea trade—only for him to never return.”

Pedro chuckled dryly and responded, “I’m a law-abiding citizen. I won’t resort to such measures.”

A sea-faring captain with Beyonder abilities is a law-

abiding citizen? Spare me the humor… Lumian criticized, smiling at Pedro, prompting him to continue.

“I probed the young man and sensed something amiss. I hired adventurers to investigate him, but the two adventurers never returned,” Pedro explained earnestly. “This raised my alarm. I don’t want my child involved with such a person. It’s too risky.”

Lumian nodded slightly.

“Yes,” Pedro admitted, forcing a smile. “To you, this may seem trivial, but it’s of utmost importance to me. I’m willing to pay 20,000 gold risot as compensation. All spoils are yours.”

20,000 gold risot. Being a captain seems quite lucrative… Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, “Are you a Beyonder of the Planter or Apothecary pathway?

“Are there any Beyonders from these two pathways in your family?”
Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

What kind of question is that… Pedro was taken aback.

“No.”

“Why haven’t you sought help from the Church?” Lumian inquired, posing a second question.

Pedro’s expression darkened. After a brief silence, he sighed and replied, “As expected of an experienced adventurer.

“I didn’t approach the Church because something is off with my daughter, Salah. Her infatuation with that young man is too intense, and she rejects reason. It’s as if she’s possessed by a demon. Seeking the Church could resolve the issue, but it might also lead to a negative encounter and outcome for Salah.”

Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

“Do you suspect that Salah has been influenced or even possessed by an unknown entity?”

“Yes,” Pedro admitted, appearing worried.

Lumian asked a few more questions and took a moment to reflect before stating, “Alright, I accept this commission.”

He had to consistently pursue opportunities and work towards digesting the Conspirer potion to a level where he could conduct an advancement ritual upon reaching West Balam in the Southern Continent.

Of course, saving up funds for Ludwig’s meals was another motivation.

…

A few days later, at 10 p.m., in Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Trier.

Franca and Jenna glanced at Anthony, who had just knocked and entered, puzzled.

“Why are you here at this time of day?”

Anthony nodded. “I’ve found that woman.”

Huh? Jenna was momentarily surprised before questioning, “The woman who appeared in the Magic Mirror Divination?”

The woman whose presence caused the Mirror World Fragment on me to tremble slightly?

Anthony affirmed with certainty, “Yes.”

Chapter 614 - 614 Under-the-table Transaction

614 Under-the-table Transaction

Delilah Le Roy, daughter of a gem merchant, already wed with offspring—a boy and girl—indulges in opera, theater, and literature. Despite the prior incident in Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra, she persists in her activities, easily located by my informant within a week… Not one for bodyguards, she ventures out with only her lady's maid and a valet in tow…

Jenna redirected her attention, acknowledging Anthony Reid seated diagonally across from her.

"That's her."

Franca, positioned on the same side as Jenna, deliberated before speaking, "The issue at hand… Is she baiting us? If her reaction was merely surprise without understanding, we might glean little of value. Should she persist in her high-profile activities despite the resonance with the Mirror World Fragment, it's plausible that she or the person behind her seeks to draw out the Mirror World Fragment's holder."

Having assessed the scenario, Franca concluded, "Engaging with Delilah recklessly poses significant risks."

"But our Magic Mirror Divination assures the safety of today's operation," Jenna countered.

Franca smiled in response.

"Place not undue faith in divination. Moreover, the danger may not be immediate. Hastily engaging with Delilah could disrupt our future

leads."

"So, we stand by? Wait a month or two until tensions ease before acting?" Jenna pondered briefly, then sat upright, revealing her plan, "I have an idea!"

"What is it?" Franca inquired, intrigued.

Jenna pursed her lips and smiled.

"Employ the mystical item—Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction. It grants us a discreet opportunity to interact with Delilah unnoticed.

"This way, if the issue stems from the person behind Delilah, our contact remains concealed, preserving the trail of clues. And if Delilah herself is the concern, we can swiftly transition from contact to control."

Franca contemplated the proposal with gravity for a brief moment.

"It's not implausible… I'm actually interested in testing the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction myself. No need to contest it. I'm a Sequence higher than you, and my self-preservation capabilities surpass yours. Even if evil entities like demons seek a trade, I can invoke Madam Judgment, a formidable Arbiter, as my witness!"

The Demoness of Pleasure appeared eager to put the mystical item to the test.

Jenna remained silent for a few seconds before consenting, "Alright."

Anthony continued, "I'll handle the brief encounter. Using a Hypnotist ensures no lingering clues or traces for the person behind Delilah to discover."

"No issue." Franca dispensed with formalities, directing her gaze at Jenna, awaiting the retrieval of the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

Dressed in grayish-white attire with brown leather armor, Jenna, like many female mercenaries, carried a leather brown backpack.

Franca weighed the terms of her request against the price of the Authority Holder's Bribe powers. Rolling up the sleeve of her lady's shirt, she reached through the membrane curtain on one side of the wooden box with a small cloth bag containing 100 Louis d'or in her right hand. Although the usage instructions didn't explicitly exclude banknotes, Franca, drawing on her extensive mystic experience, opted for gold coins, a more universally accepted form of currency.

Suppressing a momentary surge of disgust, Franca articulated her request in Hermes.

"I desire an uninterrupted, unobserved, and highly discreet face-to-face encounter lasting over three minutes between my friend Anthony Reid, seated across from me, and Delilah, a member of the Le Roy gem merchant family in the nearby Bonnie department store."

Franca had included meticulous qualifiers, ensuring precision in the parties meeting and the manner of their encounter to avoid any distortion.

The object with the wrinkled and wet palm-like texture lifted the cloth bag containing the gold coins and withdrew.

This signified the agreement of the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction.

Franca withdrew her right hand, using a white handkerchief to meticulously cleanse the touched area while expressing her discomfort with continuous spitting.

"Where should we position ourselves while waiting for the opportunity to meet?" Anthony inquired.

Franca stowed away her handkerchief, offering a smile.

"The request specified only two individuals: yourself and Delilah Le Roy. Consequently, your best chance is to shadow her until the opportunity arises."

"Fair enough…"

At this juncture, Franca retrieved the resplendent Seven-Stone

Bracelet from her Traveler's Bag, extending it towards Anthony.

"In case of any complications, teleport away immediately."

Observing the seriousness in the Demoness of Pleasure's demeanor, Anthony swallowed his inclination to politely refuse and accepted the Seven-Stone Bracelet.

After a moment of contemplation, Franca suggested, "If you place trust in me, I can craft a Paper Figurine Substitute using your blood and hair."

Anthony remained silent for a few seconds before agreeing, "Okay."
Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

…

Within the confines of the Bonnie department store, Anthony swiftly pinpointed Delilah Le Roy, exercising his keen observation skills as a Hypnotist.

Delilah stood amidst the first floor, accompanied by her lady's maid and the valet, engrossed in a magician's performance held by the department store to elevate the ambiance.

In the midst of the spectacle, the magician's assistant wheeled in a substantial wooden box capable of accommodating three to four individuals. The magician, with a theatrical flourish, removed his top hat and made an announcement.

"For my next act, I require the assistance of two fortunate members of the audience.

"Madame, would you do me the honor of joining me on stage?"

The magician's invitation was directed at Delilah Le Roy.

Though hesitant, Delilah couldn't muster a refusal and reluctantly ascended the wooden stage prepared for the magical performance.

"This gentleman, please join us on stage as well."

Feigning reluctance, Anthony awkwardly made his way up onto the stage.

The magician gestured toward the wooden box, instructing, “Please take a seat inside.”

Pursing her lips, Delilah sighed and, urged by the crowd, entered the wooden box.

Choosing a seat the furthest from her, Anthony, while there was still illumination, offered a smile and remarked, “Truth be told, I feel a bit embarrassed too.”

His words were delivered with a calm and genial tone, causing Delilah’s tense demeanor to ease.

Anthony continued, “Don’t believe me? Look me in the eye.”

He pointed to his eyes, inviting her gaze.

Delilah instinctively turned her gaze toward a pair of dark brown eyes reflecting her figure.

My figure… Delilah was caught off guard as her gaze seemed to descend into a spiraling depth.

In that moment, the magician closed the wooden box, enveloping it in darkness.

Seizing the opportune moment, Anthony posed a question, “Did you experience anything unusual in Quartier de la Maison d’Opéra a week ago?”

“Yes,” Delilah responded truthfully, sensing a trustworthy demeanor.

“What was that sensation?” Anthony inquired as the magician recited his rehearsed lines.

“My heart started racing, and my blood felt like it was boiling,” Delilah recounted her experience.

“Do you know what that means?” Anthony probed further.

In the darkness, Delilah shook her head.

“I’m not sure, but my real father instructed me to inform him immediately if I had similar sensations.”

“Real father?” Anthony had a hunch.

Delilah chuckled self-deprecatingly, explaining, “My real father, my mother’s lover, and the current government’s Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny.”

Moran Avigny… Sensing the magician’s maneuvers with the wooden box, Anthony swiftly posed a final question. “What did he say upon learning about your reaction?”

“He told me not to worry and to continue living as usual,” Delilah admitted, still harboring some concerns.

Anthony acknowledged her words succinctly.

“Lovely lady, I’m thrilled to share this magic moment with you. Can you provide me with something memorable? Perhaps a few strands of your hair.”

His voice, deep and captivating, made Delilah feel that the request was entirely normal.

Consequently, she plucked a few strands of hair and handed them to Anthony.

Upon touching the hair, Anthony sighed in relief and continued in a resonant voice, “I don’t want this to jeopardize your family. Once you step out of this wooden box and hear my snap, you’ll forget our interaction here…”

As his compelling voice echoed, Delilah’s thoughts blurred.

Smack!

The wooden box opened, revealing only Anthony. Delilah, on the other hand, had been gracefully pulled from behind the stage by the magician.

The audience erupted in excited applause.

Once the ovation died down, the magician, hand pressed to his chest, bowed in gratitude. Without casting a glance at Delilah, Anthony snapped his fingers.

Intent on engaging in conversation with the man who had established a connection with her, Delilah was jolted when she heard the snap. Her body shuddered slightly, her eyes momentarily glazed over before regaining awareness.

Turning on her heel, she descended the wooden platform, returning to her place between the lady's maid and valet.

Meanwhile, Anthony departed at a measured pace, seamlessly blending into the crowd.

…

In Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca applied the ashes of Delilah's hair onto the surface of the makeup mirror using black flames, reciting the familiar incantation for the Magic Mirror Divination.

Amidst the splashing water and the dark luster, Franca posed the question, "Is the owner of this hair a Mirror Person?"

The aged voice responded, "No."

Chapter 615 - 615 Descendants

615 Descendants

Based on Anthony's feedback, Franca had long suspected that Delilah wasn't a Mirror Person but had some connection to them. Otherwise, she wouldn't have reacted abnormally without knowing anything.

After a moment of contemplation, Franca posed her second question.

"Is the owner of this hair a descendant of the Tamara family?"

Amidst the splashing water in the dim mirror, an aged voice replied, "No."

Not a descendant of the Tamara family… Franca used the elimination method and chose a pre-prepared question.

"Is the owner of this hair a descendant of Mirror People?"

The aged voice replied in a calm and hoarse tone, "Yes."

Yes… Franca and Jenna were both shocked and delighted.

Though they had similar suspicions, confirming it stunned and terrified them.

How long had the Mirror People infiltrated Trier? Why did they have descendants in their thirties?

Moreover, they could marry, have children, and have descendants like ordinary people…

Aside from believing in the mirror's Primordial Demoness, who had a more extreme personality and naturally harbored resentment towards Her counterpart outside the mirror, what was the essential difference between them and ordinary people?

Franca and the others weren't sure if most Mirror People dissipated after death, leaving behind fragments of the mirror world, or if only a few special Mirror People like Mirror Gardner were like this.

Combined with Delilah's biological father, the current Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny, instructing her to pay attention to abnormal reactions, Franca concluded that the high-ranking official had been replaced by a Mirror Person many years ago.

"According to the information gathered, the municipal modifications in Underground Trier, particularly the catacombs, were implemented to address the leakage of the Fourth Epoch Trier's seal. Mirror People had already replaced the originals by then, making it reasonable for them to inhabit Trier," Anthony said after some thought. "The problem now is that Mirror People can actually have descendants normally."

Jenna's eyes flickered as she interjected, "One more thing. Did a descendant of the Tamara family bring the Mirror World Fragment into the tomb in recent decades? Or was it a special Mirror Person searching for something and ended up perishing in there?

"Or could it be that before Fourth Epoch Trier sank underground or was sealed, Mirror People were already active on this land?"

Franca hissed and said, "Your latter conjecture is a little terrifying.

"Our original deduction was that the special Mirror World stemmed from the War of the Four Emperors, which caused Fourth Epoch Trier to sink. It was closely related to the Primordial Demoness's divine descent, Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's counterattack before death, and the demise of the Demoness of Catastrophe, Krismona. However, if Mirror People had appeared in Fourth Epoch Trier before all of that, the root cause of the problem would be even more mysterious and terrifying."

Fear of the unknown.

She didn't expect an answer, knowing that Magic Mirror Divination usually allowed only three questions at most. She merely voiced her thoughts and was concluding the divination.

Oh, does that mean I can't be related to the Mirror People? Wait a moment… Franca's surprise reverberated in her voice. Then, a sudden realization struck her. "So, you're not an emotionless answering machine. You don't have to strictly adhere to the corresponding rules."

The darkness on the mirror's surface swiftly dissipated, and the aged voice ceased.

Franca was left speechless.

Jenna drew closer to Anthony, her words a hushed murmur, "Did you catch the helplessness in that answer?"

Anthony cast a subtle glance at Franca and nodded imperceptibly.

"Hey! Don't whisper in front of me. I can hear you!" Franca complained, her Assassin's keen senses picking up their conversation.

She swiftly shifted the topic, "Fortunately, it said no. If it was a yes, it would be terrifying.

"Hmm… Your grandfather or great-grandfather shouldn't be Trieriens, right?"

"I'm not even a Trierien myself," Anthony replied.

Jenna tersely acknowledged.

"The generation of my father's and mother's grandfathers came to Trier."

Franca breathed a sigh of relief, stating, "Now, the direction of the investigation is clear. The current Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny!"

She pondered whether to conduct a covert investigation to gather crucial information or to promptly inform 007 and let the Eternal Blazing Sun Church handle it. Opting for the latter meant potential constraints due to confidentiality principles, limiting her access to the specific details she could seek from 007.

…

Ooo!

Amidst a whistle, a ship steered into Port Colla on the southernmost coastline of the Feynapotter Kingdom.

It was already mid-November, and Trier was gripped by a cold winter. Although Port Santa demanded thick clothing due to plummeting temperatures, Port Colla retained a warm climate. Passersby adorned themselves in fancy short-sleeved shirts and loose pants, exposing their ankles.

Unlike Port Santa, Port Colla lacked the tradition of carrying sabers or swords, but Lumian, drawing from her knowledge, knew that the people here were still rambunctious, with large-

scale armed conflicts being commonplace.

Port Colla differed significantly from Port Santa, which thrived on pastures, plains, and mountain range mines. With limited arable land and scarce pastures, the inhabitants originally depended on the sea for their livelihood.

Over generations, the Church of Earth Mother's advancements in land development, seed cultivation, and livestock breeding transformed Port Colla. While the region achieved a level of self-sufficiency in food production, the rambunctious folk customs endured.

Nevertheless, Port Colla continued to be a major importer of food, serving as one of the primary trade hubs between the Feynapotter Kingdom and the Southern Continent. The bustling port hosted numerous foreigners and stood as a key base for the Harvest Fleet.

Captain Pedro, standing beside Lumian, observed the lively port scene.

These words, spoken out of courtesy, hung in the air.

Lumian, leaning against the shipboard, directed his gaze toward the distant sea, shrouded in what seemed like dark clouds.

“Is that the Berserk Sea?”

The Berserk Sea divided the Northern and Southern Continents. Only when Emperor Roselle found a safe sea route could the Northern Continent’s countries cross the sea and reach the Southern Continent.

Pedro nodded, a hint of solemnity in his voice. “That’s right. Without a captain and sailors familiar with those waters, a ship will undoubtedly be swallowed by the ever-changing and violent weather there. Shipwrecks occur around Port Colla every year, claiming lives.” The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

When the majority of the passengers disembarked, Lumian guided Ludwig and Lugano to Captain Pedro’s residence.

He intended to assess the situation of his eldest daughter, Salah, and her lover before deciding on his next course of action.

Carrying a suitcase and holding Ludwig’s hand, Lugano trailed closely behind his employer.

It wasn’t until they left the dock that he realized something startling.

His employer and the captain were conversing in Highlander!

Since departing from Port Santa, his employer and most of the ship’s occupants had been using Highlander for communication.

When did he learn Highlander? How had he become proficient in it?

As Lugano observed his employer’s retreating figure, he fell into a thoughtful silence, absorbing the relatively fluent Highlander being spoken.

Port Colla, 7 White Shark Street, Pedro’s house.

A five-story building with a green front lawn and a charming garden in the rear, it was home to nearly thirty people under Pedro’s mother’s care.

Passing through the iron gates, Lumian spotted a couple strolling arm in arm on the lawn.

They were both very young. The woman, in her early twenties, possessed brown hair, brown eyes, and a naturally fair, now-

tanned complexion. Although her appearance was remarkable, Lumian, accustomed to interacting with Demonesses and having a beautiful sister, deemed her merely decent.

The man, in his mid-twenties, had ordinary features, single eyelids, and curly brown hair. Clad in a white shirt and dark-gray pants, he had very average looks and demeanors that would be lost in a crowd.

“Salah, let me introduce you. This is the great adventurer, Louis Berry. His legendary experiences will soon reach Colla,” Pedro joyfully introduced Lumian without a trace of gloominess.

Salah, sporting a fishnet hat to shield herself from the sun, approached with curiosity,

“What kind of legendary experiences?”

“Does earning 300,000 gold risot from a commission count?” Pedro replied, representing Lumian with a smile.

“300,000 gold risot?” Salah exclaimed.

This was a huge fortune for most people in Feynapotter.

Lumian observed the father-daughter interaction with a smile. In his peripheral vision, he detected a darkening expression on Salah’s lover, a clear sign of displeasure.

Jealousy, vigilance, and worry? If there’s truly something amiss with him, he should be more confident… Lumian mused, unfazed.

Pedro then introduced Salah’s lover.

“Flores, Salah’s fiancé. They met in Feynapotter City.”

Feynapotter City, nestled in the highlands, stood as the capital of the Feynapotter Kingdom. Salah had encountered Flores there during her university studies, though Flores hailed from an ordinary family with modest educational qualifications. Having completed only elementary

grammar school, he later established a grocery store near Highlander University.

“Greetings,” Lumian nodded slightly, exuding the self-assured air of a great adventurer.

Following the welcoming banquet, Flores departed from Pedro’s house.

He ventured into his favorite romantic bar, settling at the counter with a discontented expression.

While casually surveying the surroundings, he couldn’t help but notice a woman seated two or three spots away.

Her flaxen-colored hair was elegantly tied up, and her lake-

colored eyes held a crystalline glimmer. With a high nose bridge and rosy lips, even her side profile was breathtakingly beautiful.

Chapter 616 - 616 "Love"

“Today is my lucky day to encounter such a beautiful lady. Could I be luckier to buy you a drink?”

The woman’s eyes flickered, and a smile graced her lips. She gently shook her head, indicating that his offer wasn’t accepted.

Undeterred, Flores wanted to say more, but he noticed the woman’s expression cooling off, prompting him to retreat to his seat.

In the following moments, he alternated between stealing glances at the woman’s figure, clad in a simple shirt and slender black pants, and observing the rim of her glass, watching it touched by her moist red lips.

Flores’s body heated up, and his mouth grew dry. The more beer he drank, the harder it became to quench his thirst.

Eventually, the woman finished her light-gold Manzan, placed the tall glass on the bar counter, and gracefully left amid the soothing and elegant music.

Flores hurriedly approached, pulling out a soft tissue that had gained popularity in recent years. He wiped the edge of the wine glass, where the woman’s lips had just touched.

Then, he folded the tissue, meticulously scanning the surroundings of the bar stool. He collected a few flaxen-colored long hairs, securing them in the tissue.

Completing this task, Flores became aware of the bartender and the nearly twenty male customers around him, all staring with a shared judgmental gaze: “Pervert!”

Flores wasn’t the sole victim of the woman’s enchantment—it

extended to all the men and a few women in the bar. All of them had witnessed his perverted actions.

Despite the accusatory stares, Flores kept his composure and left as if nothing had transpired.

He vowed never to return to this bar again!

Yet, he harbored no regret for his actions.

On the way back to the apartment, Flores's heart pulsed with anticipation, fueled by the promise of gains. His pace quickened, though practicality dictated a more measured speed.

Upon reaching his residence, he drew the curtains and retrieved an old notebook with a yellowed cover from his suitcase compartment.

Inside, a mottled note held a complex vocabulary that didn't belong to any language from the Northern Continent, accompanied by numerous instructions in Highlander.

Flores eagerly placed the tissue containing the woman's hair and saliva on the notebook. He then took up the mottled note, reciting the intricate and peculiar words with marked pronunciation.

"Naboredisley…"

This was the love incantation Flores had chanced upon.

With the true name, date of birth, closely related items, or bodily fluids like flesh and blood, he could insert the medium in his notebook and recite the incantation seven times, compelling the target to fall irrevocably in love.

Flores had patiently waited for the opportune moment to orchestrate Pedro's daughter, Salah, to fall and be injured. His timely aid had not only garnered gratitude but also facilitated the collection of her blood, fulfilling the conditions for the love incantation.

Reality had validated the enchanting power of the love incantation!

Flores refrained from using it again, uncertain of how to dispel its

effects. If pursued by multiple women before his marriage to Salah, provoking a conflict among them could jeopardize his standing within the large family and hinder access to resources and support.

However, today was different.

She was the most captivating woman he had ever encountered. He was ready to pay any price to make her his own!

Uncertainty lingered in Flores's mind about whether the saliva-stained tissue and the naturally fallen hair could truly serve as a medium for the love incantation, but the desire to find out overwhelmed any reservations.

Excitement and anticipation surged within him as he envisioned the possibility of witnessing such a beautiful scene, an uncontrollable smile gracing his face.

"Naboredisley…"

Flores continued reciting the love incantation with abnormal devotion and enthusiasm, his heart pulsating with desire and joy. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

"Naboredisley!"

After repeating it seven times, Flores watched in amazement as the tissue and hair burst into flames, reflecting a rainbow before swiftly turning to ashes.

Success… Success! Flores couldn't initially believe it, but immense joy struck his heart.

Surprise lingered, but Flores cared little.

What mattered was that it worked!

That captivating woman is now in love with me!

Thoughts of what would unfold next raced through Flores's mind. He hastily closed the notebook, clipped the note, and dashed to the door without bothering to put them away.

He yearned to walk the streets, confident that the lovely person must be seeking him!

As Flores swung the door open, there she was—the woman from the bar, standing outside.

Flores's entire being went slack under the lake-colored crystalline gaze, his balance teetering on the edge of surrender. Every fiber of his being yearned to yield.

As the woman willingly stepped into Flores's embrace, he eagerly enveloped her in his arms, leaning in for a kiss.

Yet, the sensation he encountered was far from the warmth and softness he had imagined. Instead, it was cold and unyielding.

Wh… Flores's surprise turned to shock as he realized he was embracing a waist-high mirror. The mirror brushed against his chest, swaying back and forth, resisting his attempts to disengage.

Flores recoiled in unnatural fear. The lingering sensations from his earlier fantasies refused to dissipate. His heart froze while his body burned.

With mounting dread, he struck the mirror with increasing force.

Finally, retreating to his suitcase, Flores delivered a decisive blow, shattering the mirror with a resounding crack.

It shattered into countless fragments, piercing Flores's clothes, chest, stomach, and arms.

Agony surged through Flores's body, searing his senses, snapping the fraying nerve that was already on the brink.

In that moment, he tasted a euphoria unlike any other.

Collapsing to the ground, Flores lay motionless, caught between fear, longing, anguish, and ecstasy.

…

“It can truly assist in digesting the Pleasure potion…” Franca clicked her tongue, observing the scene unfold in the mirror of the apartment diagonally opposite Flores’s room.

With her expertise, the spectacle before her could be deemed a novelty.

“I assured you I wouldn’t deceive you,” Lumian, sporting a golden straw hat, responded with a grin.

Upon accepting the commission and identifying Flores’s primary problem of inexplicably garnering the fervent affection of a stunning girl, Lumian’s initial instinct was to deploy a Demoness to test this individual.

Franca’s saliva and hair served as part of the investigation. After all, mysticism likely played a role.

Naturally, for safety precautions, Franca had treated the saliva and hair beforehand. Thus, she devised a Mirror Substitution, a dark magic of Witches, which accurately connected to them.

Now, the results were in—splendid. Franca had subjected Flores to pleasure’s torment, exposing him to the agony of chasing fleeting satisfaction.

“Curious, Flores managed to ensnare my mirror’s affection with just a single-word incantation. No ritual or supplication to any entity,” Franca mused with emotion. “Even I can’t achieve that.”

Lumian chuckled in response, remarking, “You can. No incantation or medium needed. Just unleash your charm.”

“…” Franca was taken aback. “You’re starting to resemble an Intisian. Or is this a result of your Feynapotter education?”

Pursing her lips, her gaze flickered.

Lumian continued, “There’s another issue. Pedro previously tasked two adventurers with probing Flores, but they vanished. And it appears this fellow lacks Beyonder powers.”

Franca suddenly smiled. “This is intriguing… If the Mirror Substitution failed, and I fell under the sway of that incantation, falling in love with Flores, what would you do?”

Lumian emitted a soft chuckle.

“Making someone vanish without a trace is simple. I don’t even need to lift a finger.”

Lumian was confident Ludwig could consume the fellow entirely, with counter-divination to top it off.

Without awaiting Franca’s response, Lumian headed for the door.

“I’ll pay that fellow a visit. Keep vigilant for any developments and beware of mishaps.”

“Understood,” Franca replied solemnly.

As Flores hadn’t managed to close the door in time, Lumian found the entrance accessible without the need to pry it open.

Sensing the intrusion, Flores snapped out of his daze, hastily rising to his feet.

By this point, Lumian had already picked up the notebook, unfolding it to the two pages displaying the mottled note.

“W-what are you doing?” Flores asked, horror etched across his face.

He immediately recognized Lumian.

Louis Berry? The great adventurer Louis Berry?

“Did Pedro hire you to investigate me?”

Ignoring the inquiry, Lumian walked toward the window, ushering in a gust of fresh air.

“A love incantation can make a woman fall in love with you. All you need is to obtain her true name…” Lumian began reciting the Highlander annotation on the mottled note in front of Flores. “The

incantation's pronunciation is…"

He abruptly halted without completing the recitation.

Flores's face had already turned a sickly grayish-white, as if he could foresee the impending demise of his reputation and his capture by the Church.

"Where did this come from?" Lumian pointed at the mottled note and the old notebook.

Cold sweat broke out on Flores's forehead, and his eyes gradually turned fierce.

Suddenly, he shouted, pronouncing the word in a rugged and awkward tone, "Naboredisley!"

This time, there was no target or corresponding medium.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian sensed his surroundings fall silent as an ominous aura rapidly enveloped the room.

Chapter 617 - 617 Transaction

He raised his gaze, Lumian's dark hair and green eyes reflecting in his now ominous stare.

Lumian's suppressed emotions, desires, and the haze surrounding him erupted like a volcano.

This was a force even an Ascetic's endurance couldn't withstand.

Crack!

Lumian's body cracked, shrinking into a palm-sized mirror.

The mirror shattered completely, fragments scattering across the ground.

In the room diagonally opposite, Lumian materialized beside Franca, wearing a solemn expression.

Had he not prepared Mirror Substitution beforehand, he might have endured a double explosion of emotions and desires. It resembled the same outcome when evil god bestowed heard the Symphony of Hatred's different melodies.

Of course, if Franca hadn't been lurking nearby, if he hadn't readied Mirror Substitution, he wouldn't have used himself as bait to "converse" with Flores. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Lumian seized Franca's shoulder, his voice deep as he uttered, "Let's leave this place first."

He promptly activated the black mark on his right shoulder, in an attempt to teleport away.

Confronted with an adversary capable of exploiting his weaknesses and latent dangers, Lumian's initial response was to switch to

support, utilizing his corresponding abilities from a distance. Franca would assume the role of the main attacker. However, considering Franca, a Demoness of Pleasure, hadn't indulged herself for a long time, he feared she might not resist the explosion of desire. It seemed prudent to retreat, regroup with others, and return later.

At that moment, a voice alternating between masculinity and femininity echoed in Lumian and Franca's ears.

"There's no rush to escape. I've changed my mind. I want to make a deal with you."

A deal? Something jolted in Lumian's and Franca's minds. After some thought, they chose to stay put.

Simultaneously, Lumian sank his consciousness into his right hand, ready to activate the remnant aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor.

This wasn't meant to intimidate Flores, but if his emotions and desires were triggered again, Lumian could "alert the police" in time!

Being one of the Feynapotter Kingdom's primary ports for trade with the Southern Continent and a key base for the Harvest Fleet, Port Colla undoubtedly housed at least one Grade 1 Sealed Artifact even without a demigod.

Franca gazed at the wall and the air in front of her, questioning, "What deal?"

Flores, dressed in a floral shirt, casually pushed open the unlatched door of the apartment and spoke in a deep, cold, and dignified manner,

"Let me introduce myself. Naboredisley, a Demon."

A Demon? A genuine Demon… The cost of using the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction actually materialized here–to make a deal with a Demon… However, Lumian's acceptance of the captain's mission and our pursuit of Delilah are distinct matters. If we had opted to patiently wait a month or two before engaging with Delilah instead of utilizing the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction, what would have transpired today? Could there have

been a so-called deal? Franca smiled in surprise, suspicion, and confusion.

“How can you reveal yourself as a Demon?

“Shouldn’t a true Demon conceal their identity to lower our guard?”

The Demon, identifying himself as Naboredisley, clenched his right fist and pressed it against his lips. He smiled and replied, “A true Demon is both Demon in body and mind. I’ll inform you that you’re dealing with a Demon, but refusal isn’t an option. I won’t obscure my identity to achieve my goals like the foolish ones.

“For instance, this man named Flores is well aware of the consequences of repeatedly reciting my true name through the notebook. Heh heh, back then, that foolish Warlock labeled it the Love Incantation, but he still couldn’t resist the temptation and couldn’t control himself. Haha, for Demons, this gradually decaying soul that slowly descends into the Abyss is the most delectable feast. The sensation of resistance and constant decay is as unforgettable as the finest wine.”

Lumian and Franca didn’t disdain or ridicule Naboredisley’s unabashed and alluring depravity.

Since a Demon had spoken, there had to be a deeper motive!

Moreover, Lumian couldn’t be certain if Naboredisley was a genuine Demon or a self-proclaimed one. He couldn’t verify if Naboredisley was his actual name or if he had a different origin.

Although the activation of desire aligned with the traits of a Sequence 5 Desire Apostle of the Demon pathway, it wasn’t exclusive to Demons. Lumian’s Symphony of Hatred could achieve a similar effect.

Franca grinned at the Demon’s incessant narrative and remarked, “That foolish Warlock probably assumed your true name as a Love Incantation because of your cues. Is that really your true name?”

“That’s why he’s foolish,” Naboredisley replied with a faint smile.

Lumian wasn't eager to rush into the transaction. Instead, he inquired, "How did you manage to convince Flores that the Love Incantation actually works?"

Naboredisley casually glanced back at Flores's rented apartment and assumed a relaxed posture.

"He tried some other incantations from the notebook, and some of them worked."

"He's just an ordinary person, yet he can cast an incantation like a Warlock?" Franca expressed disbelief.

Naboredisley grinned.

"I've heard a very reasonable saying: 'All things possess godhood.'

"No matter how ordinary a person is, as long as they're willing to pay the corresponding price, they can create Beyonder effects."

All things possess godhood… Mr. K often says this when preaching… Lumian observed Naboredisley, the self-

proclaimed Demon.

Franca seized the opportunity to ask, "What price did Flores pay?"

Naboredisley smiled meaningfully. "I already told you."

The part where the soul gradually decays and falls into the Abyss? Franca nodded thoughtfully.

Lumian suddenly grinned.

"If he hadn't paid the price, how could you communicate with us so easily using his body?"

Naboredisley smiled back but remained silent.

Lumian shifted the topic.

"Did you have a hand in the deaths of those two adventurers who were investigating Flores?"

“Consider it a bit of interest,” Naboredisley replied, glancing around. He smiled and pulled a chair over, casually remarking, “You lack the necessary courtesy.”

“Because we never considered making a deal with you,” Franca deliberately stated. “I won’t make a deal with a Demon.”

Naboredisley chuckled and said, “Although it’s amusing for a Demoness to claim she won’t trade with a Demon, I can assure you that I won’t force you into a deal. I won’t even hinder you from informing the Church of Earth Mother about Flores later.

“I differ from my inept peers. I prefer transparent trade, avoiding the convoluted legalese of contracts where terms and conditions are twisted. I’ll make you choose to trade with me, even knowing the content and price.”

“I decline,” Franca replied with a smile. “I refuse to entertain your deal.”

Naboredisley narrowed his eyes dangerously but maintained his usual amiable demeanor.

“You can listen first before deciding if you want to accept this deal.

“I won’t boast that I can fulfill any of your wishes, but I can help you fulfill most of them. This is a promise from an ancient Demon.”

“Ancient?” Lumian looked curious. “Have you heard of the Ancient Sun God?”

Naboredisley’s expression darkened subtly.

“I’m aware.”

“Can you tell me about Him? The deity I believe in now seems to be the resurrected Him.” Lumian’s lips curled up, revealing two rows of pearly-white teeth. “This can be used as compensation for the transaction, but it has to be paid first before we fulfill the contract. Don’t think of fabricating it. That would be blasphemy to my Lord.”

Naboredisley fell silent. After a few seconds, he smiled and said, “As I

mentioned earlier, I can't accomplish certain things and fulfill certain wishes. This is one of them."

When one's humble enough, it's really difficult to win a war of words… Lumian sighed inwardly and turned to Franca, silently inquiring if she wanted to seize this opportunity to the-table Transaction.

Franca hesitated for a moment before addressing Naboredisley. "Tell me about the deal first before I decide."

Naboredisley chuckled.

"A wise decision. I hope you can help me kill another Demon's descendant. He resides somewhere in the Berserk Sea. Don't worry, Demon descendants are cold, cruel, and bloodthirsty. He definitely meets the death penalty standard in your hearts."

"Then why don't you do it yourself?" Franca clicked her tongue. "You seem quite powerful."

Is it because you're sealed? Or could it be that he can't leave the Abyss and can only project himself onto a human like now, unable to maintain it for long?

Naboredisley replied calmly, "Any abnormal movements from me will attract the attention of the other Demon. The reward for this transaction is that I fulfill one of your wishes. It's a predetermined wish that I can fulfill."

"Can you help us digest the potion in our bodies?" Lumian probed.

Naboredisley shook his head.

"I won't lie to you. I can't do it. The digestion of the potion is a personal matter.

"Of course, I can create conditions and opportunities to indirectly help you digest the potion as soon as possible, but whether you can seize those opportunities depends on yourselves."

Quite honest… Franca muttered silently.

Suddenly, she revealed a bright smile.

“This deal tempts me, but I need a reliable and powerful witness.”

Author’s Note: The inspiration for the love incantation in the previous chapter originated from the real world. I believe I’ve shared it on my public WeChat account before—Aphrodite’s hidden name is Nepherieri, meaning “beautiful eyes.” Repeating this incantation can win a woman’s love. When I read about this, I found it a little sinister. I mainly changed the pronunciation.

Chapter 618 - 618 Divination Ritual

618 Divination Ritual

Franca's request met with a gentle shake of Naboredisley's head.

"You can request the deity you believe in to bear witness when signing the contract, but I don't want anyone else present."

A chuckle escaped Naboredisley's lips.

"I'm a Demon. I need to be careful to avoid becoming prey."

We can recite a god's name as a witness when signing the contract? The temptation loomed over them both.

For ordinary Beyonders who held faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun or the God of Steam and Machinery, invoking a deity's name as a witness might offer no more than psychological comfort. True gods rarely intervened in such trivial affairs of ordinary Beyonders without a proper ritual.

Yet, as Minor Arcana card holders of the Tarot Club, Lumian and Franca followed the great existence, Mr. Fool. Simply invoking his name could draw attention, a fact not lost on them.

Franca's heart raced with uncertainty. Should she strike a deal with the Demon under the watchful gaze of Mr. Fool, in exchange for elusive benefits?

Naboredisley reiterated his stance.

"This is a fair transaction. There's no coercion. It's the same for you and me. If you insist that there must be a powerful witness present, I

choose to give up."

Just as Lumian contemplated the idea, Termiboros's resounding voice echoed within his mind, "It's best if you don't agree. Don't even make a false promise."

Lumian found himself taken aback as Termiboros, an Angel of Inevitability, unexpectedly warned him about the unfolding situation.

Alarmed, Lumian pushed aside thoughts of Termiboros's possible intentions, choosing instead to focus on scrutinizing Naboredisley's every move and assessing his own mental state.

The more Lumian delved into the matter, the more alarmed he became. Initially planning to teleport away immediately and seek help, he and Franca had gradually shifted their stance, considering Naboredisley's propositions and exploring potential exploitations. Their plan had evolved from seeking the presence of a powerful Arbiter like Madam Judgment as a witness to contemplating a deal without one. Now, all they hoped was to ensure their safety by invoking a god's name.

Compromising one step at a time, changing bit by bit… This is very similar to Naboredisley's description of degenerating bit by bit, slowly rotting one's soul before ultimately plunging into the Abyss… It also said that Demons aren't just about the body but also about the mind… Lumian swiftly snapped out of his reverie, sensing a possible influence from Naboredisley on both himself and Franca. It resembled the signs of a Spectator's presence. Similarly, he could glean insights through Anthony's self-examination technique.

Even in this state, Franca displayed remarkable control over her emotions. She turned to Lumian, seeking agreement. With thoughts racing, the corners of Lumian's mouth curled up slightly as he addressed Naboredisley.

"We don't require a witness, but I need to confirm something first."

"What is it?" Naboredisley's demeanor remained cold, yet his attitude was composed.

Lumian nodded at Franca, conveying that he would handle the situation.

Franca, in turn, silently acknowledged her understanding.

Turning back to Naboredisley, Lumian stated, “I need to verify that the name you’re using now, the name you’ll use in the contract later, is indeed your real name.”

Deliberately avoiding the term “Naboredisley,” Lumian exercised caution to mitigate potential risks.

Naboredisley pondered for a moment before responding, “Sure. As a Demon, I don’t just dislike but also admire your caution.”

Lumian maintained his smirk.

“The way to confirm is Magic Mirror Divination, a complete one. We’ll set up a ritual and seek answers from a hidden entity. As you know, my friend is a Demoness. She’s quite skilled at this.”

Lumian pointed at Franca as he spoke.

Indeed… we should confirm if Naboredisley is the Demon’s real name. Otherwise, the deal would be a joke… Franca suddenly became alert, realizing she had been too eager to conclude the deal and had overlooked many potentially problematic details.

Naboredisley pondered for a moment before agreeing, “Alright, but I have to observe from within the wall of spirituality where the ritual takes place.

“This is a Demon’s caution. We’re worried that you’ll use Magic Mirror Divination to inform certain Demons’ natural enemies.”

“No problem,” Lumian said with a bright smile. “To complete Magic Mirror Divination, I want you to write your real name on this note and bring over the ancient notebook from the opposite room. Together, they can act as a medium for divination.”

Naboredisley, well-versed in the intricacies of complete Magic Mirror Divination, responded with a smile, “No problem.”

He stood up, taking the note from Lumian's hand. Using Flores's fountain pen, he inscribed a complex word with the pronunciation "Naboredisley," its language unknown.

The self-proclaimed Demon then left for Flores's rented apartment, retrieving the ancient notebook and the note.

Lumian had already arranged a simple ritual, placing three candles and a mirror on an empty table.

Before Naboredisley returned, Franca approached him and whispered, "The usual Magic Mirror Divination target?"

Lumian shook his head, indicating they weren't. Softly uttering a single word, he said, "Him."

A pure male pronoun.

Franca's pupils dilated as she tacitly understood whom Lumian was referring to.

The implications were self-evident!

After Naboredisley handed her the ancient notebook, Franca smiled happily and said, "Demons are likely higher-level godhood creatures. I can't afford to be negligent. I plan to seek answers from a more special entity. Inevitably, my companion will need to assist me during the ritual. I hope you can understand what you'll see next. If you're unwilling, we'll abandon this transaction."

She didn't make it sound too firm, making the "abandon the transaction" option seem more like a negotiating strategy.

Naboredisley smiled and replied, "No problem. I've seen too many special rituals."

His implication was clear—if there was a problem with your ritual, I would be able to tell immediately.

Franca sanctified the ritual silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality. Lumian placed the ancient notebook and the note with the real name in front of the lit candle and mirror, using a small

amount of Gardner Martin's spiritual blood to draw a few complicated and strange symbols.

Observing from a distance, Naboredisley muttered, "Seeking guidance from fate… Questioning an entity in this domain?"

Lumian seized the opportunity to turn around and ask, "What can I do to dispel Salah's infatuation with Flores?"

Naboredisley smiled meaningfully and said, "Either they both perish, or they seek my approval."

With the preparations complete, Franca stepped back, gazing at the three burning candles and the palm-sized makeup mirror. She recited an honorific name in ancient Hermes.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era…"

Upon hearing this, Naboredisley's expression changed.

His face turned icy, and his eyes revealed a chilling cruelty.

Just as he was about to project Lumian and Franca's figures in his eyes and ignite their desires and emotions, he realized that a thin gray fog emanated, making the two targets indistinct and challenging to lock onto.

Lumian gripped Franca's forearm.

In mysticism, this signified that the two people in the ritual were one.

Of course, the prerequisite was that the original ritual host didn't resist.

Lumian took over the ritual host's position and recited the last two paragraphs.

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…"

The thick gray fog surged even more visibly, and Naboredisley, manipulating Flores's body, grew increasingly malevolent.

He tried to break free from the altar, attempting to shatter the wall of spirituality, but the gray fog stood as an impenetrable obstacle.

Lumian advanced two steps, presenting the note with the real name to the candle symbolizing the ritual's host. He ignited it and flicked it three times, dispersing ashes onto the ancient notebook.

After these preparations, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "I beseech your assistance. I implore you to banish the creature named Naboredisley…"

Naboredisley, in control of Flores's body, opened his mouth, emitting a sharp cry.

Simultaneously, filth, depravity, and evil ravings echoed in Lumian and Franca's ears. Each word seemed to assault their minds, causing their bodies to contort and their souls to decay.

Yet, under the ritual's shield and the layers of gray fog, the words appeared distant, as if emanating from the horizon. Even if Lumian and Franca strained to listen, the specifics eluded them.

Amidst a faint shriek, pitch-black gas emanated from Flores's body, swiftly dissipating.

Faces emerged from the pitch-black gas, mouths opening and closing, cursing Lumian and Franca vehemently, only to dissolve into the gray fog. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

In a matter of seconds, the pitch-black gas completely vanished, and Flores's demeanor and aura returned to normal.

Exorcism Spell!

In just a few days, Lumian had employed the Exorcism Spell once more!

From his perspective, Naboredisley, hiding his true form somewhere, had stealthily infiltrated Flores's breath for control. He was akin to a Wraith evil spirit possessing another.

Most surprising was the effectiveness of the name Naboredisley!

Of course, if this wasn't the true name, if the Exorcism Spell proved futile, Lumian could resort to Mr. Fool's complete honorific name to intimidate the Demon and drive it away with the gray fog and the gaze of a great existence.

This time, it wasn't Mr. Fool's seal on his chest that answered, but the great existence himself!

Lumian forced a smile and said to Franca, "This fellow is less formidable than the invisible Child of God of the Great Mother."

Despite Naboredisley's frenzied curse affecting his desires and emotions, requiring him to endure with his Ascetic powers, it still paled in comparison to the invisible Child of God's ability to partially breach the gray fog's protection of the ritual host, repeatedly creating a Psychic Piercing effect.

Franca remained silent, her gaze fixed on the makeup mirror serving as decoration.

In the mirror, a faint fog permeated the air, and a vague figure approached from a distance.

Chapter 619 - 619 Chronicles

619 Chronicles

Franca strained her eyes, attempting to discern the figure amidst the dimly lit surroundings. The tall buildings loomed mysteriously, their outlines blending with the fog, reminiscent of stars reflecting on a foggy night.

Wh… Franca's pupils dilated, and her eyes widened in astonishment. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Her heart, previously gripped by the effects of Naboredisley's frenzied curse, now surged with shock.

Instinctively, she focused all her might on the figure, trying to pierce through the layers of gray fog and unravel its face and clothing. However, the thin fog grew hazier, dissipating along with the fleeting images it carried.

In just three to four seconds, the mirror on the altar reverted to its normal state.

"What's wrong?" Lumian turned to Flores, who lingered in the residual gray fog, seeking an update on Franca's condition.

Franca, still captivated by the mirror, fell silent for a moment before speaking.

"Did you see the scene reflected in the mirror?"

"I did." Lumian reflected briefly and suggested, "Perhaps it signifies Mr. Fool's divine kingdom."

Their prayers for the Exorcism Spell had been directed towards Mr. Fool. Therefore, the mirror used to deceive Naboredisley while being

ineffective in actuality was likely related to Mr. Fool.

Franca stammered, “B-but the backdrop resembles the city before your sister and I transmigrated. It’s like those foggy times—every building morphing into colossal creatures nestled in the fog, adorned with countless glowing eyes.”

Lumian, understanding Franca’s emotions, showed no surprise at the familiar street scenes.

Reminding his companion, he said, “Don’t forget about the Celestial Worthy. He has a close connection to your homeland, and he and Mr. Fool have been engaged in a dream battle. It’s quite conceivable that such dreamscapes can manifest in reality through rituals.”

Franca fell into a momentary silence before releasing a sigh.

“You’re right…”

She followed with a self-deprecating laugh.

“I got worked up for nothing.”

Lumian mitigated the negative effects from Naboredisley and methodically extinguished the candle flames, concluding the ritual.

As Franca dispelled the wall of spirituality and the wind howled, clearing away the lingering gray fog, Flores seemed to snap back to reality, no longer lost in the confusion of searching for an exit.

However, upon seeing Lumian and Franca, his face turned an even more pallid shade.

Instinctively, he lowered his head and observed a black, almost ethereal, filthy liquid oozing from his body. Highly corrosive, it swiftly dissolved his blood, flesh, and bones.

“Save me!

“Save me!”

Flores unleashed a blood-curdling scream, repeatedly calling for help.

Lumian, however, observed with interest, as though studying the toll exacted on those who made a deal with Demons.

In less than ten seconds, Flores's body succumbed to corrosion, collapsing with a resounding crash, immersed in the almost illusory black liquid.

Flores's head continued to wail, his voice gradually fading.

After a while, he breathed his last with wide-open eyes.

His relatively intact head swiftly disintegrated into the filthy liquid.

The once-illusory liquid lost its evil, mystical aura, revealing the remains of the corpse, now filled with a foul, noxious mud-like substance.

"Dealing with Demons doesn't end well.." Franca sighed, reflecting on her earlier temptation.

Her laughter echoed hollowly as she continued, "Thankfully, we didn't strike a deal with that self-proclaimed ancient Demon. Still, I missed an opportunity to eliminate the latent threat of using the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction."

Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Consider this carefully.

"I remember Madam Magician's usage instructions, emphasizing the possibility of encountering transactions with evil entities like Demons.

"Recall, it was about encountering a transaction, not completing one.

"You've faced it; you simply chose not to accept it. That fellow didn't force you either."

Franca contemplated the situation and admitted, "You make a point. It does seem that way…"

She clicked her tongue and glanced at Lumian.

"If you had chosen the Lawyer path, you might be equally

promising…

“In reality, I believe that’s the norm. The Authority Holder’s Under-the-table Transaction is, at most, equivalent to a Sequence 5. Every use means one less opportunity. How could the negative effects be a transaction with a Demon? From what I know, Demon is a High Sequence term within the Criminal path. What does it signify? It represents a demigod!

“Yes, it’s merely encountering a transaction, not completing it. There’s room for negotiation. Yet, it’s also highly dangerous. Demons and other evil entities aren’t known for their philanthropy. If we refuse to trade with them, why would they spare us indefinitely? Furthermore, predicting when we’ll encounter them is impossible, making it challenging to prepare in advance.”

Lumian smiled.

“If you can’t predict it, try approaching it differently. After using the Authority Holder’s Under-the-table Transaction, immediately prepare and take the initiative to create an opportunity to negotiate with Demons and other evil creatures. Set the pace and manage the risks. For instance, ‘invite’ Demons to Saint Vième Cathedral for a deal.”

The Eternal Blazing Sun Church’s main cathedral in Trier, Saint Vième Cathedral!

Franca chuckled.

Franca suddenly halted.

Saint Vième Cathedral might not be suitable, but they did have a few hidden locations with a similar atmosphere. It wasn’t entirely impossible.

For example, the sacrificial square on the third level of the catacombs, Krismona Night Pillar…

“That’s an interesting idea,” Franca commended Lumian. “In the past, when facing the negative effects of mystical items, we always endured and waited passively. Taking the initiative is a different approach. Hunters indeed have their own unique styles.”

Taking the initiative involved making preparations in advance and minimizing potential dangers.

Of course, taking the initiative didn't necessarily mean triggering the effects, but it required considering such possibilities.

Lumian glanced out the window.

"Flores's scream has likely attracted the attention of the nearby residents. Someone may have called the police. Let's vacate this place before examining the contents of this notebook."

He gathered the ancient notebook, candles, and other items from the dining table as he spoke.

"Agreed." Franca surveyed the room, and dark flames silently ignited in various spots.

As the flames flickered, Lumian teleported Franca away, returning to the guest room of Captain Pedro's five-story house.

"Go through the notebook and check if there's a way to dispel the love incantation. I'll verify Salah's condition and inform Pedro about Flores's situation and outcome. He can handle the Church of Earth Mother and liaise with the local police." Lumian handed the ancient notebook to Franca before opening the door and stepping into the corridor.

Franca settled into the recliner and opened the notebook.

Suddenly, she murmured to herself, Something feels off. Knowing Lumian's approach, shouldn't he have immediately perused the notebook after the ritual, searching for a solution to dispel the love incantation? Why did he hastily leave the moment the police were mentioned after discussing matters with me extensively?

He should be aware of the critical issue…

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Franca suddenly came to a moment of realization.

Naboredisley's chilling rants and wild curses had a disturbing impact

on Lumian, stirring up his desires and emotions. Despite his attempts to endure the onslaught using his Ascetic powers, subtle signs of struggle manifested.

Franca's eyes darted around, a sly chuckle escaping her lips.

…

Lumian found Pedro in the small living room on the first floor.

Before he could delve into Flores's situation, the captain exclaimed in surprise,

"Mr. Berry, Salah came to me a few minutes ago. She was crying in fear and pain, saying she dreamt of falling in love with Flores and couldn't wake up. However, she suddenly woke up tonight, feeling like it was a nightmare, and she wishes to annul the engagement.

"May I know how you did it?"

Pedro spoke with a touch of unconscious politeness.

She's back to normal? Could it be because Flores is dead? No, more likely Naboredisley's expulsion through the Exorcism Spell has restored those affected by the devil to normal… Lumian guessed, smiling.

"Flores is already dead."

"Did you kill him?" Pedro, showing no aversion to the idea of killing, was even more intrigued by the fact that Flores's death seemed to have awakened his daughter.

"A Demon killed him." Lumian briefly recounted the events, avoiding mentioning Naboredisley by name. Instead, he handed Pedro the love incantation note tucked into an ancient notebook for a closer look.

Finally, he said, "You handle the rest. It's advisable to keep Salah in a cathedral or cloister for the next month or two. I'm uncertain if the Demon will revisit the former victim once he recovers."

"Understood." Pedro clenched his teeth, his expression somber.

After receiving the 20,000 gold risot bounty, Lumian returned to his guest room.

Franca, holding the ancient notebook, frowned as she said, “This doesn’t seem like the notebook of an evil Warlock. It’s more like a collection of a novelty hunter’s chronicles. It contains various legends of Devils and Demons from the Northern and Southern Continents spanning the past thousand years. The last record appears to be over a hundred years ago.

“Mmm… There are peculiar incantations scattered within, as if fabricated.

“One of them mentions a legend of a Demon on Hanth Island in the Berserk Sea.”

Lumian grasped Franca’s concern.

Naboredisley had mentioned that the Demon descendant he sought to eliminate resided somewhere in the Berserk Sea!

Chapter 620 - 620 Abnormality in the Abyss

620 Abnormality in the Abyss

“Could it be that some of the Demon legends in this notebook are true?” Lumian held the yellowed notebook and flipped through a few pages.

“Perhaps,” Lumian smiled. “Let’s not speculate about such matters involving high-level creatures. I’ll just write to Madam Magician and report it to her.”

Franca glanced at Lumian and chuckled.

“You’re really proficient in dealing with management.

“However, it does make sense. We know very little about real Demons. Making wild guesses is a waste of time.”

She then pointed at the notebook and said, “The handwriting differs from the note that wrote the Love Incantation. It’s not the same author.”

Lumian had already sat at his desk, unfolded a piece of paper, and wrote to Madam Magician. As he deliberated over his words, he responded to Franca’s words, “Does the notebook have the phrase that represents the Love Incantation?”

“I scanned through it. Nothing,” Franca replied affirmatively.

Lumian contemplated for a moment and said, “There are two possibilities. The first is that the Demon used someone under its control to insert the Love Incantation into this notebook that records Devil and Demon legends, hoping that it could secretly spread and

affect more people. The second possibility is that those who once read this notebook were unknowingly influenced by the demon and obtained a so-called revelation. They wrote this Love Incantation and provided commentary."

"Mysticism sure is dangerous…" Franca sighed with emotion.

Lumian swiftly composed the letter and dispatched the ancient notebook and the note with the Love Incantation to Madam Magician.

While awaiting a response, Franca and Lumian briefly delved into the Demon legend of Hanth Island in the Berserk Sea.

Thirty years after Emperor Roselle discovered a safe sea route to the Southern Continent, numerous mysterious deaths of colonists and natives plagued the newly colonized Hanth Island. Witnesses claimed to have seen a valley ablaze with sulfur flames in the island's forest. At night, pitch-black Demons with goat horns were suspected of circling the area.

After the authorities intervened, the mysterious deaths ceased. The owner of the notebook that chronicled the legend even attempted to explore the forest, but he failed to locate the alleged valley burning with sulfur flames.

As they conversed, time passed. The doll messenger arrived with Madam Magician's reply, the ancient notebook, and the Love Incantation note.

Lumian illuminated the gas wall lamp and began reading. Franca didn't hesitate and leaned in.

"It's impossible to determine its true name with just the fact that the name 'Naboredisley' could expel that fellow.

"This is because it admitted, in a short period of time, that it was its real name. Even if it's lying, sometimes, under certain circumstances, admitting something makes it the truth. It possesses the corresponding mysticism connection. This is one of Mr. Fool's authorities. Amon, too, could do it in the past.

“As you prayed directly to Mr. Fool and used his power to exorcize Naboredisley, it doesn’t matter if it’s its real name. It won’t affect the final outcome.

“Do you understand? Termiboros’s warning was correct. You have to be cautious even if it’s a false promise.

Upon reading this, Lumian turned to Franca.

Franca said with a solemn expression, “Emperor Roselle once found the entrance to the Abyss and conducted a thorough exploration.”

“As expected of Emperor Roselle,” Lumian praised instinctively and sincerely.

There weren’t many people he admired—in fact, very few—but Emperor Roselle was one of them.

Knowing that this emperor was a transmigrator like his sister made him feel an affinity with him.

Franca continued, “In the Abyss that Emperor Roselle explored, Devils and Demons had long perished. Not a single one remained.

“All he saw before him were either corpses or silence.

“This state made him feel fear. He left in a hurry without completing his exploration.”

“All dead?” Lumian frowned slightly. “Is the Love Incantation fellow either not a Demon or an ancient Demon from the Abyss’s core?”

Pausing momentarily, he added, “If it’s really an ancient Demon, it might know why the Abyss underwent such an abnormality.”

Franca nodded solemnly.

The duo cast their gazes at the back of Madam Magician’s reply.

“I reckon you’ve already grasped the gist of the Abyss from the Two of Cups, so I won’t dive deeper. Simply put, Naboredisley could be a potent Demon who slipped out of the Abyss’s anomaly, or it might

have roamed the Northern Continent before the three major Devil clans—Nois, Beria, and Andariel—held sway. It didn't pledge allegiance to any ancient gods, whichever way you slice it. But dealing with an ancient Devil King who's fled back to the Abyss isn't something the two of you are capable of, let alone striking a bargain with it.

"You can explore the Demon legends on Hanth Island if it's on your route, but stay cautious.

"Remember, the Abyss's corruption is potent. It can corrupt people without their awareness. During this time, be vigilant for changes in your thoughts, concepts, emotions, and desires. If you notice anything unusual, consult a Psychiatrist for confirmation. If you're genuinely affected by the Abyss aura from Naboredisley, contact me or Judgment. Experts skilled in purifying such influences will assist you. Avoid burdening Mr. Fool unnecessarily.

"Thinking about the name 'Naboredisley' is okay, but refrain from writing or reading it."

After reading the letter, Lumian mumbled to himself, "Madam Magician seems more inclined to believe it's a Demon and not some other hidden entity."

"That's right," Franca echoed, puzzled. "Let's assume that fellow is a Demon, yet it doesn't even have Danger Premonition, allowing us to complete the preparations for the Exorcism Spell. If we say it isn't, it can create fluctuations and trigger our desires and emotions. I was just guessing that it's a secret entity that possesses a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact of the Demon pathway."

Lumian pondered for a few seconds and said, "Perhaps Madam Magician has seen more.

"That fellow probably doesn't have Danger Premonition because its true form isn't here. It only descended with a sliver of its aura and power. Or perhaps, the danger originated from Mr. Fool, so it couldn't sense it!"

"That makes sense," Franca agreed before saying with a strange

expression, “Ever since we became Minor Arcana cards, we’ve increasingly come into contact with the depths of the mystic world. The Demoness Sect, the mirror world, the War of the Four Emperors, the Great Mother, and a Demon of the Abyss this time… In the past, when I read Emperor Roselle’s diary, I often had the feeling that ‘that’s just how the world is.’ But now, the contents of his diary have truly come to us.”

Without waiting for Lumian to speak, Franca added in a self-

deprecating manner, “For example, a Demoness does taste pretty good.”

Lumian chuckled and remarked, “Think about it carefully. Did you encounter these things after becoming a Minor Arcana card holder, or after getting to know me?”

…

Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

Two days later, Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano boarded a long- New n***o***vel chapters are published on

distance ship set to pass by Hanth Island, en route to the Southern Continent’s West Balam.

Lumian aimed to investigate the Demon’s legend and seize an opportunity to fully digest the Conspirer potion.

After outsmarting Naboredisley and banishing it with the Exorcism Spell, Lumian realized that his potion digestion had made significant progress.

With another decent performance, he could advance the digestion further. This would eliminate the need for the final advancement ritual’s aid, allowing him to plan the subsequent matters more calmly.

Captain Pedro, accompanied by his eldest daughter Salah, and a few Favored and Blessed, expressed sincere gratitude to Lumian. They watched as he ascended the gangway with his godson and servant,

boarding the ship named ‘Berries.’

Once the ship set sail, one of the Blessed appeared to sigh in relief and commented, “He’s finally left Port Colla…”

Without waiting for Salah to inquire about the reason for the sigh, the Blessed, wearing a brown priest’s robe, turned to her and Pedro and advised,

“The circumstances at the scene of Flores’s death indicate that this matter involved a true, high-ranking Demon. Miss Salah, it’s best if you stay in the cloister for a year to avoid any possible aftereffects.”

Salah, aware of her awakening thanks to the adventurer Louis Berry’s assistance, was horrified. However, lacking personal experience, she inquired, “A year? A real Demon… What kind of Demon is that?”

The Blessed, in a brown clergyman’s attire, responded solemnly, “It’s the Demons from the legends you’ve heard of, or something even more powerful.”

“Wh…” Salah turned to her father with a face filled with fear, confusion, and disbelief.

Did you guys save me from such a Demon?

Pedro was equally surprised.

He had never imagined that his daughter’s situation would involve such a terrifying existence.

And Louis Berry had only received 20,000 gold risot!

No, he actually succeeded!

Pedro, having witnessed the adventurer Louis Berry’s strength through the colossal wave he created, could now grasp his power more vividly in this direct comparison.

…

In the first-class cabin suite aboard the Berries.

Lumian handed the ancient notebook and the note with Love Incantation to Ludwig and asked with a smile, “Is it edible?”

Chapter 621 - 621 Hanth Island

621 Hanth Island

Ludwig, savoring succulent roasted lamb chops, cast a quick glance at the ancient notebook and the note containing the Love Incantation. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

The knowledge and concealed content inscribed on it couldn't be extracted.

"Alright." Lumian withdrew his hand, his disappointment minimal.

He had approached Ludwig with the intention that it didn't harm asking.

Finding nothing else of interest, he settled into the recliner, immersing himself in the warm sunlight. Flipping through the ancient notebook filled with Demon legends,

Lumian found it composed entirely in Highlander. Flores, having only attended elementary grammar school, wouldn't have comprehended it otherwise.

Reading with enthusiasm, as if engrossed in a gripping novel, Lumian discovered that certain legends surpassed even the thrill of contemporary horror stories, sending shivers down his spine.

Occasionally, incantations emerged, some fabricated by the ignorant and subjected to numerous alterations. Others carried a subtle malevolence, bearing a resemblance to Naboredisley. Lumian refrained from uttering them aloud, silently reciting them instead.

The first day of the Berries' voyage unfolded in tranquil serenity.

Late at night, Lumian dreamt of enchanting scenes, weaving into

blush-inducing stories that heightened his emotions.

Suddenly, Lumian awoke. Sunlight filtered through the window curtains, casting a faint glow.

It was 6 a.m.

Lying in bed, Lumian experienced a sense of loss.

He lacked the endurance of an Ascetic in dreams, causing certain scenes to be unusually poignant.

Phew… Lumian exhaled, emitting a self-deprecating laugh. Almost forgot, this isn't a boon; it's a curse.

Reverting to a physical state when Termiboros was newly sealed at 6 a.m. every morning brought benefits like fearlessness of serious injuries, no heed of energy consumption, and automatic healing.

Though thoughts of Cordu's catastrophe and his sister Aurore haunted him with each reset, the initial pain gradually dulled, becoming a bearable numbness after his psychiatric treatment. Occasionally, he felt a dull ache and emptiness.

Lumian rose from bed and drew open the curtains, revealing two contrasting scenes of the azure sea.

To the right, a crimson sun had just surfaced on the horizon. To the left, fog lingered, and waves surged, shrouding the situation 100 meters away.

Exiting the master bedroom, Lumian noticed that Lugano was already awake, captivated by the seascape.

Lugano grinned sheepishly and replied, "It's my first time in the Berserk Sea. I'm a little excited and woke up early."

On the coffee table in the room lay numerous Dutanese books recently purchased by Lumian from Port Colla. Being a primary trading port for the Southern Continent, Port Colla's citizens had a practical need to learn Dutanese, resulting in a trend. Lumian easily acquired two sets of teaching materials covering elementary,

intermediate, and advanced levels, along with practice materials, thanks to various teaching aids and Dutanese instructors. This was a stark contrast to Port Santa, where obtaining a few barely usable books required considerable effort.

Lumian applauded gently.

“Not bad.”

Lugano pointed towards the foggy sea and explained, “Last night, I heard from a sailor on the ship that many vessels attempted to explore the sea in that direction, but they never returned. Occasionally, people would spot one of those ships quietly passing by at night with no lights or anyone on the deck.

“They say it’s the Berserk Sea. Stick to the safe sea route; attempting unknown routes often leads to unknown and irresistible danger.

“See, the sun is rising over there, right? The sea seems calm, but venture beyond the safe route, and we might face a sudden hurricane, a lightning storm, or even get melted by the sun and evaporated. These are tales from sailors; I’m not sure if they’re true.”

Lumian nodded and suggested, “Look into more similar rumors.”

With his employer’s approval, Lugano’s expression brightened, finding a purpose in his work.

The voyage through the Berserk Sea proved relatively uneventful. Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano managed to avoid causing any disruptions.

Occasionally, they witnessed storms capable of city-wide destruction or forest-like lightning. Sometimes, they noticed the absence of fish throughout the entire sea, creating an eerie silence akin to the legendary Underworld.

Guided by the seasoned captain, first mate, and sailors, the Berries navigated through these regions along the safe sea route.

After a few days, the ocean-venturing steamship reached Hanth Island, the transit port. The crew replenished coal and water,

conducted machine maintenance, restocked light beer, and replenished various food supplies over two days.

“There doesn’t seem to be any specialties on this island,” Lugano remarked, consulting the travel guide from Port Colla. “But due to its strategic geographical location and natural deepwater port, it’s one of the main transit ports controlled by the Feynapotter Kingdom.”

Specialties? Does that include Demons? Lumian critiqued silently, producing two gold risots and twirling them in his hand.

“I’m going to try the local self-brewed wine.”

He made his way to the port’s largest bar and ordered a glass of thick, pomegranate-colored local red wine, Paha.

Lumian struck up a conversation with a few patrons near the bar counter, deliberately approaching one with a local accent.

“I met a nice chick,” he said with a sly wink and an ambiguous smile. “We’re going on a date later—on a quiet night. Can you share a few local horror stories? They don’t have to be well-

known, just terrifying enough, preferably with a specific location. For instance, if there’s a horrifying tale about an empty house on a certain street, heh heh, I plan to take her there for our date.”

The local, his beard dampened with ale, set down his oak beer mug and chuckled.

“How devious, but I like you! It’s a battle of wits between men and women. For victory, anything goes!”

After a brief pause, the local suggested, “You can take her on a date at the edge of the forest outside the city. You know, a forest at night is always chilling. Besides, there might be more than one Demon lurking in the woods on Hanth Island.

“As far back as I can remember, the priests have been warning everyone against venturing deep into the forest or even thinking about cutting wood in the middle of the island. There are many hidden dangers.

“As for those who claim to have seen the Demon with their own eyes, it’s said that they all met their demise—for some unknown reason.

“How about that? No woman isn’t afraid of a Demon. Well, except my wife. She’s even scarier than a Demon!”

Have the Demon stories on Hanth Island evolved to such an extent? It resembles the legend of the Montsouris ghost, but encountering a Montsouris ghost does result in the death of an entire family. Hanth Island doesn’t have such an obvious characteristic… Lumian raised his glass of red wine, toasting the local before saying, “Though I’m quite charming, I doubt any chick would be willing to follow me to the edge of the forest outside the city on our first date, especially at night. Even if she’s not afraid of me doing harm, she might worry that I’m a criminal with a penchant for harming young girls. How about this: Is there a legend of a serial killer? Ideally, one that haunts the city.”

Drawing from Aurore’s grimoires and the information gathered in recent months, Lumian discerned that Sequence 9 of the Demon pathway was Criminal, Sequence 8 was Coldblooded, and Sequence 7 was Serial Killer.

The name of Sequence 7, Serial Killer, indicated that Beyonders, regardless of their grasp of the acting method, would actively or passively engage in serial killings.

Although the Demon on Hanth Island had clearly surpassed Sequence 7 and evolved beyond the Serial Killer stage, Lumian wondered whether, as a high-ranking individual who had progressed through the ranks, it retained certain preferences acquired during its Serial Killer phase.

Intelligent beings, be they human or of a certain creature, tended to maintain certain desires if not deliberately restrained or controlled.

Just as humans might occasionally indulge in a drink, Demons might occasionally engage in serial killings.

Moreover, if Naboredisley’s commission wasn’t concocted merely for a verbal agreement, the Demon of Hanth Island or its descendants

should be concealed among humans.

The bearded local pondered for a moment before responding, “There haven’t been any serial killers. In a small place like ours, if serial murders were happening, everyone in the city would know.”

He paused, then added, “But what if someone goes missing in the forest outside the city every year? Would that count?”

…

In Trier, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony managed to gather sufficient information about Moran Avigny, the current Minister of Industry.

This information included a color photograph.

In the picture, Moran Avigny displayed a striking resemblance to an Intisian. Despite his age, he exuded an air of elegance.

In his late sixties, his once-black hair had transitioned into a distinguished gray. Refined facial features and dark gray eyes added to his overall presence, with the wrinkles on his face highlighting the passage of time.

“Dark gray eyes are rare in Intis…” Franca sighed.

Mid-sentence, she abruptly halted.

Another individual with dark-gray eyes in Intis crossed her mind—Demoness of Black Clarice.

Chapter 622 - 622 Smell of Death

622 Smell of Death

Under normal circumstances, dark-gray eyes wouldn't usually grab one's attention. Such pupils were rare in Intis but not uncommon in places like the Loen Kingdom. However, Franca sensed that there was crucial information hidden within.

Moran Avigny was suspected to be a Mirror Person. The Demoness of Black Clarice pursued the Mirror People, and being a demigod of the Demoness pathway closely related to the Mirror World, they all shared those unusual dark gray eyes.

Too much of a coincidence, isn't it?

"What's wrong?" Jenna asked with concern when Franca paused.

Franca deliberated for a few seconds before revealing that the Demoness of Black shared the same eye color as Moran Avigny. Finally, she said, "None of the Mirror People we encountered previously had such characteristics."

"Only relatively special Mirror People have them? Is the Demoness of Black also a Mirror Person?" Jenna guessed, her thoughts wandering.

"Impossible," Franca subconsciously denied. "She even tasked me with investigating the Mirror People… Right, it's not impossible. Haven't we read enough stories of burglars calling the police to catch thieves?"

Anthony thought for a moment and said, "Could it be a symbol of being corrupted by the mirror's Primordial Demoness? Could special Mirror People at a certain level have such eye color? Could it be the

same for a Demoness who has become a demigod and has been corrupted?

“No, Moran Avigny should have had dark gray eyes to begin with. It’s impossible for the Mirror People who replaced him to change the color of his eyes without attracting suspicion,” Franca pondered and deduced, “In other words, does the Demoness of Black come from the same family as the original Moran Avigny? I previously thought she belonged to the Sauron family and was Browns Sauron’s elder. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have nurtured such a simple-minded Demoness. Now, it doesn’t seem so…”

“Not necessarily,” Franca and Jenna said in unison.

Everyone had a paternal and maternal side of the family. Just because they were from the Sauron family didn’t mean they weren’t from a dark-gray-eyed family!

Franca hesitated for a few seconds before saying, “It’s been a while since I updated the Demoness of Black on the Mirror People investigation. I plan to visit her this week and discuss Moran Avigny.”

“Be careful,” Jenna cautioned.

A gleaming smile played on Franca’s lips as she replied, “Don’t worry. She tasked me with the Mirror People inquiry, so she should anticipate some updates. If she has ties with Moran Avigny, we might see something unfolding for the Minister of Industry shortly. If not, we can seek her assistance!”

…

On Hanth Island, Lumian strolled through the dimly lit streets, relishing the cool sea breeze that replaced the earlier heat as he casually headed back to the Berries.

Hands tucked into his pockets, his mind raced with unusual activity. He sifted through the legends and stories he had recently gathered, attempting to uncover any hints about the elusive Demon.

Had Madam Magician not issued a cautious warning, and had

Naboredisley not disclosed the Demon descendant's name and identity, Lumian might have considered using himself as bait. In such circumstances, he could have showcased his malice, devised a plan with a chance of success, triggering the Demon's Danger Premonition, luring it out to eliminate the perceived threat. A concealed trap would await it.

It's been a century or two. Numerous adventurers have ventured to unravel the Demon legend. Despite the Church of Earth Mother's relentless efforts to eradicate lingering issues, there's still no resolution. Relying on conventional methods to track down that elusive Demon seems impractical…

Looking at it from a different angle, why would the Demon choose to remain on Hanth Island?

The Church of Earth Mother already purged it once. Why take the risk to stay? Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

If it were me, I would have relocated ages ago. As a Demon, where couldn't I survive?

If I truly believed I was a highly intelligent criminal—a genuine Criminal—why use such a method to taunt the clergy of the Church of Earth Mother? It would become dull after all these years…

Could there be a reason for its persistence on Hanth Island?

Is it perhaps partially sealed? Or is there something profoundly significant buried on the island that cannot be moved?

The valley ablaze with sulfurous flames?

Moreover, Demons can live for centuries, but ordinary people cannot. If the Demon indeed concealed itself in human towns, it would have to change identities every few decades, potentially leaving traces.

Hanth Island serves as a transit port for trade routes between the Northern and Southern Continents. With numerous foreign settlers, the Demon can effortlessly forge a new identity. However, how can it smoothly exit the stage with its original identity?

The residents here all devoutly follow Earth Mother. Upon their demise, they are invariably sent to the cathedral for a wake. Would a Demon have the audacity to feign death and undergo Earth Mother's scrutiny and the purifying touch of holy water?

Yes, vanishing is the optimal solution. Whether through a sea adventure or disappearing into the forest, it effectively sidesteps corresponding problems.

Every year, people vanish in the forest outside the city… Did the Demon purposely orchestrate some accidents, concealing its 'death' among them? Lumian's thoughts raced as he gradually formulated deductions and speculations.

This was also a tempering of a Conspirer's powers and a method to digest the potion.

He had a vague understanding of the entire situation.

If I want to locate the Demon concealed among humans, I must find the mysterious valley ablaze with sulfur flames deep in the forest. To unravel the valley's secret, I must rely on that Demon. These two matters are likely intertwined and inseparable.

Lumian had a tentative plan for tomorrow's investigation.

I'll begin by exploring the forest, utilizing my Hunter powers to search for the remains of the missing. If I discover one or two, and they still retain some edible structure, I'll bring them back to Ludwig and determine who the deceased last encountered.

Throughout this process, without alerting the clergy of the Church of Earth Mother, I'll delve deeper into the island to identify any anomalies. If they exist, what kind of anomalies they are…

As he strolled leisurely, Lumian suddenly looked up and observed the stars in the sky veiled by dark clouds.

In an instant, torrential rain poured down.

Drops of rain misted in front of Lumian. Without an umbrella, he had no choice but to dash under the eaves of a three-story building on the

street and seek refuge outside a café with its lights off. He waited for the storm to end impassively.

The few pedestrians on the road unfurled their umbrellas.

Lumian couldn't help but chuckle as he recalled the common depiction of the Berserk Sea's islands in the travel guide: The weather is highly erratic; remember to bring an umbrella or a hat when out.

Clearly, Lumian didn't take the reminder seriously.

He wasn't in a rush. Leaning against the café's two glass windows, he quietly observed the raindrops streak down and the people returning home late traverse different streets.

The sound of the rain masked all movement, and white mist veiled most of his vision, creating the sensation for Lumian as if he were in another world.

Observing this scene, Lumian reminisced about his wandering days.

Wanderers often struggled to predict the weather, making it challenging to secure refuge in cathedrals and other places in Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

advance. Consequently, he would occasionally huddle in a corner of a street, sheltered from the rain. He watched the rain with fear, worry, uneasiness, and gloom, praying that no other vagabond would snatch his temporary shelter.

But now, his mood was entirely different.

The heavy rain in the Berserk Sea ceased as swiftly as it had arrived. In less than half an hour, only stagnant water remained on the street.

Lumian chuckled and tucked his hands back into his pockets. He strolled along the wet street toward the harbor and boarded the Berries.

Just as Lumian pushed open the door and entered, he saw Lugano wiping Ludwig's dripping hair with a dry and fluffy towel. Ludwig looked as if he had taken an unexpected plunge.

“You didn’t bring an umbrella?” Lumian asked with a smile.

Lugano replied awkwardly, “I thought I was a Planter and could predict changes in the weather in advance, so I didn’t bring an umbrella and led Ludwig to the streets to buy supper. He said he didn’t want to eat cakes and biscuits tonight. Sigh, who knew that even though I predicted a rainstorm, it only took tens of seconds before it arrived. At that time, I wanted to carry Ludwig and rush back to the ship before the rain started…”

Seeing that the Doctor didn’t seek an objective reason and only complained about his lack of ability, Lumian kindly added,

“This is the weather in the Berserk Sea. Even Planters can’t predict it.”

This was also one of the reasons why the islands in the Berserk Sea, clearly under the rule of the Church of Earth Mother, didn’t always experience bumper harvests like the Feynapotter Kingdom.

“Yes, yes, yes.” Lugano heaved a sigh of relief.

Lumian turned to Ludwig, whose hair was now dry, and casually inquired, “Do you smell anything?”

Is there any particularly alluring “food” hidden nearby?

Ludwig nibbled on a tortilla and responded, “There’s the smell of death.”

Smell of death? Lumian frowned slightly.

“Did someone die near the night market?”

Ludwig shook his head.

Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

“When it rains, there’s the smell of death everywhere.”

What… what does this mean? Lumian probed, voicing his doubts.

Ludwig replied candidly, “I don’t know. It disappeared later.”

It happens when it rains, but not after… Is this an abnormality from the Berserk Sea, or is it the island’s abnormality triggered by the Berserk Sea’s weather? Lumian pondered for a moment, but he wasn’t in a rush to write to Madam Magician and inquire.

This was a digestion opportunity for him. He felt that he should avoid relying on the power of a high-ranking person to digest it better unless it was crucial.

That night, Lumian fell asleep with a heavy heart.

In his hazy dream, he saw many familiar and unfamiliar things.

The pale-white Samaritan Women’s Spring, the mountain- sized Blood Emperor’s afterimage dripping with yellowish magma, and the unknown object protruding from the spring…

The scene suddenly changed, revealing Lumian wandering alone in the deep darkness underground.

It was as if he had become the Montsouris ghost.

Chapter 623 - 623 Grave Digging

623 Grave Digging Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

In the endless darkness, cramped quarters, and jumbled thoughts, Lumian found himself unusually frustrated, even within the confines of his dreams. He longed to rip apart the cage around him and shatter everything in his path.

Slowly, the realization dawned upon him that he was dreaming. He struggled to open his eyes and wake up, but his efforts were in vain. Each time he thought he had finally awakened, in the blink of an eye, he plunged into a deeper darkness and a more profound dream.

After an unknown stretch of time, Lumian naturally awoke to some light seeping through the curtained window.

It was 6 a.m.

Lumian raised his right hand and wiped his forehead, sensing a layer of cold sweat.

Is this a spiritual warning, or had memories of the Samaritan Women's Spring and the afterimage of the Blood Emperor haunted me after I contemplated the smell of death on Hanth Island yesterday? Previously, I had drawn connections between the mysterious deaths of those who witnessed the Demon and the Montsouris ghost, possibly leading to a shallow corruption? Lumian couldn't accurately decipher the complete meaning of the dream. All he could do was remind himself to be cautious and stay focused on his original goal for coming to Hanth Island:

To investigate the Demon legends, not to eliminate the Demon.

Setting aside whether he possessed the strength to face the Demon or if he needed assistance, the fact that the Church of Earth Mother had operated on the island for over a century without completely eradicating the target suggested even the Tarot Club's Major Arcana card holders might not resolve this matter entirely.

Lumian got out of bed and retrieved the golden pocket watch from Salle de Bal Brise. Opening and glancing at it: 6:01 a.m.

Though early, Lumian felt a sense of urgency. The Berries would depart from Hanth Island the morning after tomorrow. He had only two days to delve into the Demon legends, unravel the truth, and identify potential suspects.

If he succeeded, his Conspirer potion might very well be digested.

Gathering, screening, and utilizing information were crucial aspects of a conspiracy!

And if Lumian were a Sequence 7 Detective of the Reader pathway, successfully solving a century-old unsolved case involving high-level powers in just two days would be a remarkable leap from initial digestion to complete digestion.

…

At 9 a.m., in the suburbs of Port Hanth, Return Cemetery.

Holding a bunch of yellow flowers, Lumian navigated through the tree-lined cemetery.

Armed with Ludwig's intel and the insights from the previous night's dream, he adjusted his plan. Instead of hastily venturing into the forest to search for the missing people's remains, he decided to dig up graves here!

His objective: to investigate the circumstances surrounding the mysterious death of someone who had glimpsed the Demon's figure in the forest depths. He aimed to discover if they would meet the same fate as those killed by the Montsouris ghost—exhibiting self-mutilation.

According to the gathered information, the last person to report the Demon's presence to the Church of Earth Mother rested in a quiet corner of Return Cemetery.

His name was Antonio Elias.

Before long, Lumian, clutching the bouquet of yellow flowers, reached the grave. Apart from the deceased's name, birth and death dates, a concise epitaph adorned the stone tombstone: "This wretched man's life was taken by a Demon."

Lumian stooped down, placing the bouquet before the tombstone. Then, he straightened up, silently studying the stone tomb.

Details about Antonio Elias flashed through his mind.

A local, not a foreigner, with parents, a wife, and children. Nine months ago, during a hunting trip in the forest, he encountered a wandering Demon. Fearing his imminent demise, he sought refuge in the cathedral and cloister of the Church of Earth Mother for a full five months. Afterwards, intending to serve as a crew member for three years, steering clear of Hanth Island and its hidden dangers, he was discovered dead at the bottom of the cabin on his second voyage…

Lumian scanned the surroundings, gathering ten to twenty withered branches from beneath nearby trees. He planted them around Antonio Elias's tomb, forming a short, makeshift, and somewhat futile barrier.

Lastly, he laid a withered branch flat on two adjacent branches, constructing a shaky door impassable to anyone.

With that completed, Lumian stepped over the "wall" and entered the grave.

He then bent down, extending his right hand to touch the makeshift door constructed of withered branches.

Simultaneously, a black mark activated on his body.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian's figure vanished. Antonio's tomb

remained undisturbed, except for the added circle of withered branches.

In reality, Lumian had retrieved an iron pick, shovel, and other items from his just-purchased Traveler's Bag. He began prying open the stone slabs and digging into the soil.

Bottle of Fiction!

Lumian utilized the "wall" and "door" he had fashioned to employ the Bottle of Fiction contract ability.

In less than two minutes, relying on his understanding of the cemetery's layout and two precise explosions, Lumian cleared the soil from the coffin and pried open the black-painted wooden plank.

A pungent odor of decay wafted out, and Lumian casually ignited it.

After a brief wait, he squatted down, donned gloves, and examined the white bones, now devoid of flesh and blood.

The first item he picked up was Antonio Elias's skull. With a cursory glance, he noted cracks on the inside of the skull, while the exterior remained intact.

A brain explosion as the cause of death? Lumian pondered the force required to induce such damage. Regardless of the ability responsible, Antonio's cerebrum, cerebellum, and brain stem should have exploded into mush at the time of his demise. It seemed illogical for the hard inner cranium to crack while the soft brain remained unharmed.

Examining Antonio Elias's other bones yielded no additional injuries. The stains in the coffin offered no further clues.

Lumian concluded that Antonio's death resulted from an internal explosion in his head. The explosive force, while not physically strong enough to shatter his skull entirely, was sufficient to destroy his brain.

With Fire Infusion, I can precisely control the quantity and Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

quality of the flames. I should be able to achieve a similar effect. How did the Demon do it? Lumian's comprehension of the Demon pathway came from his sister's grimoires, information provided by the Tarot Club, and Franca's account. He had only truly interacted with a Demon above Sequence 6 once, and that was with Naboredisley.

He immediately recollected the sensations when Naboredisley stirred his desires and emotions. The echoes of the ranting transmitted through the gray fog during Naboredisley's expulsion and the tumult of his own desires replayed in his mind.

For ordinary people, inducing an upheaval in their desires before detonating them could lead to their brains exploding, given an increase in potency… It shouldn't be a challenging feat for a demigod creature like a Demon. Moreover, the Demon can use those ravings to achieve this remotely? As Lumian completed his deduction, he was convinced that a Demon was indeed concealed on Hanth Island. A Demon of the Criminal pathway, a Demon surpassing Sequences like Devil and Desire Apostle.

With this confirmation, Lumian believed it would be relatively straightforward to locate the Demon if he put his mind to it.

However, the prerequisite was finding it and not resolving the situation, all while risking his life.

Removing the glove, he reached into his Traveler's Bag and touched the Flog boxing gloves.

Following the incident with the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings and the Great Mother, Lumian had already speculated that the Mother Tree of Desire stood at the peak of the Prisoner, Criminal, and Scrooge pathways. Therefore, the Rose School of Thought's indulgence faction and some members of the Devil family believed in Her and followed Her.

Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

In that case, the Flog boxing gloves made from the branches of the Tree of Shadow, closely related to the Mother Tree of Desire, had a

high chance of attracting the Demon's attention within a certain range. Just as its negative effects meant being observed by some hidden entities, influenced and attacked by dangerous creatures!

Phew, there are no useless items. Only Beyonders who don't know how to use them. Lumian chuckled self-

deprecatingly and withdrew his right hand from the Flog boxing gloves.

He abandoned the plan to directly lure out the Demon.

This decision stemmed from the realization that the Demon was still active on the island, claiming lives, yet the Church of Earth Mother hadn't eradicated it completely!

Having encountered various challenges, Lumian possessed a reasonable understanding of an orthodox Church's strength. He knew that if the Church of Earth Mother genuinely committed, it could eliminate all residents suspected to be Demons and obliterate the island, similar to what the Church of Storms had done to Bansy Harbor.

It wasn't that the Church of Earth Mother lacked the will, but there was a reason holding them back.

This brought Lumian's thoughts back to the valley burning with sulfurous flames deep in the forest. He believed that the Demon couldn't be slain under regular circumstances. It could only be sealed and constrained.

As the Church of Earth Mother couldn't achieve this, and Lumian doubted his ability to do so, enticing the Demon directly would be futile and perilous.

Lumian's current strategy involved leveraging his fake level and Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

his allure to evil gods to traverse the forest. During critical moments, he planned to use the Flog boxing gloves to see if he could converge on the mysterious valley burning with sulfur flames to investigate the source of the Demon legends.

…

In the heart of the forest, surrounded by towering trees, Lumian navigated a path untouched by human presence for years. He moved forward at a measured pace.

From time to time, he would extract the Flog boxing gloves, relying on intuition to guide his course. After ten to twenty seconds, he stowed them away.

After almost an hour, the dense forest unexpectedly cleared.

A menacing brown bear emerged from behind a tree, advancing toward Lumian with ponderous steps.

“Stop, foreigner!”

The bear’s mouth emitted a buzzing human voice.

Chapter 624 - 624 More Than One?

624 More Than One?

Lumian remained unfazed as the brown bear uttered words in precise Highlander. Instead of fear, delight filled him–a clear sign that he had stumbled upon the correct location!

This was the Planter pathway, the main pathway of the Church of Earth Mother, known as a Druid at Sequence 5. Capable of transforming into a formidable three-meter-tall bear.

Encountering a human-speaking brown bear in the desolate forest of Hanth Island hinted at his proximity to the heavily guarded area, possibly the mysterious valley of sulfur flames from Demon legends.

Without the signature golden straw hat, Lumian studied the brown bear's furry visage openly, making no effort to conceal his extraordinary nature.

"Alright," he sighed with regret, turning on his heels and retracing his steps.

Twenty to thirty meters away, Lumian vanished from the brown bear's view, concealed by towering trees that had stood for over a century.

He halted, leaning against a tree trunk, and casually retrieved an item from his Traveler's Bag.

It was a pair of brown gold-rimmed glasses–the Mystery Prying Glasses!

Lumian had no intention of recklessly breaching the Church of Earth

Mother's protective circle and venturing into the sealed-off region.

Perhaps it was no safer than confronting the hidden Demon on Hanth Island.

Without sufficient and effective information, Lumian wasn't inclined to take such risks.

What if it resembled Fourth Epoch Trier?

Lumian's strategy involved skirting the edges of the problem zone, wielding the Mystery Prying Glasses to shift his perspective and uncover hidden truths.

From Lumian's familiarity with the Mystery Prying Glasses from previous, the item's lower level hindered his ability to directly perceive various seals. In Trier, he had utilized them multiple times but couldn't catch a direct glimpse of Fourth Epoch Trier. Instead, he witnessed concealed elements beneath the ground, lurking in darkness, or disguised through distorted, overlooking, or prying angles.

This inherent flaw safeguarded Lumian from directly encountering the Church of Earth Mother's sealed artifact, thus averting potential catastrophe. Nonetheless, it allowed him to discern abnormal traces.

And that was sufficient!

More traces equaled more information, bringing Lumian closer to the elusive truth!

Ready to teleport at a moment's notice, Lumian positioned the brown gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose.

An unsettling dizziness gripped him, akin to being buried underground. Despite looking up at the soil, trees, and sky, he sensed an elevated vantage point, overseeing everything.

Withering tree bark, decaying leaves, crawling insects, and animals circling a water source–all these details and buried bones spun in Lumian's vision, inducing nausea from the depths of his soul.

Amidst the nausea creeping from the depths of his soul, Lumian's gaze fixated on a startling sight.

Silent blue flames devoured the entire landscape.

Whether above, below, or around the flames, the trees swiftly transformed into an inky black, dissolving into sewage. From the decaying remnants, new trees sprouted, rapidly expanding and flourishing.

In the midst of the blue inferno, Lumian vaguely discerned a crimson, colossal figure sprawled at the core. Submerged in pitch-black, viscous sewage, it sank gradually, only to be yanked upward by an invisible force.

This unseen power emanated from beyond the withering and burgeoning forest, from…

Abruptly, a pair of eyes materialized within Lumian's line of sight.

They were bloodshot, icy-blue eyes tinged with pain.

Without hesitation, Lumian removed the Mystery Prying Glasses and activated the black mark representing Spirit World Traversal.

Swiftly fading, he disappeared into the forest and reappeared outside the Church of Earth Mother Cathedral in Port Hanth, behind the familiar stone pillar observed earlier that morning.

After stashing the Mystery Prying Glasses back into his Traveler's Bag, Lumian departed the secluded spot. Blending in with believers, he entered the cathedral exuding scents of wheat and milk, occupying a pew closest to the Sacred Emblem of Life. With crossed arms, he mimicked the old man in a black formal suit, feigning prayer.

Only then did he exhale a sigh of relief, assured that those icy-blue eyes wouldn't target or lock onto him.

These Mystery Prying Glasses could pass through countless hands if not in my possession. Its negative effects are indeed unique and beneficial, but they're also very dangerous… Lumian couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

Then, he analyzed the scenes witnessed through the Mystery Prying Glasses.

There's a region engulfed in sulfur flames, but the Church of Earth Mother's trees seal it off, cycling between death and rebirth. It's nearly impossible to spot from the outside. Even with the Mystery Prying Glasses, I can only vaguely discern its outline.

It's akin to lurking outside a cage and surveying the interior through the gaps in the railing. Despite the Mystery Prying Glasses' capabilities, they shouldn't breach the seal.

That colossal, blood-colored figure resembles a small mountain, yet I can't discern any details… Could it be the true form of the Demon of Hanth Island? How can others see it when it's sealed inside, causing those who witness it to mysteriously vanish?

Could there be more than one Demon on Hanth Island? The ice-blue eyes staring at me may belong to another Demon. Is it utilizing the invisible connection between itself and the blood-colored Demon to prevent its descent into the pitch-

black, viscous sewage? New n***o***vel chapters are published on

If so, the Church of Earth Mother should eliminate the Demon active both outside and on the island. By doing so, the blood-colored Demon would lose its assistance.

Or does the Church of Earth Mother not want the blood-

colored Demon to completely sink into the pitch-black sewage, letting the ice-blue-eyed Demon exist only to restrict its range and frequency?

If it's not entirely sealed, would the invisible connection between the two parties disappear? Is it because the ice-blue-

eyed Demon will also be affected by the pitch-black sewage?

Lumian deepened his understanding and speculations regarding the Demon legends on Hanth Island. He sensed that his Conspirer potion had become active, showing signs of digestion, but it was still one

step away.

He wasn't in a rush to succeed. Instead, he pondered the mission that Naboredisley hadn't entrusted to him and Franca.

Killing a Demon descendant from an island in the Berserk Sea…

That's correct, a descendant! The ice-blue-eyed Demon is a descendant of that blood-colored Demon. Is that why an invisible connection binds them?

Does Naboredisley desire the blood-colored Demon to fully submerge into the pitch-black sewage?

Is this beneficial or detrimental for the blood-colored Demon?

If it's beneficial, it makes sense why the Earth Mother Church impedes it. Why does the blood-colored Demon's descendant persist in pulling and preventing its descent?

Suppose the ice-blue-eyed Demon is under the control of the Church of Earth Mother, yet it can kill and cause disappearances. Conversely, why doesn't it flee Hanth Island? This implies that it's not in the ice-blue-eyed Demon's favor if the blood-colored Demon were to completely sink into the pitch-black sewage. It's even willing to forfeit its freedom to obstruct it.

If it's not favorable, perhaps Naboredisley isn't deceiving. It's an adversary of the blood-colored Demon, hoping for its complete submersion and assimilation by the pitch-black sewage. This might have a certain impact on Hanth Island, the Berserk Sea, or even the entire world. That's why the Church of Earth Mother seals and monitors it…

Can't they just kill it? Without the blood-colored Demon, the issue of it sinking completely into the pitch-black sewage would cease…

Can't be killed?

What Naboredisley feared wasn't that the blood-colored Demon might sense danger, but that the Church of Earth Mother might be alerted?

Lumian gradually understood the mentality and stance of the Church of Earth Mother, the local Demon, and Naboredisley, but he lacked sufficient evidence.

What he was most certain of now was: the pitch-black, viscous sewage wasn't simple!

Perhaps it was something akin to the Samaritan Women's Spring.

Furthermore, it bore a striking resemblance to the pitch-black form of the Montsouris ghost.

Trier's catacombs is a labyrinth of complexity, filled with corruption and unique monsters that defy easy elimination. It's the aftermath of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's significant accomplishment, an act that nearly brought the gods down with Him. Ultimately, He perished. What could be the reason for Hanth Island? Could it be a divine battle and the demise of a deity?

That's not beyond the realm of possibility… While my knowledge of the Fourth Epoch's history is limited, I do know that the Berserk Sea was not as tumultuous back then. There were still interactions between the Northern and Southern Continents. Could it be that another emperor from the War of the Four Emperors or two emperors met Their end here, permanently reshaping the terrain and weather to give rise to the Berserk Sea?

Is this the manifestation of a deity's power? The Blood Emperor sank a colossal city underground, forcing over a million people to live above it to contain the subsequent effects. And the deity who perished here has been influencing the Berserk Sea for more than a thousand years. This surpasses the waters near Port Santa… As Lumian sighed, he prepared to stand up and return to the Berries to strategize his next move for gathering more information.

Sensing the quietude around him, his movements softened, cautious not to disturb the prayers of the Earth Mother believers.

Subconsciously scanning his surroundings, Lumian noticed that the believer beside him had also finished praying and retracted his arms.

A gray-haired old man in a black formal suit with a bow tie caught Lumian's eye. His face bore well-defined features, and his beard was meticulously shaved.

In the next moment, Lumian observed the elder turning his head—revealing bloodshot ice-blue eyes.

Chapter 625 - 625 Repentance

625 Repentance

Ice-blue eyes!

That Demon!

It's lurking right there in the cathedral!

Lumian tensed. Without a second thought, he tried to teleport away.

This time, he chose Trier–the entrance to Saint Vi?¨ve Cathedral!

In that moment, his reflection stared back at him in those chilling, ice-blue eyes.

His face twisted, expression sinister, eyes cold.

Soon, Lumians manifested, encircling him.

There was one Lumian, eyes intoxicated, breathing heavy, face flushed red. Another, trembling in fear. Another, expressionless and resolute. One, lost and sorrowful. Another, with no will to live. And one more, eyes filled with anger and hatred, red with intensity…

In an instant, Lumian seemed to multiply into countless versions, each appearing tangible.

This severely impacted his thoughts and actions, hindering him from activating the contract mark representing Spirit World Traversal.

Instinctively, he focused his remaining will on his right hand and the mark left by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor.

To escape this state and gain the strength to teleport away, he needed to terrify the ice-blue-eyed Demon!

Suddenly, Lumian heard ravings filled with intense madness and depravity.

His mind turned to mush, swelling dangerously.

The Blood Emperor's aura didn't activate in time.

Fragmented, emotional, and painful thoughts burst in Lumian's mind like fireworks before gradually descending.

An intense burning sensation in his chest anchored him, preventing complete loss of self.

After an unknown span of time, Lumian finally regained command of his thoughts.

His first thought was: I'm still alive?

It must have been a considerable duration since the onslaught of ravings and his subsequent awakening. The Demon's power could have easily ended him multiple times!

As Lumian concentrated on his right hand, he scrutinized the Demon with ice-blue eyes.

The white-haired Demon, adorned in a black formal suit and bow tie, sat upright once more, facing the Sacred Emblem of Life. It inclined slightly, crossing its arms over its chest.

Shutting its eyes, it whispered with a pained expression, "Oh, merciful Mother, I implore your mercy for my transgressions…"

Merciful Mother, I implore your mercy for my transgressions… Lumian's resolve wavered as he abandoned activating the Blood Emperor's aura.

He settled beside the Demon.

Observing the Sacred Emblem of Life on the altar, he waited silently, refraining from disrupting the Demon's repentance. Contemplating his encounter, he mused quietly.

The various selves I witnessed must be genuine illusions–not existing in the physical world but within my heart and mind…

Could this be a sophisticated manifestation of emotional and desire fluctuations, triggering individual emotions and desires to vie for control of the body without reaching the point of dissociation?

The subsequent ravings resembled Naboredisley's frenzied curse upon expulsion. Yet, this time, there was no shield from Mr. Fool's gray fog. Well, not entirely absent. Otherwise, the mad river of ravings would have capsized my identity. Even if I hadn't lost control, I would have succumbed completely before the Demon found its "conscience" and started repenting…

I believed the safest haven on Hanth Island was the cathedral of the Church of Earth Mother. I specifically chose it to evade the Demon. Surprisingly, it's praying here… Judging by this, blind trust in the orthodox Church's cathedrals might not be foolproof in the future. Without adequate information, nothing is absolute…

Yet, it was only within the cathedral that I survived. Anywhere else, it would be Termiboros grappling with the ice-blue-eyed Demon. Then, the Angels of the orthodox Churches and the Tarot Club would descend…

Lumian had formed some hypotheses and waited with assurance. He condensed his experiences and absorbed his lesson.

After a brief span, the white-haired, ice-blue-eyed Demon, donned in a black formal suit, concluded its repentance. Its expression regained composure, but the blood vessels in its eyes deepened.

Only then did Lumian observe the black leather gloves on both of its hands. Even during confession and prayer, they remained unremoved–a departure from devout believer behavior. In the human world, wearing gloves while praying was deemed disrespectful to a deity, except in emergencies or special circumstances. The same applied to wearing a hat.

The Demon cast a glance at Lumian and spoke in a deep but composed voice, "You haven't fled yet. Aren't you afraid of angering

me again?"

Lumian gazed at the Sacred Emblem of Life and smiled.

"I'm not. This is Earth Mother's cathedral."

"Weren't we in the cathedral just now?" The Demon moderated its volume, not disturbing the other supplicants.

"Occasional accidents are understandable," Lumian replied unhurriedly. "Moreover, I believe you can certainly control yourself in a short period. It'll be more challenging beyond half a year."

The Demon also directed its gaze at the altar, its ice-blue eyes reflecting the Sacred Emblem of Life.

"Why do you think so?"

"I'm an experienced adventurer," Lumian said with a smile. "I know that orthodox Churches adhere to a common rule. Survivors entangled in a mysticism incident are often drawn into the Church if there's any hidden danger. They become civilian staff and receive long-term protection to prevent sudden deaths. However, those who witnessed the Demon's figure on Hanth Island didn't undergo this process. They only received a few months of protection before departing.

"Could it be that the Church fears prolonged stays might lead to deaths even within the cathedral or cloister?

"In such instances, it would undoubtedly tarnish the Church's reputation. One can't keep a constant watch on higher-level powers indefinitely."

The white-haired Demon fell silent for a few moments before confessing, "I didn't want to kill them, but I…"

At this point, its face twisted once more, icy-blue eyes filled with pain.

Once again, it crossed its arms over its chest, resuming a low-

voiced prayer.

This time, it swiftly regained its composure. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian resumed the conversation with a smile.

“Don’t tell me you penned all those epitaphs for those people?”

“That’s correct.” The Demon in the black suit maintained its slightly forward-leaning posture.

It seems this Demon has a rather amicable relationship with the Church of Earth Mother… Not strictly devout, but a believer nonetheless… Lumian understood that the ice-blue- eyed Demon wouldn’t respond even if he inquired. Such questions might even provoke serious consequences. He had to capitalize on its stable emotions to seek some details.

Before Lumian could speak, the Demon posed a question.

“Foreigner, why did you come to Hanth Island?”

Lumian deliberately smiled.

“I previously encountered a Demon incident…”

Lumian briefly recounted Salah’s encounter with the Love Incantation in Port Colla. While leading the investigation, the suspect’s body had been suddenly commandeered by a Demon seeking a deal, which he rejected. Lumian, utilizing undisclosed official powers, had then expelled the other party.

Lumian omitted details about the Love Incantation’s content and refrained from mentioning Naboredisley’s name, fearing deep-seated animosity that might trigger intense agitation.

Concluding, he stated, “I read in the notebook about Demon legends on Hanth Island, connected to the deal the Demon sought. Intrigued, I decided to investigate. My intention wasn’t to finish off anyone.”

“You can’t finish off anyone either,” the Demon with ice-blue eyes

remarked candidly.

It continued gazing at the Sacred Emblem of Life and added in a calm, deep voice, “Curiosity kills the cat.”

Lumian chuckled.

“It’s indeed risky, but finding you within a day and discovering the sealed valley indicates my capabilities.”

Next time, I’ll choose a safer “sanctuary.”

The Demon with ice-blue eyes, with few wrinkles, smiled—an uncommon sight.

“Your methods are unconventional, but they align with the mysticism world’s underlying laws.

“But had I not controlled myself and repented for past deeds, you would be dead. Such an investigation would have been futile.”

Lumian didn’t dispute. With the information he gathered, he knew there was no immediate danger in the cathedral of the Church of Earth Mother. The recent episode proved to be a false alarm.

He shifted the topic.

“Why did that inexplicable Demon target you?

“Moreover, with the strength of me and my companions, it’s likely impossible to eradicate a so-called Demon descendant like you. Was it deliberately leading us to our demise?”

The Demon, clad in a black suit, kept its gaze fixed on the Sacred Emblem of Life and responded, “I’m not certain which one you encountered.”

It refused to disclose more.

Lumian didn’t dare press further, let alone provoke. His mind raced, searching for an alternate approach.

“You seem unrestricted. Why not leave Hanth Island?

“There appears to be some force influencing you here.”

The Demon’s expression twisted as it stated, “This is my duty and my atonement.

“Since converting to Earth Mother, there are times when I can’t resist the urge to kill, accumulating profound sins.”

Recalling his earlier deduction, Lumian inquired casually, “Then why not fully confine yourself?”

“Confinement won’t suffice. I can’t do it, and it can’t be achieved that way.” The Demon with ice-blue eyes displayed pain once again.

Indeed, closely tied to the blood-colored Demon in the valley… Yet, as a Coldblooded, why does the act of killing, and the subsequent “healing” by the Church of Earth Mother’s reverence for life, still cause you pain? Lumian decided to steer the conversation to a less sensitive realm and soothe the other party.

In a relaxed tone, he said, “I apologize. I wasn’t courteous earlier and failed to inquire about your preferred address.”

The Demon with ice-blue eyes stared blankly for a moment before responding, “Naboredisley.”

Chapter 626 - 626 Blatant Malice

626 Blatant Malice

Naboredisley? Lumian almost thought the ice-blue-eyed Demon was jesting with him.

However, he swiftly confirmed a crucial detail.

When it came to matters concerning the Love Incantation, he had never uttered the name Naboredisley!

Not only did he fear that Naboredisley and the ice-blue-eyed Demon were adversaries, but he also adhered to Madam Magician's instructions to abstain from writing or speaking this name.

If so, why did the ice-blue-eyed Demon identify itself as Naboredisley?

Could it truly be the genuine Naboredisley?

Then, why did the repeated chanting of "Naboredisley" summon a different Demon and not the ice-blue-eyed one?

Or were they equals? Was Naboredisley scheming to manipulate someone else into killing me?

Amidst Lumian's astonishment and confusion, a smile crept onto his face.

"I wouldn't dare utter that name."

He was testing the Demon with ice-blue eyes.

The Demon with ice-blue eyes turned towards Lumian.

“You’ve heard of Naboredisley and are aware of the concealed perils of uttering this name?”

“Yes,” Lumian replied with a grin.

From the Demon’s reaction, it seems unlikely to be the one propagating the Love Incantation… That’s intriguing… Lumian pondered.

Though this might unveil greater horrors and deeper secrets, as a Hunter, fear and curiosity didn’t contradict each other. It was akin to how everyone in the army feared death, yet it didn’t deter them from banding together for combat.

The Demon with ice-blue eyes nodded slowly and spoke, “Here, within Earth Mother’s cathedral, you needn’t fret about uttering the name Naboredisley.”

“That’s evidently not the name you typically go by. Why don’t you disclose your true name instead?” Lumian didn’t reply. Instead, he posed a query.

He had a persistent feeling that the other party intended to harm him.

Had he not encountered the Love Incantation and received guidance from Madam Magician, he might have inadvertently mentioned the concealed Demon on Hanth Island, Naboredisley, after leaving Earth Mother’s cathedral today. That could have been troublesome!

The Demon with ice-blue eyes fell silent for a few moments before stating, “The name I go by in human society holds no significance for you.

“Moreover, after learning the name Naboredisley and uttering it at least three times outside the cathedral…

At this juncture, the white-haired Demon’s visage twitched, and a pained expression surfaced.

“I will establish a connection with you. When I can no longer control myself, I may choose to end your life. Ending the life of an

uninformed adventurer like you, seeking to uncover the truth of Hanth Island's legend, would bring me greater satisfaction than harming ordinary people. I won't feel as regretful or guilty."

The ice-blue-eyed Demon gazed at the Sacred Emblem of Life once more, bowed its head, and expressed remorse.

"Oh, merciful Mother, I implore your mercy for my transgressions. I should not have harbored malevolent intentions…"

The corners of Lumian's mouth twitched, and his expression darkened.

Did you genuinely intend to harm me?

He couldn't afford to let his guard down for a moment when dealing with Demons. Vigilance was paramount, even if it was a Demon professing allegiance to Earth Mother!

Moreover, a seemingly innocuous conversation could clandestinely plant a time bomb. Any other adventurer would have fallen victim to it. Truly befitting the Criminal pathway, known for its high IQ crimes…

Cold, calculating, and overtly malicious…

After the ice-blue-eyed Demon, self-identified as Naboredisley, concluded its repentance, Lumian feigned a nonchalant smile and remarked,

"If you truly cannot control yourself and desire to take a life, target pirates. It aligns with a sense of justice."

The ice-blue-eyed Demon's expression darkened as it retorted, "This is my prison. I cannot depart until I have atoned. If any pirates enter Port Hanth, I will make them vanish into the forest outside the city."

Lumian nodded and redirected the conversation.

"The Love Incantation I mentioned earlier was the name you brought up. The Demon who proposed a deal with me also identified itself with that name."

The gray-haired, ice-blue-eyed Demon remained silent, gazing at the Sacred Emblem of Life for an extended period.

Rather than detecting anger and animosity, Lumian sensed surprise and bewilderment.

What… It can't pinpoint the Demon's true identity either? Is there no direct connection between the two parties? Lumian pondered inwardly.

After a while, the ice-blue-eyed Demon, self-dubbed Naboredisley, spoke,

"According to you, the Love Incantation has been clandestinely circulating for many years, yet I've never established a connection with anyone outside Hanth Island."

"I'm puzzled by that too. Could it be that someone can intercept the direction of the name? Is it conceivable to assume your identity in the future?" Lumian feigned curiosity as an adventurer.

He believed that, based on Madam Magician's words, Mr. Fool could accomplish such a feat. Amon was capable of it once too. Whether any Demon could do it remained unknown for now.

The ice-blue-eyed Demon fell silent once more. After a few seconds, it spoke with a deep voice,

"Foreigner, you've inquired enough. Let's conclude it here. Otherwise, you may meet your end unknowingly."

Clad in a formal black suit, the Demon self-dubbed Naboredisley slowly rose. It positioned its feet apart, raised its hands adorned with black leather gloves, and whispered,

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!"

Then, it turned around, picked up its cane, and shuffled towards the cathedral's door, bathed in the midday sun.

Lumian scrutinized the ice-blue-eyed Demon, realizing it wasn't tall and appeared rather thin. It emitted a withered and feeble aura,

resembling that of an elderly ordinary human. It hardly resembled a terrifying and mighty Demon.

Observing closely, Lumian sensed a dark, blatant malice expanding and contracting beneath the thin human skin and aged flesh. The Demon struggled to maintain composure, refraining from tearing through its fragile facade.

The frightening inner core sharply contrasted with its frail appearance, yet the overall aura seemed feeble and commonplace.

This is reminiscent of Ludwig… One is a child concealing an unknown monster beneath the skin, while the other is a pitch-black Demon concealed within an old man's body… Lumian exerted great effort to refrain from fixating on scrutinizing the ice-blue-eyed Demon's luck.

The gray-haired elder in black leather gloves, wielding a cane, slowly departed from the cathedral.

Lumian wasn't in a rush to return to the Berries. He remained seated in the first row, contemplating the local Demon legends, which had recently become clearer yet were shrouded in numerous mysteries.

Suddenly, from the corner of his eye, he spotted a brown clergyman's uniform.

This was the attire of a clergyman from the Church of Earth Mother.

Lumian looked up and saw a middle-aged man with well-

defined facial features and thick eyebrows. He noticed a pair of bloodshot, ice-blue eyes filled with pain.

Ice-blue eyes?

Dammit! Lumian's hair stood on end as he cursed inwardly.

The ice-blue-eyed clergyman sat beside Lumian, where the Demon had been.

He smiled warmly and said, "Don't provoke Boselli or attempt his

suggestions. His self-control diminishes with age."

"Boselli? Are you referring to the old gentleman with ice-blue eyes?" Lumian feigned ignorance.

"Yes." The ice-blue-eyed clergyman nodded slightly.

Lumian pondered for a moment and grinned.

"What about you? How's your self-control?"

"I'm much better than him. I lose control only once every few years," the ice-blue-eyed clergyman replied candidly.

Is he admitting that he's also a Demon? I'm not in Earth Mother's cathedral, but a Devil family's dining room… Lumian felt a chill and couldn't help but criticize.

Maintaining a composed smile, he said, "Are you acquainted with him? Are you from the same family?"

The ice-blue-eyed clergyman reflected for a moment and replied, "We're all born in the Port Hanth Cloister."

Children born in a cloister? The description made Lumian uneasy.

In other Churches, having a child in a cloister was a grave matter, deviating from the teachings of the deity, a symptom of succumbing to carnal desires and blaspheming faith.

Lumian pondered for a moment before reaching a realization.

This was the Church of Earth Mother. The more nuns and monks had children in the cloister, the more aligned with the doctrine!

He immediately understood why the ice-blue-eyed clergyman and Boselli were born in the cloister.

It would conceal their origins and identities well, preventing them from implicating ordinary families.

This shattered Lumian's previous deductions about the local Demons.

Demons didn't need to vanish to conceal their "corpses." The Church of Earth Mother would assist in concealing them. For instance, replacing genuine holy water with distilled water during a wake and later providing new identities and legal origins.

My earlier deduction was based on the assumption that the Church of Earth Mother and the local Demons weren't allies. No wonder there are so many errors… This is a factor I need to be mindful of when crafting conspiracies in the future. If I'm mistaken, any subsequent clever arrangements will lose their significance… It seems the Church of Earth Mother is directly offering protection to these ice-blue-eyed Demons, both resisting restrictions and cooperating to shield them? Lumian reflected on his investigations over the past two days.

This introspection couldn't enable him to digest the potion completely, but he felt it was more beneficial than a complete digestion.

Lumian gazed at the clergyman with ice-blue eyes and inquired with a smile, "Could it be that you're also using the name Boselli mentioned just now?"

The ice-blue-eyed clergyman responded with a warm smile.

"Yes, my name is also Naboredisley."

Without waiting for Lumian to probe further, it continued, "I don't know your background, but you can report Hanth Island to the other orthodox Churches. I believe they will advise you against delving into the truth of the Demon legends.

"Just as Boselli mentioned, Foreigner, let's conclude this here. Leave Hanth Island." The source of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian nodded, stood up, and departed from the cathedral.

Under the bright sunlight, he strolled along the street, his mind filled with pairs of icy-blue eyes and the name Naboredisley. He felt a little disoriented.

Chapter 627 - 627 Treatment Plan?

How many Demons inhabit this island?

Are they all part of the same family with ice-blue eyes?

As expected of the Mother of All Things. Even a Demon can be Her child. A whole nest of them!

…

As thoughts swirled in Lumian's mind, accompanied by those piercing ice-blue eyes and the name Naboredisley, he felt that his previous investigations and speculations were completely off course.

The complexity and mystery surrounding the legend of the Demons on Hanth Island surpassed his initial imagination. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

No, there are still gains and benefits…

Speculation involves bold assumptions and careful confirmation. It's normal for initial assumptions to be overturned. The elimination method is a crucial deduction tool…

How can there be unsolved cases that are guessed completely correct from the beginning? The crucial aspect lies in consistently refuting the incorrect path through falsification and integrating new information acquired during the investigation to uncover the right one…

Heh heh, if I were to take the Reader pathway, it should be relatively straightforward for me to act the role of a Detective. Discerning a conspiracy stands out as one of the primary duties of a Detective…

Lumian reassured himself, disentangling from the impact of the two ice-blue-eyed Demons. He regained his clarity and rationality, no longer feeling befuddled and disoriented.

Under the blistering sunlight, he swiftly identified an issue.

In the scene I witnessed through the Mystery Prying Glasses, the blood-colored Demon was pulled by an invisible force, but there was only one invisible force, and only a pair of ice-blue eyes gazed at me…

There's only one ice-blue-eyed Demon closely linked to the blood-colored Demon, and that's the elder Boselli who repented before the Sacred Emblem of Life. The others, including the ice-blue-eyed clergyman, are its descendants. Could they be the offspring it left behind with the nuns when it used the Hanth Island's cloister to 'restore its youth' and obtain a new identity?

However, when the ice-blue-eyed clergyman mentioned Boselli, it didn't sound like it was referring to its father, grandfather, or ancestor. It was as if it was discussing a friend with whom it didn't share an amicable relationship…

Moreover, it also identifies itself as Naboredisley…

Could this be a family name? A significant family name among the Abyss Demons?

Puzzled, Lumian boarded the Berries and returned to his first-class suite.

At that moment, Lugano and Ludwig were relishing a lavish lunch.

Upon spotting Lumian, the Doctor grinned sheepishly and said, "I thought you'd be indulging in the local delights on the island, so I didn't wait for you."

Lumian sat down and grabbed a wheat-flavored bun. As he chewed, he asked thoughtfully,

"What do you know about the abilities of the Planter pathway?"

Lugano hesitated for a moment before truthfully responding, "Sequence 9 Planter significantly boosts my strength. I can predict the weather to a certain extent by observing clouds, wind, and other natural phenomena. I'm adept at identifying seeds and nurturing them. Farming tools suit me more than knives and guns.

"Sequence 8 Doctor's primary abilities revolve around healing. They can discern the patient's specific situation through Spirit Vision. They possess outstanding surgical skills, such as suturing severed limbs and transplanting internal organs. Additionally, we gain Beyonder abilities like Evil Ailment Treatment, Trauma Treatment, Soul Suture, and Life-Giving.

"As far as I know, the next Sequence is called Harvest Priest. It mainly focuses on promoting the reproduction and growth of creatures and bringing about a bumper harvest with Beyonder powers…"

Upon hearing this, Lumian suddenly interrupted Lugano.

"Soul Suture?

"How is this implemented?"

Lugano grinned sheepishly and said, "I haven't really used this ability yet. It's used to treat soul injuries. As you know, some superpowers can attack the soul, making it difficult for it to heal on its own. At this moment, as long as the injured let go of their bodies and minds and don't resist, I can carry out a soul-level surgery to stitch up the corresponding wound."

Lumian's concern wasn't about stitching up a soul; it was another matter that provided him with a fresh perspective on the Demon legends of Hanth Island.

He downed the pre-meal bun and took a sip of the golden liqueur. After a moment of contemplation, he inquired, "Since you can suture souls, from a different standpoint, can you also sever souls?"

Lugano fell silent. After ten to twenty seconds, he responded, "Theoretically, yes, but it requires the corresponding person to

completely open up their body and mind, leaving their soul unprotected. It would be even more effective if their physical body doesn't exist."

The Doctor hesitated for a moment before adding, "This can serve as an attack on the soul, but it could also be a treatment method. If a patient's soul is corrupted by a curse, they can address it by severing the depravity and allowing their soul to gradually heal."

Upon hearing this, Lumian smiled and applauded softly.

"Well said. Well said."

Lugano, being thick-skinned, couldn't help but feel a bit embarrassed by the praise. He blurted out, "That's just my speculation. I haven't tested it yet."

Lumian ignored him and proceeded to emulate what Ludwig had done. He forked a lamb chop onto his plate and began cutting with determination.

Simultaneously, the initial sensations when he faced the onslaught of the ice-blue-eyed Demon resurfaced in Lumian's mind.

He witnessed diverse versions of himself—a version brimming with hatred, another immersed in pain, one engrossed in lust, and another consumed by various desires and emotions…

As Lugano detailed the process of suturing and soul-severing, an idea sparked in Lumian's mind.

What if the High-Sequence abilities of the Planter pathway were employed to excise different aspects of the soul corresponding to various desires?

Could there truly be just one ice-blue-eyed Demon on Hanth Island, but its soul had been partitioned by the Saints and even Angels of the Church of Earth Mother, each becoming an individual? On a mystical level, they remain a single entity. Hence, is there only one invisible force closely tied to the blood-colored Demon?

The question now is—why would the Church of Earth Mother

undertake such an action?

Imposing restrictions or offering protection? Perhaps both?

Lumian swiftly linked this with the state of the blood-colored Demon. It consistently descended into the pitch-black sewage before being hoisted up by an unseen force.

Splitting the soul acted as a shield for the ice-blue Demon, preventing corruption from the power of the pitch-

black sewage?

Wait, could the ice-blue-eyed Demon be the untainted segment of the blood-colored Demon's soul? Is the Church of Earth Mother's approach based on deeming the entire body beyond salvation, but parts are still considered healthy? Is that why a healthy soul needs to be severed into different desires?

The forest sealing off the mysterious valley, pitch-black sewage, and the blood-colored Demon displayed characteristics of rebirth, growth, depravity, death, and rebirth again… The soul fragments of the blood-colored Demon were given new life, enabling them to utilize the cycle of rebirth, growth, aging, death, and rebirth again to resist the corruption spreading from their true bodies?

Simultaneously, relying on the existence of the healthy parts prevented the blood-colored Demon from sinking entirely?

Aging soul fragments are inherently more vulnerable to corruption from the main body, and newborns are the healthiest. This explains why the old Boselli and the ice-blue-

eyed clergyman are in different states…

Such a newborn possesses a Demon's potent soul, but its human body is exceedingly frail. Yes, it aligns with my observations of Boselli. Its feeble and aged body encases a potent soul teeming with malevolence… This… This method of sealing and rescuing aligns with the Church of Earth Mother's unique abilities…

With these revelations, Lumian felt enlightened. Only then did he

realize that he had been continuously cutting the lamb chop's bones, producing a grinding sound.

Lugano pretended not to notice or hear anything, focusing on enjoying his meal. Ludwig paid no attention to such trivial matters, wholly absorbed in the delicacies.

Lumian withdrew his gaze and happily poured himself a glass of Paha red wine. The confusion, disorder, loss, and disappointment he had previously experienced dissipated significantly.

As he drank, he leisurely pondered, This hypothesis aligns most with the current details. Unfortunately, it can't be verified, nor do I dare to. And without verification and results, there's no feedback for the potion's digestion…

Forget it. The experience and lessons I gained this time are much more important than the digestion I can still attempt in the future.

Why does the Church of Earth Mother want to protect the blood-colored Demon? Moreover, since a healthy soul has been separated and given new life, why not completely destroy and purify the corrupted true form to eliminate any hidden dangers?

There's a high chance that this involves the world's deep secrets…

Is that blood-colored Demon the true and largest Naboredisley?

Was the one seeking a deal to slay Hanth Island's Demon descendant it? Can it, in turn, affect a few soul fragments, allowing me and a Mid-Sequence Beyonder like Franca to slay a true Demon?

The more Lumian contemplated, the more curious he became about the truth. However, he eventually restrained himself.

For Beyonders at his level, this matter was concluded. After leaving Hanth Island, he would report his gains and speculations to Madam Magician and consult the Tarot Club's Major Arcana card holders.

Lumian, putting aside his investigative thoughts, felt a sense of relief. He spent the rest of his time leisurely strolling through Port Hanth.

To his surprise, he realized that the Berserk Sea island city, far from the Feynapotter Kingdom, didn't have a genuine casino. There were no criminal industries like human trafficking. It was as clean as if it had been purified by the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

After engaging in Fighting Evil and other card games throughout the afternoon, Lumian, with wins and losses not exceeding 1 gold risot, finally grasped the reason.

Unable to control themselves, the ice-blue-eyed Demons prioritized the malevolent wrongdoers, making them vanish into the forest outside the city.

As time—a century or two—elapsed, Port Hanth could be deemed a city bathed in sunlight.

Certainly, there were innocents among them, like Antonio Elias.

Late at night, in the first-class cabin suite of the Berries.

In his slumber, Lumian vaguely witnessed the land shrouded in sulfurous flames, and the blood-colored Demon sprawled within the pitch-black liquid.

Chapter 628 - 628 Terrifying Dream

628 Terrifying Dream

Lumian vaguely noticed bubbles emerging from the pitch-black liquid enveloping most of the blood-colored Demon's body. The brownish-green hue of the bubbles resembled tree warts.

In an instant, the bubbles burst, reflecting brilliant colors as they merged with the pitch-black liquid.

For some reason, Lumian sensed that something was wrong. He wished to shut his eyes and avoid these details, but trapped in a dream, he had no control.

In the depths of the pitch-black liquid, a figure lurked. It raised its head slightly, gazing at the blood-colored Demon.

Moist brownish-green or light brown tree warts protruded from the figure's body, reminding Lumian of Susanna Mattise in her Fallen Tree Spirit state.

The distinction lay in Susanna Mattise's tree warts, branches, and flower buds growing from her body, melding with her original form. The figure's tree warts, however, seemed to pierce out flamboyantly from the flesh and internal organs, tainted with blood.

In his dream, Lumian instinctively raised his right hand, wiping the corners of his eyes. The back of his hand was stained red.

At some point, blood had flowed from his eyes, turning his vision a blurry red.

The figure's overall outline appeared in the blur.

As if grown on a brownish-green tree, pierced by branches, overrun by tree warts, and covered in flower buds, dripping with a viscous liquid.

A burning sensation engulfed Lumian's chest, prompting him to instinctively close his eyes in the dream.

Yet, he was a step too slow.

Bang!

Lumian's eyes exploded, flooding his mind with searing pain.

He jolted awake, curling up in agony. His hands instinctively reached for his eyes, encountering a flat, sticky, and moist substance. The scent of blood hung heavily in the air.

As an Ascetic accustomed to severe injuries, Lumian took several minutes to overcome the pain that threatened to render him unconscious.

Struggling to sit up, he opened his eyes, only to be met with absolute darkness.

No crimson moonlight, no outlines of furniture in the bedroom–he couldn't see a thing.

Lumian raised his hand once more, gently touching his eye sockets. Both eyeballs had deflated, shattered beyond repair.

Is it because I glimpsed something I shouldn't have? Lumian chuckled in self-deprecation.

It was a vision from a dream, something he never wished to witness.

Upon reflection, he realized that if Mr. Fool's seal hadn't triggered or Termiboros hadn't activated it, his eyes might not have been the only casualties.

Wiping the tip of his nose, Lumian felt moistness and caught the unmistakable scent of rust.

In a surprisingly good mood, he quipped, “Luckily, it seems what’s flowing down is blood, not brain matter.”

He rejoiced in surviving the ordeal.

Despite the tragic state of his head, Lumian’s body remained relatively unharmed, albeit a bit drained.

Gripping the edge of the bed, Lumian pulled himself up. In a state of blindness and impaired smell, he relied on the Hunter’s instinct, navigating through his turf with a mental map. Bypassing furniture, he reached the living room and knocked on the servant’s door.

“Yes, what’s the matter?” Startled, Lugano hastily opened the door, dressed in a cotton shirt and underpants that served as makeshift pajamas, fearing a repeat of the terrifying encounter with Father Montserrat.

Under the crimson moonlight, he saw Lumian’s blood-streaked face and empty blood-red eyes filled with shattered fragments.

“Wh-what happened?” Lugano stammered, bewildered.

Who had beaten his employer to such a state?

Who could inflict such harm upon his employer?

Why not teleport away from this perilous situation?

Lumian calmly pointed at his eyes.

“Treat them.”

“Alright,” Lugano responded subconsciously, then added awkwardly, “With the eyeballs in such a state, there’s no way of treatment. We can only find a suitable transplant.”

Lumian, enduring the pain, calmly stated, “No need. Just stop the bleeding and ease the pain.”

“Alright.” Lugano didn’t dare argue, following his employer’s instructions. He extended his shimmering left palm.

Upon contact and a simple use of a scalpel, Lumian felt a refreshing sensation in his eyes. The pain became more bearable, though his vision remained absent.

“You can go back to sleep,” Lumian waved dismissively, as if his loss of vision was inconsequential. With one hand in his pocket, he strolled past the Dutanese textbook on the carpet, settled into a recliner, and rocked it gently.

Lugano watched in confusion and anxiety for a while before attempting to return to bed, unable to fall asleep.

When the morning sun bathed the sea’s edge, the Doctor abruptly rose from his bed, deciding to grab a cup of coffee for a pick-me-up.

Upon leaving the room, he witnessed his employer in motion. Lumian’s green eyes sparkled, showing no signs of injury.

“Y-you’re alright?” Lugano was bewildered.

Lumian responded with a radiant smile, “That’s right.”

“…” Lugano was momentarily speechless.

How did my employer regenerate his eyeballs?

What kind of monster is this…

Is my role as his doctor merely to stop the bleeding and relieve the pain?

Lumian paid no heed to the servant’s psychological turmoil. He returned to the master bedroom, drew back the curtains, laid out the paper, and picked up a dark-black fountain pen.

I’m still not cautious enough… He sighed suddenly.

After heeding the ice-blue-eyed Demons’ warning and preparing to depart Hanth Island with the Berries, Lumian refrained from promptly writing to Madam Magician. He intended to observe the aftermath and wait until they were safely away from the port.

Unexpectedly, he had experienced such a terrifying and dangerous dream last night!

Initially suspecting that a Demon with ice-blue eyes had lost control and covertly influenced him, Lumian later speculated that he might have been subtly corrupted when he observed the blood-colored Demon and the pitch-black liquid through the Mystery Prying Glasses. The corruption lay dormant until he slept, manifesting fully in his dream.

Focusing his thoughts, he detailed everything witnessed and heard on Hanth Island. He replaced the name Naboredisley with the term Love Incantation.

Concluding the letter, Lumian wrote sincerely, “Perhaps I’ve encountered too many Demons recently. I feel like I’ve accumulated too much corruption and want to undergo treatment.”

Following that, Lumian conducted a ritual, summoning the doll messenger, and handed over the folded letter.

Accepting the letter with its right hand, the doll messenger covered its nose with its left palm and exclaimed, “You stepped on the world’s stinkiest thing!

“It stinks! It stinks!

“So dirty, so dirty!”

Swiftly grasping the letter between two fingers, the doll messenger vanished from the room.

Lumian waited briefly, but with no immediate response from Madam Magician, he decided to seek “treatment” elsewhere.

His destination was the cathedral of the Church of Earth Mother in Port Hanth, where he had visited the day before.

In the early morning, before the commencement of work, numerous believers gathered to listen to the preaching.

The preacher, the ice-blue-eyed clergyman from yesterday,

expounded on a specific doctrine from the Holy Scripture. The concept that good and evil emanated from the same source, making them inseparable, was discussed. The sermon emphasized promoting good and suppressing evil.

Isn't it a little ironic to have this coming from a Demon like you? Lumian criticized and sat in the first row, listening casually.

He soon sensed the cathedral's vibrant vitality. Vegetation flourished, and mushrooms quietly sprouted. The scent of wheat and milk provided a calming atmosphere.

Unconsciously, Lumian realized that his life had gained intensity.

Each of the orthodox Churches has its own merits… he sighed silently.

After five to six minutes, the ice-blue-eyed clergyman concluded his preaching and approached Lumian with a warm smile.

"Young people who are willing to listen to advice always have a bright future.

"Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!"

Lumian observed the ice-blue-eyed clergyman retracting his raised hands. Is he hinting that it's "satisfied" that I stopped inquiring, exploring the forest, and searching for someone with ice-blue eyes since noon yesterday? Lumian considered, then looked at the clergyman before speaking.

"However, I had a terrifying dream last night and nearly died from it."

"What dream?" the ice-blue-eyed clergyman inquired warmly.

"Bishop, how should I address you?" Lumian asked, deferring from providing an immediate answer.

"Newman," the ice-blue-eyed clergyman announced its name in human society.

Lumian briefly recounted the blood-colored Demon in his dream, the pitch-black liquid, the blurry figure, and the branches and tree warts. He didn't delve into the final injuries he had suffered.

Bishop Newman listened quietly, gazing at Lumian for a few seconds.

"Are you willing to listen to my preaching?"

"Sure," Lumian agreed, curious about what the Ice-blue-eyed Demon had to say. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Newman flipped open the Holy Bible in his arms and spoke in a magnetic voice, "There are two Abysses. One is material, and the entrance is somewhere in the real world. The other is spiritual, and the entrance is deep in everyone's hearts.

"Sometimes, these two Abysses are separated, but most of the time, they're one.

"Good intentions and evil intentions come from the same source. It's inevitable for us to harbor evil thoughts like jealousy, hatred, destruction, greed, harm, and arrogance. This is normal, not sinful.

"However, if we act on jealousy, hatred, greed, and arrogance, killing someone—our souls will gradually sink into the Abyss.

"When the time comes, one can only repent to the Mother, just like this.

"Merciful Mother, I have fallen into the Abyss of evil…"

Lumian listened quietly, grasping the essence of Bishop Newman's words.

He acknowledged his mistake rooted in arrogance.

His earlier ventures, marked by a proactive approach and a lack of major problems, had led him to underestimate the concealed perils of high-level matters.

Standing up, Lumian raised his hands.

“I understand. Praise the Earth, praise the Mother of All Things!”

Newman nodded in satisfaction.

Returning to the Berries, Lumian read the reply, neatly folded into a square.

The letter contained spirit world coordinates and a concise directive: “Put an end to the matter on Hanth Island. Find time to seek treatment here.”

Chapter 629 - 629 Corruption Removal

629 Corruption Removal

Madam Magician had not confirmed Lumian's speculation or delved into the deeper truth of Hanth Island's Demon legends. Lumian realized that this likely involved something he shouldn't pry into at the moment, or perhaps it was best not to understand until the accumulated corruption was eliminated.

Does "find time" imply that I can go whenever I want, disregarding the healer's schedule? Has Madam Magician foreseen that there won't be any issues? Lumian clutched the paper with the spirit world's coordinates and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

His figure vanished from the Berries, navigating through the swirling chaos of colors. Occasionally, he felt inexplicable gazes and caught glimpses of indescribable forms.

After an unknown period, Lumian arrived at the location corresponding to the spirit world's coordinates and stepped out.

Before him stood a towering dome, illuminated by bright glass windows, with a mural depicting an epic scene.

In the midst of the hall, Lumian noticed a ball of sunlight.

Realization struck, prompting him to approach.

As he walked, the sunlight seemed to "spread" over, banishing shadows and darkness wherever it touched.

Soon, Lumian found himself enveloped in the sunlight.

Suddenly, it felt as if pure sunlight pierced through his skin, flesh, bones, and internal organs, exposing his soul.

Bits of illusory black gas were expelled from his soul by the sunlight, portraying various of Lumian's expressions–ferocious, pained, pleading, or intimidating.

Within seconds, the black gas dissipated under the purifying sunlight.

Simultaneously, Lumian felt his heart throb, and his left chest burned.

The blazing sunlight appeared to expel and purify everything in its path.

Amidst the agonizing heartache, Lumian sensed a change in the seal on his left chest, as if it was concealing itself, synchronizing with the sunlight.

However, before the attempt could fully succeed, the sunlight took the initiative to stop, receding like a tide into the depths of the hall.

Lumian swiftly returned to his usual state. Aside from the lingering discomfort in his heart, he felt significantly more at ease, as if he had suddenly caught the morning breeze and glimpsed the sunrise after an extended period of oppressive darkness.

His attention was drawn to a tall man in a simple white robe standing in the depths of the hall.

Observing the man, Lumian estimated him to be around 22 or 23 years old, towering at over two meters with an imposing aura. Despite his height, he exuded a calm temperament, and his brownish-yellow hair was neatly styled.

"The residual corruption on you has been cleared," the tall man spoke in ancient Feysac.

Lumian had a suspicion and inquired, "Are you Mr. Sun?"

"Yes," the young and tall man responded politely, devoid of arrogance or impatience.

He's actually so young, but one can't judge his age from his appearance… Lumian expressed his gratitude without delving into further questions.

Indicating towards the hall's exit, Lumian asked, "Can I go out for a walk?"

Though unaware of his location, the murals suggested it was an essential cathedral of the Church of The Fool.

Lumian deduced that the Major Arcana card holder, The Sun, held a prominent position in the Church, or perhaps even the top position.

"Sure." Major Arcana The Sun nodded.

Observing the Church of The Fool's etiquette, Lumian pressed his hand to his chest and bowed before turning to exit the hall.

Once outside, the world teemed with life. Voices and figures surrounded him.

His initial thought: Did I accidentally step into a land of giants?

The shortest individuals on the street were at least 1.89 meters tall, with occasional figures reaching three to four meters. Clad in white shirts, black trench coats, and half top hats, the men carried canes resembling spears, emitting an inexplicable sense of absurdity.

Even the ladies matched the towering height, mostly opting for flexibility in long pants rather than skirts.

Lumian surveyed the area, his gaze traversing doors exceeding four meters in height.

For a moment, he fell silent, feeling like a newborn in this peculiar environment.

However, this realization only briefly dampened his mood for exploration. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Of course, it was only a brief moment.

…

Trier, Trocadéro, at the entrance of a grape manor.

Franca clarified to the valet that her purpose was to visit Madame Clarice, and he stepped aside without guiding her. His stance implied that she knew the way and could proceed independently.

Undeterred, Franca followed the path ingrained in her memory, arriving at the circular pavilion nestled among the grape trees.

Demoness of Black Clarice, adorned in a black court dress, was seated there.

“Good morning, Your Excellency Clarice,” Franca greeted warmly, openly admiring her beautiful face and slightly sorrowful demeanor.

Demoness of Black Clarice nodded slightly and inquired, “Has there been progress in the Mirror People investigation?”

Franca, not in a rush to respond, met Clarice’s dark-gray eyes and remarked, “Is Browns not present?”

“She’s not my lady’s maid. She attends to her own matters,” Demoness of Black Clarice replied succinctly.

“Not at the Red House Café or the hunting ground beside the forest either,” Franca observed the air’s fragrance and chose to engage in conversation with the Demoness of Black.

“She has other matters to attend to,” Clarice evaded delving into Browns’ affairs.

Reluctantly, Franca recounted the details of the Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny’s situation, from the initial sensing of the Mirror World Fragment’s tremors after the play, substituting herself as the person involved.

Clarice remained silent, her eyes lowered in contemplation.

Franca didn’t rush the Demoness of Black. Her gaze flickered between the deep gray of her eyes, the fairness of her delicate skin, the curves

that stirred the soul, and the unnaturally alluring red lips.

She knew this wasn't a good idea, but she couldn't rein in her impulses. Her heart gradually heated up, and her thoughts got a bit muddled. Her mouth dried, forcing her to purse her lips intermittently.

Dammit! Why am I feeling this way right now? While humans as animals can be susceptible to instincts, I've always maintained composure during serious discussions and encounters with high-ranking figures. At most, I've held admiration… Could it be that the Demoness of Black is intentionally radiating her charm to draw me in? Or is there another explanation? Yes, the lingering corruption from the Demon incident must be affecting me! Though it's subtle and doesn't manifest in my daily life, it's making it difficult for me to control my desires in the presence of a high-ranking Demoness known for her feminine allure. As a result, I find myself slipping into an aroused state… Franca gritted her teeth, refusing to succumb to the temptations of desire.

Clarice looked up at her.

"Has it been too long since you've experienced pleasure?"

"Not since my last lover passed away," Franca replied truthfully, aware that the Demoness of Black referred to a specific kind of pleasure. She explained, "As I mentioned earlier, to get close to Moran Avigny's illegitimate daughter, I used a mystical item. Unfortunately, it had a side effect, leading to encounters with Demons and other evil entities for a transaction. I was somewhat affected."

Clarice's voice turned icy.

"Endurance is not a sustainable solution. Indulge yourself. Otherwise, the Demon pathway will become your nemesis."

The Demoness of Black's aura instantly shifted to a holy and dignified state, becoming inviolable.

Franca also sensed that she couldn't entertain lascivious thoughts

about such a captivating beauty. Her desires gradually subsided, and her mind cleared, breaking free from her aroused state.

Clarice redirected the conversation.

“You aim to deal with Moran Avigny?”

“He should be a crucial Mirror Person. If we can capture him or channel his spirit, we should uncover most of the Mirror People hidden in Trier. Madame, I seek your assistance,” Franca stated, laying out her thoughts.

She avoided mentioning that Moran Avigny shared Clarice’s dark-gray eyes and instead presented a color photo.

Clarice nodded slightly and said, “You can now strategize your operation. I’ll assist during crucial moments, but for most scenarios, you must rely on yourself and the factions under your control.”

“No problem.” Franca didn’t conceal her excitement.

As she exited the vine-surrounded circular pavilion, Demoness of Black Clarice’s dark-gray eyes turned cold as she rose slowly.

…

In a brightly lit bar, Lumian clinked a beer glass, larger than his head, against the nearly three-meter-tall “giant” opposite him and gulped down the golden liquor.

Wiping the corners of his mouth, he chuckled.

“So, this is the New City of Silver in the Bible.”

From the sermons he had heard, Lumian knew that the New City of Silver served as the headquarters of the Church of The Fool, situated in the Sonia Sea. It had been established by the surviving humans rescued by Gehrman Sparrow from the cursed continent of the Forsaken Land of the Gods.

Unexpectedly, the surviving humans were towering figures, almost like giants!

“That’s right. All the warriors here are ready to defend Mr. Fool’s Church at all times!” the nearly three-meter-tall giant expressed with satisfaction. “You’re not bad. You worship the Angel of Redemption and believe in Mr. Fool. Just these two points alone makes us brothers!”

He extended his right palm and slapped Lumian, nearly toppling him. It felt like a child encountering a brown bear’s paw.

Lumian forced a smile and inquired, “Can you share more about the Angel of Redemption’s deeds in the Forsaken Land of the Gods?”

Chapter 630 - 630 Day Tour

630 Day Tour

The nearly three-meter-tall giant expressed regret, “The six-member council mandates that we can’t discuss matters not mentioned in the Holy Bible. As a believer of Mr. Fool, you must be familiar with the sermons and official statements. I can’t share anything beyond that, just as I can’t claim to have personally seen the Angel of Redemption and received his assistance.”

Attempting to tap Lumian on the shoulder, the “giant” found Lumian deftly dodging the gesture.

“How should I address you?” Lumian, feigning reverence, inquired, not fully convinced.

The “giant” responded, “Livalie.

“A toast to the newborn of the City of Silver!”

Lumian raised his massive beer glass, clinking it against the other party’s. Then, he downed the remaining golden liquid.

Rubbing his bulging stomach, he gestured towards the washroom, indicating his need to relieve himself.

The beer in the New City of Silver wasn’t extraordinary, but the cups were simply too large. After two glasses, Lumian’s physique and alcohol tolerance reached their limit.

He wasn’t drunk; he was just stuffed!

Entering the washroom, Lumian stood before one of the urinals, unbuckling his belt and narrowing his eyes.

Amidst the splashing sounds, a “giant” more than three meters tall

entered and chose the urinal beside him.

Lumian subconsciously turned his head before slowly retracting his gaze.

Dazed, he stared at the wall in front of him until the pressure in his abdomen completely subsided. Only then did he leave the washroom, returning to his usual seat at the bar counter.

Livalie had already ordered a new glass of beer for Lumian. It was dark-black but not murky. Swirling in the mug, it revealed a hint of brown.

“Try it. It’s a specialty of the New City of Silver, Black-Faced Beer!” the “giant,” firmly believing himself to be human, introduced enthusiastically.

“Black-Faced Beer?” Lumian, holding the beer glass larger than his head, asked in puzzlement.

Livalie suddenly felt a pang of sadness. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

“The Forsaken Land of the Gods lacked the sun and fertile soil. Only Black-Faced Grass grew. It was our staple, sustaining generations of City of Silver residents. Though always insufficient, it was better than nothing.

“Back then, brewing alcohol from Black-Faced Grass was impossible. It was too, too extravagant.

“Heh heh, now with food, meat, and milk in abundance, I’ve grown taller again. I’m 30 centimeters taller than before.”

“Can Black-Faced Grass still be planted in the New City of Silver? Grown underground?” Although Lumian wasn’t a Planter, having grown up in the countryside, he knew that in extreme environments, those plants might not survive under normal circumstances.

Livalie smiled.

“It can be planted! It can grow in any environment. Of course, we’ve

had someone modify the Black-Faced Grass seeds to make them more suitable for the current conditions. Its texture is actually quite different from before. Even more flavorful. Give it a try. You won't find this beer elsewhere. We don't grow much ourselves. It's mainly to remember the past."

Lumian raised the beer glass to his lips with interest, taking a large gulp.

The first thing he tasted was the normal, faint fragrance of wheat. Then, he experienced a refreshing grass-like stimulation in the sweet alcohol. Finally, a subtle milky taste filled his mouth.

"Not bad. It's a special and wonderful experience." Lumian was generous with his praise.

Curious, he inquired, "Do you have any liquor brewed from Black-Faced Grass?"

Livalie's expression darkened as he shook his head.

"We in the New City of Silver consider alcoholism debased, indulgent, and a waste of food. That's why we reject liquor."

At this point, he paused.

"Besides, Black-Faced Grass doesn't seem suitable for brewing. Even if it's made into beer, drinking too much will cause hallucinations. I can only handle three glasses at a time."

Minor toxicity? In the Forsaken Land of the Gods, people from the New City of Silver relied on eating this plant to survive generation after generation. It wasn't easy… Lumian recalled his sister's occasional jokes and smirked.

"If you drink too much, will you see a group of little people dancing?"

Livalie pondered for a moment and replied, "No, hallucinations are usually different. Some see their wives slapping them, some hear the cries of their deceased relatives, and some find a baby lying by the roadside wailing…"

Lumian couldn't bear to hear about matters involving babies crying, so he lost interest and focused on the taste of the Black-Faced Beer.

After finishing the glass, he made another trip to the washroom before leaving the bar. He planned to take advantage of the afternoon sun to stroll around New Silver City and teleport back to the Berries docked at Port Hanth in the evening.

In the sparsely populated yet unusually towering buildings, half-giants roamed. Every now and then, one or two "giants" standing over three meters tall could be spotted. Those below 1.8 meters were a rarity, except for those with child-like faces.

Lumian's stature barely met the criteria, and his eyes quickly scanned the surroundings.

He observed turquoise vines snaking up the outer walls of certain houses. On these vines, numerous soft, large, white, and plump mushrooms thrived.

Mushrooms? Since when did vines yield mushrooms? Lumian furrowed his brow, questioning his botanical knowledge.

It occurred to him that this might be a unique plant brought from the Forsaken Land of the Gods by the New City of Silver, bringing a sense of relief.

He approached a roadside stall and glanced up.

"You're selling milk. Why don't I see a bucket of milk?"

The vendor, standing at 2.56 meters with slightly grayish-blue skin, smiled genuinely and replied, "The house behind me is mine. Want some milk?"

"I'll take a glass." Lumian, having already inquired, had no qualms about purchasing a glass of milk; money was not an issue.

Though verl d'or and gold risot weren't official currency in the New City of Silver, gold held value universally.

The vendor cheerfully grabbed a cup, turned around, and headed to

his two-story house. He reached out and plucked a soft, white mushroom.

He aimed the mushroom at the cup and squeezed it.

Milk-white liquid gushed out, rapidly filling the cup.

Lumian's jaw dropped, confusion once again clouding his eyes.

This is what you guys call milk?

"It's ready." The half-giant vendor handed the milk to Lumian.

Lumian instinctively took it and asked in bewilderment, "Are those mushrooms?"

"Yes, milk mushrooms," the half-giant vendor replied earnestly.

You call that mushrooms? Lumian paid in a daze and left the stall with a cup in hand.

He couldn't recall how much he paid or even why he started the conversation about buying milk.

After walking more than ten meters, he brought the cup to his lips and took a sip.

It tasted like milk!

Lumian finished the glass with a frown, finding nothing peculiar.

Yet, the liquid came from mushrooms!

Just consider it a unique plant… Just consider it a unique plant… Lumian muttered, deciding not to try it again.

He feared that drinking too much might turn him into a milk producer himself!

He continued to wander aimlessly along streets twice as wide as those in Port Hanth.

Suddenly, another "half-giant" with slightly grayish-blue skin

approached, holding a thick book and speaking with unusual enthusiasm, “My friend, would you be interested in hearing me introduce our beacon and savior…”

Lumian smiled, pressed his hand to his chest, and bowed.

“Praise The Fool!”

“Ah, a brother.” The half-giant was both disappointed and delighted.

The two of them conversed in ancient Feysac, but Lumian had overheard New City of Silver residents occasionally speaking Jotun, a language that could stir supernatural powers.

“Are there usually foreigners here?” Lumian asked casually.

The half-giant smiled and replied, “We often have foreigners visiting, exploring, and sightseeing. In the early years, some chose to settle here, but most eventually moved away. Living with us proved challenging for them. Heh heh, we’re too tall and not well-versed in the pleasures of life.”

With that, the half-giant took something from his pocket and handed it to Lumian.

“I’m pleased to have you as a guest in the New City of Silver. Try our locally made candy.”

It was a candy wrapped in thin blue-white paper.

Lumian didn’t hesitate. He took it, tore off the wrapping, and popped the white candy into his mouth.

The rich milky aroma and smooth sweetness quickly unfolded on his tongue, creating a delightful experience.

Milk flavor… Lumian’s curiosity sparked as he inquired with a peculiar expression, “Is this milk candy?”

“Yes,” the proselytizing half-giant replied with a smile.

“What kind of milk did you use?” Lumian hadn’t anticipated ever

asking such a question.

The half-giant replied naturally, “Milk from the milk mushrooms.”

“…” Lumian held the milk candy in his mouth, torn between spitting it out or swallowing it.

He sensed the genuine warmth and enthusiasm when the other party shared the milk candy.

As time passed, Lumian witnessed mushrooms with a cooked meat fragrance, mushrooms smelling like fish, and various peculiar mushrooms.

His gaze turned lost as he observed the half-giants and giants joyfully sharing their food.

Unconsciously, he arrived at a corner of the New City of Silver.

A towering building stood there.

It was split into two sections. On the left, a spire tower; on the right, a domed tower. The outer wall, standing 30 to 40 meters tall, was a grayish-white hue.

The Twin Towers? According to Livalie, the spire houses the library and other public facilities, while the domed tower serves as the council office for the ruling six-member council of the New City of Silver… There must be Sealed Artifacts and formidable individuals in such a place… Lumian stood nearby, examining the imposing structure before him.

His eyes moved across the domed tower and noticed black plants resembling hair growing from the cracks near the ground. They hung there, swaying occasionally in the wind.

Lumian diverted his attention and headed towards the spire, eager to explore the books passed down in the New City of Silver, a human settlement existing in the Forsaken Land of the Gods for thousands of years.

Chapter 631 - 631 Devilogy

631 Devilogy

631 Devilogy

Guided by the signs on the wall, he ascended to the third floor, revealing rows of imposing bookshelves. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The custodian of the library, an elderly man draped in a linen robe, oversaw the space.

Even seated, he matched Lumian's height, and his slightly gray skin bore the marks of age.

Engrossed in a goatskin-bound book, the library administrator paid no heed to Lumian's entrance, his gaze firmly fixed on the text.

Lumian, not rushing to seek permission for his exploration, entered the library and followed the guidelines posted on each row of bookshelves leading to the section housing mythical books.

He ran his finger over the weathered leather-bound book and another with freshly copied pages, choosing a tome that chronicled creation myths.

Before the bookshelf, Lumian casually flipped through its pages, only to stuff the book back.

He couldn't comprehend it!

The words were in Jotun!

This ancient language, associated with the Beyonder race of giants, possessed the ability to manipulate the forces of nature. Ranked alongside Dragonese, Elvish, and ancient Hermes, Jotun held

significant importance in mysticism.

Although Lumian had mastered ancient Hermes and Hermes, Jotun remained a language he recognized but hadn't fully mastered. He could barely decipher the title of the ancient book but couldn't comprehend its contents.

A sweep of his gaze revealed a corresponding copy of the ancient book, this time written in ancient Feysac—a human language devoid of supernatural influence.

Joy surged within Lumian as he retrieved the soft-covered book and settled into the reading area near the window.

Throughout the entire process, no one intervened or issued a warning.

<nulli>This library is entirely open to everyone. Even those not residing in the New City of Silver can peruse its contents, but borrowing seems to be off the table? Or perhaps, the knowledge on this level isn't deemed confidential, Lumian mused, maintaining a steady pace.

He strolled past the section dedicated to Beyonder creatures, and his keen eyes snagged a book titled "Devilology."

<nulli>Devilology… Recalling recent encounters, Lumian snagged the corresponding copy.

In the reading area, he chose a spot shielded from direct sunlight yet bathed in ample illumination. Seated, he delved into the pages of "Devilology."

As he read, Lumian's eyes widened, and his mouth hung slightly ajar.

Each piece of information was invaluable!

For those potentially facing Beyonders of the Devil pathway in combat, the value of this book rivaled that of a potent Grade 2 Sealed Artifact or its corresponding mystical item.

<nulli>Moreover, how did the New City of Silver come by such

knowledge? It's improbable they could compile creature illustrations without dispatching hundreds of Devils… Could it be that the half-

giants and giants here are Devil Hunters? Perhaps, in ancient times, when Devils were more active, they shared information with other factions? Lumian grew more alarmed as he read on.

Midway through, he massaged his throbbing temples, sensing a rapid depletion of his spirituality.

Lumian temporarily closed "Devilology," intending to explore the creation myths of the New City of Silver and take a well-deserved break.

From the very outset, the creation myth read:

"The omnipotent and omniscient god created everything before slipping into a profound slumber.

"Among the mythical races He brought into being, Giant King Aurmir, Dragon of Imagination Ankewelt, Elf King Soniathrym, Vampire Ancestor Lilith, Devil King Farbauti, Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace, Mutant King Kvastir, and King of Demonic Wolves Flegrea emerged as potent and crazy beings. They partitioned the authority left by the Lord, transforming into ancient deities governing the sky, land, sea, reality, the spirit world, and the astral realm…"

Abruptly, a dull-skinned, slightly gray finger tapped a specific spot on the page.

An aged, raspy voice echoed.

"Do not utter this name in any Beyonder language."

Lumian looked up, surprised to find the library administrator, previously immersed in his books, standing beside him seemingly out of nowhere.

As a Hunter, Lumian remained oblivious!

Partly due to the lingering dizziness from reading "Devilology," it showcased the library administrator's proficiency in concealing both

breath and movement, given his towering stature of more than three meters.

Lumian redirected his attention to the name indicated by the library administrator.

“Devil Monarch Farbauti.”

Without awaiting Lumian’s inquiry, the library administrator, bearing giant-like traits, shifted his finger a few centimeters and remarked, “It’s advisable to avoid pronouncing this name in any Beyonder language as well.”

Lumian followed the motion of the finger, silently noting the corresponding name in his mind.

“Vampire Ancestor Lilith.”

“Why am I not allowed to read about it?” Lumian expressed his ignorance without reservation.

The library administrator spoke in a deep voice, “The Devil Monarch is still alive. This formidable ancient deity remains among the living.

“And the Vampire Ancestor is suspected to be alive as well. In recent times, an individual in the city experienced disturbances after uttering the name ‘Lilith’ in Jotun. Although their life wasn’t at risk, they endured prolonged suffering.”

＜nulli＞Ancient deities? Entities that once governed the world before the Ancient Sun God’s era? Lumian recalled fragments of his limited knowledge and inquired thoughtfully, “Did the Ancient Sun God rescue humanity from the dominion of these ancient deities?”

Lumian read the description:

“The omnipotent and omniscient god stirred from slumber, rising from the earth to vanquish the ancient deities and reclaim His authorities.

“Note: In the present era, the omnipotent and omniscient god is also known as the Ancient Sun God…”

<nulli>Indeed… Among the eight ancient deities, Devil Monarch Farbauti is still alive, Vampire Ancestor Lilith is suspected to be alive, and the rest have perished? Giant King Aurmir… Why does that name sound familiar? Ah, the provincial capital renowned for its red wine and champagne. What ties does it share with the Giant King? Lumian cautiously inquired, “Can these two names be pronounced in ordinary human language?”

“The Vampire Ancestor’s is acceptable, but it’s advisable to refrain from attempting the Devil Monarch’s. You must exercise caution even in writing it,” responded the colossal library administrator. “We are uncertain if the Devil Monarch possesses any special abilities.”

<nulli>Exercise caution even in writing… Are all Demons like this? Yes, the deity of the Devil pathway remains alive, an ancient being since the Second Epoch… Lumian murmured, his heart stirred. He retrieved a note with the Love Incantation from his Traveler’s Bag.

“Have you encountered this name before? I came across a Demon who identified itself as this. Much like the others, it cannot be spoken or written, only thought.”

The library administrator accepted the note with a hand capable of engulfing Lumian’s head. His gaze swept over the name “Naboredisley.”

He lapsed into deep contemplation. After a minute or two, he silently retrieved a copy from a concealed location within the bookshelf.

The book’s title read: “A Summary of Rumors and Hearsay Before the Cataclysm (1)”

<nulli>What a simple name… Lumian observed as the library administrator opened the newly-acquired book, pointing at a particular line of text.

“As anticipated, it’s right here.”

Lumian fixed his gaze and read silently.

“After the Devil Monarch Farbauti led the Devils back to the Abyss, occasional rumors persisted of Demons enticing humans.

“The Demons operated under the following names:

“Beelbubli, Almos, Samael, Lilatan, and Naboredisley.

“A high-ranking Demon Hunter speculated that these names conceal the aliases of Devil Monarch Farbauti…”

＜nulli＞The Devil Monarch Farbauti’s alias? Lumian felt a jolt as a thin layer of sweat coated his back.

＜nulli＞Could Naboredisley be the Devil Monarch?

＜nulli＞The sealed blood-colored Demon was the Devil Monarch?

＜nulli＞No, it doesn’t seem likely. If it were a genuine ancient deity, catching just a glimpse of His form wouldn’t have resulted in my eyes exploding in a dream. I would have lost control immediately… Yes, perhaps Farbauti’s pseudonym is among these names, but it doesn’t necessarily mean Naboredisley is Him… Lumian wiped his forehead with his right hand, forcing a smile as he addressed the library administrator, “As a foreigner, am I truly allowed to read these books? The knowledge they contain is exceedingly precious.”

The library administrator responded calmly, “The Chief has already informed us that you are Mr. Fool’s Blessed.”

“Very well.” Lumian found it amusing.

Apparently, not every foreigner could access this library.

The library administrator offered no further warnings. He took the book chronicling pre-Cataclysm rumors and departed from Lumian’s vicinity.

Lumian continued to alternate between reading “Devilology” and “Creation Tales,” taking breaks as needed.

As evening approached, he barely concluded both books and departed from the Twin Towers.

Releasing his compressed spirituality, Lumian teleported back to the Berries in Port Hanth.

Surveying the still-bright sky, Lumian confirmed that the investigation into Hanth Island's Demon legends had reached its conclusion.

The matter delved into complexities beyond his reach.

He no longer hesitated about his next steps and plans.

Since he hadn't fully digested the Conspirer potion, he resolved to head to West Balam and seek out Hisoka. There, he would hunt to digest the potion and complete the advancement ritual!

Chapter 632 - 632 Conspiracy

632 Conspiracy

Late at night, in Trier, Angoul?ame de Fran?§ois sat in front of a small analyzer and a radio transceiver, attentively listening to the clicks and observing as a “translated” telegram was produced by a mechanical typewriter.

The signature above simply read Hidden Blade.

Having exchanged a few messages, Angoul?ame remained composed. He picked up the telegram and swiftly skimmed through its contents.

“Um, when you’re protecting high-ranking government officials and members of parliament daily, do you tail them even during personal moments like affairs or trips to the washroom?”

A wry smile formed on Angoul?ame’s face. He contemplated responding to Hidden Blade with, “What occupies your thoughts all day?” However, in the blink of an eye, his eyes narrowed as he tapped away on the mechanical typewriter.

“Tell me, what crime do you intend to commit? Which high-ranking government official or member of parliament is your target for assassination?”

Dammit! Franca, seated in the master bedroom of her apartment, squirmed uncomfortably.

Why did it feel like she was undergoing police interrogation?

She dryly chuckled to herself and replied on the mechanical typewriter.

“I’m just curious. Following them would be awkward, and not doing

so might expose a security vulnerability easily exploitable by others."

She refused to acknowledge any plans involving the Minister of Industry in the current government.

After a while, 007 sent a new telegram.

"I rarely undertake such missions. Initially, I dealt with Beyonder incidents and battled cultists. Later, I got promoted and no longer had to participate in daily protection operations.

"Based on my knowledge and limited experience, we have to follow the protectee wherever they go. If they choose to have an affair, at least one of us will discreetly stand by the coat rack, keeping a watchful eye. If time allows, we'll investigate and confirm the identity and background of the target in advance. If the protectee enters the washroom, one of us waits by their side, guarding against potential threats from sewers, ventilation pipes, and shadows.

"However, there's an exception. If the protectee strongly requests and writes an exemption, we can respect their privacy. After all, we're not their parents obligated to protect their every move. If they perish, someone else will take their place. It's not easy to find a three-legged toad, but those aspiring to be high-ranking government officials and members of parliament can fill Avenue du Boulevard. Moreover, such officials and MPs don't often possess exceptional foresight and wisdom. What matters is the position they hold, not the individual.

"Very few high-ranking officials and MPs choose to write exemptions for privacy, but they tend to do so when discussing confidential matters with their team."

007, did you work overtime so much that you harbor resentment? Franca chuckled inwardly.

She felt that 007 wasn't as laid back as she would have liked. If it were the two members from Loen, they would likely say, "It's fine if most high-ranking officials who don't deal with real matters or MPs who only give speeches are dead. Even curly-haired baboons in their positions would perform better. At least the baboons wouldn't smack their heads to formulate policies or work for personal gain. They

wouldn't boast about their wisdom and desire to show off. They'd simply enjoy bananas and play happily. That's the least harmful thing for the entire country."

Franca read 007's telegram again and turned to Jenna, who was sitting by the bed.

"The protective measures are tight, and there are no loopholes to exploit."

"Yes, that's the case with the Purifiers. The Machinery Hivemind and Bureau 8 should be similar."

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony had been gathering information for a while and had devised several plans, but they still found it unsafe and uncertain. Hence, they consulted 007, seeking clarification on the security situation around Moran Avigny.

Being a Cabinet Minister of a country, Moran Avigny was not an easy target for assassination.

Moreover, Franca and the others' primary goal wasn't assassination. Even if they considered it, they had to factor in the time required for spirit channeling, making it even more troublesome.

Listening to Franca's summary of 007's response, Jenna pondered for a moment and said, "If it were any other Demoness, they might choose to sacrifice their established legitimate identity by seducing Moran Avigny and pretending to be shy to make the minister get an exemption from the protectors. However, I don't think that's feasible. Moran Avigny is likely a Mirror Person, and Mirror People have a close relationship with the Demoness pathway. They might be especially wary of a Demoness approaching them."

Franca had initially hesitated to involve Jenna in the operation against Moran Avigny because the Demoness of Black Clarice would secretly monitor and provide assistance at critical moments. It would be risky if she discovered Jenna using the Demoness pathway's abilities.

However, Jenna insisted on participating. Her reasoning was:

After Franca admitted to Clarice that she hadn't experienced pleasure for a long time, the Demoness of Black would likely suspect her relationship with Franca. After all, Franca had approached Browns Sauron under the guise of attending a female orgy. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Therefore, Jenna wanted to showcase a Vampire's abilities and combat style in front of the Demoness of Black. The mystical item she currently possessed would allow her to disguise herself effectively and maintain sufficient combat strength. The prerequisite was that she had to conceal the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty well and hide it under her clothes. As for Mirror Substitution, she could explain it away with Franca since Anthony had one too.

Franca had muttered, "Demonesses can also have pure love," but as she finished speaking, she awkwardly changed the topic and tacitly allowed Jenna to participate.

"Hmm." Franca, sitting cross-legged, nodded slightly and said, "Moran Avigny's strength is unknown. He might be very formidable. If we attempt to seduce him, we risk becoming his prey if he's vigilant, possibly even losing our lives. Sigh, I'd better write to Lumian and see what he thinks."

Franca chuckled self-deprecatingly.

"Ever since he left Trier, my brain seems to have gone on vacation."

She was mocking her past laziness, acknowledging that she often delegated the primary responsibility of thinking to Lumian while playing a supporting role.

Jenna chuckled and said, "You're really good at self-deprecating. That's what I admire most about you. You're open-minded and cheerful."

Franca chuckled.

"Teasing can liven up the atmosphere and foster closer relationships, but sometimes, if you can't gauge others' acceptance, teasing can easily turn into mockery. It's safer to make a self-deprecating

remark."

As the two Demonesses conversed, a telegram clattered in. It was still from 007.

Franca's eyes lit up as she read the telegram.

The telegram read:

"Hidden Blade, if you disclose your target and provide sufficient reason, I might be able to offer assistance and discreetly cooperate with your actions."

Wow, what a bro! Franca praised inwardly as her fingers swiftly moved over the mechanical typewriter.

"Here's the deal. I currently possess ample evidence to believe that the Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny, is a Mirror Person who has infiltrated Trier and assumed the original owner's identity for decades. Haha, I didn't reveal this earlier because I needed to acquire crucial information from Moran Avigny. If he's captured by you, I can't guarantee that you'll gain access to pertinent information, so I plan to take action myself."

"Phew… There's hope!" Franca turned around and joyfully raised her right index and middle fingers to Jenna.

Before long, 007 responded:

"Gather the results of your previous investigations and Moran Avigny's information promptly and place it at the designated contact point. I'll verify it first and find an opportune moment. Await my further instructions."

Franca's face lit up with joy. She pursed her lips and sent a brief telegram:

"It's highly likely that a demigod of the Demoness Sect will be involved in this operation. Exercise caution."

Jenna read it quietly and asked thoughtfully, "Are we still seeking Lumian's opinion?"

“Yes,” Franca replied without hesitation. “As the saying goes, ‘three smelly cobblers are as good as Roselle.’ With more people brainstorming, we may uncover better solutions.”

“What kind of proverb is that? Why haven’t I heard it before…” Jenna suspected that Franca was making it up.

…

The crimson moon remained unseen, with only the stars casting a faint glow.

Seated in the Berries’ first-class suite, Lumian perused Dutanese textbooks when his messenger, Penitent Baynfel, abruptly materialized before him.

Baynfel, draped in a black clergyman’s robe, resembling a charred corpse, handed over the letter.

Lumian caught it, inhaling the lingering fragrance on the paper.

Franca’s letter… Jenna even held and read it… Lumian made a casual judgment as he observed his messenger curiously.

He had a persistent feeling that Penitent Baynfel harbored many untold stories, but every attempt to engage in conversation was met with stoic silence.

After Baynfel traversed into the spirit world, Lumian unfolded the letter, reclined in his chair, and leisurely read.

With 007’s help, this shouldn’t be difficult. Lumian smiled suddenly and whispered to himself, If it doesn’t work out, they can force the bait. Focus on the Mirror Person’s wariness of Demonesses and the potential strength they possess to lure him. When Moran Avigny believes the target is a bait from the Demoness Sect, with a demigod hiding behind her, planning to take the poison pill and retreat to deliver a bomb, he’ll find himself facing one or two Angels, three to five demigods… However, this way, Franca’s Demoness Sect mission will be finished…

Lumian’s thoughts raced as he crafted and discarded one plan after

another.

Tomorrow, the Berries would depart from the Berserk Sea, sailing into the Southern Continent's waters.

When the time came, the ship wouldn't need to navigate complex twists and turns to avoid storms, maelstroms, and mystical phenomena. It could head directly for its destination port in West Balam.

Suddenly, Lumian sensed something and stood up.

Approaching the window, he peered out. In the darkness not far away, an ancient three-masted sailboat sailed silently.

There were no lights on the ship, and no one strolled on the deck.

Chapter 633 - 633 West Balam

633 West Balam

Lumian had heard from Lugano that ships deviating from the safe sea route might mysteriously disappear. In a few years, they would occasionally appear at night–with no lights or people.

This seemed to be the case now.

In the past, Lumian might have teleported over out of curiosity, taking advantage of the three-masted sailboat's reentry into a safe sea route to assess its internal condition. However, after encountering the Demon legends on Hanth Island, he felt that less curiosity was better. As long as the uninhabited ship traveling in the darkness didn't exhibit signs of attack or an imminent danger, he could treat it as a unique spectacle of the Berserk Sea and simply observe.

The brown ship gradually distanced itself, leaving only the billowing sails in its wake.

Abruptly, Lumian, utilizing his exceptional vision, spotted a face silently staring out of an open hole in the cabin's uppermost window.

The face, shriveled and pale-white, clung tightly to the bones, devoid of flesh and blood. Flaxen-colored hair cascaded like withered weeds. The eyeballs were absent, leaving only a void of deep darkness.

It resembled the head of a desiccated corpse, yet its lips were surprisingly vibrant, as if recently adorned with lipstick.

Lumian instinctively sensed the face belonged to a woman. At least, she had been a woman when alive.

He refrained from raising his right hand for a warm greeting. Instead, he quietly observed as the ancient three-masted sailboat sailed

beyond the safe sea route and into the dark night. The desiccated face, with blood-red lips and pitch-black eyes, blended into the darkness.

Only then did Lumian wave his hand and offer a faint smile.

“Goodbye! You won’t be missed!”

He then helped Franca and the others to devise a plan to confront Moran Avigny. Ultimately, he opted to await further information from 007 before finalizing their strategy.

Conspirer wasn’t a visionary, known for conjuring conspiracies out of thin air; they required substantial information as a foundation.

When Lumian awoke at dawn, the Berries emerged from the dense, death-carrying fog of the Berserk Sea.

Before him stretched a clear blue sea, bathed in the intense sunlight of the high sky.

The next day, the Berries bypassed Behrens Harbor at the northernmost tip of West Balam. Instead, they continued southwest, reaching Port Pylos by 4 p.m.

Situated in Matani, the port was under the rule of Admiral Querarill.

Originally a colony of the Intis Republic, Port Pylos saw Intis colonists withdraw after the war a few years ago. Subsequently, various factions from the Feynapotter Kingdom, maintaining a favorable relationship with Admiral Querarill, took control.

Lumian’s target, Hisoka, was yet to surface in Port Pylos, but Lumian knew that the two pranks he had engaged in were in Matani. One occurred in Tizamo Town, at the outskirts of Port Pylos, closest to the forest, and the other in Devise, the southernmost gold mine city in Matani.

As Lumian unbuttoned the second button on his linen shirt, he remarked to Lugano in a self-deprecating tone,

“I feel like I’m shunned by winter and have been living in a scorching

environment."

Having arrived in Port Santa during late autumn, which was relatively hot and sunny, Lumian moved on to Port Colla as Port Santa began to cool. His journey continued through what his sister called the tropics, devoid of winter and maintaining a temperature of at least around 20 degrees Celsius.

While Trier was already in midwinter, the Southern Continent was experiencing the height of summer.

This made Lumian's specially prepared black tweed coat and Gehrman-styled trench coat impractical.

"Because we've been traveling south all autumn," Lugano declared authoritatively on matters of weather and seasons.

Lumian donned a golden straw hat and strolled down the gangway to the port, hand in hand with Ludwig.

He boldly embodied the traits of the adventurer Louis Berry.

Initially, Lumian had contemplated altering his strategy, adopting a new identity to discreetly investigate the two pranks in Matani and uncover Hisoka without drawing attention. However, after Franca vividly detailed Hisoka's usual characteristics to Anthony Reid, the Hypnotist's profiling revealed an exceptionally aggressive trait, ranking among the top.

As a result, Lumian reconsidered and returned to his role of casting out "bait."

Yet, he couldn't shake the feeling that success was a slim possibility. The sea sacrificial ritual and Loki's survival had likely provided Hisoka with a comprehensive understanding of the factions backing him. April Fool's, with its former display of resources and energy, seemed ill-equipped to challenge the might of the Tarot Club. And Lumian wasn't solely relying on the Tarot Club for support.

If he were in Hisoka's shoes, Lumian would opt for patience. He'd wait a month or two, allowing the vengeful enemy to grow restless and make mistakes. When the formidable forces behind him could no

longer guarantee protection, he'd launch a surprise attack.

For now, let's not devise a plan. I'll consider it when I find clues, Lumian muttered to himself. Leaving the port alongside a throng of passengers, he reached the public carriage stop.

Numerous rental carriages and pitch-black or vermilion coffins were parked nearby.

Coffins? Despite having read many travelog books on West Balam's customs, Lumian found it absurd to witness coffins lining the roadside.

Before the invasion of the Northern Continent, before East and West Balam's division, the Balam Empire revered Death—

the Emperor of the Underworld from the War of the Four Emperors. Thus, the locals valued and loved coffins, considering them objects that brought peace, tranquility, and the blessing of Death. When traveling, they would lie inside, carried by people or pulled by horses and single-horned goats.

Of course, this form of transportation was reserved for those of a certain wealth level. Ordinary people couldn't even afford lying in a coffin.

After a momentary daze, Lumian addressed Lugano and Ludwig with interest, "Do you want to take the coffin? I plan to give it a try."
Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"I-I'll pass," Lugano replied, finding the idea of lying in a coffin unsettling.

Ludwig shifted his attention to the nearby street vendors.

The aroma of corn and potatoes intertwined, enticing every passerby and prompting increased saliva production.

"How lame," Lumian teased with a smile. Approaching the four locals with disheveled black hair and dark brown skin, he raised his right hand and pointed at the pitch-black coffin beneath the shade of a tree.

“How much?” Lugano inquired in fluent Dutanese before Lumian could.

“How much?” Lugano inquired in fluent Dutanese before Lumian could.

His linguistic talent was evident. Less than a month had passed since their departure from Port Santa to their arrival at Port Pylos, and he could already communicate with people in Dutanese. Of course, his proficiency was limited to basic words and short sentences.

A half-naked local in linen pants replied in Dutanese,

“Nearby, 40 coppet; faraway, 1 verl d’or.”

Recognizing the foreigner’s inquiry, he refrained from quoting the price in the local currency, Delexi, the Intisian term for copper coins.

Quite affordable. This coffin, carried by four people, should be considerably cheaper than the one carried by eight… Lumian mused, appreciating the direct use of verl d’or and coppet. It showcased the recent Intisian influence in the former colony, lost only a few years ago. Lumian’s grasp of Dutanese surpassed Lugano’s, thanks to the mid-level Language Comprehension charm he had used on the ship.

Learning Dutanese in this manner proved more efficient.

Regarding charm consumption, Lumian harbored no concerns. In his view, items served a purpose, and there was no concept of waste as long as they proved useful. He couldn’t align with those miserly individuals who hoarded their wealth throughout life, only for it to benefit others after their demise. If he urgently needed Language Comprehension charms, he could acquire them from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. If their gathering didn’t align with his schedule, teleporting to various cities in Lenburg would allow him to purchase them from the Church of Knowledge.

“Sure,” Lumian nodded at Lugano and said, “Let’s go to Hotel Orella.”

After Lugano paid 1 verl d’or, the local who had quoted the price lifted the thin coffin lid, revealing the interior covered with thick dark-red cloth and a stiff neck pillow.

Excitedly, Lumian removed his golden straw hat and lay down, immediately feeling a cooling sensation enveloping his body.

In the hot season, the coffin effectively dispelled the humidity.

Is it the coffin's wood or the sun-screening black paint, or perhaps the shade of the tree? It feels like stepping into a morgue in the summer —surprisingly comfortable… Lumian observed the thin coffin lid closing, witnessing the shadows rapidly expanding until they dominated his world.

Outside, the voices became muffled in his ears.

The coffin was lifted, swaying slightly as it moved forward.

Within Lumian's view, everything was dark, and his surroundings exuded a sinister, cold ambiance. For some reason, it felt like he was walking toward death, touching it.

Setting aside the psychological discomfort, it isn't bad. The only downside is the tendency to easily fall asleep… Lumian evaluated the mode of transportation in a good mood. It's unsuitable for mixed-gender rides, which could be more awkward. Heh heh, I wonder if the "romantic" Intisians have ever engaged in an affair under such circumstances?

Nearly half an hour later, the coffin halted in front of Hotel Orella.

Lumian stepped out, finding himself in front of a small, man-

made valley.

Rows of grayish-black stone rooms encircled the inner wall of the "deep valley" until reaching the bottom.

This was Port Pylos's most renowned Hotel Orella.

Originally belonging to a Balam royal family descendant, Orella Eggers, it had been constructed with the intent of approaching death. Later, it fell into the hands of Intis colonists.

Upon the Feynapotterians' arrival, they perceived it as a symbol of

entering the earth and returning to the land, prompting its transformation into a sizable hotel.

Chapter 634 - 634 Fresh Off The Boat

634 Fresh Off The Boat

In the well-lit lobby of Hotel Orella, aboveground, Lugano effortlessly balanced Ludwig, munching on a burrito, in one hand and clutched his suitcase in the other. His eyes darted around uneasily. From his adventurous beginnings to trailing Lumian south, he'd never lodged in a place proudly declaring itself a "hotel" instead of a "motel."

He'd only encountered Trier's renowned Grand Champs-élysée in newspapers and magazines, learning that its construction cost a whopping 21 million verl d'or. With 800 rooms and 65 functional halls, even the most basic accommodations demanded 12 verl d'or per day in the off-season. A stark contrast to Lugano's usual frugal 3.5 verl d'or weekly motel stays.

The bustling metropolis of Trier had left an indelible mark on Lugano, urging him to rise above and recommend himself to Lumian.

Accumulating wealth, obtaining potion ingredients, and advancing to Doctor became his priorities.

He aspired to join the ranks of high society!

Only when he became a Doctor did he grasp the vastness of the Beyonder world. He had barely scratched its surface.

The male receptionist, sporting curly black hair, dark brown skin, and a keen countenance, addressed Lugano in fluent Intisian.

"Would you prefer a suite or a standard room? Are you inclined towards a coffin bed or a conventional one?"

Lugano glanced at his employer.

Lumian toyed with a caramel-colored East Balam cigarette wrapped in roasted tobacco leaves, bringing it to his nose for a gentle sniff. He savored the blend of tobacco leaves, internal spices, and assorted herbs.

The aroma was mildly invigorating and redolent, tempting one to inhale deeply.

“A suite. Standard, and closer to ground level.” Lumian had sampled rental coffins for transportation and had no plans to continue sleeping in them.

It wasn’t a traumatic experience, but it did alter his perception of his surroundings. In case of an attack, it could impede his initial response.

Lugano sighed in relief upon hearing Lumian’s decision and conveyed the employer’s request to the male receptionist.

“8 verl d’or a day. Three days’ payment in advance,” the native male receptionist stated the price.

After Lugano completed the payment, the receptionist, with a nod to his colleagues, said obsequiously, “I’ll escort you down.”

Three mechanical elevators stood at the back of the hall. Lumian and his group entered the middle door, pulling the brass handle to B3.

Chains tightened, gears clamped, and various metal parts started to operate with resonating sounds. In the distance, it resembled the roar of a boiler, and white steam billowed out.

As the mechanical elevator descended, the native receptionist glanced at Ludwig and smiled at Lumian.

“Settling down in Port Pylos, are you?

“If you need info on local grammar schools and rentals in different communities, feel free to approach me.”

In his view, anyone bringing a seven- or eight-year-old child to the Southern Continent was likely moving, not merely traveling. After all, the child was too young for perilous long-distance journeys.

Moving meant finding a house—renting or buying—and choosing a good school. These were all opportunities to make money!

At the mention of "school," Ludwig, munching on a roasted corn cob, suddenly stopped chewing, as if the food had lost its fragrance.

Lumian wasn't oblivious to the native receptionist's thoughts but didn't mind. Instead, he admired the man's shrewdness.

He grinned and remarked, "I'll take a look first. We haven't confirmed if we would stay in Port Pylos."

At that moment, the mechanical elevator halted at B3.

Entering the room on the right, with a stone fence on one side and the cold valley aisle on the other, Lumian addressed the native receptionist, "Do you know Tizamo Town?"

The native receptionist, aiding Lugano with the suitcase, slightly bent and led the way.

"I do. Many gentlemen head to Tizamo on weekends for forest hunting.

"There are secret temples and mausoleums left behind by former nobles in the forest. If you want to have fun, don't venture too deep. The primitive tribes there are barbaric and savage."

Lumian nodded, not probing further. Upon reaching Suite 7 and entering the living room, he casually tossed a verl d'or silver coin to the native receptionist.

"What's your name?"

The receptionist, pleasantly surprised, responded, "You can call me Ron."

Lumian chuckled.

“I might have to trouble you often in the future. For example, what’s the name of the nearest and better bars? Where is it?”

Ron touched the silver coin and smiled.

“It’s my honor to assist you.

“Head to the Man-Eating Flower Bar. Intisian is used for communication there. It’s on the street behind our hotel.”

Lumian instructed Lugano and left the room with Ron, waiting for one of the mechanical elevators.

Inside, a man with a deathly pale face and vacant eyes stood.

The man’s face was deathly pale, and his eyes were vacant. He wore a wrinkled shirt and pants.

Lumian glanced at him without a word.

Amidst the tightening of the chain and the relatively stable elevation, the mechanical lift returned to the ground.

Once the vacant-eyed man exited the lift and distanced himself from them, Ron leaned closer to Lumian and whispered, “I wanted to remind you to pretend not to see that customer.”

“Who is he?” Lumian asked casually.

Ron glanced around and lowered his voice.

“He resides in a suite at B18, a servant of Mr. Iveljsta.

“That gentleman’s servants don’t seem normal.”

Of course, it’s not normal. They are walking corpses… Lumian criticized.

He had already observed the servant and realized his fate was dark and that of a deceased.

Lumian wasn’t surprised to encounter such a situation in a country that once worshipped Death.

Having already seen the Blood Emperor's afterimage, encountering a zombie was hardly shocking.

…

In the sweltering evening, Lumian bypassed the artificial deep valley where Hotel Orella stood and entered a street with an unpronounceable name. He spotted a bar adorned with an exaggerated Man-Eating Flower.

Donning a golden straw hat, he lit the East Balam cigarette purchased from the hotel lobby and placed it between his lips.

Cough, cough, cough!

Lumian quickly coughed, emitting white smoke from his nose.

His intention was to showcase his experience as an experienced adventurer by smoking East Balam cigarettes, but he hadn't anticipated their potency. As someone who rarely smoked, he found it unbearable.

In Cordu, various cheap alcohols abounded, but cigarettes were scarce. Lumian had only witnessed Pons Bénet, Louis Lund, and a few others indulging in smoking.

After extinguishing the East Balam cigarette and tossing it into the trash can, Lumian entered the bar and skillfully approached the counter. He pulled up a barstool and settled in.

Sensing the lingering smoke in his mouth, he opted for something milder. He tapped the counter and spoke in Intisian, "A glass of kilju, the regular kind."

"Ten licks," replied the bartender, a local man in a white shirt and black vest, his Intisian tinged with a distinct accent.

Lumian settled the bill and awaited the bartender's pour. He discreetly surveyed the area, noticing nobody paying him any heed except for a dozen wanted posters adorning the bar's wall.

Thoughtfully accepting the amber-colored kilju, he adjusted his

golden straw hat and addressed the bartender with a smile, “Do you know who I am?”

The bartender glanced at him and smiled back.

“Every now and then, a self-proclaimed renowned adventurer poses that question, but I’m sorry, I don’t know you.”

From the looks of it, the adventurer Louis Berry’s exploits in hunting the Demon Warlock are primarily known in the Fog Sea. My rising fame was tied to activities within the Church of Earth Mother’s sphere of influence. Louis Berry’s reputation waned upon entering the Berserk Sea, and few in West Balam are familiar with him… If Hisoka isn’t stationed at the docks every day, he likely doesn’t know about my arrival in Port Pylos… Lumian refrained from erupting in rage at the bartender’s words. He sipped his kilju, contemplating the situation.

Noticing Lumian’s silence, the bartender casually smiled and remarked, “You just arrived in the Southern Continent, right?”

“Yes, I left the Berserk Sea this morning.” Lumian seamlessly assumed the role of a regular at Ol’ Tavern, recounting his story with a smile. “Encountered a ghost ship in the Berserk Sea, danced with dried corpses under the moon, and repelled a Demon’s attack. Praise the Mother of All Things. You might never understand how magical and dangerous the Berserk Sea is…”

The bartender wiped the glass’s inner wall and interrupted Lumian.

“I know. After all, that’s where Death disappeared.”

“Where Death disappeared?” Lumian asked in surprise.

While he had speculated about the dangers of the Berserk Sea and abnormal weather being linked to a deity’s demise, he hadn’t expected such an easy answer.

The bartender regarded Lumian with an expression that implied, “You’re actually a rookie.”

“Have you never heard of the legend of treasures at sea?

“At the top is Death’s Key. It’s said that at the end of the Fourth Epoch, Death, who had lost the Pale-White War, stirred violent waves to obstruct the returning enemy to Balam, creating insurmountable obstacles that severed the Northern and Southern Continents. However, He ultimately didn’t return to His throne and vanished. Only those with the special key can find Him, discover the treasures He left behind, and gain His boon.”

The bartender’s tone was complicated.

Lumian fell silent.

He had embarked on the sea seeking revenge and held little interest in treasure legends. He hadn’t anticipated missing such crucial information.

Just then, the heavy wooden door of the bar creaked open.

The once-noisy bar hushed in an instant. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Sensing the shift in atmosphere, Lumian turned his body, fixing his gaze upon the door.

Chapter 635 - 635 Man-Eating Flower

635 Man-Eating Flower

At the entrance of the Man-Eating Flower bar, a figure strode in.

A woman, neither towering nor petite, clad in a conservative, deep-black dress, caught everyone's attention. Her eyebrows were meticulously drawn, her skin thickly powdered, and her cheeks adorned with noticeable blush. Her lips shone gorgeously, and the area around her eyes sparkled with gem-like hues.

Despite the woman's excessive makeup and unconventional style, her captivating brown eyes, high nose bridge, luscious lips, and curvaceous figure emitted a potent charm.

Male patrons in the bar shifted their gazes to the door, momentarily silent. Only when the woman acknowledged a few customers with an aloof nod did the atmosphere spring to life. Some attempted conversation, while others raised their voices at their companions, trying to make an impression on her.

Without lingering, the woman navigated through the crowd and settled on the opposite side of the bar counter.

Unique. If Franca were here, she'd surely strike up a conversation… Lumian felt a twinge of regret for his companion and averted his gaze. He smiled at the bartender and commented,

"That lady seems quite popular."

The bartender wiped away the expression reserved for new adventurers and replied sternly,

“She’s my boss.” Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Boss… Lumian suddenly recalled the bar’s name and asked thoughtfully,

“Man-Eating Flower?”

“It’s her,” the bartender lowered his voice and approached the beautifully made-up woman of indeterminate age. He poured her a glass of some unknown brand of Black Rand.

After the bartender returned, Lumian asked curiously,

“Why does she have the nickname ‘Man-Eating Flower?’

“She seems very popular.”

The bartender instinctively turned his head, observing his boss as she focused on her drink and surveyed the patrons nearby. Leaning in, he whispered,

“In Port Pylos, women of her caliber often relish the pursuit and adulation of men but keep them at arm’s length. Our boss, however, is different. If she takes a liking to you, she’ll extend an invitation for a memorable night. Sometimes, we can hear her passion echoing through the halls upstairs…”

The bartender paused, a mix of nostalgia and desire evident on his face.

Pleasure? Lumian subtly frowned and inquired with a smile, “Have you ever been the object of her affections?”

The bartender fell silent.

For a moment, Lumian wondered if the other would smash his head with the cup in hand.

Changing the subject, Lumian asked, “Aren’t there brash men who try to force themselves on your boss?”

The bartender sighed and replied, “Remember the name of our bar.”

Man-Eating Flower… Is that what it means? Lumian grasped the meaning.

The bartender elaborated, “Those who tried to force themselves on our boss ended up badly. Some were severely injured or thrown down the stairs. Others simply vanished.

“Even those who caught her eye would be pale the next day, legs unsteady. They couldn’t walk properly.

“That’s why she’s called ‘Man-Eating Flower.’ She embraces it. Eventually, she named the bar after it.”

This is a departure from the Demonesses of Pleasure’s style… But each demoness has her own unique approach. Franca, a Demoness of Pleasure, stands out from the rest… Lumian’s curiosity sated, he didn’t delve further into the bar owner. Instead, he retrieved an ordinary deck of poker cards from his Traveler’s Bag and asked, “Have you come across anyone using poker cards as a weapon recently?”

According to Anthony Reid’s analysis of Hisoka, a key member of April Fool’s, Hisoka had a strong inclination towards self-expression. After successfully creating the poker card with the ability to change its face, possessing Frost and Cut characteristics, it was clear he wouldn’t limit its use to mere April Fool’s pranks. When engaged in combat or carrying out acts of violence, he wouldn’t hesitate to employ the mystical item to end his target’s life.

This information presented a promising lead for investigation.

Regarding the two pranks orchestrated by Hisoka, they revolved around Matani and were linked to relatively confidential or significant local affairs. Individuals who weren’t locals or lacked prolonged residence wouldn’t spontaneously choose this area unless they also possessed ample information to support their actions.

Lumian reasonably suspected that Hisoka’s original sphere of activity centered on Matani and its neighboring regions.

This rationale prompted his journey to Matani, despite believing that

Hisoka had likely heeded Loki's warning and evaded capture, concealing himself.

Understanding Hisoka's past was crucial to deciphering his present and ending his future!

The native bartender scoffed at Lumian's inquiry.

"Do you think I'd have that information?

"Consult the patrol team. Whether they choose to answer is another matter."

Patrol team… Lumian didn't mind and nodded slightly.

Established by Admiral Querarill, the ruler of Matani, the among Beyonders.

In this state, following the withdrawal of most Intis colonial forces, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, the Church of God of Steam and Machinery, and the new Cathedral of the Church of Earth Mother lacked official authority to enforce the law.

While these churches maintained Beyonder teams in their cathedrals across different cities, their jurisdiction was limited to self-defense and safeguarding believers within the cathedral. They couldn't address matters akin to their usual spheres of influence or eliminate potential hidden dangers.

Admiral Querarill entrusted the corresponding authority to the newly formed patrol team.

Some of the patrol team's Beyonders were veterans from Admiral Querarill's army, while others were remnants of the former Balam Empire or former adventurers and bounty hunters.

What a simple name… Lumian pondered for a moment as he glanced at the few wanted posters on the wall.

"Admiral Querarill doesn't want adventurers turning Matani into a hunting paradise? He doesn't want them brawling on the streets under the guise of pursuing targets on wanted posters?"

The bartender shot Lumian a surprised look.

“You’re quite sharp for an adventurer.

“In Matani, the wanted status is earned through crimes committed here. No one cares about your actions elsewhere.”

As expected of one of the adventure paradises… Lumian lifted the kilju and finished it.

Just as he was about to switch to a glass of West Balam-

specific liquor to savor its distinct flavors, he felt a gaze upon him.

It was the owner of the Man-Eating Flower bar, the woman in the black dress with exquisite makeup.

Lumian nodded calmly and shifted his focus back to the bartender.

While this Man-Eating Flower was undoubtedly attractive, she couldn’t match a Demoness in terms of feminine allure. Additionally, Lumian wasn’t fond of heavy makeup.

At that moment, the woman rose from her seat and sauntered over to Lumian. She curled her lips and remarked, “I can sense that you’re like me, a living volcano, but it hasn’t erupted yet. You’re still enduring and waiting in pain.

“Tonight, are you willing to feel my passion?”

Lumian raised his right hand and stroked his face.

You’re taken with me just like that?

Come to think of it, I’ve been a hit with the ladies since my youth. Being a Hunter, I’ve often found myself surrounded by all sorts of beauties… Could this be the subtle influence of the True Men pathway? It doesn’t add up. According to The Adventurer series and recent sea rumors, Mr. Fool’s Oracle, Danitz, is also from the Hunter pathway, yet his romantic endeavors were fruitless, and he doesn’t boast any notable female companions…

Lumian muttered internally and stood up. He offered a smile and inquired, “How should I address you?”

“Bellotia.” The woman’s smile relaxed, making Lumian feel that she might appear even more stunning without her heavy makeup.

Lumian took off his golden straw hat, pressed it to his chest, and bowed slightly.

“Madam Bellotia, I appreciate your invitation, but there’s someone else I hold dear.”

As he spoke, he disregarded Bellotia’s slightly stiffened expression and made his way past the Man-Eating Flower, heading for the bar’s entrance with composed demeanor.

Bellotia didn’t stop him. Like numerous patrons in the bar, she observed as he swung open the sturdy wooden door and stepped out.

As the wooden door thudded shut behind him, Lumian sneered and muttered to himself, I can resist even the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure. Why take the risk with a woman of unknown origins?

Using someone I like as an excuse is already preserving your dignity. If you still seek revenge, I won’t hold back…

Having left the bar early, Lumian wandered through the nearby streets, exploring secluded alleys in hopes of stumbling upon incidents or criminals to gather information.

After turning a few corners, he suddenly heard a clanging sound emanating from a dark and deserted alley.

Silently, Lumian approached and delved into the alley. There, he witnessed an intense battle between two men.

One, with evident native characteristics, appeared in his twenties. His face was pallid, and he wielded a sharp but hefty dagger in his right hand. His left palm was slightly open, and a dark shadow hovered in it, creating a chilling atmosphere.

The other, in his early thirties, had ordinary facial features and an

expressionless demeanor. Short, black hair framed his face, and his dark-green eyes were encircled by white.

Clad in a plain white shirt and black pants, he wielded longer, sharper weapons resembling scalpels in each hand.

At this moment, the two engaged in a fierce battle, their weapons clashing rapidly, resonating with metallic clangs.

Observing the skirmish, Lumian recognized that these weren't ordinary individuals. They both bore Beyonder characteristics.

Halting his advance, Lumian nonchalantly stood with his hands in his pockets, his right foot propped up against the wall. He unabashedly observed the close-quarters combat between these Beyonders.

Chapter 636 - 636 Catharsis

636 Catharsis

In just over ten seconds, the two Beyonders locked in combat sensed an observer and instinctively distanced themselves, fixing their gaze on Lumian.

Casually leaning against the alley wall, Lumian chuckled and remarked, “Go on, keep fighting. Don’t mind me.”

With a heavy dagger in hand, the young native, his left palm slightly open, eyed the black-haired, green-eyed, handsome, golden straw hat-donning Lumian with vigilance.

Who is this?

What is he up to?

The short-haired man, armed with two odd-shaped scalpels, was equally vigilant.

He, too, eyed Lumian and the vigilant young native. Suddenly, he crouched, arms hanging loose, and black, sulfurous smoke enveloped him completely.

Lumian’s smile didn’t waver; his right eyebrow arched in mild interest.

Unfazed, the young native extended his slightly open left hand, releasing a shadow that expanded into a distorted “black cloud.”

This “black cloud” merged with the sulfurous smoke, swiftly clearing the alley. The crimson moon once again illuminated the scene.

However, the short-haired man, with dark-green eyes and an emotionless expression, had vanished.

Ran off? The young native was shocked, angry, and vexed.

As he sought clues, he instinctively turned his head to where Lumian had been.

No one stood before the wall.

When did he leave? Why didn't I sense it at all? the young native, holding the heavy dagger, pondered in bewilderment, uncertain whether to pursue his target.

…

Relying on his spell-like abilities, Bram skillfully escaped the alley, stowing away the two odd-shaped scalpels. He navigated the dark, unlit paths, frequently changing directions in an attempt to lose his imaginary pursuer.

In the process, he pried open a shoemaker's shop on the street, donned a pair of ill-fitting leather shoes, and discreetly handled any signs of his intrusion.

After circling three times, Bram returned to the alley, entering a simple apartment nearby, constructed from black stones and brown wood.

Bram opened his room and entered, closing the wooden door behind him.

He finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Then, he withdrew a transparent glass bottle from the grayish-white cloth bag hanging from his waist. The bottle held a nearly colorless liquid, faintly tinged with red. Suspended within, a blood-colored, well-defined mouth hung open, frozen in intense pain and fear.

As if admiring a masterpiece, Bram stared entranced at the glass bottle in his grasp.

After a moment, he averted his gaze, moved to the side of the room, and opened a cupboard.

Within the cupboard, seven or eight similar glass bottles awaited, each containing a unique lip. The hues varied, some slightly upturned, others in a pouting stance.

Bram positioned his newly acquired spoils in an empty spot, then used sticky blood-colored paint to draw an ominous symbol.

With the task complete, his fingers gently explored different lips through the glass bottles, as if assessing each piece in an art exhibition.

“How twisted.”

A mocking sigh suddenly resonated in Bram’s ears.

Startled, he whirled around, focusing on the source of the voice. A golden straw hat-donning young man with black hair and green eyes sat in an armchair by the table, the top two buttons of his white shirt now casually undone.

Him?

Bram’s pupils dilated as he recognized the man who had witnessed his clash with the Numinous Episcopate member.

The person who had witnessed his battle with the Numinous Episcopate member!

When did he tail me?

How did he pinpoint my location without detection…

Lumian smiled and cordially responded to the other’s unspoken queries,

“Hasn’t anyone informed you that the preservative in those glass bottles is quite noticeable?

“Moreover, you reek of blood after killing someone.”

Bram’s heart tightened.

“Are you a Hunter?”

As he spoke, he moved slowly and quietly.

“You seem to know a lot,” Lumian replied calmly. “So, why collect those lips, preserve them, and carry them with you? That doesn’t sound like the work of a seasoned Serial Killer. I get it. You have the urge and the necessity to gather trophies. Is it for your own satisfaction or part of a ritual? Heh heh, desire can be destructive. Even the most Coldblooded are prone to errors, despite their calculated demeanor, often wagering that they won’t be caught if they overlook the details.”

Observing the twisted murderer summon black, sulfurous smoke, Lumian deduced that he was a Sequence 7 Serial Killer following the Criminal pathway.

In the Devilology book of the New City of Silver, it was noted that upon reaching Sequence 8 Coldblooded, also known as the Unwinged Angel, individuals underwent inhuman changes, acquiring two or three Devil spell-like abilities, varying from person to person. Some wielded poisonous flames, while others inflicted damaging curses. The creation of black smoke was one such ability.

Combining the target’s actions in battle, Lumian concluded he was merely a Sequence 7 Serial Killer.

Bram’s brow twitched at Lumian’s mockery and sarcasm.

Maintaining his cool, he advanced and murmured, “Did you come here just to converse? What is it you seek from me?”

As soon as he finished speaking, dense black smoke billowed from the Serial Killer, carrying a pungent sulfuric aroma.

Within the shroud of the dark smoke, Bram’s eyes deepened as he unleashed another Devil spell.

His body morphed, adopting the color of a chameleon, seamlessly blending with the spreading smoke.

Swift and silent, he approached the door, opened it with precision,

and lunged outside.

Bram's vision distorted, and amidst the lingering black smoke, he glimpsed the green-eyed man in the armchair, grinning at him.

Suddenly, he found himself back in the room.

Contrary to his previous orientation, he now faced away from the door.

Bottle of Fiction!

Upon infiltrating the room, Lumian's initial action wasn't a pose but the creation of a Bottle of Fiction, one that prevented Beyonders from exiting!

Unfazed by the sudden wave of disappointment and frustration, Bram darted to the side within the obscurity of the black smoke obscuring his vision. Rolling to the bedside, he retrieved a six-barrel machine gun.

Raising the machine gun, he aimed it at Lumian and unleashed a barrage of bullets.

Amidst the rapid gunfire, Lumian disappeared from the armchair, the furniture torn apart by the storm of metal projectiles.

Gone? As this realization hit Bram, he instinctively glanced upward and witnessed the man in the golden straw hat descending from the ceiling. Surrounding him were numerous crimson, almost white, flaming ravens.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! Fire Ravens assailed Bram before Lumian's arrival.

Caught within the encirclement, Bram reluctantly abandoned the six-barrel machine gun. Attempting to evade the impending explosion, he sought refuge under the bed.

However, the crimson, nearly white Fire Ravens dissipated on their own. Lumian landed before him, adorned with a grayish-

white lightning brooch. He smiled and said, “Didn’t you just ask me what I wanted? What I want is simple. I haven’t vented for too long. I’m in dire need of a humanoid sandbag.”

As he finished speaking, Lumian swung his fist at the retreating Bram.

Instinctively, Bram raised his right arm to block.

With a resounding bang, a silver-white bolt of lightning surged from Lumian’s fist into Bram’s arm, coursing through his entire body. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Bram shuddered. Despite his inhuman transformation, a momentary paralysis gripped him.

Lumian’s other fist followed suit, crashing into Bram’s side profile.

Bang!

The Serial Killer’s head tilted, and a spray of teeth accompanied by blood scattered.

Once more, silver-white lightning enveloped Bram’s head.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Lumian unleashed a barrage of punches, turning the encounter into a tempest, making Bram feel like he was caught in a thunderstorm. The electric shocks made any form of retaliation or defense nearly impossible.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lumian’s expression remained icy as he relentlessly struck Bram’s face, chest, arms, and head. The Criminal Pathway Beyonder’s chest caved, ribs cracked, face swelled, and skull fractured. Charred marks covered his upper body after the brutal assault.

After the relentless beating, Lumian clenched his fists and raised his arm.

He crashed into Bram’s left shoulder.

Bang!

Bram's left shoulder crumpled entirely.

Collapsed on the ground, twisted and gasping, Bram's breath weakened.

"That's it? It's fine. I can get my servant to treat you before continuing," Lumian remarked, wearing a devilish smile that Bram recognized all too well.

Without awaiting Bram's fearful response, Lumian removed the Fury of the Sea brooch, stowing it back into his Traveler's Bag. In a gentle tone, he inquired, "Tell me, which family are you from?"

Bram, undergoing the initial stages of dehumanization with a robust physique, realized Lumian had purposely avoided vital points in his attacks, leaving him far from unconsciousness. His mind still functioned, and thoughts raced before settling on Lumian's smile.

After a momentary silence, Bram weakly replied, "I'm a member of the Andariel family."

Chapter 637 - 637 Unexpected Information

637 Unexpected Information

Andariel, one of the three Devil families… Lumian recognized the last name from Madam Magician and asked with a warm smile, “What brings you to Port Pylos?”

If it weren’t for the lineage running in Devil families for generations, with descendants naturally inclined towards the Criminal pathway, and the other option of the Prisoner pathway seemingly trouble-free, Bram Andariel couldn’t shake the suspicion that the man before him carried the last name Nois or Beria. Why did he exude more of a Devil vibe than Bram himself?

Struggling, he lifted his right hand, wiping his swollen and cracked face, cleaning up the blood and flinging it to the ground.

With the task completed, Bram responded, “Firstly, it’s to gather information about Matani for the family. Secondly, it’s to find an opportunity to act as a Serial Killer. Do you know what acting is?”

He cooperated with Lumian by speaking in Intisian.

Lumian nonchalantly stood before Bram, who was curled up on the ground, and remarked with a smile,

“Your acting is subpar. You don’t seem to be a criminal with a high IQ.

“Why would the Andariel family gather information about Matani?”

Bram had no intention of concealing the truth for the family.

“We’re cooperating with the Rose School of Thought. They want information on this place.”

The Rose School of Thought setting its sights on Matani? That’s right. Matani, seemingly detached from any Northern Continent nation, holds ties to the Feynapotter Kingdom, but their influence is lacking. With Admiral Querarill’s sway, even if the Rose School of Thought and the Andariel family dispatch only a handful of agents, resisting may prove challenging… Lumian perceived the stark contrast between the Southern and Northern Continents.

Whether in Trier, the Feynapotter Kingdom, or the maritime colonies, Lumian encountered criminal acts and mystical disasters driven by the pursuit of strength and faith. Encroachments on factions or cities were rare, but West Balam presented a different scenario on his first day.

If maritime disorder resulted from chaos, the Southern Continent teemed with factional conflicts, overt or covert, causing widespread chaos.

Lumian, observing Bram’s wound clotting, questioned further, “What intel does the Rose School of Thought seek?”

Bram, reflecting, responded, “They want all kinds of information—cathedral locations, military camp details, patrol team compositions, port throughput, daily prices, and the locals’ lives.”

Are they preparing to rule this place in the future? Lumian inquired, puzzled.

“To whom will you hand over the information you gathered? Where?”

“It will be written and placed in the study of an empty house at 17 Aleg Street. My uncle, Devajo Andariel, will be responsible for retrieving it. We don’t usually contact each other, and I don’t know where he lives or under what identity,” Bram explained in detail. “After becoming a Devil, his special ability is to completely skin humans and perform complicated processes to create Beyonder items with usage or time limitations. No matter who it is, as long as he

wears the human skin as clothes, he can transform into the other person and complete the corresponding disguise."

As Bram spoke, he wiped the blood off his body and flung it to the ground, as if obsessed with cleanliness.

This was mentioned in Devilology… Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

He pondered for a moment and asked, "Are there any traces of other Devils in Matani?"

Perhaps Bram and his uncle weren't the only ones sent by the Rose School of Thought to gather information.

Bram shook his head.

"Not recently.

"However, during my investigation, I stumbled upon a string of serial murders around Port Pylos about four years back.

"The victims lay dissected, the scene steeped in blood and marked by the aftermath of a fierce battle. Moreover, the seven casualties were no ordinary individuals; they were Beyonders, ranging from Sequence 7 to Sequence 8."

Listening intently, Lumian felt a surge of intrigue.

As per Franca's explanation, the name "Hisoka" stemmed from a literary work hailing from the original world of transmigrators like themselves. One of the character's defining traits was an insatiable appetite for combat and the thrill of extinguishing formidable adversaries, reveling in the ecstasy and carnage of claiming lives. If the target was sufficiently potent, he'd patiently await their growth, perhaps even offer a nudge.

Hisoka, a key member in April Fool's, adopted this moniker as his code name, driven by an unmistakable urge for self-expression, mirroring this characteristic.

Hisoka is a Beyonder of the Devil pathway. Moreover, his targets are Beyonders while he was at the Serial Killer stage. Unlike other Serial

Killers, he doesn't prey on the weak or ordinary people. If he had been a Serial Killer four years ago, he would likely be at least a Sequence 6 by now. There's a strong chance he's a Sequence 5… Yes, he's concealed his identity very effectively. No one in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society knows his true pathway… Lumian listened attentively to Bram's account without interruption. He eagerly pondered the possibility that Hisoka was a Devil or even a Desire Apostle in his mind.

The curled-up Bram glanced up at him, propping his bloody palm on the ground, and straightening his body slightly.

"This seems like the work of a Serial Killer. Moreover, he's exceedingly confident in his strength and intellect, daring to target Beyonders. However, I noticed some discrepancies."

"What discrepancies?" Lumian concealed his joy behind a gentle smile.

Bram shifted his palm to support himself.

"Serial Killers' victims often exhibit degraded behaviors. For instance, those I've selected typically share a common trait: they enjoy inflicting verbal harm and curses upon others for extended periods. Thus, I'd remove their lips and preserve them. However, the seven slain Beyonders had varying identities, backgrounds, and behaviors, lacking the typical degeneracy."

"Perhaps he's merely a Beyonder with a fascination for serial killing, not necessarily acting out the Devil pathway,"

Lumian mused, masking his interest with a teasing tone. He added playfully, "Were you subjected to constant verbal violence as a child?"

And the Coldblooded and Serial Killer potions amplified corresponding resentments and psychological traumas?

Bram fell silent, his body gradually stretching out, no longer curled up.

Only then did Lumian steer the conversation back to the serial

murder case from four years ago.

“Do you have detailed information about the seven Beyonders who were killed?

“Did you identify any suspects during the initial investigation?”

Bram shook his head slowly.

“I only had read the summary provided by the patrol team, not the full investigation files.

“Most of the patrol team members were seasoned Beyonders who had encountered Mutants and Devils before. Their judgment should be reliable.”

Patrol team… Lumian grinned at Bram and remarked, “Is there any other information you deem crucial to share with me? If not, let’s proceed.”

“Yes, of course.” Bram straightened his back abruptly.

In the next moment, he spat out foul words in a language Lumian had never heard before.

Devil Language!

As the Devil words reverberated, the blood, bloodstains, and bloody handprints that Bram had left on the ground were enveloped in a faint light.

A mystical connection seemed to form between them, linking them based on their location, creating sinister symbols and patterns.

In the room’s far cupboard, glass bottles filled with lips and colorless liquid trembled suddenly, as if rocked by an earthquake.

This marked the initiation of a ritual to summon the projection of an Abyssal Devil!

Serial Killers executed serial murders not solely for the thrill but also to appease the Abyssal Devils. Once the killing spree concluded,

Serial Killers could proceed to the final step of the ritual, summoning the projection of the corresponding Abyssal Devil. This granted them the assistance needed to fulfill their desires.

Though Bram's string of murders wasn't entirely finished and fell short by a few targets, he had met the minimum threshold. It satisfied the basic quantitative requirements, allowing him to expedite the ritual.

Understandably, this shortcut wouldn't yield the same effectiveness as the standard procedure. Yet, in the face of urgency and danger, Bram paid little heed.

He cooperated willingly, divulging information to divert the enemy's focus from his subtle actions. For instance, allowing blood to drip onto the ground in a specific pattern and pressing his blood-stained palm in a particular location. These marks replaced conspicuous evil and degenerate symbols with subtler, blood-stained alternatives.

With the preparations complete, Bram could utilize the Devil Language's "activate" to trigger the ritual, pleasing a high-level Devil and summoning its projection to confront the enemy!

Lumian silently observed Bram Andariel's "handiwork," feeling the room steeped in malevolence and tainted by corruption.

He raised his right hand, snapping his fingers.

Bram, coldly observing him while anticipating the ritual's protection, suddenly heard a rumbling emanate from within his body.

In confusion, he lowered his head and scrutinized his form. Crimson flames erupted from within, inflicting the agony of violent waves tearing through his internal organs, bones, and flesh.

Darkness gripped Bram's consciousness, accompanied by searing pain.

The last sight before losing consciousness: A black-haired young man with green eyes, sporting a golden straw hat, curved his lips, maintaining a warm smile. It was as though he watched a clown diligently tumble into a trap.

Rumble!

The ritual concluded prematurely. An explosion originating from Bram's body tore him into multiple fragments.

Fire Infusion and Delayed Explosion! Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

As Lumian adorned the Fury of the Sea brooch and ruthlessly assailed Bram, he not only released pent-up emotions but also covertly infused flames into Bram's body, triggering a Delayed Explosion.

This precaution aimed to avert any mishaps.

Moreover, there was no intention of granting forgiveness or negotiating a deal to spare Bram. Thus, there existed no psychological barrier to implanting a controlled time bomb within his body, ready to be activated.

Rumble!

Corpse fragments scattered across the room, some plastering the walls. Yet, this tumultuous event remained contained within the confines of the Bottle of Fiction.

Chapter 638 Possible Enemy

"My father bore the last name Andariel, cut down by a curse unleashed by a Devil's projection during a ritual gone awry.

"Inheriting his mantle, I became a Beyonder. My mother remains a mystery, perhaps just another name etched into my father's ledger of victims…

Upon the murky surface of a dark mirror, Bram Andariel's blood-drained visage recounted his origins with an impassive mask.

Franca, "invited" by Lumian, faced a full-body mirror, employing her unique magic mirror spirit channeling technique to delve into the Andariel family and the Rose School of Thought.

Regrettably, Bram lingered on the fringes of the secret organization and his Devilish family. His insights were scant. Moreover, to divert Lumian's scrutiny and covertly finalize the ritual preparations, he divulged truths without deceit.

With Spirit Channeling reaching its threshold, Franca posed a final query.

"Who leads the Andariel family now?"

Bram's increasingly translucent and sinister countenance contorted abruptly.

"He—he's dead.

"He became a sacrifice!"

Sacrifice… such theatricality? Before Franca could delve deeper, Bram's figure waned swiftly, dissipating into nothingness.

As the Demoness of Pleasure concluded the ritual, she clicked her

tongue and addressed Lumian, "The Andariel family's state is dire. Even the patriarch can be offered as a sacrifice. Are they fully controlled by the Rose School of Thought?"

In light of the temperance faction's alignment with the Church of The Fool within the Rose School of Thought, Franca glossed over distinctions between factions. After all, the Rose School likely teemed with adherents of indulgence.

Lumian responded contemplatively, "The situation in the Abyss isn't quite right either…"

Whether Naboredisley was the pseudonym of Devil Monarch Farbauti or not, the plight of the blood-colored Demon deep within Hanth Island mirrored the Abyss's troubles to some extent.

With a scoff, Lumian remarked, "We're accustomed to damning others to hell and the Abyss. We believed it to be the worst place. Who knew the Abyss itself could decay? It's falling into its own abyss."

"A hellish jest indeed." Franca glanced at the pristine night sky, less tainted by industrial pollution. The crimson moon of the Southern Continent appeared clearer and brighter.

She steered the conversation back on track.

"If Hisoka truly is from the Devil pathway, his actions make sense.

"The Research Society was lax. Minimal filters or restrictions on its members…"

Franca and Lumian were aware that the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society operated in a way that there were no Devil pathway Beyonders, but nobody knew the truth. Membership didn't entail self-declaration of pathways or proof. Sequences were discerned through interactions at gatherings. Hisoka remained an enigma, his pathways and Sequence elusive even to key April Fool's members.

"Hisoka has always been a loner. He rarely participates in other April Fool's pranks. Is he afraid of being discovered as a Devil?" Lumian contemplated, adding, "He was most inclined to collaborate with Mad Lady, an unabashed lunatic who couldn't care less. She might even

relish the prospect of testing if a Devil's blood runs cold…"

I sense a subtle mockery, insinuating my penchant for experimentation… Yet, despite being a Coldblooded, the remnant blood of the Serial Killer Bram retained a hint of warmth. Does Coldblooded mainly denote emotional detachment rather than literal coldness? Or could it be the Southern Continent's summer, heating up the blood of cold-blooded creatures… Franca's musings drifted.

Franca then cautioned Lumian, "If Hisoka is truly a Devil, he'll sense your malice the moment you uncover a key clue. He can decide whether to strike or flee, shifting to another country to hide.

"Dammit! Pursuing a Devil is a real hassle. When we can't beat him, he strikes first. When we can, he's nowhere to be found."

"We could use a Demon Hunter in times like these," Lumian half-jokingly remarked.

From Devilology, Lumian knew that Sequence 4 of the Warrior pathway was the Demon Hunter—an expert in hunting Devils. They were natural adversaries to Devils, Desire Apostles, and even Demons.B1nRealm was the platform where this chapter was initially revealed on N0v3l.B1n.

One of the Demon Hunters' crucial skills was concealing their actions and intentions, making it impossible for targets capable of sensing danger to detect them!

Franca concurred succinctly, "Now I see why Madam Magician sent you the spirit world's coordinates, instructing you to visit the New City of Silver and find Mr. Sun to eliminate the remaining corruption. It's dominated by the Warrior pathway and boasts many Demon Hunters.

"Though enlisting a Demon Hunter throughout the entire process might strain our resources."

That was a genuine demigod!

While dealing with Hisoka was Lumian's personal grudge, Major Arcana card holders would also take notice, given Hisoka's potential

alignment with that Celestial Worthy.

Lumian chuckled.

"No need for a Demon Hunter to intervene directly. I wonder if they can craft charms, potions, or items concealing malice. If so, we can spend a hefty sum through the Tarot Club's connections to acquire them or engage in item exchange."

"Start inquiring soon," Franca advised. "If Hisoka is a Desire Apostle, be cautious. You carry too many random items, and some mystical items have adverse effects on emotions and desires. He could detonate them, injuring you instantly…"

As she spoke, Franca's lips trembled before she sealed them shut.

Lumian nodded solemnly, refraining from boasting about his Ascetic abilities.

Having recently endured an explosion of emotions and desires, he understood it was beyond the endurance of an Ascetic, causing physical damage to the brain.

Franca then said, "The one chasing the Serial Killer was from the Numinous Episcopate, not a regular patrol member. The currents in Matani run deep."

The Numinous Episcopate, a clandestine organization in the Southern Continent, was rumored to trace its origins to the former royal descendants of the Balam Empire and Beyonders unwilling to forsake Death as their faith. Their ultimate aim was to restore Death to His throne, ruling East and West Balam once more. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Lumian strolled to the window, gazing at the street. He grinned and commented,

"This is the chaotic Southern Continent.

"Actually, what piques my interest is why the Rose School of Thought is collecting information about the daily lives of Port Pylos residents. It seems like they want to govern this place.

"That's not their usual style."

Lumian had limited knowledge of the Rose School of Thought's past. All he knew was their recent spree of sacrifices, leaving bloodshed wherever they occupied. Running a city or port for extended periods didn't align with their usual behavior.

"Nothing is certain." Franca's mind was working overtime recently. After a moment's reflection, she added, "Regardless of the Rose School of Thought's motives, considering the sacrifices they've conducted in recent years, they should have gained substantial boons from the Mother Tree of Desire. Now, with Devil family members in the mix, encountering a significant Rose School of Thought member may mean dealing with a dual Bearer of potions and boons. Perhaps a Zombie Recipient, Wraith Tree Spirit, or Sex Addict Apostle? Similar to a Hunter Monk like you."

Franca, always more adept at nicknames and unconventional thoughts than Lumian, playfully referred to Beyonders who were both Zombies and Recipients as Zombie Recipients.

Her primary intention was to caution Lumian that certain Rose School of Thought members might exploit abilities like those of the Sex Addict to provoke his desires. Later, in their Desire Apostle form, they could detonate those desires, providing end-to-end service.

It would be a formidable challenge. In Lumian's condition, facing such Beyonders posed considerable danger.

Lumian chuckled, somewhat self-deprecatingly.

Why do I feel like a powder keg, ready to explode with the slightest touch?

"Nevertheless, I don't intend to meddle in the Rose School of Thought's affairs. I'll write to Madam Magician and report the traces of the Rose School of Thought in Port Pylos. Someone will investigate and handle it. Aren't Mr. Star and Mr. Moon among the Major Arcana card holders overseeing the Rose School of Thought?

"My sole focus is Hisoka. At least, we can be sure that even if he's of

the Devil pathway, he likely has no connection to the Andariel family. Otherwise, the Rose School of Thought wouldn't have dispatched Bram and company for reconnaissance. Bram wouldn't have been oblivious if a family member had been active here."

Franca hesitated for a moment before adding, "Hmm, just be careful."

…

Having escorted Franca back to Trier, Lumian stowed away Bram's Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic.

It took the form of a sharp-edged, prismatic ice cube, enveloping faint wisps of thin black gas.

Upon reaching Hotel Orella, Lumian approached the trio of mechanical elevators, pulled the handle, and stood patiently.

With a creak, the double doors opened simultaneously.

Lumian's silhouette, elongated by the crystal chandelier behind him, was mirrored in the mechanical lift.

Beside him stood a slender human shadow.

Chapter 639 Bribe

Lumian stood before the open mechanical elevator door, casting a glance at the slender shadow beside him. With raised eyebrows, he calmly turned his head, noting the sudden presence diagonally behind him.

The figure appeared as a tall, thin man draped in a complex, layered black robe. His face bore a pale-white complexion, as though untouched by sunlight for an extended period. Atop his black hair sat a fluffy black hat, its edge adorned with a gently swaying white feather.

Lumian retracted his gaze and entered the mechanical elevator. The tall, thin man with dark brown eyes following suit in silence.

Gripping the brass handle within with his right hand, Lumian selected the desired floor, pressing it down to B3, a definitive click echoing in response.

After Lumian selected his intended floor, the lanky man mimicked his action, opting for B18.

As they awaited descent, the distant sound of steam hissing reached their ears. Gears whirred to life, chains tightened, and the luxurious mechanical elevator began its gradual descent.

Throughout the journey, both remained eerily silent, the atmosphere thick with unspoken tension.

Upon arrival at B3, Lumian departed without a backward glance, heading towards Suite 7 with purpose.

As the metal chains continued their retreat behind him, Lumian muttered thoughtfully to himself, Monsieur Iveljsta?

Iveljsta, residing in B18, harbored lifeless servants.

The peculiar appearance of Iveljsta and the condition of his servants led Lumian to suspect his association with a Wraith, a Sequence 5 Wraith of the Prisoner pathway.

The Prisoner pathway, controlled by the Rose School of Thought, held sway over temperance and indulgence factions, both intertwined with the secret organization. It seemed unlikely for a Wraith not to be affiliated with the Rose School of Thought.

Could it be a rare rogue Wraith, or perhaps the vanguard of the Rose School of Thought targeting Port Pylos? Lumian couldn't discount the possibility of a temperance faction member. Yet, in the past few minutes, he discerned no evidence of Iveljsta's protracted indulgence… Lumian resolved to detail his observations in Madam Magician's letter.

Whether something was good or bad would be determined by professionals!

Returning to Suite 7, Lumian noticed Ludwig seated at the dining table, indulging in a feast from a ceramic soup pot with a silver spoon.

Atop the dish, a layer of cheese infused with egg juice charred in spots. Through the substantial hole Ludwig had carved, Lumian glimpsed a medley of pork, beef, fish, shrimp, shells, potatoes, and tomatoes stewed together. The rich aroma of spices mingled with the meats' essence permeated the living and dining rooms, casting a spell that stirred his appetite.

Ludwig continued to eat in silence as Lugano stood up and asked, "Would you like some? This is the local Eseo. Different chefs choose different ingredients, and the taste will vary."

Ludwig, without uttering a word, simply turned his head at Lugano before resuming his meal, quickening his pace.

Taking a seat beside Ludwig, Lumian smiled at the cheese-filled boy and said, "I was going to bring you a better supper, but I thought

better of it."

Confused, Lugano inquired, "What supper?"

"You don't want to know," Lumian responded with a Devil-like smile.

The supper he alluded to was Serial Killer Bram's corpse.

Originally intending to bring a few pieces back for Ludwig to sample and discern any "nutrients" and information, Lumian reconsidered, aware of Bram's limited knowledge about the Andariel family's peculiarities. Thus, he abandoned the idea of feeding Ludwig out of prudence.

From Lumian's observations, Ludwig could derive some strength from eating, releasing the seal. However, consuming a Sequence 7 Beyonder corpse might trigger a significant change. Lumian feared his own strength might not suffice to manage potential complications; Ludwig could potentially turn the tables and consume him as a delicacy.

Ludwig's silver spoon paused briefly before he remarked, "If you didn't bring it, why did you mention it?"

Oh, having a little tantrum? Lumian chuckled inwardly and said, "It's to inform you that we've reached an adventurer's paradise, a land of chaos. You'll have ample opportunities for fine dining in the future."

The implication was clear: do well, and I'll remember to reward you with delicacies. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Ludwig, spooning a soft potato stew into his mouth, responded vaguely, "I'm not going to school."

Does this mean that as long as he doesn't go to school, everything else is negotiable? Of course, the prerequisite is that I have to pay with enough delicacies… Satisfied, Lumian rose and made his way to the washroom adjoining the master bedroom, where he washed up.

The brass faucet delivered warm water at a comfortable temperature.

Lumian soaked a towel, relishing the refreshing steam that enveloped

his face, invigorating him.

Hotel Orella's utilization of a steam engine to power its mechanical elevators and machinery ensured continuous hot water, a notable feature of its service.

…

The following morning, Lumian, sporting a golden straw hat, appeared on Cania Street beside Port Pylos's Resurrection Square.

Once the ruling center for Intis colonists in Matani, the area bore remnants of its history with road signs and shop names in the Intisian language. Lumian effortlessly traced the path beneath the Intis parasol trees, arriving at a four-story beige house showcasing Intis's opulent architectural style.

Signs adorned in Dutanese, Intisian, Highlander, Loen, and Feysac languages marked the building: "Port Pylos Patrol Team."

Below the sign, five lines had the same meaning: "Only deals with paranormal events."

Fully taking into account the needs of adventurers from different countries to report a case… Lumian playfully remarked as he entered the beige establishment.

Within the hall, devoid of occupants, Lumian found a receptionist casually perusing the day's local tabloid from a lounging position.

The native, in his thirties with dark brown skin and black hair, possessed a slender face and dark brown eyes.

Approaching, Lumian addressed him in Intisian, "I want to report a case."

The native glanced up, rising unsteadily. He opened a partition behind him, uttering a few incomprehensible words in Dutanese.

Lumian could barely understand him speaking in Dutanese.

"Someone who understands Intisian or Highlander…"

This won't do. Since you don't understand foreign languages, don't waste time reading the newspaper. Study diligently… Maintaining a genial smile, he patiently awaited other patrol team members to appear.

Within a mere minute or two, a young man with fluffy brown hair, appearing as if he had fallen asleep without washing his hair the night before, swung open the door from the depths of the hall.

Dressed in a white shirt and an unbuttoned yellow vest, he strolled towards Lumian, one hand casually tucked into his pocket. In fluent Intisian, he inquired, "What case are you filing?"

Lumian assessed the young man, unmistakably hailing from the Northern Continent, cigarette in hand, and brownish-

yellow eyes. With a reserved smile, Lumian responded, "I found a killer."

Amused, the well-defined young man gestured towards the door.

"For killers, go to the police on the opposite street."

Opposite the patrol team stood Port Pylos's police headquarters.

Maintaining his composure, Lumian reiterated, "He's a serial killer."

Serial killer… The young man with the cigarette muttered to himself, a shift in his demeanor indicating a sudden seriousness.

"How do you know?"

"I found many severed lips in his house—human lips," Lumian disclosed with a reserved smile.

"Cut off lips?" The young man, yet to fasten his yellow vest, pressed with urgency, "Where's his home?"

After a brief pause, Lumian replied, "I can't spell the street name, but I can take you to the scene. It's on a street near the Man-Eating Flower bar."

Forcing himself to calm down, the young man took a drag on his cigarette, asking, "What about the killer? Did you see his face?"

"He's dead," Lumian truthfully responded.

Taken aback for a moment, the brown-haired young man queried, "How did he die?"

Lumian's reserved smile transformed into a more open one.

"I killed him."

The young man's expression froze in disbelief.

He scrutinized Lumian for a few seconds before inquiring, "Are you an adventurer here to collect the bounty?"

Bram's serial murders had prompted a local wanted poster issued by Admiral Querarill. However, the poster lacked a corresponding name or appearance, featuring only a case description due to the suspect's unidentified status.

Smiling, Lumian replied, "Sort of, but you can also claim it."

The young man furrowed his brow.

"What do you mean?"

"The bounty can be yours," Lumian stated, making his intention to bribe clear.

The young man cast a glance at Lumian.

"What would you like in exchange?"

"I want the dossier on a serial murder case from four years ago and the relevant items you gathered," Lumian disclosed openly.

There might be something among them that Ludwig could consume.

The young man fell into contemplative silence, assessing the pros and cons.

Eventually, he scratched his brown hair and said, "I can show you the case dossier and related items, but you can't take them away. You can only copy them.

"Also, I need to confirm if it's a Serial Killer at the scene."

"Alright," Lumian agreed, extending his right hand with a smile. "Happy working with you."

The young man shook Lumian's hand.

"Nice working with you. You can call me Camus. What about you?"

Lumian smiled once more.

"Louis Berry."

As Camus entered the door deep in the hall, preparing to gather two teammates, he pondered, Louis Berry… Why does this name sound familiar…

Chapter 640 Commonality

On the street adorned with the words "Chilicasco" in Dutanese, Lumian led Camus and the rest of the patrol team into the apartment crafted from dark black stones and brown wood.

The moment he swung open the door to Bram's room, a blend of charred scent and the tang of blood wafted through the air.

Corpse fragments lay strewn across the floor, the walls tainted with a mixture of blood and flesh. Handprints, crimson and searing marks adorned every surface.

Camus's eyes widened, as if thrust back into the midst of a serial killing.

Yet, this was a level of devastation beyond even that.

Turning to Lumian, Camus, despite already anticipating the grim answer, habitually inquired, "Where's that person's body?"

Lumian gestured towards the scattered remains and minced meat, responding with a grim smile, "All of these."

Camus fell into a momentary silence before signaling his two stunned teammates to examine the scene.

He had promised to share a portion of the bounty with them, making them witnesses to his "merits."

Camus hadn't ventured alone, wary that this might be a trap set by Louis Berry, an assassination attempt by the Rose School of Thought, or other secret organizations targeting the patrol team.

In the Southern Continent, vigilance was a necessity!

Approaching a cupboard, Camus fixated his gaze on lips soaked in

preservatives, the tragic fate of the victims replaying in his mind.

After a moment of silence, Louis Berry spoke calmly, "Bram is a member of the Devil family, Andariel. He was instructed by the Rose School of Thought to gather information in Port Pylos and carry out the serial murders. His uncle, Devajo, was supposed to be his contact, but they never actually met. Instead, he left the information he collected in the study of an empty house at 17 Aleg Street..."

Wh-- Camus and the others were initially startled, then deeply puzzled.

How does Louis Berry possess such detailed knowledge?

Camus couldn't help but glance at the scattered corpse pieces, the blood-soaked walls, the handprints on the ground, and the various charred marks.

Eventually, his gaze settled on Lumian's face.

Lumian responded with a warm smile curling his lips.

Camus and his two companions exchanged glances, refraining from questioning whether Louis Berry obtained the information through spirit channeling, torture, or if he had discerned Bram's motives from the start. Louis's pursuit of the serial murderer wasn't solely due to a criminal act.

"This intel is crucial," Camus nodded, gesturing towards the severely damaged six-barrel machine gun in the room. "We need to secure Bram's weapon."

"No problem," Lumian replied casually.

Being a Pyromaniac, firearms held little appeal for him. Fireballs proved far more potent than the rapid fire of a six-barrel machine gun--just not as swift.

...

Beside Resurrection Square, on Cania Street, on the second floor of the patrol team's four-story building.

Camus placed the dossier and related items on the table in front of Lumian, emphasizing, "You can only read and record. Taking it away or damaging it is not an option."

Lumian nodded subtly, taking one of the envelopes, unwinding the thread a few times, and carefully opening it.

Rather than hastily perusing the contents, he first extracted the dossier, giving it a thorough read.

The dense dossier meticulously outlined the identities, origins, possible pathways, Sequences, locations of death, the scene's conditions, and the varied speculations and investigations conducted by the patrol team.

It was clear the patrol team had been diligent in their investigations, especially when new victims kept emerging. Daily operations varied until the serial murders appeared to cease, leading to a slackening of efforts. They gradually reduced the frequency of case studies and large-scale visit trips. After six months, investigations reached a standstill, concluding the dossier.

In the final report, the vice-captain overseeing the matter concluded: "This is a classic serial murder case committed by the Devil pathway. Though Serial Killers seldom target only seven individuals, as more victims enhance the ritual's efficacy, this time, all victims are Beyonders, including Mid-Sequence Beyonders. Even with just seven deaths, they are more favored by Devils, pleasing them more than 14 or even 20 ordinary people.

"The main question in this mystic case is that, aside from being Beyonders, there's no common thread among the seven victims. This sets it apart from previous serial murders.

"We hypothesize that the seven victims were active Beyonders in West Balam, likely having committed some form of killing in the past. It can be seen as a manifestation of depravity..."

Lumian read it meticulously, concurring with the theory that seven Beyonders surpassed 14 ordinary individuals in Devil-

pleasing rituals.

This wasn't new information to him. After all, ordinary people were only the third-best sacrifice, while creatures with Beyonder characteristics ranked second.

Similar situations arose in specific "acts," particularly those requiring feedback. It was akin to deciphering an Angel's conspiracy, allowing Lumian to assimilate a potion more effectively than an ordinary person's intrigue.

Having grasped a general understanding of the entire serial murder case, Lumian delved into gathering information about the seven Beyonders. Synthesizing Anthony's psychological profile of Hisoka, Franca's archetype summary and her speculations about the actor, he scoured for potential commonalities.

Among the Beyonders were both men and women, one under Admiral Querarill, while another was a Death believer residing in Port Pylos. Foreign adventurers, an Intis Republic spy stationed in Matani, a peripheral member of the Rose School of Thought, and a local clergyman of the God of Steam and Machinery Church were also among the list.

Judging by their identities and backgrounds, they seemingly had nothing in common.

Yet, for Lumian, who read with subjective conjectures, subtle details held significance.

All seven victims were young, with the oldest in his early thirties, widely praised for combat talent and outstanding intelligence. Lumian mused to himself,

Are the targets Beyonders who are young, filled with potential, and have already reached a certain level of maturity? Even the two who weren't particularly young bore the label of being famous, powerful, with limitless potential… Lumian gained a rough understanding of Hisoka's selection criteria.

If Franca were present, she might have noted that it matched the

characteristics of the original archetype.

However, Lumian believed Hisoka would adhere to the archetype when it suited him, not letting it dictate his true motives. Mad Lady's evaluation of Hisoka as not being pure enough further supported Lumian's perspective.

Considering the selection criteria, Lumian thought, Louis Berry fits Hisoka's homicidal fetish. He clicked his tongue and retrieved items related to the case from the official envelopes.

Most were the victim's belongings, but there were also seven thin aluminum foils stained with blackish-brown substances that didn't belong to this group.

Described in the case file, they were wrappings for the local chocolate, left at each crime scene. It was suspected that the murderer would peel off the thin foil after success, indulging in a piece of chocolate before dissecting the corpse.

As the murderer used a gloved hand to extract and consume the chocolate, no corresponding traces were left on the thin foil. Such chocolates were common in Matani, making tracking difficult.

Lumian studied the thin aluminum foil before smiling at Camus, who supervised him.

"Can I take two or three?"

Camus, with his brown hair, furrowed his brow.

"If you want to use divination or other Beyonder methods, you can do it here."

"Just two. It won't hinder your future investigations," Lumian said enticingly. "If you agree to help, I'll give you an additional reward. For example, a very useful summoning incantation for a spirit world creature."

Camus fell silent briefly before agreeing, "Deal."

...

More than fifteen minutes later, Camus, having brought Lumian out to purchase chocolate-like items, observed with a bewildered expression as a rabbit-shaped spirit world creature adeptly copied the dossiers with a fountain pen.

After nearly a minute, Camus shifted his gaze to Lumian, leisurely sitting on the side, peeling off the thin aluminum foil and savoring a piece of dark-brown chocolate. He inquired in a deep voice, "Is this the very useful spirit world creature you mentioned?"

Lumian, chewing on the fragrant chocolate, responded with a smile, "Yes, it's one of the Rabbits of Knowledge. It can help you evade the labor of copying."

What do I need such a copying tool for!? Camus bellowed inwardly, but he restrained himself as he recalled the bounty for the serial murders and the grisly scene of Bram's demise.

Lumian added with a smile, "When you prefer to keep the origin of your words hidden, summon the Rabbit of Knowledge for assistance.

"Moreover, this is a growth-oriented spirit world creature. It evolves based on the knowledge it receives. Of course, it's ideal if you can secure a contract with the spirit world creature. Otherwise, each summoned Rabbit of Knowledge might differ, making nurturing impossible."

"Growth-oriented…" Camus echoed the term, his expression gradually softening.

… New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Back at Hotel Orella, Lumian retrieved the two old aluminum foils from his pocket and handed one to Ludwig.

"Try eating these," he suggested with a smile.

Chapter 641 Information From Eating

Lugano, who had been observing from the sidelines, was taken aback when Lumian handed the thin aluminum foil to Ludwig and inquired if he wanted to eat it.

Despite Ludwig's previous display of abnormal eating habits, including drinking a tube of human blood in front of Lugano, revealing all the corresponding information, Lugano still harbored reservations about feeding Ludwig just anything, especially something as unconventional as aluminum foil.

After all, Ludwig was still a child!

In the blink of an eye, Lugano witnessed Ludwig silently accepting the old, thin aluminum foil, stuffing it into his mouth, chewing, and swallowing.

"..." Lugano found himself in a daze.

Once Ludwig finished consuming the aluminum foil, he calmly turned to Lumian and inquired, "Which details do you need--information on the cocoa beans used, the precise quantity, additional ingredients, the origin of the aluminum foil ingredients, the production factories, or the individuals most in contact with it?"

Lumian shook his head slowly.

"No need."

This information wouldn't help track down Hisoka. Hisoka had touched the thin aluminum foil while wearing gloves, leaving behind no corresponding personal details. The patrol team had already confirmed that the chocolate packaging was common in Port Pylos,

and there was nothing distinctive about the taste.

As Lumian responded, a mix of amusement and surprise washed over him.

He can even extract such information from eating?

As expected of a monster capable of recovering just by eating and gradually breaking free from the seal's constraints!

Ludwig seemed to relish the delicacy. After a few moments, he remarked, "The residual chocolate has a hint of depravity."

Depravity? Could it be that Hisoka had carried it for an extended period, corrupting it? That doesn't make sense. Unless one was a demigod, Beyonder auras couldn't reach such a level. The only possibility was that they were on the brink of losing control, deep in a state of depravity. However, such a Beyonder's body would undoubtedly display various abnormal details. They wouldn't be able to leave the house; stepping out would lead to discovery and pursuit by law enforcers. Could he rely on the human skin Bram mentioned for disguise? Lumian was initially puzzled, but then he asked with anticipation, "A decadent aura from the Devil pathway?"

Ludwig licked his lips, savoring the taste of the chocolate residue.

"Yes, at least a Demon's."

"Demon's?" Lumian was taken aback and couldn't help but frown.

Having extensively studied Devilology, he knew that Sequence 4 of the Devil pathway was known as Demon, representing a demigod.

If the chocolate slightly tainted with a decadent aura came from a Demon, it clearly didn't belong to Hisoka.

Lumian wasn't arrogantly dismissing Hisoka's potential to have advanced to Sequence 4. Instead, the aluminum foil and chocolate marks represented the state four years ago. Hisoka couldn't have been a Demon back then, unless he had become a Desire Apostle upon transmigration. If that were the case, his targets for the serial murders should have been Sequence 6 or 5 Beyonders.

Although Beyonders at this level were rare in Matani, Devilology didn't specify that serial murders could only occur in one location.

"Are you certain?" Lumian looked at Ludwig for confirmation.

Ludwig replied earnestly, "A Demon's decadent aura has a completely different texture from Low- to Mid-Sequence Devils."

Upon hearing his godson's response, an image suddenly surfaced in Lumian's mind.

Hisoka standing within the wall of spirituality, engaged in a special ritual to establish a connection with a Demon. Throughout this process, a few pieces of chocolate wrapped in thin aluminum foil remained in his pocket. They were slightly tainted by the decadent aura permeating the altar, subtly and silently transforming... New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Yes, when I perform a ritual, I don't remove all my belongings in advance and leave them outside the altar unless there's a specific mention in the ritual requirements that I should avoid... As a Conspirer, Lumian quickly made a guess and asked Ludwig, "Can you tell which Demon's decadent aura it belongs to?"

Lumian's current idea was that if Hisoka couldn't be found in the future, he would exhaust his resources and seek the help of the New City of Silver's Demon-Hunter experts. He would set up a ritual and summon the Demon who had established a connection with Hisoka. He would have it beaten up before interrogating it for information about Hisoka.

Ludwig shook his head.

"I can't absorb such subtle information yet. All I know is that the decadent aura belongs to a family called Nois."

Nois, one of the three Devil families... The Demon responding to Hisoka's special ritual is from the Nois family? That's peculiar. How can a Demon respond to a ritual remotely? It has to be at Sequence 3, or even at the Angel level... According to Devilology, Serial Killers can summon projections of Abyss Demons because those Devils can

use the special properties of the Abyss to respond, not because they have reached the corresponding level. However, the Nois family is a Devil family active in the real world and hasn't entered the Abyss... Lumian made many connections from the Nois last name.

He concluded by listing three possibilities:

Firstly, the Demon responding to the Hisoka ritual was none other than the Nois family's Angel.

Secondly, it had reached Sequence 3 and was located in Port Pylos, near Hisoka.

Thirdly, the Nois family had a close connection to the Abyss. They could borrow the Abyss's properties to some extent. Even a Demon could respond to prayers from afar.

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked Ludwig, "Any other information?"

"No," Ludwig replied, disappointing Lumian.

Lumian handed over the remaining piece of aluminum foil.

"Try this one too."

Ludwig didn't hesitate. Like many children drawn to the sweetness lingering on wrappers, he popped the thin foil stained with chocolate into his mouth and chewed.

After a moment, while Lugano snapped back to reality, Ludwig looked at Lumian and remarked, "There's more to this one."

"What kind of information?" Lumian knew that Ludwig's special mention had to be of some value.

Ludwig responded with the air of a connoisseur, "This thin aluminum foil rested on a table marked by old blood and a splash of coffee. The blood belonged to a deceased male. The spirituality was initially potent, and the coffee was Fermo blend, unsweetened, distinctly bitter yet fragrant."

Upon hearing Ludwig's account, Lumian's mind painted another vivid scene.

A few pieces of chocolate wrapped in thin aluminum foil lay nonchalantly on a table, soaked in old blood and spilled coffee. They seemed to share an intimate connection for an extended period. Then, a hand reached out, snatched them up, and swiftly pocketed them before making a hasty exit.

Connecting the dots, Lumian strongly suspected that the table had served Hisoka in a dwelling he once occupied.

"Do you have detailed information on the male deceased?" Lumian probed Ludwig for more insights.

Ludwig shook his head once more.

"No, unless I consume the blood directly."

14:53

The bloodstains likely belonged to one of the victims, Lumian Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

surmised. He pondered whether this information was documented in the case file or elsewhere. Was Hisoka using "No, unless I consume the blood directly."

The bloodstains likely belonged to one of the victims, Lumian the table as an autopsy platform or perhaps an altar? Lumian mused inwardly, a tinge of disappointment clouding his thoughts. Nevertheless, he refocused his attention on the Fermo coffee.

He mumbled to himself, Does this mean that Hisoka has a penchant for coffee, specifically the Fermo blend from the Paz Valley…

The Paz Valley, nestled in the Southern Continent, boasted the renowned Fermo coffee, comparable to Feynapotter's highlander coffee and the Southern Continent's own version. It was a luxury enjoyed mainly by the middle class for extended periods.

In Matani, where both East and West Balam produced high-

quality coffee beans, such occurrences were rare. The locals had access to a plethora of excellent coffee beans. Those unfit for export were sold at affordable prices, favored by both colonists and natives.

Lugano, now fully attentive, cautiously added, "I've heard that those who frequent Fermo coffee appreciate its bitterness and fragrance. However, those who prefer it without sugar are a rare breed."

In essence, Hisoka's unique taste in coffee is uncommon here… Lumian smiled at Ludwig and remarked, "Well done. If I apprehend the target in the future, I'll give him to you."

When the time came, Lumian would likely be a Sequence 5. Moreover, he wouldn't give Ludwig the Beyonder characteristic. Lumian could ease his grip on the boy.

Give… The notion sent a chill down Lugano's spine, a hint that his imagination might have run too wild.

To others, gifting a Beyonder of the Devil's Pathway might relegate the recipient to a life of servitude or worse, becoming an ingredient. However, with Ludwig…

Lugano involuntarily shuddered.

He didn't dare to think about it!

Ludwig nodded, his eyes gleaming with anticipation.

Lumian turned to Lugano and said, "Don't you have a good grasp of Dutanese? Check Port Pylos this afternoon and find out which shops sell Fermo coffee. It's preferable if it's one that has been operating for four to five years or longer."

"Alright." Lugano suddenly felt a surge of usefulness.

In the evening, he returned to Suite 7 at B3 and reported to Lumian, "There are only three shops selling Fermo coffee. One is on Cania Street in Resurrection Square…"

"You mentioned Cania Street in Resurrection Square?" Lumian interjected.

"Yes, Unit 21 on that street. It's called Matani Import and Export Shop," Lugano confirmed.

Lumian fell silent.

Isn't it close to Port Pylos's patrol team?

……

In Port Pylos, on the third floor of the building housing the patrol team.

Camus received the bounty and gave a fifth to his two companions.

He then entered the telegraph room and inquired of the telegrapher, "Do you have a telegram for me?"

He had previously sent a telegram to inquire with certain friends if they had any information on Louis Berry, the adventurer.

Since they were in collaboration, he needed to ascertain the other party's situation first!

The female telegrapher, wearing a sweet smile, straightened up and responded, "Yes! From Farim."

Chapter 642 Visit

Camus extended his thanks to the telegrapher, retrieved his telegram, and swiftly scanned its contents.

"Louis Berry, Intisian, hailed as the most renowned adventurer in the Fog Sea over the past six months. Sporting a distinctive golden straw hat, he successfully hunted down the Demon Warlock Burman, earning a hefty bounty of 600,000 verl d'or. Furthermore, he collaborated with the Earth Mother Church in Port Santa to address the crisis surrounding the Sea Prayer Ritual. However, the precise details remain elusive…"

Upon perusing the telegram, Camus released a silent sigh and remarked to himself, He's truly a great adventurer. It's no surprise he managed to handle that Serial Killer… Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Camus couldn't gauge the Demon Warlock's true strength, but the substantial bounty spoke volumes. The sum of 600,000 verl d'or was a testament to the Demon Warlock's threat level. Even if Louis Berry's fame stemmed solely from his encounter with such a formidable adversary, he undeniably stood among the great adventurers.

It wasn't lost on Camus that Bram, the perpetrator of numerous murders that had kept the patrol team occupied for nearly two weeks, only carried a bounty of 50,000 verl d'or. Such figures tempted Camus to consider collaboration with Louis Berry.

Reflecting on the substantial 600,000 bounty and comprehending Louis Berry's generosity, Camus tucked away the telegram and graciously commended the female telegrapher with an exaggerated flying kiss.

Running his fingers through his tousled brown hair, Camus descended to the hall below.

The evening had descended, and it wasn't his night for duty. He could head home and take a break.

Out of the blue, Camus's gaze focused as he spotted the handsome Louis Berry, sporting black hair, green eyes, and a laid-back demeanor, seated on the sofa, casually playing with a golden straw hat.

Approaching cautiously, Camus inquired, "Is there anything else?"

Lumian ceased twirling the straw hat, sat up straight, and grinned.

"I've got something else to talk to you about."

Realizing that one of the three shops that could buy Fermo coffee was on Cania Street, not far from the patrol team, Lumian's immediate thought was:

Could Hisoka be hiding within the patrol team, perhaps as one of its members?

Is the most dangerous place the safest?

After careful consideration, Lumian considered it a possibility, though not particularly likely.

On the one hand, among the seven Beyonders who were killed, including the Death believer in Port Pylos, the Rose School of Thought's peripheral member, and the spy left behind in Matani by the Intis Republic, were secretive individuals, blending in with ordinary people. Without substantial information sources, it would be challenging for Hisoka to identify them as Beyonders and target them.

This suggested that either Hisoka had a unique ability to discern Beyonders from ordinary people or possessed a mystical item granting him such insight, or he had control over an extensive information network. The patrol team, being intimately familiar with Matani and Port Pylos, might have already detected something amiss with the Death believer, the Rose School of Thought's member, and the Intis spy and been conducting surveillance.

Hisoka's membership in the patrol team would explain his ability to uncover a Beyonder's hidden identity and carry out the murders.

On the other hand, if Hisoka, a Devil pathway Beyonder, had joined the patrol team, suspicions would undoubtedly arise once the serial murders occurred—unless he concealed his true pathway from the start. However, the patrol team differed from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. Hisoka would need to use his abilities frequently during daily missions, making it difficult to conceal them for months or years.

There was no room for mishaps. It wasn't feasible for him to meticulously prepare before each mission, adorning the corresponding mystical item solely to reveal his abilities in that specific situation, right?

Even as a Devil, he couldn't pull it off!

Given that many missions had no specific target, Devils couldn't foresee imminent danger.

Driven by suspicion and uncertainty, Lumian took a special trip to the patrol team, visiting Camus to unearth new clues or gain inspiration to either confirm or eliminate the corresponding possibilities.

"What do you want to discuss?" Camus furrowed his brow.

Is this guy scheming to use the morning's bribe as leverage to threaten me?

The dossier isn't particularly important. Even if I lose it, it's just a minor punishment!

Wearing his golden straw hat, Lumian rose with a smile. Pointing at the door, he suggested, "How about a cup of coffee?"

After a brief contemplation, Camus responded in a deep voice, "Fine."

Exiting the patrol team's entrance, Lumian made his way toward the Matani Import and Export Shop.

In the fading dusk, he immediately spotted Port Pylos's police headquarters diagonally opposite the patrol team.

Numerous individuals clad in dark-blue police uniforms moved in and out, some holding cups of coffee.

Wh— Lumian's heart stirred.

Could Hisoka not be a member of the patrol team but a high-ranking police officer at the police headquarters?

At a certain rank, the police collaborated with official Beyonders to access a wealth of information. Many official Beyonders' investigations were conducted through the police due to limited manpower.

If Hisoka held a significant position at Port Pylos's police headquarters, it was plausible for him to identify the three concealed Beyonders. Additionally, there would be no risk of exposing his pathway during routine missions, and acquiring his favored Fermo coffee beans would be a breeze.

On the other hand, it was precisely because the Matani Import and Export Shop offered a variety of coffee beans that Hisoka fell in love with the pure, bitter, and fragrant Fermo coffee without sugar.

However, this was just one possibility among Lumian's speculations. For instance, Hisoka, being a bold and self- assured individual, might have visited Cania Street specifically to buy Fermo coffee, relishing the incompetence and frustration of the patrol team. Alternatively, Hisoka might not be a Beyonder of the Devil pathway but simply possessed the corresponding Sealed Artifact and had mastered a unique ritual to appease Devils. There was also the chance that Lumian was mistaken—Hisoka might not be linked to the serial murders four years ago.

With these thoughts in mind, Lumian contained his excitement and entered the Matani Import and Export Shop alongside Camus. They reached the section where various coffee beans were on display and secured a seat in the attached coffee shop.

"Highlander coffee with milk and two cubes of sugar," Camus ordered from the waiter with a sense of familiarity.

Lumian, on the other hand, opted for a cup of fragrant Intis coffee.

While waiting, Lumian casually observed the coffee choices of other customers. Turning to Camus, he inquired, "Judging by the name, are you a Feynapotterian?"

Camus hesitated briefly before truthfully responding, "My full name is Don Givré Camus Castiya."

He was willing to share his full name as the telegram mentioned Louis Berry having a good working relationship with the Church of Earth Mother.

Lumian chuckled.

"So, you're a noble lord."

The name Castiya belonged to the royal family of the Feynapotter Kingdom, and "Don" at the beginning of Camus's name signified "Honorable," representing his noble status.

Camus smiled wryly and remarked, "If I were truly a nobleman, why would I join a local patrol team in the Southern Continent?

"Our branch has long dwindled, but I can't deny that this last name and the Don prefix have provided me with advantages beyond those of ordinary people. I received a potion upon reaching adulthood, achieving Sequence 9 Beyonder status. However, my subsequent advancements were the result of my own efforts."

Accepting my 50,000 verl d'or bribe is part of your efforts? Lumian teased inwardly. He glanced at the two cups of coffee brought by the waiter, feigning casualness as he asked, "Don't you want to try some other coffees? Is highlander coffee your only choice?"

Camus raised his cup and took a sip. "I'm accustomed to its taste."

Lumian removed his golden straw hat and took a sip, smiling as he replied, "Fair enough. Just like how I can never acclimate to Fermo

coffee. It's too bitter with regular sugar, and too cloying with too much. Some people appreciate the bitterness and fragrance of Fermo coffee, opting for just a hint of sugar."

Lumian anticipated Camus to respond with, "Yes, some even drink Fermo coffee without sugar." However, Camus's reply didn't align with his expectations.

"That's how it goes. What's on your mind?"

Internally exhaling, Lumian spoke openly, "As you can tell, I'm deeply intrigued by the serial murder case from four years ago. It's my sole purpose in Port Pylos—a highly valuable assignment."

"Highly valuable? It's just a Serial Killer." Camus let out a sigh of relief upon realizing Louis Berry was interested in discussing this matter.

Even if he were blind, he could tell Louis Berry's genuine concern about the serial murders four years prior.

Lumian vaguely explained with a smile, "This case holds secrets beyond your wildest imagination."

For example, transmigrators, or that Celestial Worthy…

Camus took another sip of his highlander coffee and reflected.

"I arrived in Matani over five years ago. At that time, the Intisians had just departed, and the kingdom and the Church's forces had completed their initial infiltration. I sensed numerous opportunities, thinking I could leverage my last name to secure a prominent position. Hence, I took a ship across the Fog Sea. The outcome differed from my expectations, but it was still acceptable."

Camus, in his mid-twenties, sighed as he recounted the past.

He continued, "When the case unfolded, I was merely a Sequence 8. Alongside a few teammates, I followed Vice-

Captain Reaza to investigate."

He paused, offering Lumian a smile that seemed to convey, "If you want more information, show more sincerity."

In that moment, Lumian was contemplating another question.

If Hisoka truly belongs to the Devil pathway and has joined the patrol team, is there a way for him to conceal his identity?

Putting himself in those shoes, Lumian realized that concealing the abilities of the Hunter pathway wouldn't pose a problem.

Most situations could be handled with the Ascetic pathway's abilities and a couple of items.

Of course, the usage of an Ascetic's abilities was suspicious.

Could it be that Hisoka is indeed a bestowed individual who typically exhibits powers from the boon pathway? Lumian raised his cup and took a sip of coffee, avoiding delving into the details of the serial murders. He gazed at Camus thoughtfully and inquired, "Do you have members in the patrol team skilled in divination or decryption?"

Chapter 643 Target Suspect

Chapter??643 Target Suspect

643 Target Suspect

Camus couldn't comprehend why Louis Berry had abruptly changed the topic and neglected to charge for the pertinent information. Recollecting, he mentioned, "Yes, there's a Magician. He was initially an officer of the Admiral Guard but later got transferred to the patrol team."

Later… Lumian frowned slightly.

"When did he transfer to the patrol team?"

"Why do you ask? Last year," replied Camus. He had no clue about Louis Berry's inquiry, making it unclear what information was vital.

Last year… It doesn't seem to be Hisoka, judging by appearances… Although possibilities can't be completely ruled out. Serving as an officer in Admiral Querarill's guard provides opportunities for gathering intel. Perhaps he didn't purchase Fermo coffee from this Import Export Shop. It could be one of the other two cafes… Even so, there's a logical reason for buying it here. Yes, to relish watching the incompetence and frustration of the patrol team… Lumian temporarily placed the Magician on his suspect list.

He didn't dismiss the possibility that the other party was Hisoka just because they were a Sequence 7. This was because the level of a boon might not be the same as the level brought about by potions.

Furthermore, Lumian had vaguely perceived changes beneath Matani's surface from the Magician's departure from Admiral

Querarill's guard to joining the patrol team.

Beyonders of the Seer pathway either originated from the Church of The Fool or were associated with Intis's Bureau 8 or secret organizations supporting Bureau 8, like the Secret Order. While there were wild Beyonders, very few evolved into Magicians. Coupled with Matani's history as an Intis colony, Lumian reasonably deduced that the Magician had close ties to the Intis Republic, a fact well-known to Admiral Querarill.

He retained the Magician in the guards to maintain a specific connection with Intis and handle the new Feynapotter Kingdom. By achieving a balance of power, he could better sustain his rule.

The Magician's departure from the Admiral Guard last year might indicate that Admiral Querarill had truly gauged the Feynapotter Kingdom's stance after years of collaboration and had sided with them.

Lumian's speculation didn't eliminate the suspicion that the Magician might be Hisoka. Loki, from Intis and a Secret Order member, held a mid-management position in Bureau 8. It was entirely possible for him to use the proper channels to involve Hisoka in Bureau 8's overseas section and recruit him into the Secret Order.

After contemplating for a moment, Lumian inquired, "Does that Magician have a fondness for Fermo coffee?"

He didn't directly ask about the other party's name and characteristics.

Camus shook his head.

"He doesn't appreciate coffee. His preference leans towards sweet drinks like Gwadar."

Gwadar, a well-loved local beverage in West Balam, was crafted from locally grown berries and contained a certain amount of caffeine. It had the same impact as coffee in enhancing mental strength and combating fatigue. However, its hue was orange-yellow, with a hint of sweetness amidst the sourness. It served both to alleviate the

sweltering heat and quench thirst.

Prefers sweetness… Lumian felt a sense of disappointment. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Four years ago, Hisoka had no inkling that he would confront a monster like Ludwig in the future. It was unlikely for him to deliberately splash some unsweetened Fermo coffee on the table with the chocolate. Lumian cautiously believed now that Hisoka truly enjoyed bitter coffee.

In that case, the Magician, with a sweet tooth, probably wasn't Hisoka. Unless Hisoka meticulously maintained the traits of each identity, consistently playing the role of a Magician who relished drinking Gwadar on a daily basis.

He wasn't an Actor who needed to meticulously perform every aspect of his daily life!

Moreover, he had no reason to digest Faceless!

As he contemplated, Lumian's heart skipped a beat.

Actor…

If Hisoka is genuinely a Beyonder of the Devil pathway, apart from his belief in the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings due to transmigration, he might also be influenced by the Mother Tree of Desire in his daily life.

Could it be that the boon of the Hisoka pathway doesn't come from one of the Celestial Worthy's Seer, Apprentice, or Marauder, but rather from the Mother Tree of Desire?

The current Celestial Worthy desires the invasion of evil gods into the world within the barrier. It's not implausible for Him to collaborate with the Mother Tree of Desire and tacitly permit Hisoka to exploit the Mother Tree of Desire…

With a fresh train of thought, Lumian observed the now-silent Camus and took a sip of Intis coffee, offering a smile as he changed the subject.

"Any Beyonders from the Prisoner pathway in the patrol team?"

He had long suspected that the Mother Tree of Desire was an evil deity at the pinnacle of the Criminal, Prisoner, and Scrooge pathways. The corresponding boons likely originated from one of them or were intertwined.

Lumian refrained from asking about the existence of the Scrooge pathway because it was even more suspicious than the Criminal pathway, also known as the Devil pathway. It didn't belong to the twenty-two paths of the divine.

It was akin to a thief being apprehended by the police and asking in confusion, "I clearly disguised myself and left no traces. How did you quickly lock onto me," only to receive the answer, "This isn't Trier. No ordinary person would disguise themselves as a turkey and hide in a secluded alley."

"Do you think there's a spy from the Rose School of Thought in the patrol team?" Camus believed Louis Berry was casually raising the issue of the Rose School of Thought's interest in Port Pylos. "No, definitely not. He adheres to temperance and doesn't indulge at all."

Lumian smiled.

"In other words, there really is a Beyonder from the Prisoner pathway?"

"Yes, a Sequence 6 Zombie…" Camus confirmed.

Lumian interjected suddenly, "Don't disclose who he is, what he looks like, or his characteristics. Answer a few questions first."

"What questions?" Camus, feeling a bit disoriented from the rapidly changing topics, planned to decide when to ask for benefits later.

Lumian held a porcelain cup filled with Intis coffee and casually said, "When did he join the patrol team?"

"Half a year after me," Camus recalled.

You arrived in Matani over five years ago and joined the patrol team

shortly after. Half a year later means that the Prisoner was already on the patrol team when the serial murder case occurred four years ago… Lumian's spirits lifted as he pondered for a moment.

"Did he face a catastrophe in the past and nearly died?"

"No." Camus shook his head. "At least, I don't know."

Lumian maintained his smile, showing no signs of disappointment, and said, "Does he have a liking for Fermo coffee?"

"Yes, he adores Fermo coffee and is the type who doesn't add sugar," replied Camus without much thought. Then, he remembered Louis Berry's inquiry about the Magician's preference for Fermo coffee in the patrol team.

He quickly formed a guess.

"Is there an issue with the ones enjoying Fermo coffee? Does the culprit of the serial murders four years ago have a taste for Fermo coffee? There are very few places in Port Pylos where you can get Fermo coffee. This is one of them. Even cafes selling Fermo coffee procure the beans from here… Are you suspecting that the murderer from four years ago is part of the patrol team?"

Impressive. You reacted swiftly and identified the core issue… Lumian inwardly praised Camus.

Simultaneously, a surge of joy filled his heart.

In Matani, Fermo coffee was a rare commodity, and those who preferred it without sugar were even rarer. Moreover, this individual was on the patrol team and seemingly from the Prisoner pathway!

With so many conditions aligning, Lumian felt like he had caught Hisoka by the tail!

To avoid triggering any sense of malice and danger, Lumian refrained from asking about the patrol team member's name, appearance, identity, or characteristics.

Feigning ignorance about the enemy, Lumian casually asked, "Is he

from around here?"

Observing Camus's silence, Lumian added with a smile, "I won't claim the official bounty."

Camus's expression eased.

"He's a local of Port Pylos, born in Tizamo Town, which is part of Port Pylos."

Though the patrol team wasn't as stringent in member recruitment as the various Churches and governments, they still gathered basic information and conducted verifications. Otherwise, Admiral Querarill might have to worry about being assassinated by a patrol team member investigating a Beyonder case one day.

Tizamo Town… the location of one of Hisoka's pranks… It fits! Lumian controlled his excitement, preventing the corners of his mouth from curling up. Regrettably, he told Camus,

"Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the target."

This was to prevent Camus from investigating the target.

This could potentially alert the other party to the corresponding malice!

"Alright." Camus shrugged.

Curious, he inquired, "How did you find out that the murderer from the serial killings four years ago liked Fermo coffee?"

"I was already aware of such a person before starting the investigation," Lumian replied with a meaningful tone.

He chose not to disclose that the information came from the thin aluminum foil wrapping of the chocolate. Revealing this might prompt Camus to believe he could uncover more clues and reignite the investigation, potentially drawing Hisoka's attention.

With this realization, Lumian understood something.

I should now be a target for Hisoka, but fishing has its benefits…

Louis Berry, adorned with a golden straw hat, had bribed members of the patrol team to examine the files of the serial murder case from four years ago. Other team members paid little attention, but if the Prisoner was indeed Hisoka, he would have detected Lumian—his adversary's investigation into the four-year-old serial murder case.

Hisoka refrained from taking action likely because Lumian openly presented himself as Louis Berry, making no effort to hide his identity. This led to the suspicion that Lumian was fishing, making Hisoka cautious of stepping into a potential trap. There was no sense of malice or danger perceived, as Lumian didn't possess details about the suspect's identity. Lumian was merely preparing for a potential surprise attack from a Devil or Desire Apostle.

Before, I fished to catch fish, but now my fishing is a bluff… Lumian's thoughts clarified as he looked at Camus and said,

"Keep an eye out for anyone at the police headquarters who enjoys Fermo coffee."

"Alright," Camus agreed, thinking that Louis Berry had identified the suspect as a member of the patrol team and the police through details he wasn't aware of. For now, the possibility of the patrol team members was tentatively ruled out.

After finishing the remaining Intis coffee and settling the bill with the corresponding verl d'or, Lumian donned the golden straw hat and maintained his smile. He left the Matani Import and Export Shop and Cania Street, step by step.

Passing by Port Pylos's police headquarters, he deliberately cast a few glances.

Chapter 644 Patrol Team

Camus stood at the entrance of the Matani Import and Export Shop, casually smoking a cigarette as he observed the passing customers. Despite his watchful eyes, he didn't spot anyone purchasing Fermo coffee.

As the gas street lamps gradually illuminated the surroundings, casting a dark blue hue across the sky, Camus extinguished his cigarette and tossed it into a nearby trash can. He then made his way back to the beige four-story building that housed the patrol team.

Originally planning to indulge in an Intis feast in a neighborhood frequented by foreigners to celebrate his unexpected windfall of 40,000 verl d'or, his plans were disrupted by Louis Berry. By the time he returned, it was already late, and he couldn't be bothered to wait for a top chef to prepare something special. Instead, he decided to return to the patrol team, pool money with his close teammates, and order takeout from a nearby restaurant. After satisfying his hunger, he intended to relax at a bar or dance hall.

While crossing the hall, Camus spotted a teammate with dark brown skin, thick lips, and a height exceeding 1.8 meters. Curious, he inquired, "Why did the guy in the straw hat come looking for you again?

"Heh, I heard you and the others caught a Serial Killer and got a bounty of 50,000 verl d'or?"

In Matani, the currency was commonly denoted in verl d'or and Delexi copper coins, a system ingrained during Intis colonization. Despite Admiral Querarill's control, there were no significant changes in this aspect. The only difference was a partnership with the Feynapotter Kingdom's bank that facilitated the free exchange of verl d'or and gold risot.

If he were one of the two teammates--either the Magician or the Zombie--whom Louis Berry had asked about, Camus would undoubtedly be on high alert. However, the person standing in front of him was Sow, a Sequence 8 Pugilist of the Warrior pathway. Sow had joined the patrol team as an adventurer just last year and was known for having a pleasant personality. Besides a bit of laziness and a love for enjoyment, there were no significant issues.

Camus laughed and said, "That's my informant. Without him, I wouldn't have received that much bounty."

Sow, with his single eyelids, had a realization.

"Did he come to you just now to get his share?"

Camus thought for a moment and replied, "That's one reason. The other reason is that he's still investigating the serial murders from four years ago and wanted to ask me for some details."

He had kept the case dossier hidden from the captain and vice-captains of the patrol team, but he couldn't keep it from his teammates. Therefore, he had no intention of concealing Louis Berry's investigation into the serial murders from four years ago. Moreover, he planned to monitor the police headquarters to identify anyone who enjoyed Fermo coffee and seemed suspicious. He would need his teammates' assistance to some extent.

"Any progress? Any chance of claiming the bounty?" Sow, dressed in a pleated shirt and carrying a broadsword, displayed visible interest.

Camus wasn't ready to provide detailed information at the moment. He vaguely responded, "He suspects that the murderer might be hiding at the police headquarters from four years ago. I plan to investigate discreetly."

"Why do you think the murderer is a police officer?" Sow looked puzzled.

Camus hadn't discussed this with Lumian earlier, so he pondered for a moment and explained, "Consider this. In the case four years ago, only Beyonders were targeted. Several of them usually concealed

their identities. How could the murderer accurately locate them and know that they were Beyonders?

"Only us or those from the police headquarters at a certain rank can access that kind of information. It's easier to verify if there are Beyonders of the Devil pathway on the patrol team."

Four years ago, during their investigation, Vice-Captain Reaza had proposed this idea. However, he only suspected that the Serial Killer was hiding within the patrol team and hadn't considered the police headquarters or the Admiral Guard. Subsequently, the patrol team conducted an investigation and found no suspicious individuals, leading them to shift their focus.

"I see a glimmer of hope and smell the fragrance of verl d'or," Sow said with anticipation. "If you need help, feel free to look for me. I heard that Kolobo and the others just followed you to the scene and each got 5,000 verl d'or!"

"No problem," Camus readily agreed.

Then, he walked past Sow and along the corridor toward his office.

At the door of his office, Kolobo poked his head out, observing the conversation between Camus and Sow.

Kolobo, about the same age as Camus, in his mid-twenties, had dark hair, azure eyes, and a slender figure. He held a pair of black sunglasses in his hand.

He lowered his voice and said to Camus, "Stay away from Sow for the time being."

"Why?" Camus asked, surprised.

Observing Sow vanish through the door leading to the hall, Kolobo averted his gaze and explained,

"I have a feeling that something bad will happen if one interacts with him during this period."

"Then why didn't you warn him?" Camus frowned in confusion.

As a Sequence 8 Robot of the Monster pathway, Kolobo possessed formidable spiritual perception and could vaguely sense certain things.

"I warned him. He thinks everything's fine. I even reported it to the Captain." Kolobo shrugged.

As he spoke, the thin Beyonder recalled something.

"That adventurer, Louis Berry, is also dangerous. When I arrived at the scene this morning, I didn't dare to look directly at him. Occasionally, I would glance at him and see large amounts of blood, flames, and death.

"I didn't want to tell you at first. I felt that if I said it, fate would suffocate me. Phew, it actually seems okay to say it now. It seems I'm too sensitive."

That dangerous? As expected of a great adventurer who received a bounty of 600,000 verl d'or at once... While Camus, who knew about Louis Berry's deeds, wasn't overly shocked, this was the first time he had heard a Monster like Kolobo describe someone in such a way.

Camus patted Kolobo's shoulder.

"Thank you. I'll be careful."

With that settled, he asked curiously, "Was Louis Berry the first person to give you such a feeling?"

"No, there's another one." Kolobo shook his head.

"Who is it?" Camus was surprised.

Kolobo's expression suddenly turned serious.

"I can't say. I'll die if I say it. I'll die!" Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

With that, the thin Beyonder swiftly left Camus's office.

…

Upon returning to Hotel Orella, Lumian headed straight for the master bedroom.

In the subterranean suite, even during the scorching season, a refreshing coolness lingered in the air.

On the desk in the master bedroom, a neatly folded letter awaited Lumian.

Madam Magician's response… Lumian picked up the letter and began reading.

"Excellent. You have a good understanding of yourself.

"The Rose School of Thought and the Numinous Episcopate will be managed by dedicated personnel. No need for you to take unnecessary risks. Concentrate on dealing with Hisoka. If they request your help, you may cooperate.

"The Beyonder characteristics left behind by members of the Rose School of Thought, especially those of the Devil and Prisoner pathways, come with a certain level of troublesome corruption. It's advisable not to sell them or randomly seek out an Artisan to craft items. If you need to, you can sell them to me or let me find an Artisan. Keeping them in the Traveler's Bag is also fine. Compared to the Shadow Branch boxing gloves, Mr. Fool's seal, and the attention and influence of other items on you, they're as weak as an ordinary newborn baby."

Relieved by this response, Lumian took a breath and activated the black mark on his right shoulder, vanishing from the room.

After a while, he materialized atop a bell tower on Avenue du Boulevard in Trier.

Directly support the authors on WebNovel!

Gazing at the luxurious Champs-élysées in the distance and the already lit lamps, Lumian couldn't hold back any longer. He needed to carefully consider the information he had just obtained from Camus.

With the Berserk Sea, the Feynapotter Kingdom, and half of the Intis Republic between them, Lumian could devise a plan to hunt Hisoka without worrying about the enemy sensing malice and danger!

Perhaps only an Angel could sense over such a distance.

Though Lumian lacked specific information about his target or Hisoka's identity and had no concrete plan, caution was paramount when he had the ability to be cautious.

Relying on his Ascetic trait, he endured, putting aside thoughts of the corresponding matters. Only when far from Port Pylos and the Southern Continent did he carefully consider details, allowing his thoughts to run free.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Lumian vanished from the bell tower.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

The pendulum clock struck 7 p.m.

…

The next morning.

Upon entering the hall, Camus spotted Louis Berry, adorned in a golden straw hat, seated on a sofa in the reception area.

Why is he here again? Recalling Kolobo's warning, Camus frowned and approached with concern.

"What can I do for you this time?" he asked calmly, keeping his emotions in check.

Lumian chuckled.

"I need some information, but it won't be from you. Find a reliable teammate who isn't privy to our discussion yesterday evening. Meet me at the Matani Import and Export Shop.

"I can offer 5,000 verl d'or for this."

A peculiar request… 5,000 verl d'or. How generous… Is he trying to avoid a Devil's danger premonition? Camus, an experienced official Beyonder, quickly made the connection.

He refrained from overthinking and pondered for a moment before responding, "Agreed."

Heading into the office area, Lumian rose and departed, making his way to the Matani Import and Export Shop nearby.

Soon, a man sat opposite Lumian, who was savoring his coffee.

The man, with dark hair and a relatively thin build, was a member of the patrol team who had accompanied them to the scene yesterday. Today, he wore dark-black sunglasses, giving him the appearance of a blind individual.

"I'm Kolobo. Camus mentioned a chance to earn 5,000 verl d'or," the patrol team member introduced himself in fluent Intisian.

Amused, Lumian observed Kolobo's demeanor. Taking out a pen and paper, he counted out 5,000 verl d'or notes and slid them over.

"Write down the Prisoner pathway Beyonder's name and details from the patrol team. Ensure I don't catch sight of it. Fold it into a square after writing."

Kolobo, almost as if blind, fumbled for the banknotes.

He bent down and counted, nearly burying his head under the table.

"Why aren't you looking at me?" Lumian asked with curiosity.

Trembling, Kolobo replied, "I fear I might truly go blind."

Are you able to see something you shouldn't? From the Monster pathway? Lumian pondered but refrained from probing further.

Kolobo turned around and swiftly wrote down the corresponding information on the table behind him, folding the paper and passing it to Lumian.

Without a second glance, Lumian promptly received the information and stowed it in his Traveler's Bag.

After settling the bill for his coffee, he headed to the washroom.

His figure vanished once more.

Chapter 645 "Gifts"

After Louis Berry left the coffee area, Kolobo breathed a sigh of relief. He removed his sunglasses, retrieved the 5,000 verl d'or, and counted it again.

His gut told him this deal would work out. That's the only reason he dared to risk coming to the Matani Import and Export Shop. Still, his whole body had been trembling with fear. He couldn't even keep his eyes open most of the time, and his hands were shaking so badly that he was surprised it was legible.

Trouble always waits until it's ready to explode, he thought, clutching his sunglasses.

He stood up and headed for the door.

Something was wrong. He could feel it. His body tensed with some kind of danger sense he couldn't explain.

His heart raced as he scanned the place professionally, trying to pinpoint the danger. Kolobo's footsteps changed--sometimes fast, sometimes slow. He'd zip off in one direction only to stop short a few paces later.

Kolobo took in the morning sun, the quiet shop that had just opened its doors, and the handful of customers scattered about. Not a single pair of eyes seemed fixed on him, and there was no one lurking in the shadows, observing his every move.

Yet, following his instincts, his feet carried him back to the coffee shop area. That's where he finally stopped, in front of the bathroom sign.

Two years as a Beyonder taught Kolobo the most important lesson: trust your gut. Without thinking, he yanked open the heavy wooden

door and walked inside.

The Matani Import and Export Shop wasn't some back-alley dive. This restroom was big. Three urinals, three stalls, and gas lamps flickered on the clean tile.

Kolobo headed to the sink to splash cold water on his face. Maybe that would shake this weird danger feeling that was creeping all over him.

As he looked up, a face stared back at him in the mirror.

But it wasn't his.

The face was freakishly white. The guy looked late twenties, with light brown skin and eyes that flashed a dark, sickly green. He stared at Kolobo with dead, cold eyes.

Kolobo's brain short-circuited as recognition hit.

Twanaku Tupi??n, the only Prisoner pathway Beyonder on their patrol team. The guy had become a Sequence 6 Zombie last year.

He was also the first guy to ever make Kolobo's skin crawl. If he told anyone else, he gut told him he'd end up dead!

When Lumian asked Kolobo to spill the beans about the Prisoner pathway Beyonder on his team, something about it felt wrong. He'd almost bailed on the whole deal. He'd counted that huge 50,000 sum not out of distrust but because he needed time to think, to weigh the risk.

He decided to trust his gut, but he hadn't told Lumian about this feeling, this fear of Tupi??n...

And now, here Twanaku Tupi??n was, reflected in the mirror.

This is a Sequence 5 Wraith power. When did he advance? Kolobo could barely think over the growing horror. Suddenly, his body felt like it'd been dropped into an icy lake.

Twanaku Twanaku's face in the mirror vanished.

Kolobo could barely move. An icy coldness gripped him, the kind that chilled you to the bone.

It wasn't his own hands that were moving--they lifted without him wanting them to. A voice drifted through his ears, flat and emotionless.

"Looks like my cover is blown. You were actually asked to provide my information.

"I'll get out of Port Pylos, but I'm going to leave two gifts for Lumian Lee."

What did that even mean? What kind of gift? And who the heck was Lumian Lee? Kolobo's thoughts were a jumbled mess. His own hands were tightening around his neck.

Then, with a sickening jolt, he realized what "gift" the voice was talking about.

Twanaku Tupi??n was going to kill him and leave a gift--his dead body!

But he said two gifts. What was the other one?

...

In the four-story beige building of the patrol team.

Camus sipped his Highlander coffee and read the West Balam Telegraph, contemplating the deal between Kolobo and Louis Berry.

If successful, as an intermediary, he would receive 20% of the amount.

Knock, knock, knock. A gentle rap echoed on Camus's office door.

"Please come in." Though not particularly young, Camus had ample experience, leading one of the patrol team's operations teams. If there were a vacancy for the vice-captain position, his only competition would be Twanaku Tupi??n of the Prisoner pathway.

The Southern Continent was a chaotic place, especially in an area torn between multiple factions. Whether dealing with the bloodthirsty Rose School of Thought, the ominous Numinous Episcopate, ambitious adventurers, spies from various countries, or missionaries, danger lurked at every corner. Some would take the initiative to assassinate patrol team members, while others would rebel and escape. Meticulous planning was not uncommon, and even the patrol team members found themselves as targets. Consequently, the patrol team faced casualties every year, leading to a constant need for new recruits.

Encountering more attacks had its advantages. Victorious confrontations often yielded valuable items and Beyonder-related ingredients. Many of the patrol team's advancement formulas and potions were acquired in such situations, creating a noteworthy trend.

Compared to cities of similar size in the Northern Continent, Port Pylos had an even greater number of official Beyonders, especially Mid-Sequence Beyonders. However, they lacked higher levels of power or corresponding Sealed Artifacts.

Camus found himself in a tight spot financially due to his rapid advancement outpacing his cousins.

Arriving in Matani State and Port Pylos as a Sequence 9 Arbiter, he had swiftly climbed to a Sequence 7 Justiciar in just five years. His goal was to advance to Sequence 6 and become a Judge, and he had recently been gathering the funds to purchase the necessary materials. If the opportunity to become a vice-captain arose, the patrol team would certainly contribute resources to aid his advancement.

Spoils of war weren't always suitable for him; sometimes, he needed to trade with teammates or sell them to the patrol team for money. He patiently waited for the potion formulas and Beyonder ingredients corresponding to his pathway to appear.

The patrol team, being relatively new, hadn't accumulated substantial reserves. Camus needed to find a way to purchase practical mystical items, regularly replenish charms, potions, and other essentials to

stay prepared against assassinations and conflicts.

In such a situation, money was naturally scarce.

Chaos was a path to hell but also a ladder to the top!

Pugilist Sow entered.

With his brown braids gently swaying, Sow, clad in a sky-blue shirt and beige pants, approached Camus with one hand in his pocket, smiling as he asked, "Have you seen Kolobo? I need to discuss something with him."

Camus had already prepared a reason.

"He went to the Import and Export Shop to buy coffee beans."

Sow tersely acknowledged, "Then I'll wait for him to return."

"What's up?" Camus asked casually.

Sow took two steps forward and smiled.

"There's an investigation we would like to involve him in. Maybe he can uncover clues that others can't."

"You bastards, aren't you concerned about Kolobo getting hurt?" Camus replied with amusement, lifting his coffee and taking a sip.

At that moment, Sow withdrew his right hand from his trouser pocket, holding a poker card flickering with a metallic gleam between his thumb and index finger.

The card portrayed a grayish-white clown.

With a swift motion, Sow hurled the poker card at Camus's head.

…

In the men's washroom of the Matani Import and Export Shop.

Kolobo finally caught his reflection in the mirror.

His skin had turned a sickly green, and his hands were locked around his own neck, the pressure making his bones crack. Twanaku Tupián stared back at him from his bright blue eyes.

Kolobo tried to scream, but nothing came out. He wanted to run, but his legs wouldn't move.

It was like his body wasn't his anymore—it was killing him.

Ugh… A choked sound finally escaped Kolobo's throat, too quiet for anyone to hear. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Fear and despair tightened around his heart.

Then, Kolobo's fingers slipped.

A figure emerged from the shadows by the bathroom vents.

Lumian—black hair, green eyes, all dressed in black and white with a golden straw hat.

A flicker of surprise crossed his face, then understanding. He held a black bone flute to his lips.

A hum resounded, accompanied by a melancholic tune echoing from the dark red holes.

Symphony of Hatred!

Why did I only sense malice and danger now… Just as this thought crossed Twanaku's mind, Twanaku's murderous intent exploded, fueled by the haunting melody.

Silently, a figure peeled away from Kolobo's body. It was Twanaku Tupián, his light brown skin gone deathly pale.

Blood vessels bulged in his yellow eyes, threatening to burst.

The Symphony of Hatred tore into Kolobo, already weak with fear.

His heart almost stopped. He crumpled to the floor, barely alive.

Lumian stopped the melody. Holding the black bone flute, he slid

back into the shadows and under the vent.

A moment later, he reappeared behind Twanaku Tupián, who was practically vibrating with murderous intent. Lumian lifted the flute, its blood-colored holes gleaming ominously, and took a breath.

Finally, you're here!

Chapter 646 Indoor Fight

Twanaku Tupián's ears rang, his eyes stinging with blood. His mind burned, his thoughts scattering like sparks. For an agonizing moment, he couldn't process his situation, couldn't even think about the enemy closing in.

Blood, smelling strangely metallic, trickled from his eyes and nose. His pale skin darkened ominously.

"Ha!"

Lumian spat a blast of pale-yellow light, hitting the suspected Hisoka from barely two meters away.

Twanaku's eyes slammed shut, and he collapsed. Before he hit the ground, Lumian's Symphony of Hatred, a black bone flute, jabbed towards his neck.

Instantly, the tiled bathroom floor dissolved into a vast, muddy expanse of darkness. Arms burst upward.

Some were stripped of skin, all raw muscle and glistening tendon. Others twisted and ghostly, pale and transparent. Some bore bulging eyes that spun madly, others sprouted thick green growths…

The grotesque limbs tore at Lumian and Twanaku, clawing and dragging.

This was Twanaku's spell, a death-type enchantment once called Vengeful Wraith's Entanglement, meant to summon an undead horde to paralyze his targets.

But as a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Devil pathway, his power twisted the spell into something new—the Fallen Abyss!

He could alter a space in advance, allowing undead or fallen creatures to lurk beneath the surface. Anyone unfortunate enough to step inside would be grabbed by unseen arms and dragged into the muddy, pitch-black depths. The Abyss would slow and weaken its victims, the icy touch of the undead stealing their strength with agonizing speed. If they were pulled all the way under, they'd be corrupted and lost.

Twanaku had cast this spell in the bathroom before attacking Kolobo. He hadn't wanted any nosy employees or customers to stumble on the scene, but it turned out to be a lucky break. That's why he'd appeared in the mirror instead of right inside Kolobo's eyes. Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Lumian's attack with the Symphony of Hatred came to an abrupt halt.

Countless arms wrapped around his ankles, calves, hips, and torso. A wave of icy stiffness washed over him, his movements turning sluggish.

It was the same for Twanaku. With the Wraith and Desire Apostle unconscious, the Fallen Abyss slipped from his control, leaving him vulnerable. His limp body was seized by the strange arms and dragged to the ground.

Nearby, Kolobo, badly injured and out for the count, was pulled into the muddy, pitch-black depths of the illusory Abyss.

A burst of crimson flames exploded from Lumian's body, surrounding him like a blazing cloak.

The flames roared, scorching most of the arms into retreat. Still, some remained unaffected, their grip relentless. A creeping coldness numbed Lumian's body, but he regained a sliver of his former agility.

Before, he could have simply lunged forward, thrusting the black bone flute towards his enemy's neck. But now, the target—the one he believed was Hisoka—was about to vanish into the ground.

Thud!

Twanaku slammed into the ground, the impact jarring him awake.

The Spell of Harrumph's grip faded, and he finally regained his senses.

His toughest moment, that relentless surge of desire, was behind him.

Lumian lowered his head, a single scornful sound escaping him.

"Hmph!"

Twin beams of white light shot out while Lumian retracted his hands, fingers slipping back into his Traveler's Bag.

The beams missed their mark, but horrifying, bloody arms sprouted from the ground, a gruesome forest that blocked Twanaku from their path.

With a flash of awareness, Twanaku seized control of the Fallen Abyss spell, shielding himself and attacking his enemy.

The arms hit by the Spell of Harrumph softened, sinking back into the pitch-black mud as if drained.

Twanaku took his chance. His body twisted, morphing into a dark, oozing malevolence, a shape born from the darkest shadows of his heart.

Silently, Twanaku transformed into an illusory, viscous, and foul black liquid, merging with the muddy Abyss and vanishing.

The evil arms, unfazed by the flames, clung to Lumian, limiting his movement.

His hands flew to his Traveler's Bag, pulling out a suit of gleaming silver armor.

He set the armor beside him, sinking it firmly into the pitch-black mud.

Pride Armor!

Evil, writhing arms erupted from the illusory Abyss—and the corresponding spirit world. Guided by the spell, they lunged for the

Pride Armor, seizing its ankles, legs, torso, and back.

The Pride Armor struck back, a broadsword of pure light flashing in its hand. Blinding, holy light flooded the washroom.

The shadowy arms recoiled with hisses of black smoke, retreating into the depths.

The pitch-black mud dissolved, revealing the bathroom's stone tiles.

Kolobo, who'd been on the brink of sinking into the Abyss, lay unconscious on the floor.

Just meters away, near the washroom door, a figure of viscous black liquid prepared to flee.

Now free, Twanaku came to a swift decision.

He wouldn't waste time trying to possess Lumian Lee. Instead, he'd abandon the Matani Import and Export Shop—and Port Pylos!

It was a trap. He had to escape before it closed around him. Staying to fight back was foolish—he couldn't risk lingering just to satisfy his rage and murderous desire.

That would be far too dangerous!

Twanaku was glad he'd chosen to give Lumian Lee those two "gifts". He'd even divided his favorite mystical items to do it. The patrol team should be in chaos by now, focused on a false target.

The distraction would give him his chance to escape.

Before, Twanaku hadn't been focused on killing Camus. His priority was taking out Kolobo and escaping. If everything went smoothly, there shouldn't be problems for either side. Any chaos caused by Camus's death would be a bonus—

distracting the enemy by having the other passing off as the real deal.

He'd sent that extra "gift" as a precaution, not some bloodthirsty urge!

…

In Camus's office, nestled inside the patrol team's beige four-

story building, a poker card shimmered with metallic light as it hurtled towards him. Coffee was the last thing on his mind. He dove behind his desk with a surge of adrenaline, planning to send the table flying back at Sow before blasting him with Psychic Piercing.

The joker-faced card soared over Camus's head, missing its target.

But then, as if it had a mind of its own, the card swerved and plunged down, aiming for Camus's back.

It seemed to melt right into him, vanishing in a flash.

Sow's grin stretched wider. He strode to the desk, yanking the broadsword from his back.

…

Inside the men's bathroom of the Matani Import and Export Shop.

A figure made of thick, black liquid slipped through the crack under the door then strangely reformed in its original spot.

Bottle of Fiction!

The moment Lumian harbored malice and took out the Symphony of Hatred from the Traveler's Bag, Lumian had used this bathroom vent as a base, using the Bottle of Fiction to set one condition: only females could enter or exit!

That way, innocent customers wouldn't stumble into the dangerous Beyonder battle. And Hisoka couldn't escape without destroying the Bottle of Fiction first!

The black, liquid figure spread toward the vent, dodging the two white beams from Lumian.

Twanaku was done with dodging. His body swelled and warped, transforming into a monstrous giant almost three meters tall.

The monster's skin turned a dull, dark shade, and a pair of curved goat horns marked with strange patterns sprouted from his head. Colossal bat wings wreathed in blue and crimson flames lashed out, releasing a stinging, sulfurous stench.

Devil Transformation!

This was the signature power of a Sequence 6 Devil from the Prisoner pathway—a boost to strength, speed, defense… everything.

Lumian knew his target, the one he thought was Hisoka, was on high alert, braced to dodge his Spell of Harrumph. He stopped using it.

He decided against the Symphony of Hatred too. The situation was different.

Before, his enemy had been fueled by bloodlust in his murder attempt on Kolobo, a perfect trigger. Now, there was only a cold, emotionless focus.

With no guarantee that the Symphony of Hatred would work

—or that it wouldn't backfire—Lumian wasn't taking that chance.

Instead, a crimson spear sparked into existence. From a few meters away, he hurled it at the suspected Hisoka.

The second the spear left his hand, Lumian vanished.

He couldn't stay put. Possession by the Wraith, a mind-

shattering psychic blast from a Desire Apostle, some twisted desire spell—any of those were a risk!

Chapter 647 "Inexplicable Action"

In the face of the flaming spear, Twanaku's eyes, now crimson from the Devil Transformation, reflected dancing and burning crimson flames.

He remained unfazed. Instead, he conjured an aberration--a broadsword made of crimson magma and pale-blue flames.

Swiftly turning, Twanaku exposed his back to the flaming spear. With the magma broadsword in hand, he slashed at the foe who had seemingly teleported behind him, launching an attack.

The broadsword, adorned with crimson magma and pale-blue flames, sliced through the air but missed Lumian. It left only an exaggerated mark on the wall behind, a testament to its destructive force.

Had it not been for the Bottle of Fiction's protection, the bathroom wall would have been split in half. Even so, the bottle visibly trembled, bearing some damage.

The nearly white flaming spear also struck Twanaku's back, piercing a little before being halted by the elastic dark skin and sturdy flesh. It failed to penetrate the Devil's body, leaving only blackened traces from the resulting inferno.

Devils, armored in thick and tough natural protection, were resistant to flames, poison, and curses to a certain extent. Twanaku, in his Zombie state, possessed a steel-like body that could withstand bullets and cannonballs. Lumian's flaming spear and fireball attacks, as well as the Fire Ravens' onslaught, posed little threat. Standing still, Twanaku could endure repeated attacks without suffering severe injuries.

Additionally, his ability to transform into a Wraith allowed him to evade explosions effortlessly.

"Hisoka" Twanaku believed that, without the support of the Tarot Club, the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, and powerful demigods, he could have tortured Lumian to death. Even with teleportation, spells rendering him temporarily unconscious, and mystical items, most of Lumian's attacks were ineffective against Wraiths and Desire Apostle Beyonders. The Psychic Shock and Desire Detonation further restrained him, leaving him vulnerable to the assaults of Wraiths and undead creatures. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Having missed his strike, Twanaku noticed Lumian's figure reappear in midair.

As anticipated, Lumian had chosen to teleport behind and launch an attack. However, there was a notable change compared to previous encounters.

Hovering near the ceiling and the vent, Lumian opened his mouth and emitted a harrumph.

The moment a pale-yellow light shot out, Hisoka Twanaku's figure faded and vanished.

In Lumian's pupils, a devilish figure materialized--dark skin, long goat horns, bat wings on its back, and no longer wielding the Sword of Lava.

Swiftly, Twanaku transformed into a Wraith, leaping into Lumian's eyes, deftly dodging the Spell of Harrumph's attack.

Devil Transformation didn't impede his Wraith abilities!

Lumian's face paled, a dark-green hue tinting his features. His hands involuntarily rose, reaching for his neck, and his body plummeted to the ground.

Prepared for such a situation, Lumian didn't resist. While he could still struggle, he didn't halt his hands or resist the Wraith's control. Instead, he sank his consciousness into his right hand.

The frenzied, bloody aura of superiority dissipated slightly, causing Twanaku to instinctively tremble.

He subconsciously detached from Lumian's body and leaped onto the sink.

Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder, vanishing before crashing to the ground.

This time, he appeared behind the motionless silver-white full-body armor.

Behind!

The Pride Armor spun around abruptly, raising the broadsword of light and slashing at Lumian in the not-too-small bathroom. Lumian employed Spirit World Traversal once more, vanishing from the silver armor's path.

Within the mirror, "Hisoka" Twanaku was somewhat bewildered.

Why did Lumian Lee provoke his Sealed Artifact and engage in combat with it?

Am I not his enemy target?

The negative effects of a Sealed Artifact?

Though he didn't understand what was going on, Twanaku sensed danger instinctively.

His Danger Premonition, along with a possible insight from Emperor Roselle--"If something shows signs of abnormality, there must be an abnormal factor hidden. Such factors often signify danger."

Without hesitation, Twanaku left the sink and leaped to the bathroom door in his colossal Devil form.

Conjuring a dozen or so light-blue Sulfur Fireballs, he directed them at the wooden door in unison.

Twanaku, who had shaken the Bottle of Fiction with his sword, knew

that the current seal could be broken by brute force. There was no need to find the true exit or kill the enemy who had constructed the seal.

For this reason, he chose to forgo teaming up with the full-body armor to assail Lumian.

He reckoned that any further delay, even if Lumian Lee were to fall on the spot, would lead to him being surrounded, facing a lethal blow with no chance of escaping alive.

In such a scenario, killing Lumian Lee would render the effort meaningless!

Certainly, Twanaku wasn't about to let Lumian off easily. Following the Sulfur Fireball assault, he clenched his fists and spoke a word in Devil language filled with depravity and filth.

"Slow!"

This was a manifestation of the Language of Foulness, capable of stiffening and even halting the movements of targets within a seven- to eight-meter radius for approximately two seconds.

Considering the bathroom's size, this radius covered the entire area.

Lumian's form reappeared.

Once more, he teleported behind the Pride Armor, conjuring a crimson fireball almost white in his hand.

Influenced by the Language of Foulness, both Lumian and the Pride Armor moved sluggishly. One "slowly" launched a fireball, while the other struggled to turn around, as if its joints had rusted.

Rumble!

The Sulfur Fireballs erupted against the bathroom door.

A translucent, illusory membrane materialized on the bathroom's side. Like glass, it shattered inch by inch, leaving crisscrossing marks that teetered on the brink of collapse.

The wooden door appeared charred and pieced together, reminiscent of a child's broken toy hastily glued back together.

Observing this, "Hisoka" Twanaku grasped that another strike could completely shatter the seal.

This time, he gathered seven to eight light-blue Sulfur Fireballs.

On the opposite end, Lumian's fireball finally collided with the Pride Armor's back, assisted by the explosive waves.

Amidst the rumbling and clanging, the silver armor stiffened.

Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder once more and teleported away from his current location.

Almost simultaneously, the Pride Armor overcame the effects of Slow with abnormal swiftness, swiftly turning around.

However, it still couldn't lock onto its target.

Twanaku felt a surge of amusement bubbling within him but maintained an unusual vigilance. His only wish was that the relentless bombardment would shatter the seal completely, granting him an avenue for escape.

In the next moment, the Sulfur Fireballs collided with the wooden door at the bathroom entrance. Twanaku witnessed the silver-white full-body armor squat down, driving the broadsword of light into the ground.

Wh— Twanaku's pupils dilated as he instinctively readied himself to transform into a Wraith.

Yet, he held back, exercising restraint. Aware of the potential consequences within the Warrior pathway, he understood the risk of subjecting himself to even greater harm.

Rumble!

Simultaneously with the explosion of the Sulfur Fireballs, the Sword of Dawn, embedded in the crevice in the stone tiles by the Pride

Armor, disintegrated into fragments of light. Densely packed, they formed a flickering, violent, and sharp hurricane that swept in all directions, filled with the intent to annihilate everything.

Hurricane of Light!

Since it couldn't lock onto the backstabber, it opted for a wide-ranging assault!

The sharp and terrifying storm of light enveloped Twanaku and Kolobo on the ground. Lumian materialized in front of the latter, crouched down, shielding vital points. He faced the formidable hurricane head-on.

The washroom bore the brunt of the assault. The urinal was wrecked, and the cubicles silently collapsed, shedding a layer of bricks.

As a depraved creature, Twanaku had nowhere to hide. All he could do was endure the damage, his eyes flickering with a sharp light.

In the radiant blades' storm, Lumian's figure cracked inch by inch, shattering into numerous mirror fragments.

Mirror Substitution!

With his obstruction, Kolobo avoided fatal injuries but couldn't escape multiple bleeding wounds.

…

In Camus's office, within the beige four-story building housing the patrol team.

Crouched behind a table, Camus's face turned pale, tinged with a dark-green hue. It was as if a grayish-white clown laughed exaggeratedly in his eyes.

Camus strained to ignite bolts of lightning in his eyes, piercing Sow's mind. His betraying teammate grimaced in pain, causing his broadsword to lose strength and direction, crashing into the desk and failing to hit Camus.

In that critical moment, Camus drew a silver revolver from his right hand, aiming it not at Sow but at himself.

Across the street, in a room facing Camus's office,

Jenna, holding a telescope, huddled by the curtain, closely monitored Camus's condition.

Seeing the other party under attack and struggling, she swiftly grabbed the loudspeaker she had prepared and brought it to her mouth.

"Camus has been attacked!

"Camus has been attacked by the Rose School of Thought!

"Camus is being attacked in his office!"

The loudspeaker's sound reverberated through every room of the patrol team.

Chapter 648 Teamwork

On the top floor of the beige building belonging to the patrol team, a middle-aged man in a thin black suit heard Jenna's voice.

Without bothering to trace the source of the shout, he stood up abruptly and retrieved a white human skull, seemingly carved from crystal, from his hidden pocket.

The man, a mix of Intis and West Balam lineage, held the crystal skull and recited a mysterious language with a strong sense of death.

In the next moment, a decaying palm extended from the void in front of him. Its joints were thick, and its skin was bleeding, revealing signs of decay.

The palm belonged to a corpse that looked vaguely human but, upon closer inspection, resembled a monster.

Over 1.8 meters tall, its face concealed by a rusty bronze mask, and its torso composed of corpses from various species, including lions, tigers, black wolves, baboons, giant serpents, vultures, and humans themselves--all in a severe state of rot.

The corpse's bronze mask flickered with dark-red lights in its eyes as it took a step forward, arriving in Camus's office.

Faced with Camus, who had a revolver in his right hand, staggering toward his forehead, the monstrous corpse removed its bronze mask.

Underneath the mask, there was no nose, flesh, or bones. Only two dark-red balls of light and a mouth that occupied four-fifths of the head.

The mouth opened wide, revealing a pitch-black interior.

A terrifying suction force emanated from the mouth, affecting Camus's spirit but having no effect on the documents, newspapers, and other items on the desk. It only caused Camus's spirit to surface, as if pulled by an invisible force, about to be plunged into hell.

As Camus's Spirit Body materialized, the grayish-white clown seeped out of his flesh, revealing its complete form--a magnified, illusory poker card.

The poker card had no body of its own and was swiftly drawn out by the pitch-black mouth beneath the bronze mask. Camus's Spirit Body struggled.

Smack!

The poker card materialized and fell to the ground, emitting the sound of a heavy object colliding with solid bricks, but there was no metallic sound.

...

In the Matani Import and Export Shop, the male bathroom lay in ruins. The door and the wall facing the corridor crumbled into fragments, scattering for several meters, as if a storm had passed through.

The Bottle of Fiction had lost its effect.

Amidst the residual fragments of light and the lingering sulfur smell, Twanaku rolled out in his Devil form.

His pitch-black skin bore hideous wounds, and his flesh seemed to evaporate. Half of the two curved goat horns on his head were gone, and viscous black liquid flowed from the cracks.

The bat-like wings on his back were tattered and drooping.

With Twanaku's formidable physical strength, the Hurricane of Light from the Pride Armor shouldn't have caused such tragic and severe damage, but he was a Devil.

The Hurricane of Light possessed the unique ability to destroy evil

creatures and undead beings.

It was like Twanaku undergoing purification while being sliced by a fragmentary blade. What made it more potent was their collaboration. Purification weakened defense and inflicted harm on the evil creature's spirit and flesh, while the fragmentary blade utilized purification to weaken defense and cut through flesh. The more wounds and the deeper they were, the better the purification effect.

Had Twanaku not resisted in his Devil form and instead transformed into a Wraith, he might have faced severe injury, teetering on the brink of death, or even elimination.

The Hurricane of Light could vanquish Wraiths and injure evil spirits.

Despite being severely injured, Twanaku, still capable of combat, calmly suppressed his tyrannical and bloodthirsty emotions. Realizing he had escaped the seal, he prepared to transform into a Wraith and escape through the surrounding mirrors.

Just as he made this decision, a sudden sense of Danger Premonition struck him.

The malice came from behind, and in the shadows outside the bathroom, Franca, dressed in an Assassin suit, emerged, raising her left hand.

On her left thumb, she wore an iron-colored ring with a thick band and a surface covered in small spikes--Ring of Punishment! The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Franca's lake-blue eyes flickered with lightning, moving many times faster than the fastest bullets, shooting out silently with

Psychic Piercing!

Hidden Blade... Why do I only sense her malice now... The severely injured Twanaku couldn't dodge in time and suddenly heard an illusory shattering sound.

The shattering sound echoed from Twanaku's Spirit Body, and intense

pain flooded his mind, compelling him to raise his hands to cover his head.

Seizing the opportunity, Franca swiftly took out a mirror and reflected Twanaku in his Devil form.

Black flames ignited in her left palm as she smeared it across the mirror's surface--

Demoness's curse!

Black flames erupted from Twanaku's body, but nearly two-thirds were suppressed by his flesh and blood, leaving only a portion of the colossal Devil's Spirit Body to be incinerated.

Being a Devil, immune to curses to a certain extent, helped Twanaku endure the Demoness's curse better, given his already ravaged state from the Hurricane of Light.

Finally free from the influence of Psychic Piercing, Twanaku, with his Spirit Body engulfed in black flames, transformed into a pitch-black, viscous liquid.

These liquids seemed to originate from the darkest corners of the human heart, representing the most sinister and shadowy desires and emotions.

Twanaku abandoned Wraith Form, choosing Desire Apostle's Desire Incarnation because Demoness's black flames targeted the Spirit Body more.

Before the pitch-black viscous liquid could fully elongate into a human figure, he fled into the nearby darkness, sensing a strong Danger Premonition in his heart.

At the corridor's entrance, Anthony Reid, donned in military-

green attire, appeared in a blind spot.

His eyes took on a faint golden hue, transforming into vertical pupils —Psychological Invisibility!

Frenzy!

Twanaku's mind buzzed, instantly breaking free from his Desire Incarnation state. Bloodshot eyes and livor mortis appeared on his body, emitting sulfurous blood.

He entered a frenzied state. Already grievously injured and subjected to Psychic Piercing and the Demoness's curse, he was on the verge of losing control.

Rumble!

Light-blue sulfur fireballs pelted the surroundings, propelled by Twanaku's wild instincts.

Franca's form quickly shattered into mirror fragments, while Anthony's body sprouted grayish-white dragon scales. He leaped toward the wall for cover.

Rumble!

Using up Franca's Mirror Substitution, Lumian teleported behind the frenzied Twanaku.

Having already unleashed the accumulated spirituality and strength within him, Lumian's spirituality surged, no longer drained.

Enduring the scorching sulfur flames and the blast's impact, Lumian focused on the oblivious, frenzied Twanaku. He harrumphed.

Two beams of white light shot from his nose, hitting what appeared to be Hisoka.

Twanaku collapsed, and the signs of madness began to fade.

Lumian didn't allow him to reach the ground. Extending his right hand, he grabbed Twanaku by the shoulder and teleported him into the spirit world!

In seconds, Lumian materialized at the edge of the primitive forest near Port Pylos.

Even during this process, he let out a harrumph. The pale-

yellow light emitted from his mouth knocked Twanaku out again, preventing him from regaining consciousness.

At that moment, a woman stood at the edge of the primitive forest. It was Hela, dressed like a black widow but not as distant as before.

Observing Twanaku, no longer in his colossal Devil state but emitting a sulfuric scent, with dark patterns on his skin, Hela nodded at Lumian and said, "It should be Hisoka."

Every time Hisoka participated in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, he only disguised himself superficially. If Hisoka's true identity was targeted, Hela, who was responsible for providing the gathering venue and entrance method, could still recognize him.

"Ha!" Lumian chuckled and added a new Spell of Harrumph to Hisoka.

Hela seized his arm and chanted an incantation.

The two of them, along with Hisoka, vanished like pencil drawings erased by an eraser.

In the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight.

As Lumian emerged from his concealed state, he harrumphed.

Two beams of white light descended, and Hisoka remained unconscious.

Hela's tone chilled as she remarked, "I'll let you enter the same dream."

"Thank you." Lumian released Hisoka, reclining against a broken stone pillar.

Moments later, his thoughts blurred until he heard Hela's voice.

"It's done."

Lumian snapped back, gazing into the interrogation room where Hisoka sat opposite.

This member of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, Twanaku Tupián, bore light-brown skin, a blend of Northern and Southern Continent descent. His eyes gleamed flaxen, his hair dark. While not unattractive, his demeanor exuded indifference to life.

At the sight, Lumian's lips curved into a smile.

He had sought Hela's assistance primarily to craft an environment where he could safely unveil his plans after capturing Hisoka alive.

Otherwise, restraining Hisoka's resistance would have posed a significant challenge. Communicating with him would have been impossible if he remained unconscious until his demise. Destroying Hisoka's frontal lobe would strip away frustration, pain, and resentment, making it difficult to fulfill the requirements of the Reaper ritual.

Upon spotting Lumian, Hisoka suddenly struggled, but an invisible force held him back, preventing his transformation into a Wraith.

This was a dream controlled by Hela.

Hisoka calmed down and gazed at Lumian, posing the greatest question on his mind, "How did you manage to evade my Danger Premonition?"

Lumian's smile deepened. He looked down at Hisoka and said casually, "No need for a Demon Hunter's assistance. A sufficient distance and a Hypnotist would do the trick."

Chapter 649 Conspiracy Showcase

Sufficient distance and a Hypnotist... Hisoka repeated Lumian's words as if he had realized something.

Lumian stood in front of him, looking down, and questioned, "Do you think that, apart from Demon Hunters and higher-level Beyonders of the corresponding pathway, Devils mainly get killed based on chance encounters in battles?"

Hisoka regarded Lumian with indifference and remained silent.

Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down, crossing his right foot over his left knee. Casually, he said, "I've read a mysticism book about Devils. It's filled with numerous cases of hunting Devils.

"It's clear that Beyonders of most pathways rely on chance encounters to kill specific Devils. That's what I believed back then. However, when I revisited the detailed description of Devil abilities, I found a contradiction.

"This is how the mysticism book describes your Danger Premonition:

"Danger Premonition, also known as Malicious Perception--if an enemy can soon cause lethal harm to a Devil and takes clear action to do so, a Devil can sense the danger in advance and grasp the source. They can target it, kill it, take revenge, or escape, but it's impossible to know the exact details of the plan. Different Devils have different intuition ranges--from a few minutes to a day, from a few kilometers to as wide as a city."

"What's the contradiction between this and a battle encounter?" Hisoka asked, sitting upright, cold and curious.

"According to this description, Devils can indeed sense a battle encounter," Lumian said with a smile. "For example, even though I only intended to have a cup of coffee today and suddenly encountered a Devil, and had no choice but to kill him. For that Devil, it's literal. He should have sensed that my coffee-drinking at the caf?? would pose a fatal danger to him in advance and that it would happen, but that's not the case in reality."

Observing Hisoka's thoughtful expression, Lumian clasped his hands together.

"This means that a Devil's Danger Premonition doesn't stem from fate. If it were a powerful Beyonder of the Monster pathway, there's a high chance they would suddenly feel that coffee isn't suitable today and avoid danger. But you can't.

"Since a Devil's Danger Premonition doesn't stem from precognition of fate, where does it stem from?

"Once, a high-ranking Demon enlightened me about the concept of the Abyss. According to its perspective, the Abyss holds two dimensions. The first is physical, with an entrance hidden somewhere in the real world. The second is in the mind, with an entrance nestled deep within everyone's hearts.

"Considering this insight, I believe we need to tweak the foundation of a Devil's Danger Premonition.

"It kicks in only when an adversary has a well-defined plan capable of inflicting fatal harm on a Devil soon. That's when the Devil can sense it beforehand.

"Got it? A more distinct thought process or intent."

Lumian adopted the cadence of Madam Magician to taunt Hisoka, weaving the narrative of his conspiracy.

"In the beginning, I probed bit by bit and investigated step by step. When I stumbled upon crucial information, I purposely skirted around it, leaving me in the dark about who I was dealing with and without a rough plan to handle the target.

"In simpler terms, I didn't have clear thoughts or intentions, and there was no effective plan to cause lethal harm to you anytime soon. Everything was vague, chaotic, and uncommitted, filled with variation and accidents, ensuring you couldn't naturally sense danger.

"However, your position alerted you when I delved into the serial murder from four years ago. Since then, you've been using a Wraith's ability and the patrol team members under your control to keep a vigilant eye on this matter, right?"

Hisoka listened coldly, showing no intention of responding.

Lumian smiled and continued, "After figuring out that you were hiding in the patrol team as a Zombie Sequence Beyonder, I resisted my urges and tried my best not to dwell on such matters. When I returned to the hotel, I immediately teleported to Trier.

"At this distance, you won't be able to sense that I'm formulating a plan and putting it into practice.

"After coming up with a preliminary plan, I went to Hidden Blade and my two other companions to discuss a detailed plan. It was just past 7 p.m. Trier time.

"The next move involved assigning tasks. Each of us had a role to play. We underwent a Hypnotist's Hypnotism, erasing our true purpose from memory. Only when a Devil like you emerged would we recall the specific details.

"My mission was to use teleportation, making it seem like I left, only to return stealthily using shadow concealment. I trailed the patrol team member I interacted with, believing that I was checking if there was anything problematic with him.

"Hidden Blade's mission was to tail me, providing necessary vigilance and support. If I activated the Bottle of Fiction ability, she'd preemptively don the Ring of Punishment and lie in wait outside. The reason for her ambush eluded her until she laid eyes on you. With her combat prowess and intelligence, she instinctively knew what steps to take. No need for me to give detailed instructions.

"The Hypnotist's mission involved using Psychological Invisibility to wander the vicinity, just aimlessly wandering.

"As for the other Demoness, her duty was to monitor the patrol team and promptly report any issues to the authorities. Before your arrival, she too was unaware of the real reason behind her actions. She simply thought we had plans involving the patrol team.

"Before the Hypnotism wore off, none of us had intentions of confronting you. Our individual actions couldn't pose lethal harm to you, ensuring you couldn't foresee it.

"This was a premeditated encounter, a clash pitting you against multiple adversaries."

With that final sentence, Lumian suddenly heard an illusory shattering sound.

He sensed that his Conspirer potion had been fully digested.

He also felt Hisoka's seemingly cold expression, vexation, and regret growing, gnawing at his heart.

Lumian's smile widened. He stood up, leaned forward, and inched his head in front of Hisoka. He looked into Hisoka's bloodshot flaxen-colored eyes and said, "Your biggest mistake was not leaving Port Pylos ahead of time and sticking with the patrol team. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"Why are you so certain I won't track you down?"

"How do you know I enjoy Fermo coffee without sugar?" Hisoka inquired instead of answering.

Sensing his intense anger and killing intent, Lumian straightened up and replied with a smile, "My sister always says that wherever you go, you leave a trace, and I have an expert at finding traces with me.

"Heh heh, Emperor Roselle must have said something similar. You must know what it means."

Hisoka's hands tightened on the chair's armrests as he asked again,

"Why were you so sure I'll kill Kolobo?"

Lumian replied with a sense of satisfaction, "I wasn't certain.

"Didn't I mention I had a Demoness companion monitoring the patrol team?

"Hidden Blade and I believed that if you ultimately choose to escape, you will definitely do something to vent your murderous desires. Otherwise, something might happen to you, considering your Devil and Prisoner pathways. And since you want to kill someone, it's either the patrol team member who traded with me or Camus who gave me the information. It's either at the Matani Shop or in the patrol team."

At this juncture, Lumian guessed with a smile, "You took the gamble of staying in Port Pylos and the patrol team because you wanted to seize an opportunity to kill me? Under the watchful eyes of the Tarot Club and Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, finding a chance to eliminate a promising young man like me and escape unscathed can satisfy your twisted mind to the fullest extent?"

Hisoka subconsciously licked his lips.

"I initially planned to bide my time, waiting for your patience to wear thin and an opportune moment to present itself. But it seems you didn't seek the assistance of the demigods; you only reached out to Hela.

"I should have struck last night."

Hisoka didn't conceal his frustration.

Lumian didn't immediately address the topic. After a few moments of contemplation, he said,

"Waiting for an opportunity… You're quite confident in concealing your identity. Unafraid of normal investigations,

"Is it because the higher-ups of the patrol team allowed a Sequence 6 of the Prisoner pathway to join?"

Hisoka sealed his lips, responding with silence.

"Seems there's a significant secret lurking here." Lumian suddenly sensed a conspiracy. "Is the opportunity you're waiting for connected to this secret?"

Hisoka maintained silence, his eyes transformed, now bloodthirsty and filled with a desire to kill.

"Not willing to share?" Lumian chuckled. "No problem. Let's discuss something else first."

He bent down again, looking at Hisoka.

"In this operation, I sought only Hela. Firstly, to guard against the Nois family Demons who had made contact with you. Secondly, to create an environment for a quiet conversation with you."

At the mention of the Nois family's Demons, Hisoka's gaze subtly shifted.

"How do you know?"

Lumian didn't reply. The corners of his mouth curled up even more.

"I chose Hela because I wanted to capture you alive, relying on my own strength and that of my companions.

"Each of us is weaker than you, and each of us is someone you think you can easily kill. However, as a team, through teamwork, we've put you in a tight spot. You'll descend into hell."

Hisoka shattered the chair's armrest, but he couldn't attack Lumian.

Observing his bloodshot eyes, Lumian retrieved a golden straw hat from his Traveler's Bag, pressed it to his chest, and bowed.

"I'll excuse myself for a moment," he said with a smile.

In the next moment, Lumian left the dream.

Swiftly shifting his sitting position, he leaned against a broken stone

pillar. From his Traveler's Bag, he retrieved Gardner Martin's Beyonder characteristic, teeth, blood, Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard's venom, hornbeam essential oil, and other items.

He had genuinely sensed Hisoka's fear, anger, and frustration. Although it occurred in a dream, it was reflected in Hisoka's brain and body, real and intense.

He was about to concoct the Reaper potion.

Chapter 650 Reaper

In the ancient, crumbling palace of the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian carefully poured Gardner Martin's blood into a measuring cylinder and added the unusually sharp, small white bone blade that emitted a cold light.

During this process, he moved swiftly, paying no attention to the bone-blade-shaped Beyonder characteristic slicing his fingers and causing blood to flow. Instead, he ignited crimson flames, helping the wounds contract and preventing the white bone blade from entering the potion with his blood.

The physical pain heightened Lumian's clarity and excitement. He added Gardner Martin's two teeth, the Colorful Bearded Horned Lizard's venom, and the hornbeam essential oil into the bright red blood.

Bloop! Bloop! Bubbles bubbled in the blood, and the items mysteriously dissolved.

Soon, black iron dregs emerged from the bright-red blood, as if an iron weapon had shattered inside.

Lumian glanced at the still-slumbering "Hisoka" Twanaku, picked up the measuring cylinder, and poured the liquid into his mouth.

The pungent smell of blood, the unfamiliar taste of rust, and the burning sensation instantly filled Lumian's mouth and pierced his brain.

It felt like being caught in a chaotic war, constantly facing blades, firearms, and relentless enemy assaults. Wounds appeared all over his body, throbbing with pain.

Son of a sow, am I being attacked by a potion? Lumian muttered,

bewildered, as he found himself locked in combat with a swarm of oncoming adversaries.

Fireballs, Fire Ravens, and blazing white spears shattered, tore through, or impaled the enemies, turning them into torches that illuminated the battlefield.

After an unknown span of time, Lumian felt his strength waning, his spiritual energy on the brink of exhaustion. The accumulated spirituality of an Ascetic had long been unleashed.

In that moment, a colossal figure materialized before him, radiating a formidable and intimidating aura.

Despite Lumian's weakening state, he sensed the colossal figure's fear, hatred, and frustration.

He's afraid of me... Lumian realized suddenly. Summoning the last shreds of his courage, he condensed a blazing white flaming spear and hurled it at the colossal figure.

A blinding white flame erupted, piercing through the colossal figure's head.

Rumble. The giant figure exploded from within, shattering into countless fragments.

Rumble. The entire battlefield crumbled.

Lumian shook off the daze and found himself in front of a crumbling ancient palace, its stone bricks weathered by time. Hisoka Twanaku still slumbered, and Hela stood silently by his side.

Sweat dripped from Lumian's body, bursting into crimson sparks.

Eventually, the sweat returned to normal.

Phew... Lumian let out a relieved breath. His spirituality was rapidly recovering.

He had advanced to become a Reaper.

Having completed the ritual of capturing a higher Sequence enemy alive and revealing his conspiracy, Lumian had consumed the potion and advanced to Sequence 5, a Reaper of the Hunter pathway.

Compared to his previous Sequences, Reaper bestowed three additional abilities:

The first, Weakness Investigation, allowed Lumian to discern the target's vulnerabilities and weak points in their defenses from a mystic perspective. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

The second, Cull, could be infused into any attack to harvest the target's life. Any part struck by Cull was akin to an assault on vital points and weaknesses, dealing significant damage.

If Cull hit a genuine weakness or vital point, it could deliver a fatal blow, making it challenging for the target to withstand three consecutive attacks.

It could even inflict real damage on demigod-level creatures, provided they didn't block or successfully evade, and refrained from using mystic defenses.

The third, Precision, enabled Lumian to precisely target a predetermined location and manipulate fireballs, Fire Ravens, and other spells that had left his body.

He could split a colossal fireball into hundreds, striking different targets with precision, achieving effective area-of-effect damage.

It was a far cry from a blanket explosion, being more efficient and effective.

Both Cull and Precision demanded a substantial amount of spirituality, rivaling Lumian's current usage of teleportation.

The exception was the combination of Precision and Fire Raven, as Fire Raven could allocate a bit of spirituality and was easily manipulated. Even with Precision, its consumption of spirituality wasn't significant.

Lumian also felt a significant enhancement in his spirituality. His

mind cleared, and his life force intensified. He could compress flames to a blazing white state in an incredibly short time, merging with flaming spears and swiftly covering dozens to hundreds of meters. Ignoring the spirituality consumption, he could travel using this method.

While Lumian's strength, speed, and physique had improved, he was still not resilient enough to withstand a bullet with his body.

...

At the entrance of the mostly collapsed male bathroom in the Matani Import and Export Shop, the silver-white full-body armor burst out, wielding a light-condensed hammer in both hands.

It searched left and right but couldn't locate its target. Gradually, it seemed to "calm down."

From a nearby shadow, Franca emerged, her eyes assessing Kolobo within the half-collapsed bathroom. His life wasn't at risk, but his injuries were significant, and he appeared weakened.

He'll be Pride Armor's next target... Franca thought quickly. Seizing the moment while Pride Armor was still on the lookout for the backstabber and hadn't chosen a new target, she swiftly approached. Franca grabbed the motionless silver full-body armor and deftly stowed it into her Traveler's Bag.

"Meet up with Jenna!" Franca called out to Anthony, positioned outside the corridor.

In an instant, she melted into the shadows, disappearing from sight.

…

Surveying his newfound abilities, Lumian felt a surge of delight. Is this Reaper… If I were to confront Hisoka now, breaking through his defenses wouldn't be a concern. My craving for combat and slaughter has intensified… Having adapted to the changes in his body, Lumian turned to Hela and expressed his gratitude.

"Thank you."

Hela, not seeing any cause for gratitude, sighed and commented, "Your team's teamwork is impressive."

"Madame Hela, the ritual has succeeded, but I wish to enter Hisoka's dream again and inquire about something else," Lumian requested.

Hela nodded in agreement.

"The ritual requires him to remain lucid. He might lie, but the questioning doesn't need him to be lucid."

As she finished speaking, Lumian suddenly closed his eyes, slumping to the ground against a dilapidated stone pillar.

The corners of his mouth remained curled up, and his expression gradually turned calm.

In the dream's interrogation room, Lumian took a seat across from Hisoka and addressed the captive, whose malice and desire to kill were no longer concealed.

"Thank you for your help. I've become a Reaper."

Hisoka, leaning forward, seemed to forget that he could attack.

"So what if you're a Reaper? In a duel, I'd still kill you easily!

"If you hadn't joined forces with Hidden Blade and relied on numbers, you would have been dead!"

No longer lucid, he's finally revealing his true thoughts in the dream… Lumian chuckled and responded, "If I can create an opportunity to fight with numbers, why should I face you one-on-one?

"My companions are also a part of my strength."

Hisoka spoke with malice, "Do you truly trust that Hypnotist?

"It's very dangerous to open up your body and mind to a Hypnotist. Aren't you afraid that he'll take the opportunity to leave some hidden cues that will unknowingly bring you under his control?"

Lumian gazed at Hisoka for a moment before breaking into a smile.

"Perhaps that's why I defeated you. No wonder Mad Lady said you weren't pure enough.

"Firstly, I do trust him. We've been through life and death together.

"Secondly, I'm willing to take such a risk to kill all of you!"

Straightening up, Lumian locked eyes with Hisoka, enunciating each word, "Even if I plunge into the Abyss, even if I descend into hell, I shall witness your tragic demise!"

Hisoka fell silent.

Lumian eased back into his seat, composed himself, and casually inquired, "I learned from Devilology that a Devil requires a ritual to advance to Desire Apostle. It's best if it's a special serial killing ritual. However, other than the one four years ago, there's only been one in Port Pylos recently. Furthermore, I've already killed the murderer. How did you advance?

"With a boon? You couldn't have become a Desire Apostle four years ago, could you?"

Hisoka responded with a smile, "Just because you don't know doesn't mean it didn't happen."

Lumian's heart stirred.

"Was one of those two pranks to cover up your advancement ritual?"

Lumian ventured, drawing from the scattered information he had gleaned from the peripheral members of April Fool's. They were like scattered pieces of a puzzle, each offering a fragment of the truth but lacking the full picture.

The tales spoke of chaos unleashed: a disappearance of gold in the depths of Devise, and a clash between townsfolk and a primitive tribe in Tizamo Town, resulting in tragedy.

Lumian suspected that Hisoka's advancement ritual had been

shrouded within the chaos of Tizamo's prank.

Hisoka's eyes sparkled with approval, his tone paternal.

"You're quite perceptive."

Lumian seized the moment to shift the conversation.

"What's up with the Nois family's Demon?"

He treaded cautiously, sidestepping the Celestial Worthy and the Mother Tree of Desire, for now.

Hisoka's expression turned cold.

"I aimed to utilize him to acquire something and carry out a ritual to appease him repeatedly, but he only formed a connection with me. He only granted me an opportunity two years ago."

Something… Two years ago… The pranks in the gold mine city and the town of Tizamo took place after this. One happened at the close of the preceding year, while the other unfolded at the close of last year… Lumian started suspecting that these two pranks might have motives beyond concealing the advancement ritual.

Before he could delve deeper, Hisoka asked vehemently and frenziedly, "Why didn't you seek the Tarot Club's assistance this time?"

Lumian arched his eyebrows and inquired with confusion, "Why does it matter to you? Even without the Tarot Club's aid, I could have successfully dealt with you."

Chapter 651 An Unfulfilled Conspiracy

In the beige, four-story patrol team building, Camus had managed to break free from the poker card's influence. He discovered Sow sprawled in a pool of blood, brutally torn apart by two zombie-like undead creatures.

In neighboring rooms, another patrol team member, under Twanaku's control, put up a stubborn resistance. His comrades had already fallen victim to the relentless assault.

Camus, catching his breath, hadn't anticipated stumbling upon an assassination plot within the patrol team, putting his own life at risk.

His gaze fixed on Deputy Captain Reaza, a middle-aged man in a sleek black suit controlling the undead creatures. Confused, Camus inquired, "How did Sow end up joining the Rose School of Thought?

"And why are so many members under their control?"

Despite Camus resisting the poker card's influence, Jenna's earlier shout lingered in his mind.

Reaza, surveying the scene of blood and undead, responded after a moment of contemplation, "It's likely Twanaku's doing."

Twanaku... Camus recalled the questions raised by Louis Berry.

Was Twanaku truly responsible for the serial murders four years ago?

Could he be a Devil in disguise?

Frowning, Camus grumbled, "Keeping a Zombie on the team was already a significant risk. Just because he can show restraint doesn't

clear him from suspicion of being a Rose School of Thought member. He might indulge at specific times."

Reaza, with a stern demeanor, spoke in a deep voice, "We'd confirmed he defected from the Rose School of Thought. He believes in The Fool."

"The Fool, the temperance faction?" Camus asked in surprise,

not expecting such a revelation.

...

In the dream's interrogation room, housed within the ancient and crumbling palace of the Nation of the Evernight, Hisoka couldn't contain his amusement at Lumian's question.

"If you had sought the Tarot Club's assistance, I could have killed you!"

Hisoka's laughter reverberated, and his black shadow danced on the wall, morphing into curved goat horns and colossal bat wings.

Lumian caught a whiff of a conspiracy and asked in confusion and curiosity, "Why do you think so?"

Hisoka rose, a murderous glint materializing in his eyes.

"If you involve the Tarot Club, they'll undoubtedly seek my aid in your investigation."

At this point, Hisoka's lips curled into an unusually flamboyant smile.

No longer conscious in the dream, he revealed his innermost self.

Lumian raised an eyebrow, asking, "Are you a Minor Arcana card holder?"

Hisoka shook his head, replying with a radiant smile, "I'm a member of the temperance faction, a devotee of Mr. Fool."

The Devil burst into laughter, bowing and exclaiming, "Praise The

Fool!"

Lumian, finding it absurd and amusing, instinctively analyzed the situation.

Hisoka is actually a member of the Rose School of Thought's temperance faction? A flamboyant and malicious Devil is actually a member of the temperance faction?

Logically speaking, this was clearly impossible!

Yet, in this dream crafted by Hela, unless Hisoka possessed unique abilities to deceive, lying was unlikely.

The only plausible explanation: he had infiltrated the temperance faction through deception and deceit! New n***o***vel chapters are published on

On the surface, Hisoka seemed to be a Beyonder of the Prisoner pathway, displaying a level of restraint. As a non-core member of the temperance faction, he might have gone unnoticed with his issues.

Right, is this why the Matani patrol team allowed a Prisoner pathway Beyonder to join?

This was more than four years ago. Back then, Hisoka was merely a Sequence 8 Lunatic of the Prisoner pathway, not yet a Mid-Sequence Beyonder. As a peripheral member of the temperance faction, he likely operated without much scrutiny.

Moreover, he probably joined the temperance faction before this, when he was weaker and less noticeable.

Later, he faked receiving resources from the temperance faction and the Rose School of Thought's attack to advance. In reality, did he rely on the Mother Tree of Desire's boons? Where did those resources go? Were they secretly sold or crafted into a mystical item? That poker card?

Why did he infiltrate the temperance faction and worship Mr. Fool?

His main goal clearly isn't resources...

Faith in Mr. Fool…

With this in mind, Lumian suddenly had a guess.

Hisoka's true aim was to infiltrate the Church of The Fool through a certain pathway and have faith in Mr. Fool!

This revelation came from Celestial Worthy!

Hisoka genuinely believes in the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. However, that Celestial Worthy is resisting Mr. Fool. He can clearly influence the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways…

Hisoka used a specific technique during prayer. On the surface, he seemed to be praying to Mr. Fool, but in reality, did he receive a message from that Celestial Worthy? This way, he wouldn't face the risk of a false premise…

That's very likely… Madam Magician mentioned that if I don't follow the procedures when praying to Mr. Fool, the response might not be from him, but from the Celestial Worthy…

Why did Celestial Worthy make Hisoka do this?

Marauder… Steal… Could It be that He intends to gradually steal Mr. Fool's identity and faith through this method?

When many believers genuinely believe in Mr. Fool, but they equate him as the Celestial Worthy, the Celestial Worthy becomes The Fool?

Hiss, the more I think about it, the more terrifying it becomes…

Hisoka can't do it alone. There must be many others who share similar beliefs…

Impressive. If the Celestial Worthy usually gathers followers, the Tarot Club would wipe them out at the slightest hint. Yet, if their followers outwardly professed faith in Mr. Fool, not only would they escape destruction, but they'd also gain protection…

How devious…

Lumian swiftly deduced the situation, sensing the ominous pressure from the hidden Celestial Worthy.

Once marked by Him, failure could creep in unnoticed and strike him down unexpectedly!

Considering this, Lumian recalled Port Pylos and grasped Hisoka's confidence. He also comprehended why Hisoka had opted to remain and wait patiently.

Freshly arrived in the Southern Continent and stepping into Port Pylos for the first time, Lumian lacked resources, companions, and even knowledge of Dutanese. There was a high likelihood that he'd seek aid from the Tarot Club standing behind him.

The Major Arcana card holders of the Tarot Club wouldn't personally intervene without a clear target due to the uncertain timeframe. They would likely dispatch a Minor Arcana card holder familiar with the Southern Continent or a faction member to assist.

Under these circumstances, who better to meet the requirements than Twanaku Tupián, a Church of The Fool's temperance faction member from Matani, well-versed in the local situation, holding the appropriate official status, and reaching Sequence 6.

In that scenario, Lumian and Hisoka would investigate Hisoka. The other party would gradually grasp the situation, assess potential traps and their effectiveness. Hisoka could then seize the opportunity for a surprise attack, assault the mind, and trigger desires!

Contemplating this, Lumian acknowledged that if he failed to detect Hisoka's malice during the investigation, the chances of succumbing to Hisoka's hands were 100%. He'd be a spectator as the Devil faced off against Termiboros in the form of a soul fragment.

Hisoka, informed by Loki, should have made preparations to deal with the dangerous creature within the seal. Perhaps relying on the Nois family's Demon or his status as a Blessed of the Mother Tree of Desire.

Thankfully, Madam Magician kept reminding me that a Hunter can't

rely on high-ranking individuals behind an organization for everything. I need to hone my skills, familiarize myself with conspiracies and battles. Otherwise, I might have sought guidance from the Tarot Club as soon as I arrived in Port Pyro…

That would have been dangerous…

Grande Soeur and Emperor Roselle both mentioned that the most dangerous places are often the safest. Now, I must add that those who seem the safest and most reliable might pose the greatest risk…

It's not that they're no longer trustworthy, but the enemy will exploit this sense of security.

Yes, Madam Magician has also emphasized that if anything seems awry with her orders and suggestions, I should ignore them. Quickly contacting the other Major Arcana card holders to confirm the situation is crucial.

Lumian gazed at the flamboyant Hisoka and smiled.

"If I hadn't received help from a special trace expert, if Hidden Blade hadn't been more familiar with your persona, and if I hadn't had a Psychiatrist to profile you, and ultimately failed to find any clues or direction, I would have sought the Tarot Club's help and looked for a guide familiar with the local situation."

Hisoka fell into silence. After a few moments, he spoke up, "I get everything else, but why the sudden need for a special trace expert?"

Lumian chuckled.

"Because it's a gift from a true god."

The more time Lumian spent with Ludwig, the more he felt that letting such a dangerous individual escape the Church's control wasn't a decision a high-ranking member of the Church of Knowledge would make. There had to be a revelation from the God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

Certainly, Lumian couldn't be sure. As far as he knew, the Knowledge pathway, also known as the Reader pathway, excelled in prophecies

at high Sequence.

Hisoka fell into silence for a moment before unleashing a roar, much like a wild wolf howling beneath the moon.

Lumian reviewed the entire incident, realizing that this revenge was a clash of conspiracies. Unfortunately, Hisoka didn't grasp his personality and style well enough, nor did he comprehend his companions. He could only rely on the sea prayer ritual and Loki's first death as a guide. Consequently, there was a deviation, shattering his expectations despite a high likelihood of success.

Phew… Lumian exhaled and inquired, "Who were the ones causing havoc on the patrol team's side?"

Chapter 652 "Extreme Joy Begets Sorrow"

Upon hearing Lumian's question, Hisoka's lips curved into a smile.

"Those are a few Fallen, under my control."

"Fallen?" Lumian could understand the literal meaning, but he didn't grasp the situation.

Simultaneously, he criticized Hisoka.

This is truly a dream. Emotions change so quickly.

Hisoka reminisced, "A Desire Apostle can plant a seed in others' hearts when their emotions and desires clearly fluctuate, causing corresponding problems to worsen. Gradually, they lose control and degenerate.

"When combined with my special abilities, I can make those humans unable to escape my control and obey only me for a long period through repeated depravities."

It's akin to injecting addictive psychiatric drugs, but more mystical? Lumian searched for analogous examples from an easy-to-understand perspective.

Suddenly, he recalled Naboredisley's description of Demons: "Demon in body, Demon in mind..."

Could this be a manifestation of the Demon within the mind? Is Hisoka's distinctiveness reflected in this aspect? Could it be that the individual from the temperance faction liaising with him has been tainted by his influence, causing them to withhold reporting any irregularities? Lumian gazed thoughtfully at Hisoka and inquired,

"Indeed, as one would expect from an Apostle of Desire, a Demon that seduces the darkness of the mind. Is this a ritual for ascending to a Demon?"

"Just acclimating for now," Hisoka didn't refute, yet he sensed the current situation was far from ideal. It felt more like a rehearsal.

"You seem quite assured. Following the incident in Tizamo Town at year's end, you likely ascended to a Desire Apostle. It's only been a year, and you're already contemplating becoming a demigod?" Lumian mused briefly before questioning, "Is it because you finally appeased that Demon from the Nois family and acquired that thing?"

Even in his reverie, Hisoka appeared hesitant to disclose this matter. He responded with a hint of reluctance, "Yes."

Lumian refrained from provoking Hisoka for the time being, ensuring the dream didn't end prematurely. He altered his question.

"Where is that thing?"

When Hisoka transformed into a Devil, his attire ruptured, and nothing unusual dropped.

Hisoka's countenance contorted as he responded, "I-in Tizamo Town."

Concealed in his body's hometown, Tizamo Town... If it's significant, why doesn't he carry it with him? Lumian's curiosity about the two pranks orchestrated by Hisoka in Tizamo Town and the gold mine city, Devise, intensified.

After a brief pause of contemplation, Lumian inquired, "You staged a prank in Devise just to pilfer a batch of gold?"

"Yes," Hisoka affirmed.

Have you consumed too many novels like the Gold Heist? Were you in dire need of such a large sum of money back then? Yes, for criminals, it's quite normal to plan an operation to snatch gold when necessary. Unlike me, who relies on hunting and the gifts of villains... Just as Lumian thought it was trivial, he suddenly considered something.

Franca has been accumulating gold for future sacrifices to the Armored Shadow, Chen Tu...

Could Hisoka have orchestrated a prank to obtain a substantial amount of gold for a similar sacrifice? Lumian scrutinized Hisoka and probed, "Did you offer the gold as a sacrifice to the Nois family's Demon?"

Hisoka replied nonchalantly, "In Tizamo Town."

"What's in Tizamo Town?" Lumian asked.

Hisoka appeared to snap out of his daze and exclaimed with a contorted expression, "Dream Festival, Dream Festival!"

His shadow surged to life, leaping onto him and shrouding him.

Hisoka reverted to pitch-black, transforming into a viscous, repulsive, and malevolent liquid that spread swiftly in all directions, as if determined to corrupt the interrogation room, Lumian, and the entire dream.

Lumian promptly exited the dream and observed Hisoka, who lay asleep on the ground, displaying signs of Devilification once more. Furthermore, he seemed somewhat translucent.

This key member of April Fool's was teetering on the brink of losing control!

Without hesitation, Lumian materialized a longsword crafted from blazing white flames in his hand.

The Hisoka figure before him emitted a myriad of colors, with the pale-white mark on the bridge of his nose being the least conspicuous.

Weakness Investigation!

Paleness signified a vulnerability.

Lumian hoisted the flaming sword, gripping it with both hands, and thrust downward, vanishing into the pale-white hue.

The Devil-like armor, resilient flesh, and steel-like bones bestowed by Zombie endured only a second before being pierced.

Lumian withdrew his blazing-white flaming sword and thrust down again.

Pfft!

This time, it penetrated deeper.

Lumian extracted the blazing-white flaming sword once more and leaped up, adding his weight to the downward thrust.

Pfft!

Lumian genuflected, and the flaming sword plunged into Hisoka's brain, transforming into scattered flames that obliterated all weakness.

Lumian withdrew his hands and stood up.

Hisoka's body, displaying signs of Devilification, twitched a few times before settling.

Adjacent to the bridge of his nose, a two-finger-wide wound appeared grotesquely abnormal. Its surface was charred and contracted, while flames surged from within.

The Devil had lost his life.

How resilient. He managed to withstand three strikes like this… Lumian gazed at Hisoka's corpse and silently sighed.

In that moment, Hisoka's corpse swiftly turned transparent, and his light brown skin gradually faded to pale-white.

Wraith… Transforming into a genuine wraith after death? Just as these thoughts crossed Lumian's mind, his surroundings abruptly darkened.

In the depths of the darkness, a serene chant resonated, soothing one's body and mind, inducing a reluctance to do anything but lie

still.

All escape was tranquility.

Hisoka's wraith form halted its transformation, gradually gaining a tangible quality.

Finally, he perished completely.

What a formidable adversary to vanquish… If his wraith transformation hadn't been halted, could he have endured as a true wraith, evolving into an evil spirit in the future? Lumian glanced at Hela beside him and spoke once more, "Thank you." Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

He refrained from elaborating his conversation with Hisoka, recognizing that they had spoken in the dream created by Hela. She must be aware of it.

"Loki is the only one left," Hela said coldly, her gaze fixed on Hisoka's lifeless form.

Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before stating, "He can't be resurrected more than a few times."

"At most one more time," Hela replied with certainty.

Another time… Lumian tersely acknowledged.

Before long, Hisoka's Beyonder characteristic manifested, blending with the remaining goat horns above his head, transforming into a whimsical and flamboyant cluster of black crystals.

Various crystals extended in all directions, sharp and crooked. Multiple illusory, translucent faces emerged from each black crystal, their expressions alternating between malevolence, pain, madness, and confusion.

A Desire Apostle Beyonder characteristic corrupted by a Wraith boon? Lumian perceived it as more corrupting and perilous than the Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic from before.

He pointed at the Beyonder characteristic and Hisoka's lifeless body, addressing Hela, "Can I take them all?"

"Okay," Hela responded without objections.

…

In an old warehouse on an abandoned dock in Port Pylos, Franca, Anthony, and Jenna had already gathered, awaiting Lumian's return.

Amidst their conversation, a figure outlined itself in the sunlight streaming through a high window. It was Lumian, wearing a golden straw hat and disguised as Louis Berry.

Pa!

Lumian tossed Hisoka's corpse to the ground.

Immediately after, he retrieved the Beyonder characteristic from his Traveler's Bag and placed them near the corpse without touching them.

Only then did he smile at Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

"It's settled."

"Is it really Hisoka?" Franca couldn't believe it could be so straightforward.

"It's him," Lumian briefly explained the situation. "He was overconfident and believed there's a high chance of killing me. He chose to stay and wait for an opportunity."

"What gave him the confidence?" Franca's eyes widened.

Since everyone present held a Minor Arcana card, Lumian didn't hold anything back. He recounted the situation, omitting the most perilous details.

"Can that really happen… Luckily, you didn't seek guidance from the Tarot Club." Jenna felt a lingering fear.

Franca sighed and commented, "I didn't think our collaboration alone would be sufficient."

Lumian pointed at the Beyonder characteristic and stated, "There's too much corruption, and it's very dangerous. I plan to seek Madam Magician's help and find a suitable Artisan to transform it into a Sealed Artifact. Everyone has the right to use it."

Lumian found it too sinister and corrupting. It couldn't become a mystical item with relatively mild negative effects. It could only be the kind that required sealing.

"Absolutely." Franca was filled with anticipation as she imagined the potential abilities of a Sealed Artifact.

She suddenly recalled something and quickly blurted out, "Your Pride Armor is still in my possession. Tsk, you've really gotten the most out of it."

Lumian chuckled.

"How can I face Devils without a Warrior? I've always wanted to use the Pride Armor, but I didn't expect Hisoka to choose the most convenient place like the bathroom."

It was a confined, tight space with a certain degree of flexibility.

Franca retrieved the Pride Armor from her Traveler's Bag and placed it on the ground.

Suddenly, the air in the old warehouse froze.

The silver-white full-body armor turned to face Lumian, condensing into a broadsword of light. Then, it knelt on one knee and thrust into the ground.

Wh— Lumian's pupils dilated as his figure abruptly faded, disappearing from his spot.

The broadsword of light split open, transforming into a devastating storm that engulfed the surroundings, obliterating numerous wooden crates.

Wh— Franca, Jenna, and Anthony couldn't dodge in time and were shattered into fragments by the Hurricane of Light, reflecting brilliance.

"Dammit! Isn't this too vengeful? How much time has passed?!" Franca cursed from a corner of the warehouse.

Chapter 653 Lumian’s Choice

Chapter 653 Lumian's Choice

?Franca emerged from the shadows, exhaling a sigh of relief as she saw the silver-white full-body armor return to silence following Lumian's departure from the warehouse and the absence of weak targets.

With caution, she approached, making sure not to position herself behind the Pride Armor, finally standing face to face with it.

The Pride Armor remained motionless.

Franca extended her hands, barely lifting the silver-white full-body armor and tucking it back into her Traveler's Bag. Only then did she relax and call out, "It's all right, it's all right."

Jenna emerged from a dark corner on the other side, and Anthony suddenly appeared at the warehouse door, seemingly prepared to roll and escape at any moment.

In a matter of seconds, Lumian somersaulted back from a high window, eliciting a chuckle from Franca.

"Damn it, we managed Hisoka just fine, but our own Sealed Artifact nearly wiped us out. Good thing we had substitutes. Otherwise, we might have been severely injured, if not dead," she remarked.

Jenna commented calmly, "This could be a funny story for Ghost Face."

Having moved out of the market district, she now had plenty of free time. Though she still owed Franca a large sum of money, she had

enough assets to cover it. Thus, while completing the Tarot Club mission and trying to act, she could afford to watch a play once a week, buy magazines, newspapers, and books she had longed for but couldn't justify purchasing, and indulge in department stores and certain restaurants she had once yearned for.

Franca let out a hollow laugh.

"Who would have thought this armor would hold such a grudge? Hey Lumian, what did you do to it?"

she inquired, directing the subsequent questions to Lumian.

Lumian spread his hands.

"Wasn't it just a backstab?

"I thought it would be fine after disengaging and waiting for it to calm down."

Franca nodded repeatedly, offering him a way out.

"That's right, I thought so too.

"It's all because of that armor! It doesn't feel like armor at all!"

After a moment of pondering, Franca said, "I wonder when it will forget that you stabbed it in the back. For now, you'll have to leave it with me."

"Alright," Lumian said, feeling a twinge of regret. Such a useful Sealed Artifact was temporarily unusable. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

He glanced at Hisoka's severely damaged corpse and the seemingly unscathed Beyonder characteristic, stowing them away in his Traveler's Bag. He said seriously, "I hope that the operation against the Minister of Industry will commence after the Sealed Artifact is completed. Though its negative effects will undoubtedly be severe, Desire Apostle and Wraith are definitely very useful, even if they can only unleash a portion of their abilities."

"Indeed," Franca replied, filled with anticipation.

She then turned to Lumian and asked, "Hisoka is already dead. You've achieved your goal in the Southern Continent. Where are you going next? Are you returning to Trier with us?"

Lumian shook his head, as if he had already considered the answer to this question.

"I plan to stay in the Southern Continent for a while longer."

"Why? To investigate Tizamo Town and the Hisoka matter? That doesn't seem necessary," Jenna expressed her confusion.

Lumian chuckled.

"This is a Hunter's paradise, don't you think?"

Without waiting for Franca and the others to inquire further, Lumian explained seriously, "After all that has transpired, I've come to realize something. For a Hunter to act well and digest swiftly, they must undergo diverse experiences.

"What I mean is, a Hunter's path is more straightforward compared to other paths. It's unlike Demonesses who must navigate pleasure, pain, while contemplating abstract and philosophical concepts which are often more intricate.

"As long as a Hunter is immersed in chaos, conflict, and constant combat, they can excel. Combat is akin to hunting. Chaos and conflict invariably breed numerous conspiracies. Provocation smoothens these conspiracies, arson secures victory in battle, and the aftermath of such incidents reaps the lives of enemies and the spoils of victory."

Observing Franca, Jenna, and Anthony's puzzled expressions, Lumian smiled and continued, "It's been just over half a year since I ascended from Sequence 9 to Sequence 5. Why?

"Because I've been either passively or actively embroiled in a series of events. Through perpetual chaos, disputes, and battles, I've grasped the principles of performance and found opportunities to act."

"In essence, a Hunter doesn't engage in elaborate acting before reaching High-Sequence Beyonder status. Though I possess some insight into fate due to my characteristics, it's also linked to determination and willpower. It's an integral part of combat.

"Hunters are forged in the crucible of blood and fire. They thrive amidst chaos and conflict. If I aim to grow stronger, I must pursue these elements. The Southern Continent offers precisely that."

Thus, Lumian could swiftly assimilate the Reaper potion and strive to become a Sequence 5 Fate Appropriator of the Inevitability pathway.

Only by truly mastering some of fate's abilities could Lumian hope to uncover any connection between Loki and the ancient castle when he next confronted him.

According to Franca, Lumian had to locate the respawn point of an enemy capable of resurrection and camp there!

Certainly, the path to becoming a Fate Appropriator came with its own set of risks. Lumian's chances of encountering Circle Inhabitant Voisin Sanson would significantly rise, whether due to the convergence of an Outer Deity's Blessed resulting from the world's rejection or the convergence of Inevitability powers.

Despite his yearning for such an encounter, Lumian was aware that he wasn't prepared to face a demigod, lacking the corresponding strength. A high-level Beyonder he could hire wouldn't be able to constantly keep an eye on him, and the moment of encounter was beyond his control.

Franca couldn't hide her envy upon hearing Lumian's plan.

If only the Demoness pathway's acting were that straightforward.

The early stages with Assassins and Instigators were relatively direct, but as time went on, it became more complicated.

Sigh. When I first met Lumian, I was clearly at a higher Sequence and stronger than him. It's only been half a year, but the tables have turned… Franca felt a mix of sorrow and impulsive emotions.

After sending Franca, Jenna, and Anthony back to Trier, Lumian entered Suite 7 on B3 of Hotel Orella, signaling for Lugano to leave.

Then, he carefully extracted Hisoka's lifeless body from his Traveler's Bag and positioned it in front of Ludwig. With a grin, he remarked, "Here's my end of the bargain. Is it edible?"

Ludwig, clutching a silver child's knife and fork with a steak laid out before him, sprung up from his seat. As he examined the torn, half-Devil-like, and bloodied remains, a mix of desire and hesitation played across his face.

It was clear he was tempted but wary.

After more than ten seconds, Ludwig delicately picked up the child's utensils and resolved himself.

"A tiny bit."

Without awaiting Lumian's reply, he crouched down and extended the child's knife and fork toward Hisoka's still open, flaxen-colored eyes.

Amidst the slicing sounds, Ludwig retrieved the Devil-like eyeballs, one on the fork and the other on the knife's tip.

Then, he poured a glass of orange Gwadar with one hand.

"There's caffeine in this. Not suitable for children," Lumian pointed out.

Ludwig glanced at the enticing beverage, then at the eyeballs on the child's utensils, and the half-Devil corpse on the ground. He fell silent.

Lumian also fell silent.

After a few moments, Ludwig submerged the eyeballs into the orange-yellow Gwadar, deliberately puncturing more holes with his fork to allow the liquid to seep out.

Then, he lifted the drink and squatted beside Hisoka's corpse,

bringing the glass to a spot where some blood still dripped.

Bloop! Bloop! Bloop! Three drops of sulfur-scented blood fell into the fading orange beverage, swiftly tinting it with the color of blood.

Ludwig swirled the liquid in the glass and consumed it.

Lumian observed as Ludwig finished his drink, noting a clear boost in energy. Curious, he inquired, "What's the effect of this?"

Ludwig licked his lips and responded, "Permanently enhances my spirituality, allowing me to keenly sense the aura of the Abyss. I can also command a few lower-level undead creatures.

"Only the first glass has this effect. Subsequent drinks of a similar nature can only temporarily heighten my perception and restore some spirituality."

Ludwig's tone carried a maturity as he spoke on such matters.

Not bad… but only you would dare to consume such a messy thing… Lumian criticized inwardly. He stowed away Hisoka's remains and retreated to his bedroom, initiating a letter to Madam Magician. The focus was on reporting Hisoka's apparent identity, his speculations, and the issues with Tizamo Town. Additionally, he proposed that the reward for these unexpected discoveries should be the transformation of Hisoka's Beyonder characteristic into a Sealed Artifact.

Having neatly folded the letter, Lumian produced a jagged black crystal clump and arranged a ritual. He called forth Madam Magician's doll messenger.

Upon its emergence, the doll messenger emitted a disdainful sound, pinching its nose.

It pointed at Hisoka's Beyonder characteristic and remarked in a sharp voice,

"Pack it into a box! It's filthy!"

Lumian retrieved a small paper box from his Traveler's Bag and stuffed the black crystal clump inside.

"Tie it up."

"Stuff it in another box."

"Use another box to contain them."

The doll messenger continued with its requests.

Finally, it begrudgingly picked up the box and carried the letter away.

…

Port Pylos's patrol team.

Reaza informed Camus, "All the problematic team members have been purged. The rest are undergoing individual reviews. You are part of it too."

"How's Kolobo?" Camus asked with concern.

"He's fine. We went to the Earth Mother Church to hire a Doctor," Reaza replied calmly. "The major issue now is that we haven't apprehended Twanaku. Moreover, we're certain that he's both a Wraith and a Desire Apostle."

"How? Isn't he too powerful?" Camus felt a twinge of fear at the thought of potential retaliation from Twanaku.

At that moment, a patrol team member entered the office and informed Reaza and Camus, "Captain Reaza, Boss, the straw hat guy is back!"

Chapter 654 Bounty

Louis Berry is back again? Camus's forehead twitched at the mention of the "straw hat guy."

Since encountering the adventurer, his life had taken a tumultuous turn. First, he had "captured" the murderer in a serial killing case, then he unearthed clues related to a four-year-old case. Subsequently, the suspect had emerged, attempting to harm him and Kolobo, throwing the patrol team into chaos.

And now, Louis Berry was making another appearance?

Camus felt the weight on his chest, and his heart raced.

"Where is Louis Berry?" Reaza was already familiar with Camus's account.

The patrol team member who had brought the report hastily answered, "Sitting in the hall."

Reaza nodded, and he and Camus left the office, descending the stairs.

As they walked, Camus gradually snapped out of his daze.

He recalled Louis Berry's suspicions about Twanaku the previous day, how he had abandoned his theories without delving into specifics, and how the adventurer had sought him out early in the morning, hoping to gather information indirectly. Shortly after Kolobo handed over Twanaku's information, the latter had been attacked, leading to a fierce battle.

Did Louis Berry employ such a cautious inquiry to avoid triggering the Devil's Danger Premonition? Was buying information from Kolobo a trap targeting Twanaku? No, hadn't Twanaku sensed the

corresponding danger? He could only sense it a minute or two in advance, and would it be too late by the time he discovered it? As a former Public Security Officer and now an Interrogator, Camus swiftly made connections and speculations.

He believed that Louis Berry had likely identified Twanaku after learning about his preference for sugarless Fermo coffee. He hinted at suspicions regarding the police headquarters but refrained from going into specifics, fearing that Twanaku might foresee danger!

As for how Louis Berry set a trap for Twanaku without detection, Camus couldn't puzzle it out for now.

Furthermore, he suspected that Louis Berry's operation hadn't been entirely successful. There were no signs from the Matani Import and Export Shop indicating Twanaku's demise.

This was a Sequence 5 Desire Apostle, wielding the power of a Sequence 5 Wraith. Unless a demigod personally intervened, they might require two or three battle teams of Mid-Sequence Beyonders from pathways like Sun and Warrior to handle him. Alternatively, they needed to mobilize Beyonders at the level of a Sequence 5 Pirate Admiral, armed with potent mystical items.

Soon, Camus and Reaza spotted Louis Berry seated on the sofa in the hall's guest area, his golden straw hat standing out in the sunlight.

"Monsieur Louis Berry, what brings you here again?" Camus inquired in deep Intisian.

Louis Berry gave Camus a deep look before smiling and addressing Reaza in fluent Dutanese, "I'm here to collect the bounty."

As he spoke, he retrieved Twanaku's head from his Traveler's Bag.

Camus and Reaza observed the blood-stained face, the head with the broken horn, the vacant eyes, and the gruesome wound on the bridge of the nose, along with ten to twenty deep cuts.

Despite the severe damage, Camus, a former Public Security Officer, recognized the owner at a glance.

Twanaku Tupián! Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

He succeeded? Had he truly set a trap for a Desire Apostle and managed to defeat him? Camus's gaze shifted up, scrutinizing Louis Berry, a young man with the title of a great adventurer in the Fog Sea.

Such strength could rival any Pirate Admiral in the Five Seas!

Of course, this assessment applied only to individual abilities, excluding the subordinates of Pirate Admirals.

Reaza silently ascertained from a spiritual level. He turned to Camus and asked in Dutanese,

"Is it Twanaku?"

"Yes," Camus confirmed, sighing inwardly.

The battle between Twanaku and Louis Berry had been fierce, resulting in his tragic demise. Not only were his eyes absent, but he was also covered in wounds, displaying signs of Devilification.

Reaza looked at Lumian and pondered for a moment before speaking in Dutanese, "I wonder if you've seen Twanaku's wanted poster. The bounty is only 70,000 verl d'or."

Back then, the bounty was set based on the criteria of a Serial Killer. It was only increased by 20,000 because this particular Serial Killer targeted Beyonders.

Lumian barely understood and switched to Intisian with a smile.

"If I wait two days to collect the bounty, will I be able to get more?"

Upon hearing this, Camus pondered for a moment and realized the validity of the statement.

In two days, their wanted posters would depict Desire Apostle and Wraith Twanaku, who had caused the deaths of several members of the patrol team, not the Serial Killer from the past!

Of course, with Matani's financial resources, it was impossible to significantly raise the bounty. At most, they could double it and report the danger to the Church of Earth Mother, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, and other official organizations in the Northern Continent to see if they would be willing to increase the bounty.

After Camus translated Lumian's words into Dutanese, Reaza remained silent, unsure of how to respond.

For the patrol team, 70,000 to 80,000 verl d'or was a substantial sum!

Without waiting for a response, Lumian added with a smile, "But there's no need to add to the bounty. Just fulfill two of my requests. Two simple ones."

"What are they?" Reaza asked in a deep voice after hearing Camus's translation.

Lumian chuckled in response, stating, "Firstly, I want to see all the dossiers related to Tizamo Town. Secondly, I'm very curious about Twanaku's card and want to take a look. Of course, I'll just take a look."

"You want to investigate last year's incident in Tizamo Town? Isn't your sole purpose in Port Pylos to find Twanaku?" Camus asked, puzzled.

Lumian chuckled.

"Need I remind you? Twanaku's hometown is Tizamo Town."

Wh— Camus suddenly felt that the matter with Twanaku wouldn't conclude with the other party's death. There were still many secrets hidden behind it.

Louis Berry had mentioned this from the beginning.

After translating their conversation for Reaza, Camus sensed that the patrol team's previous investigation of the Tizamo Town incident might have concluded too hastily.

Eyeing Louis Berry, who had successfully taken down a Desire Apostle wielding Wraith powers, the chilly Reaza fell silent for a few seconds before uttering, "Who tasked you with looking into Twanaku?"

Without giving a direct response, Lumian inquired, "Did he declare himself a member of the temperance faction, a follower of The Fool?"

"It's not a self-proclamation. We verified it," Reaza confidently replied after hearing Camus's translation.

As anticipated… Just making confirmation, Lumian stood up for the Church of The Fool, stating, "Traitors can surface in any organization, and there'll be individuals with hidden agendas attempting to infiltrate."

"That's indeed our problem," Camus sincerely concluded. "We shouldn't solely rely on the organization they're affiliated with to determine a person's character or whether they can be recruited. We also need to observe their words and actions."

After careful consideration, Reaza agreed to Lumian's request.

While assigning another patrol team member to aid Lumian in the process and collect the bounty, he instructed Camus to show Lumian the poker card.

…

In the cold and silent underground corridor, Camus gazed at Lumian and cautiously asked, "What are you investigating?"

This had already led to the death of a Sequence 5 Desire Apostle!

Lumian emitted a soft chuckle.

"It's dangerous to know too much."

Camus fell silent, wisely choosing not to inquire further, drawing from past experiences.

As Lumian advanced, he casually asked, "How many members of the

patrol team perished this time?"

"Four. All under Twanaku's control." Camus gave a self-

deprecating smile. "We'll be recruiting new members before the end of the year. They're fortunate. Those with suitable pathways don't have to worry about subsequent Sequence potions. If they aren't from the correct pathways, they can use Sealed Artifacts."

This was how the resources of an official organization gradually accumulated.

Lumian nodded slightly.

"How's Kolobo?"

Camus's smile grew more relaxed.

"He's fine. He's almost healed."

As they conversed, they arrived at a room adorned with cold bones. A metallic poker card lay on the table in the middle.

"Be careful. It will burrow into your body and control you like a Wraith," Camus warned.

Lumian nodded slightly and approached, reaching out for the card with the ten of spades on its face.

A bone-like sensation entered his mind, accompanied by a chilling cold.

Lumian's right hand quickly became encased in a layer of frost.

The frost rapidly crystallized and extended towards his arm.

Simultaneously, the card's surface underwent a transformation, revealing a grayish-white joker.

It rapidly etherealized, poised to merge with Lumian's body.

Silently, Lumian's arm burst into brilliant white flames. With a swift flick of his palm, he accurately pressed his thumb onto the poker card

that hadn't completely dissipated, right onto the joker's face.

The poker card fell into silence.

Frost detached from Lumian's arm, descended to the ground, and melted into water.

Zombie's Frost, Wraith's Possession… This is really a mystical item from the Prisoner pathway… Lumian swiftly made a basic assessment.

However, the transformation abilities displayed by the poker cards didn't align with his understanding of the Prisoner pathway. Instead, they resembled superficial applications of a Faceless.

Could it be corruption brought about by the Celestial Worthy? Also, when the temperance faction provides resources, it's impossible to directly give Wraith. They start from low Sequences and work their way up… Did this poker card strengthen time and time again? Does Hisoka have a permanent Artisan collaborator? Lumian withdrew his gaze from the poker card and slowly retreated to Camus's side.

"I'm done," he thought for a moment and said, "Be careful when using this item."

Camus nodded.

"We'll treat it as a Sealed Artifact rather than a mystical item."

Upon returning to the surface, Camus gathered all the dossiers related to Tizamo Town.

Lumian sorted through the items and picked up one of them.

Chapter 655 Pleasure

Lumian carefully examined the dossier on the Tizamo Town tragedy, which unfolded at the close of the previous year.

It detailed the incident as a gentleman and his servant's hunting expedition in Tizamo Town's primitive forest. Their actions provoked a large primitive tribe, leading to a retaliatory surprise attack on Tizamo Town. The assault resulted in numerous casualties, including the gentleman, his servant, several patrol team members responsible for Tizamo Town's security, and many innocent civilians.

In response, Admiral Querarill deployed additional troops to safeguard the area, prompting the primitive tribe to retreat into the depths of the forest.

There are quite a few formidable tribes inhabiting the Southern Continent's primitive forests... Lumian sighed from the bottom of his heart after reading the dossier.

This situation, a historical relic from the Balam Empire era, was emblematic of the challenges faced by the region.

While ancient empires boasted numerous powerful individuals in their ranks, along with a substantial number of Low- to Mid-Sequence Beyonders, effective management faced limitations. Technical constraints, population size, and the diversity of characteristics restricted governance to cities with favorable geographical conditions. These included towns and villages surrounding these cities, fertile plains, pastures, and valleys. The more challenging terrains, like primitive forests and mountains, remained largely unexplored due to these limitations, providing little incentive for the empires to eliminate potential threats.

When the Northern Continent invaded, causing the fragmentation of the Balam Empire and the destruction or replacement of other

nations, many rebels sought refuge in these untouched areas, intensifying the dangers of the primitive forests and mountains.

In contrast, after Emperor Roselle initiated the Industrial Revolution, such challenges decreased in the Northern Continent. Currently, only a few remnants linger in the mountains of the south-central region.

The dossier offers no clues about April Fool's pranks or any Demon presence. Lumian, undeterred, set aside the dossier and turned his attention to something else.

He searched for keywords like "dream" and "festival."

Before his demise, Hisoka had mentioned the "Dream Festival."

Unfortunately, the patrol team had only been operational for six to seven years, with no recorded history of Tizamo Town's previous issues. During this period, there were no instances of dream-related or festival-related problems in Tizamo Town.

Lumian wasn't disheartened. He placed the dossiers down and addressed Camus, "Can I make a copy of everything?"

"No problem." Camus knew Louis Berry was about to summon the Rabbit of Knowledge again. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in). (com)

At that moment, Reaza entered with another member of the patrol team, placing a small but weighty cloth bag in front of Lumian.

"Your bounty. Confirm it," Reaza said in Dutanese.

Lumian lifted the cloth bag and spilled its contents onto the table.

Banknotes from Intis and a considerable number of gold coins lay before him. Lumian counted them, confirming everything was in order.

After Reaza and the other patrol team member departed, Lumian turned to Camus and pushed the cloth bag over with a smile.

"You..." Camus's eyes widened, asking hesitantly.

Lumian responded with a grin, "As I said, I'll waive the official bounty."

"But I didn't..." Camus subconsciously replied, maintaining his politeness.

Lumian chuckled.

"The information you provided was crucial, but you need to share it with Kolobo.

"Also, do me a favor."

This sum of money is for information and compensation based on the dangers we faced... Camus pressed down on the cloth bag, asking, "What is it?"

"Help me find a few people born and raised in Tizamo Town who are currently living in Port Pylos. Also, locate a few who have visited Tizamo Town multiple times but have no connection to it. Bring them to my place one by one," Lumian requested.

Camus listened attentively and breathed a sigh of relief.

"No problem."

This matter was straightforward!

Upon his return to Hotel Orella, Lumian had barely set down the Rabbit of Knowledge's copied dossier in his room, ready to delve into its details, when the doorbell chimed.

Amidst the tinkling sounds, Lugano rushed to open the door.

Shortly after, he called out, "Boss, Monsieur Iveljsta wishes to meet you."

Iveljsta? The one residing on B18 with numerous Zombie servants, suspected to be a Wraith? He's here for me? Lumian raised his eyebrows, set aside the dossier, and exited the master bedroom.

...

Trier, Quartier de la Cath??drale Comm??morative.

In Franca and Jenna's rented apartment.

After seeing Anthony off, Franca returned to the master bedroom, contemplating the progress of digesting the Pleasure potion.

Even though Lumian's situation was unique, how could he digest the potion so quickly? How could he ascend to Sequence 5 in merely half a year? Despite this, Franca found herself triggered.

There lingered a sense of disappointment and frustration at being outpaced within seven months of watching over Lumian as an elder sister, or rather, an elder brother.

She longed to reach Sequence 5 and become a Demoness of Affliction at the earliest opportunity.

Truth be told, her digestion of the Pleasure potion surpassed that of most Demonesses. She had also gleaned substantial insights while delving into alternative interpretations and symbols of Pleasure. Patience was paramount, but blame fell upon the fellow with an absurdly rapid progression by her side!

Sigh, I must seek a partner for Pleasure. Both the ordinary and more profound forms of Pleasure are imperative. Only then can I digest it more rapidly. One is akin to my left foot, the other to my right--I must exert effort in both to move forward. I cannot jump on one foot alone... Franca's thoughts were lucid, yet she was uncertain how to proceed. Sigh, I cannot muster the courage to broach the subject... Should I seek help from Browns and her companions?

As Franca paced the room, she suddenly heard a knock on the bedroom door.

Jenna? Franca paused and turned towards the door.

"Enter, please."

Jenna, donned in a beige fluffy dress, stood before the door.

"Why the sudden politeness?" Franca inquired, feeling slightly

uneasy.

Jenna chuckled in exasperation.

"Dammit! I've always been polite, okay? It's just that you never shut the door. You only close it when you sleep. How am I supposed to knock?"

With that remark, Jenna wore a vexed expression.

She regained composure and flashed a smile.

"Are you grappling with the Pleasure potion's digestion? Do you lack a target for its digestion?"

"Yes, but as I mentioned before…" Franca began to defend herself.

Jenna cut in, "What about me?"

"Huh?" Franca was caught off guard.

She questioned if she was imagining things.

Jenna's lovely face displayed a charming smile, reminiscent of her days as the Showy Diva, Little Minx.

She pushed aside strands of hair falling from her ears and grinned.

"Didn't you inform the Demoness of Black that we're lovers?

"Then why not turn to me for Pleasure potion digestion?"

"B-but…" Franca was bewildered. "Why are you doing this?"

Jenna approached Franca, maintaining her enticing smile.

"I want to experience pleasure. I'll become one in the future."

Surprise shifted to shock. Franca examined Jenna, wondering if she had undergone a sudden change.

Franca only snapped out of her reverie when Jenna halted in front of her, and a familiar fragrance filled her senses. She blurted out, "Are

you trying to help me? Are you aiding me in this aspect because I've been without a partner for Pleasure digestion for so long?"

Jenna stopped and chuckled.

"That's one reason."

She gazed up at Franca's face and sincerely praised, "You're so beautiful…"

Franca fell silent for a moment before posing a serious question, "Do you like me?"

"I do," Jenna replied promptly. Her eyes glinted as she smiled and added, "You're so lively, interesting, and captivating. Why wouldn't I like you?"

Franca bit her red, moist lips.

"Then, do you love me? In a non-platonic sense."

Jenna fell silent.

She cast her gaze downward and pursed her lips.

"I don't want to deceive you. To me, you're a beacon of light that brightens my life, offering hope and warmth. You're the person I trust the most, my closest friend, and the perfect sister in my heart. However, I've never envisioned romantic love between us."

Franca's heart sank at the words "I don't want to deceive you," and an inexplicable ache surged within her.

A shiver ran down her spine.

She raised her right hand and shifted it slightly.

"Then, I can't…"

"Dammit! Why must you make things so complicated?" Jenna was already feeling bashful, embarrassed, and torn. She struggled to conceal it and convinced herself it was just an act. Upon hearing

Franca's refusal, she finally erupted. "Can't we have sex without love? Are you truly a Demoness devoted solely to love?"

"I just feel…" Franca faltered. "I can handle others, but not you. I can't bear the thought of you sacrificing yourself…"

Before she could finish, Jenna's tender lips pressed against hers, exploring and nibbling with an unpracticed finesse.

Franca couldn't resist, swept away by Jenna's lips and tongue, fueled by long-awaited anticipation, months of restraint, the lingering influence of Demon corruption, and the effects of the Pleasure potion.

She succumbed to it until Jenna pulled back, panting.

"Sacrifice, my foot! Quit playing innocent. Haven't you always joked about letting me experience true pleasure? Get with it!" Jenna's cheeks flushed as she glared at Franca with moist eyes, resembling a fervent and assertive lion cub.

Franca suddenly felt that during Jenna's days in the market district as Little Minx, a small part of her personality might not have been an act but something she already possessed.

Jenna kissed her again, and Franca couldn't deny the allure.

As she relished the fragrant, sweet, and passionate pleasures, she couldn't shake off the realization that this was merely assistance, not love.

In that moment, a phrase echoed in her mind: In pain we find pleasure, in pleasure we drown.

Chapter 656 Choosing a Reward

Lumian once again encountered Monsieur Iveljsta, who resided in B18. He still wore a fluffy black hat adorned with a white feather and a complex black robe.

With a quick glance, Lumian had already covertly used Weakness Investigation to search for pale-white marks on Iveljsta's body, ready for potential assassinations and surprise attacks.

Aurore and Emperor Roselle had always emphasized the need to stay vigilant against others at all times!

Of course, Lumian felt that the two of them hadn't done a good job in this matter. Otherwise, they would still be active in the world.

At that moment, the pallor on Iveljsta's body concentrated on his dark-brown eyes, emitting an illusory quality that seemed unreal.

Does this mean he can quickly transform into a Wraith, and his eyes are no longer his weakness? As Lumian pondered, he gestured towards the divan in the living room.

"Let's chat there."

Ludwig, seated at the dining table, glanced at Iveljsta for a few seconds before lowering his head and continuing his meal with a succulent piece of beef.

Iveljsta nodded slightly and entered the living room quietly, taking a seat in a corner of the divan.

Are you a student at a primary school? So disciplined… Lumian criticized as he focused on observing Iverista's luck.

It was relatively normal and nothing special. The source of this

content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

At that moment, Lumian suddenly had a few thoughts.

Luck Observation and Weakness Investigation require the eyes to determine the target's color. However, one focuses on the background color, while the other captures the various colors on the surface of the body. When I become a Fate Appropriator, could these two abilities fuse and mutate into a more special ability?

Why can I only use my eyes to observe these two abilities? Is a blind Reaper incapable of attacking a target's weakness? Similarly, is a blind Ascetic unqualified to observe others' luck? Can't they rely on their spirituality and ears and nose?

Or could it be done at a higher Sequence?

Lumian eased into the armchair, positioning himself at an angle across from Iveljsta. Flashing a friendly smile, he asked, "What's the matter?"

He spoke in Intisian.

Iveljsta, as silent as a corpse, straightened up. His eyes, deep as he spoke in ancient Feysac.

"Allow me to introduce myself. Iveljsta Eggers, a member of the Rose School of Thought and temperance faction under the Church of The Fool."

Lumian's nerves, already tense, heightened. Nevertheless, he maintained a relaxed demeanor, confirming, "Are you Twanaku's liaison?"

He switched to ancient Feysac.

"No," Iveljsta shook his head, "I've already eliminated that member fifteen minutes ago."

Fifteen minutes ago, when I was still with the patrol team… However, you can't expect me to believe you just because you say so… Lumian feigned curiosity and asked, "I recall that you arrived in

Port Pylos before Twanaku was exposed. What was your original motive?"

"I'm investigating the primitive forest in this area. I'm still in the early stages of gathering more information," Iveljsta replied seriously. "Four days ago, I came into contact with Twanaku and obtained some information from him. He seemed fine and was very restrained."

He's indeed restrained. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a second serial murder case in Port Pylos only after four years… Going to the primitive forest to investigate… The primitive forest… On the surface, the incident in Tizamo Town was a sudden attack by a tribe in the primitive forest. Lumian quickly made many connections and said to Iveljsta thoughtfully, "Twanaku once did something in Tizamo Town that involved the tribes in the nearby primitive forest. Some of his important items seem to be hidden in Tizamo Town. It might also be related to a Nois family Demon of unknown Sequence."

Iveljsta listened in silence, lost in thought.

After a few seconds, he said to Lumian, "Thank you for providing this information. It might not be useful for my investigation, but it can let me know what to be wary of."

He didn't specify his mission. Clearly, he needed his superior's permission.

Lumian responded nonchalantly, "Even if I don't tell you now, you'll find out tonight or tomorrow."

Having already reported the matter to Madam Magician, the Major Arcana card holder would undoubtedly inform the Church of The Fool and the temperance faction in detail subsequently. It wouldn't only be a general outline that mentioned key personnel like before.

Iveljsta nodded with restraint and said, "I'm here to express my gratitude and to inform you that we're already investigating any potential problems and latent dangers.

"Also, if you need help in Matani, feel free to come to me."

"Alright." Lumian didn't stand on ceremony.

After delving into the more serious matters, Lumian, intrigued, asked Iveljsta, "Why did you add the Rose School of Thought prefix when you introduced yourself? You've already left the Rose School of Thought and joined the Church of The Fool. It sounds as if the Rose School of Thought is affiliated with the Church of The Fool."

"Our leader specifically requested this. She always believes that we are the true orthodox branch of the Rose School of Thought. Only we represent the Rose School of Thought. Those traitors should change the organization's name, not us," Iveljsta explained in detail.

Sounds quite stubborn… Aren't you from the temperance faction? Don't you restrain your emotions and desires in this aspect? Yes, Sequence 5 is Wraith, close to evil spirits, and evil spirits have an extreme side. Is this reflected in High-Sequence Beyonders of the temperance faction's corresponding pathway? Lumian didn't quite understand and tried to make a guess based on the available information.

He was just chatting and had no intention of inquiring further. Instead, he asked,

"Your last name is Eggers. Was your ancestor a member of the Balam Empire's royal family?"

"Yes," Iveljsta replied proudly, his emotions held in check. "And my mother's lineage is noble from the Highlands Kingdom."

For many in the Southern Continent, the surname Eggers bore unparalleled prestige. It was a symbol of a deity who had once trod the land, a representation of Death's dominion over the world.

But Lumian's curiosity wandered elsewhere.

"I've heard that the mausoleums of the Balam Empire's nobles are constructed upside down underground, much like this hotel. What mystical significance does that hold? Is it simply a way to confront death? And why is death associated with the underground? Shouldn't the Underworld exist in the spirit world?"

This was the question that piqued Lumian's interest upon learning

about the matter.

His understanding of mysticism was limited.

Iveljsta pondered for a moment and then explained, "I didn't choose the Death pathway. The construction method originated from ancient times, passed down by all the Eggers ancestors, devoted to the deity who controlled death.

"He embodies the very concept of death. Emulating Him is a way to approach the source of death.

"This mystic explanation resonates with me the most. Over the years, I've heard various interpretations:

"Some see life and death as opposing mystical concepts. They argue that, just as we stand upright and grow upwards in life, burial upside down signifies the contradiction and connection between life and death.

"Others believe that true hell isn't in the spirit world or the Underworld, but deep underground. Descending further symbolizes reaching true hell and returning to the essence of death. Thus, mausoleums are built upside down, reflecting our intention to face hell, worship death, and return to the source. This is the essence and symbol of mysticism."

Some Beyonders of the Death pathway don't really approve of the Underworld… Can you discover true hell by delving deep underground? Heh heh, hasn't anyone informed you that the world we're on is essentially a planet? Does this extension reach underground magma and the core? Do they believe that's the genuine hell? Going deeper will traverse the core and the magma, but that'll merely be the other side of the planet, let alone true hell… Lumian found himself increasingly entertained as he listened.

Suddenly, he was taken aback.

What exists on the opposite side of the planet?

I only know of the Northern and Southern Continents. Considering the time difference, they're nearly on the same side…

If this world is genuinely a planet, there must be another side. But I've never heard of any continents—just an expansive sea?

Wait, how did those giant fellows from the New City of Silver emerge from the Forsaken Land of the Gods… Something must have occurred on the continent on the other side of the planet, abandoned by the deities. Could that be why it's known as the Forsaken Land of the Gods?

If I have a chance in the future, I could revisit the New City of Silver and explore the library for books related to the Forsaken Land of the Gods…

Lumian reined in his thoughts and continued conversing with Iveljsta for a while. Eventually, he escorted the former descendant of the Balam Empire's royal family, a member of the temperance faction, away from this floor.

Not long after returning to his room, the doll messenger arrived with a response from Madam Magician.

"The information and insights you've gathered this time are exceptionally valuable. It's no wonder my spiritual perception guided me to let you visit the New City of Silver after the Hanth Island Demon incident.

"Reflecting on it, your encounter with Naboredisley seemed almost coincidental. You followed the clues to Hanth Island. Hmm, you should grasp the significance, right?

"The situation in this matter both reassures me and intensifies my vigilance and anxiety. When that entity stands by our side, these details are incredibly useful. However, He won't always be with us. When our objectives clash, I can't fathom what challenges we'll face. The same goes for you and me.

"Therefore, Hunters must rely more on their personal growth amidst blood, fire, chaos, and conflict. Many Hunters meet their end, using their bones to forge the Red Priest who conquers all.

"We've already initiated an internal review. It involves a considerable

number of individuals and will take a substantial amount of time to complete. Considering your contributions, besides converting the Beyonder characteristic into a Sealed Artifact, you have the option to choose a reward. Pick one out of two. Here are your choices.

"1: the potion formula for the Hunter pathway's Sequence 4 Iron-blooded Knight. 2: I'll assist you in divining clues about the remaining parts of the Abscessed Hand's body."

Chapter 657 Tizamo Town

Reading Madam Magician's two choices, Lumian fell into deep thought.

These were incredible rewards!

It had to be known that reaching Sequence 4 marked a crucial point for Beyonders, a moment of qualitative transformation. From then on, one could attain godhood and become a half-human, half-god entity. Most Beyonders would never get this far. This wasn't just about becoming a demigod; it also included seeing or obtaining related items firsthand.

A Sequence 4 potion formula was usually priceless!

Moreover, this was a Sequence 4 potion formula related to Lumian's own pathway. Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

As for the reward of divining clues about the rest of the Abscessed Hand's body, it symbolized the promise and assistance of an Angel. Ordinary Beyonders wouldn't even dream of such a chance, let alone receive an opportunity. They could only read about Angels gaining the Lord's permission and responding to believers' prayers in various Churches.

Furthermore, Lumian needed to address this issue.

After advancing to a Sequence 5 Reaper, his top priority was finding the remaining parts of the Abscessed Hand's body. Without completing this task, the formula, the ingredients, the digestion process, and the prepared ritual wouldn't give him a shot at becoming a demigod in time due to the unfulfilled promise and the oath's restrictions. Regret wouldn't even be an option.

Lumian had no clue how to locate it by himself. His only plan was to

mimic the incantation for summoning the Abscessed Hand and craft a new series of summoning incantations. He hoped to summon the spirit world creature's legs, arms, body, and head.

However, this was a risky endeavor. In his dream, Lumian learned from his sister that when the summoning incantation lacked clarity and had no restrictions, the summoned entity could be unpredictable. It might be a demigod-level spirit world creature filled with malice, capable of killing the summoner instantly.

Lumian couldn't pinpoint the precise direction due to the unknown fragmentation of the Abscessed Hand's body. It could be a relatively intact body missing a hand, or it might have shattered into tiny, peanut-sized fragments. Describing it accurately was impossible. He could only experiment repeatedly, narrowing down the possibilities. It was akin to playing with his life.

More importantly, Lumian had already combed through the comprehensive information on common spirit world creatures provided by Madam Magician. Still, he found nothing that seemed to be other parts of the Abscessed Hand's body.

Lumian desired the Sequence 4 Iron-blooded Knight potion formula and clues about the rest of the Abscessed Hand's body.

This was the reason why he couldn't make a decision.

He pondered whether to teleport back to Trier now and seek Franca or Jenna's help in divination, hoping their spiritual insights would provide him with valuable hints.

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian reached a decision.

The second option!

This was because he remembered something important. Mr. Hanged Man's reward had yet to materialize. It was an opportunity to explore the Blue Avenger, a ghost ship that was a relic of the Tudor Empire.

Considering that the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor was once a true god of the Hunter pathway and a half-mad Red Priest, the Tudor Empire's

inheritance contained the Sequence 4 potion formula of the Hunter pathway, along with Beyonder ingredients and characteristics. It was something to look forward to.

Lumian promptly sat down and penned a reply to Madam Magician, expressing his thoughts. He also informed her that he would be heading to Tizamo Town to investigate Hisoka's inheritance.

…

At 4 p.m., Camus Castiya, accompanied by three dark-brown Southern Continent natives, knocked on the door of Suite 7 on B3 of Hotel Orella.

"They all hail from Tizamo, born and bred. They only ventured to Port Pylos in search of opportunities upon reaching adulthood," Camus explained in Intisian, introducing the two men and one woman. "One is a supplier of Gwadar berries, another married a local and toils at the port, and the third took a less lawful path as a thief."

One is a relatively wealthy merchant, the other is a dockworker, and the other is a thief. They happen to be at three different social levels, and they are from both genders. This will allow me to understand the situation in Tizamo to the greatest extent and comprehensively. Camus is very professional in this aspect. As expected of a former Public Security Officer… Lumian nodded slightly and asked the three subjects in fluent Dutanese, "I'm a scholar of folklore en route to Tizamo. But before that, I'd like to learn more about the town. My Dutanese is a bit rusty, so Mr. Camus will assist in translation."

"We'll heed Officer Camus," responded the eldest merchant with a smile, quickly seconded by the others.

Lumian turned to Lugano and instructed, "I'll take one to the master bedroom for an exchange. You can entertain the other two."

"Alright," Lugano replied promptly.

Inside the master bedroom, Lumian courteously seated the merchant in an armchair, positioning himself at the edge of the bed. Speaking in Intisian, he inquired, "What's the primary produce of Tizamo?"

Camus, translating, wore a puzzled expression.

Is Louis Berry truly planning a journey to Tizamo?

It's evident he's tracing Twanaku's footsteps!

Camus assumed the role of an Interrogator, staring down at the seated merchant as he conveyed Lumian's words.

The merchant, filled with trepidation, responded, "Sir, we mainly cultivate Gwadar berries, spices, and forest fruits. Numerous plantations dot the surroundings, and we often venture into the forest for hunting, selling both meat and fur. Additionally, we cut down trees for crafting coffins.

"That's… that's about it. The remaining effort goes into planting corn and potatoes for our own consumption."

Lumian absorbed the information and refined his understanding of Dutanese through Camus's translation.

Engaging in casual conversation, Lumian explored the daily lives, sustenance, and leisure activities of the Tizamo residents.

From the merchant's account, Lumian painted a mental picture of Tizamo.

Its populace mainly consisted of locals, with outsiders being the proprietors of nearby plantations and some acquired slaves. Thanks to the hunting services provided to the Port Pylos gentry, Tizamo maintained a connection with the outside world, avoiding isolation and conservativism.

Although the faith in Death had been eradicated, traces of it lingered in daily life. The townspeople primarily believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun, yet remnants of Death faith were evident, such as frequent visits to the cemetery and the practice of not burying prematurely deceased children in coffins. Each adult prepared a coffin for themselves in advance, and the common means of travel involved using a coffin.

With keen interest, Lumian concluded the discussion and inquired,

"Are you familiar with Twanaku Tupián?"

Finally getting into the meat… Camus exhaled quietly and conveyed the question to the merchant.

A warm smile appeared on the merchant's face.

"I do! He's well-known in town."

"Why?" Camus interjected.

The merchant, with an obsequious smile, responded, "Sir, he should be your colleague. Twanaku is the first person from Tizamo to join the patrol team. Moreover, he's rapidly advancing in rank. He's a source of pride for us."

Lumian couldn't help but emit a soft chuckle.

"I'm quite curious about Twanaku's past."

The merchant's expression shifted slightly as he glanced around.

"Sirs, did Twanaku commit a crime? Did he join an organization that believes in Death?"

Quite perceptive… Lumian thought, while Camus grumbled in a low voice, "Are we doing the questioning or are you? Just answer truthfully!"

Under the mental pressure of the Interrogator, the dark-

skinned merchant replied with a trembling voice, "I've known for a long time that this young man, Twanaku, will surely become extraordinary, but I also know he'll one day tread the path of blasphemy against a deity."

Seeing Camus and Lumian awaiting further explanation, the merchant continued, "There was a fire in the Twanaku family. All his kin perished, and only he survived. According to our customs, he's favored by a deity, spared from death. Such individuals often go on to achieve great feats."

The deity's favor refers to Death here, right? Not succumbing to Death is considered receiving Death's favor? Lumian interjected thoughtfully.

"The fire happened about six years ago?"

"How did you know?" the surprised merchant asked. Then, slapping his forehead, he added, "I'm such a fool. You must have investigated it beforehand."

From the looks of it, the fire somehow brought Twanaku back to life, transforming him into Hisoka… Lumian nodded.

"Continue."

Recalling, the merchant said, "Since then, Twanaku fell silent, as if in shock. He no longer participated in Mass or entered the cathedral of God. Later, he left Tizamo for Port Pylos."

Was Twanaku unafraid of scrutiny for acting so unusually? Did he not bother to feign his faith? By then, Hisoka had already become a Beyonder of the Devil pathway, making it impossible for him to participate in the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's Mass? Where did his first potion come from? Lumian pondered while Camus translated and asked, "Does Twanaku frequently return to Tizamo?"

"He comes back to Tizamo every year. I'm not sure how often or for how long," the merchant truthfully replied.

"Where does he stay when he returns to Tizamo?" Lumian inquired further.

The merchant smoothly replied, "At his own place. After joining the patrol team and amassing wealth, he rebuilt the burnt-down house."

Rebuilt the house that was destroyed in the fire… Lumian contemplated for a moment and then asked, "Are there any special folklore festivals in Tizamo?"

Chapter 658 Deep Desire

The merchant responded cautiously to Camus's translation, "Sir, we don't really have any special folklore festivals. We only celebrate two festivals every year. One is the Sun Sacrifice in December, and the other is the New Sun Festival in June."

The Sun Sacrifice was a recurring festival for the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, marking the day with the longest daylight of the year when the sun reached its zenith at noon.

In the Northern Continent, it took place in mid-to-late June, while in the Southern Continent, due to the reversed seasons, it occurred in mid-to-late December.

The New Sun Festival, originating from the believers of the Southern Continent's Eternal Blazing Sun, involved celebrations during the longest night and shortest days, welcoming the return of the sun and anticipating more light and warmer weather.

This celebration often coincided with the New Year in many parts of the Southern Continent, gradually merging the two festivities.

The merchant explained that the citizens of Tizamo Town solely celebrated festivals connected to the Eternal Blazing Sun, having abandoned the traditions related to Death.

He reflected for a moment and added, "It's been like this for a long time—since my grandfather was born."

Matani, particularly Port Pylos and the gold mine city of Devise, had been Intis's colony for nearly a century. The native population was compelled to convert generations ago, becoming followers of the Eternal Blazing Sun. This, however, was limited to areas effectively managed by colonial institutions in the past.

When Lumian arrived in Port Pylos, his first impression was: at the docks, in the heart of the city, it resembled the port cities of Intis. Yet, the workers' skin was darker and browner. The streets frequented by Intisians and Feynapotterians were sparsely populated and desolate. After passing Hotel Orella and exploring other areas of Port Pylos, various buildings with West Balam characteristics emerged. More pedestrians populated the streets, and the echoes of Dutanese filled the air.

Lumian sought further details, indirectly confirming the merchant's words. Interrogator Camus discerned no signs of deception.

"What things have left a deep impression on you since you were young that you still remember from time to time?" Lumian shifted the conversation.

Recalling, the merchant replied, "Grand funerals… Newly built coffins…

"The primitive tribe that clashes with us every year… The occasional scream at night because of them…

"Everyone's hardworking, calm, and well-educated. We get angry, but we don't argue on the spot or shout. We choose to find the padre, officers, and judges to determine who's right and who's wrong…"

Camus translated the merchant's words to Lumian, adding a few comments.

"That's indeed the case. I've been to Tizamo. The people there are very docile. Even if they're treated unfairly, they rarely resist violently. The manor owners of the surrounding plantations love to hire them, reducing the cost of buying slaves.

"Of course, it's not that they're emotionless and won't resist. Instead, they tend to abide by order and follow the official processes to resolve problems. I-I guess they can be considered outstanding believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun?"

The honorific name of the Eternal Blazing Sun contained the description "Embodiment of Order."

As a member of the Feynapotter royal lineage, Camus undoubtedly believed in the Earth Mother. He knew that Louis Berry hailed from the Intis Republic and was likely a believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

Lumian stood up, extending his arms with a smile. "Praise the Sun!"

"Praise the Sun!" The merchant hastily followed suit.

Lumian settled back into his seat, contemplating for a few fleeting moments.

"Have you experienced any strange dreams?"

The merchant nodded, then shook his head.

"Many, but they slip away from memory. Do you not encounter such dreams?"

Indeed. Dreams often elude the control of one's consciousness. They can reveal spiritual insights, mirror suppressed desires, or reflect events from the day. Sometimes, these elements intertwine, resulting in strange and unpredictable dreams. I, too, frequently encounter such dreams. In the past, when I battled the Demon corruption, they were even more bizarre and exaggerated… Lumian sensed that the merchant's response was impeccable.

If the other party could pinpoint a specific strange dream, that might raise suspicion.

Either the dream was exceptionally strange and unforgettable, or the merchant was abnormal and had prepared in advance before coming.

After discussing other matters, Lumian escorted the merchant out of the master bedroom.

The responses of the other two Tizamons were similar to the merchant's, only supplementing the details they observed at their level and sharing encounters with their own characteristics.

Lumian found no traces of the Dream Festival.

If the Dream Festival is genuinely linked to Tizamo, there's only one possibility: When the townsfolk fall asleep, they enter a dream world to celebrate the festival. Upon waking, they forget everything…

Or, there's another possibility. Two factions may be involved in Hisoka's Tizamo Town prank. First, the citizens of Tizamo. Second, the primitive tribe in the nearby forest. Could the Dream Festival be a celebration for that primitive tribe?

Hisoka's prank impacted the Dream Festival, leading the primitive tribe to suddenly attack Tizamo, resulting in significant casualties and concealing the traces of his advancement ritual to Desire Apostle. Lumian pondered as he walked Camus and the three Tizamons to the door.

Upon returning to the master bedroom, he stood before the desk and gazed at the stone wall in front of him. His eyes flickered with anticipation and unease.

His decision to stay in the Southern Continent and actively pursue Hisoka's inheritance was indeed to grow amid blood, fire, chaos, and conflict, securing more acting opportunities. He aimed to open the door to godhood and advance to Sequence 4 as soon as possible.

The reason for his impatience was: he saw a glimmer of hope in reviving his sister!

The state of the Naboredisleys on Hanth Island provided him with that glimmer of hope.

This hope stemmed from the belief that a high-ranking figure of the Earth Mother Church might possess the ability to divide another person's soul. This would allow each soul fragment to grow into a relatively separate individual through rebirth.

Aurore's soul fragment was sealed within Lumian's body.

Perhaps a high-ranking member of the Church of Earth Mother could use one or more soul fragments to resurrect Aurore in a new form!

Lumian wasn't certain if such a plan could be realized or if it constituted true "resurrection," but it was the most plausible method

he had encountered so far. He was determined to give it a try.

Of course, he couldn't experiment with Aurore's soul fragment directly. His plan was to deliberately create some soul fragments in future cullings and seek help from the Church of Earth Mother to see if they could be reborn and if the person who returned was the same individual.

Once all the details were confirmed, he would revive Aurore.

Lumian didn't believe he had the qualifications to collaborate with the Church of Earth Mother. Only by becoming a demigod and relying on the secret organization, the Tarot Club, could he gain the Church of Earth Mother's attention and fulfill the transaction conditions proposed by the other party.

For this, Lumian couldn't wait to obtain godhood and advance to Sequence 4.

At times, Lumian wished his sister were also a Blessed of Celestial Worthy and had inherited the ancient castle. This way, her resurrection might be more straightforward.

Yes, to extract Aurore's soul fragment, I must undo Mr. Fool's seal. To undo his seal, I have to wait for Termiboros to become very weak. For Termiboros to weaken, I need to continuously extract his power at a higher level. And to withstand the power of a higher level, I have to possess godhood and advance step by step… Lumian's thoughts gradually clarified, and he unprecedentedly yearned for an advancement.

…

Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca lay on the bed beneath a velvet blanket, her cheeks still flushed, eyes moist, and her expression unusually complicated.

Beside her, Jenna rested under the same velvet cover. She had slipped into a deep slumber, her brows furrowed with a mix of exhaustion, satisfaction, resistance, and nostalgia. Her outstretched

arms and exposed fair skin still bore traces of the recent fervor.

Franca gazed at Jenna and let out a sudden sigh.

The experience had exceeded her expectations, yet a sense of emptiness lingered in her heart.

It was beautiful in the moment, but what would transpire after the digestion of the Pleasure potion?

Could physical intimacy and emotional distance coexist?

Did overwhelming pleasure pave the way for sorrow? Was it the agony of sinking into oblivion while resisting salvation?

Sigh… Franca released another soft sigh. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

She sensed that her Pleasure potion had been substantially digested.

…

Matani State, Port Pylos.

Lumian, sipping a glass of Gwadar, looked up and spoke to Lugano as if discussing the weather.

"We're heading to Tizamo Town today. Will you join Ludwig and me, or will you stay here and wait for us?

"Let me warn you in advance. The situation in Tizamo Town might be very dangerous."

Very dangerous… He wanted to say he'd stay in Port Pylos, but memories of Father Montserrat flashed in his mind.

Gritting his teeth, he replied, "I'm with you."

If danger lurked in Tizamo Town, he could rely on his boss to bail him out. But here? Only himself!

Lumian nodded slightly and didn't say more.

After checking out and hitting the street, he chuckled at Lugano and Ludwig, "Do we take a coffin to Tizamo, or should we grab a carriage?"

Before Lugano and Ludwig could answer, a four-wheeled, four-seater carriage rolled up from under the shade.

The carriage's driver, a young man, kept his head low, not daring to look away.

Coming to a stop, Camus Castiya emerged. He forced a smile and said to Lumian, "Thanks for your help these past days. I'll escort you to Tizamo."

Chapter 659 Poor "Monster"

Observing Camus's expression, as if compelled to act at gunpoint, Lumian didn't hold back. He replied with a smile, "I'd like that."

It was evident to him that the brass of the patrol team, or even Admiral Querarill himself, was concerned about Louis Berry wandering around their territory. Tizamo, where he was headed, was located near the primitive forest and had close ties to a Sequence 5 Desire Apostle. Therefore, two additional patrol team members with a certain relationship with Louis Berry were sent to accompany him. Even if they couldn't prevent trouble, they could at least send word before it became a catastrophe.

As for why they didn't directly stop Louis Berry from heading to Tizamo Town, it was partly because Lumian had hinted at the faction backing him when he submitted Twanaku's head. Without a conflict of principles, Admiral Querarill likely wouldn't make things difficult for him. Secondly, Louis Berry's investigations and adventures seemed to bring calamity, but they had exposed hidden dangers ahead of time. If the problem remained concealed and continued to evolve, Matani and Admiral Querarill might not be able to handle it in a year or two. When the time came, blood might flow like a river.

Kolobo, acting as the carriage driver, gazed ahead stonily. He fumbled for a pair of sunglasses and slid them onto the bridge of his nose. There were no visible injuries on his body.

As Camus held the carriage door open, he watched Louis Berry board, leading a young boy by the hand.

"He's going to Tizamo too?" Camus blurted in surprise.

He had assumed Louis Berry would leave his servant and godson at Hotel Orella, joining them later after dealing with Tizamo Town's issues. However, the adventurer was now bringing a young child to

Tizamo, and it was evident this wasn't a leisurely trip. It was very dangerous!

Lumian's left foot remained on the ground, and his right foot halted at the carriage's edge. He smiled and spoke, "My godson is fascinated by jungle fruits, the unique beasts I hunt, and various spices."

Earlier, the Tizamons had mentioned their hometown's specialties, highlighting the excellence of roasted meat. The blend of spices and the distinctive gamey flavor of wild beasts in the forest contributed to Tizamo Town's unique delicacies.

Ludwig, already settled in the carriage, swallowed, seemingly in sync with Lumian.

Aren't you worried about endangering your godson? Why are you so confident? Camus didn't press, simply signaling Lugano with his eyes to hurry up.

Lugano cast a glance at the peculiar carriage driver, who trembled slightly beneath his black sunglasses. He entered the carriage and took a seat across from Lumian and Ludwig.

Camus shut the carriage door and settled beside Kolobo. With a sigh, he remarked, "You can remove your sunglasses now. It's been hard on you."

"Alright, alright, alright." Kolobo seemed to shiver as if struck by an icy wind. His teeth chattered, and his tremors intensified.

Camus turned to him, surprised.

"Didn't you strike a deal face-to-face with Louis Berry? Why are you still so afraid?"

Not seeing him directly again!

"Alright, alright, alright." Kolobo removed his sunglasses, taking more than ten seconds to compose himself.

In a hushed tone, he confessed with fear, "I feel like my fingers, my arms, my insides, even my head… all eaten.

"That, that…"

"That what?" Camus struggled to comprehend why the Monster's demeanor had shifted so drastically, sensing that the issue might be significant.

Kolobo swallowed hard and continued, "That… that child… is also… very dangerous!

"Though I haven't laid eyes on him, I sense a looming threat, like facing a lion, a tiger, a python, ready to eat me at any moment."

"…" Camus was stunned, a hiss escaping his lips.

Until now, Kolobo had never exhibited such fear except in the presence of three individuals radiating danger: Desire Apostle Twanaku with Wraith powers, and Louis Berry, capable of hunting Twanaku. Could this boy match them?

Is he also a Beyonder, perhaps a Sequence 5 Beyonder?

No, it's not merely a Sequence 5 matter. Our patrol team's captain is a Sequence 5, yet Kolobo never mentioned feeling such foreboding in his presence.

There must be something unique about these three individuals!

Regardless, the boy is undoubtedly extraordinary and hazardous!

No wonder Louis Berry is bringing his godson to Tizamo without worry. Perhaps the child poses an even greater threat… Camus unraveled his earlier confusion, stifling his curiosity, refraining from probing further with Kolobo.

In the confines of the four-wheeled carriage, even with the barrier between them, Louis Berry caught wind of their hushed exchange!

Considering the intel gleaned from the Fog Sea, Camus harbored suspicions that Louis Berry was a Sequence 5 Beyonder following the Hunter pathway. Those of this pathway were renowned for their sharp senses—exceptional vision, acute sense of smell, and keen hearing.

A Beyonder of the Monster pathway is quite intriguing. Even without laying eyes on Ludwig or hearing his voice, Louis can sense his ominous aura, a being who devours everything… Lumian, leaning against the carriage wall, toyed with his golden straw hat, shooting Ludwig a knowing smile.

Could it be that this "little child" has truly taken a liking to Kolobo and Camus?

Indeed. These are two Beyonders who haven't succumbed to severe corruption. Ludwig likely had a momentary lapse in control… Heh heh, Camus may not have noticed, but Kolobo reacted instantly, sensing the danger? Lumian acknowledged Ludwig with a nod.

"Well done. Your restraint is admirable."

Praise was due when a child behaved correctly, fostering a healthy mindset and habits!

Ludwig remained silent, his expression conveying he was not to be treated as a child.

A faint smile graced his lips as he retrieved a box of biscuits from his crimson school bag, nibbling on them.

What restraint… What did he mean by "well done"… Lugano, seated across from him, found himself perplexed.

Tizamo stood as the most remote town in Port Pylos, nestled against the edge of the primitive forest. A full two hours' journey by carriage was required to reach it.

Of course, for those in a hurry, an alternative route existed: boarding a steam locomotive from the port to Cahert, the southernmost town. From there, a carriage or coffin could be hired to venture northeast, shaving the travel time to Tizamo down to just an hour. However, Lumian showed no inclination towards haste.

As they departed Port Pylos, the road gradually narrowed and deteriorated. Yet, the carriage pressed on steadily. Kolobo, the carriage driver, operated with precision akin to a well-

oiled machine, guiding the horses and carriage without falter.

An hour slipped by, and the carriage wound its way through the forest.

Abruptly, Lumian, pretending to slumber, snapped open his eyes.

His body turned dark and spectral, melding with the shadows cast by the window.

Shadow Transformation!

In an instant, gunshots pierced the forest's tranquility.

Bullets whizzed from afar, some thudding into the earth, kicking up clouds of soil, while others took aim at Camus, the carriage, and the horse.

Amidst the chaos, the horse crumpled, bleeding profusely, and the carriage toppled to the ground.

Kolobo had already abandoned his perch as the driver, escaping unscathed from the barrage of gunfire. Camus leaped clear of the carriage in advance, crouching low, revolver in hand. He maneuvered with agility, at times rolling, at others slithering deeper into the undergrowth.

With each movement, he unleashed shots, seeking to suppress the unseen assailant. In this range, many of his abilities were restricted.

A handful of fiery crimson orbs, almost blindingly white, streaked past Camus, disappearing into the forest's depths.

Rumble!

Amidst the thunderous explosions, the gunfire abruptly ceased.

Soon after, curses in Dutanese rang out from the forest's depths.

"Go to hell, you Northern Continent bandits!

"Rot with your sons of bitches!

"Come after us if you have the guts!

"…"

Gradually, the curses faded into the forest's depths.

Lumian emerged from the shadows of the carriage, opting not to pursue.

"It's the Resistance! What are they doing in Matani…" Camus frowned, muttering to himself in confusion.

In the Southern Continent, numerous Resistance factions abounded. He couldn't discern which faction they belonged to or their motives. Typically, Matani, ostensibly independent from the Intis Republic and governed by Admiral Querarill, a Southern Continent native, saw little Resistance activity. Their primary demand was the expulsion of colonists.

Could it be a faction of the Resistance dedicated to Death, aiming to revive Death's influence in Matani? Please not the Rose School of Thought-backed Resistance. No, those lunatics… Camus returned to the carriage, puzzled.

Lumian mulled over another matter.

Despite attaining Sequence 5 status, life still felt fragile.

Vulnerable to being shot dead!

If a Resistance member possessed sharpshooting skills and remained beyond his observational range, sniping from over 100 meters, they could have ended his life. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

Reapers lacked the resilient bodies of Devils. While lacking Malicious Perception, Devils might sustain only minor wounds from rifle shots. Their absence of long-range Danger Premonition characteristic of Seer pathways rendered them unable to preemptively evade.

Granted, Lumian's Ascetic traits bolstered his spiritual perception. Anticipating danger, he had foreseen the attack.

Yet, if the adversary could nullify his spiritual perception or manipulate it effectively, conventional rifles could indeed imperil Lumian.

Yes, Shadow Transformation can serve as a shield. Bullets lacking special effects pose no genuine threat to shadow beings… Lumian redirected his thoughts, instructing Lugano, emerging from the carriage, "Check on the horse."

If it survived, attend to its injuries promptly for carriage duty. If not, Ludwig would command the equine corpse to pull the carriage.

After all, Ludwig had gained the ability to command a handful of low-level undead from a concoction brewed from Hisoka's eyeballs.

Chapter 660 Across the Door

Without hesitation, Lugano pushed himself up and hurried to the fallen horse, carefully examining it.

After a few seconds, he exclaimed regretfully, "It's dead!"

The poor horse was unlucky. Despite being over a hundred meters away, it was hit twice by a flurry of gunshots. One bullet struck its side, and the other hit its head. It couldn't be any more dead.

In contrast, the carriage driver remained unscathed. At most, he had scraped his skin during the tumble.

Lumian glanced at Kolobo, who had his back turned to him and the others, seemingly on guard against any potential attacks from the depths of the forest. He led Ludwig, who had been thrown from the carriage, to the side of the motionless, bleeding horse corpse.

"Stop the bleeding," Lumian instructed Lugano.

Why stop it when the horse is already dead? Although Lugano didn't understand, he extended his shimmering palm.

After the dead horse's wounds closed, Lumian turned to Ludwig and said, "Your turn."

Ludwig, dressed in a child's formal attire, nodded slightly.

He extended his right palm, gripping the dead horse with his five fingers, and slowly raised it.

The blood-stained corpse of the horse suddenly stood up, causing the overturned carriage to shift slightly.

Upon seeing this, Camus gave a barely perceptible nod.

Is this child from the Death pathway or the Prisoner pathway?

However, there's no cold aura or corpse-like aura…

After Lugano righted the carriage, the undead horse corpse continued pulling the five of them towards Tizamo.

Just before noon, Lumian spotted their destination.

It was a small town half-encircled by rubber trees, acacia trees, laurels, and other vegetation. Several plantations dotted the muddy road, and the air was filled with different spice scents and the alluring smell of roasted meat.

Tizamo's buildings were unique. Apart from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church cathedral, which had a distinct northern style, the rest were propped up by wooden stakes and stone pillars. They were reminiscent of West Balam—the base deliberately left empty underneath.

This was due to the humid air and abundant rainfall in many West Balam areas. Water would often overflow and pool below.

Lumian climbed down from the four-wheeled, four-seater carriage, watching the people busy with their tasks in the plantation and the town.

…

Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca reclined in the recliner, rocking gently as she recollected the previous day's events.

After Jenna woke up that morning, she went out to the streets to buy meat, vegetables, fruits, and bread, making Franca wonder if she had experienced a wet dream or hallucination.

Why did she suddenly volunteer to help me with digesting the potion? Compared to most Trieriens, she can definitely be considered conservative…

Moreover, she was so direct and straightforward that I almost lost my desires out of shock. Shouldn't she flirt first to set the mood? When the time comes, even if she doesn't initiate, I won't be able to control myself… The more Franca thought about it, the more puzzled she became. She felt Jenna wouldn't normally act that way.

After recalling Jenna's past experiences and actions, she realized there was no issue.

That was precisely what Jenna would do!

Jenna has a bold nature, or rather, a personality that allows her to act decisively…

After the Showy Diva singer who helped her was raped by Margot and became unstable, she was truly willing to go to extremes to assassinate Margot and avenge her friend. To that end, she even indebted herself to me for the Assassin potion and firmly became a Beyonder despite her finances…

At the Hugues Artois banquet, she faced the Member of Parliament protected by official Beyonders and evil gods' minions. She risked everything, disregarding her own fate. She killed the bastard who brought catastrophe to the market district and her family on the spot…

In her heart, I should still be more important than that Showy Diva friend of hers. Suddenly going to extremes and offering to help me with the potion's effects is indeed something she would do…

Besides, sigh, this definitely isn't a spur-of-the-moment idea. She has asked me several times about my progress digesting the Pleasure potion and if I have a new partner. She even recommended Lumian…

Realizing that I haven't found a new partner and that I'm only open-minded outwardly, she decided to act after being stirred by Lumian advancing to Sequence 5 yesterday…

That doesn't seem enough reason—Jenna wouldn't sacrifice her body because of just those things. Sigh, sacrifice…

Could it be that she had long realized I secretly liked her and didn't

seek out a new partner because of her? Could she believe she affected my digesting the Pleasure potion, causing her to act?

Yes! That must be it. That's the only way she'd truly go to such extremes.

Ahhh! Why can't I find any hint of romantic love?

Franca wailed inwardly.

If she had known this would happen, she would have summoned her courage, toughened her resolve, and sought Lumian's help. That way, she wouldn't feel as conflicted and pained as she did now.

Of course, she didn't seek out a new intimate partner partly because she cared about Jenna's opinion.

She had become Gardner Martin's lover and shared his other lovers before meeting Jenna. There was no changing that history, so she continued on.

After Gardner Martin's demise, she had claimed she wanted Browns to experience true pleasure and participate in the Demoness's female orgies, but most of it was just talk. She was filled with anticipation only out of novelty. If Browns suddenly agreed, she might hesitate and make excuses.

She didn't want to leave an unrestrained image in Jenna or Lumian's minds.

To put it simply, her answer to the question "Is there really no one in this world you care about?" had changed, so she was hesitant to actively pursue a new intimate partner.

Jenna had no substantial intimate experience, so she didn't know how to set a mood for such situations. She could only revert to the straightforward seduction from when she was Little Minx, but she didn't want to deceive my feelings and make me fall deeper. That's why she acted that way yesterday.

Thankfully, she's relatively level-headed. She didn't seek a lover to make me give up, allowing me to truly find a new intimate partner.

Yes, she might think that would be giving me prolonged pain and not prolonged pleasure. It would have hindered my digestion of the potion… Franca felt even more dejected after piecing together the entire situation.

...

On the stairs leading to Apartment 702.

Jenna held a bag of bread and a basket of beef, vegetables, and fruits, reluctant to go back inside.

Recalling yesterday's events made her blush, unsure of how to face Franca.

In her previous days as a Showy Diva singer, she had witnessed others' affection and felt it was just so-so. Although exciting, she thought she could endure it.

Unexpectedly, after experiencing it for real, she realized pleasure could make people become consumed by it.

Phew… Jenna took a few deep breaths to calm herself. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

What troubled her now was how to interact with Franca.

Wait, should I pretend nothing happened and face her with my usual demeanor? Should I be more cheerful and take the initiative to mention yesterday, pretending it's no big deal so Franca doesn't mind?

But won't this upset her? She needs to digest the Pleasure potion…

Besides, one pleasure encounter is definitely not enough. I have to spend time with her as a couple…

Should I keep seducing her tonight like yesterday, or wait for her to initiate?

Dammit, how annoying!

Jenna found such matters more vexing than assassinating powerful figures. Whether avenging herself on Margot or killing Hugues Artois, she had always felt death was the worst outcome—no big deal. However, this situation clearly hadn't reached life-or-death stakes. The subsequent troubles would linger.

Jenna couldn't help but feel frustrated at the thought of maintaining an intimate physical relationship with Franca and all the complexities involved. She wished she could simply assassinate the Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny, instead.

Taking deep breaths to steady her emotions, Jenna analyzed how to approach this from an actress's perspective to make Franca more accepting of future intimacies.

She had already taken the first bold step. She definitely wasn't willing to give up now. She planned to continue their relationship until Franca finished digesting the Pleasure potion's effects.

After figuring out her next move, Jenna's lips curled into a faint smile.

Carrying bread and ingredients, she briskly climbed the stairs and returned to Apartment 702.

As soon as she opened the door, Franca jumped up from the recliner instinctively and forced a smile. She said nervously, "You're back?"

Amused by Franca's actions, Jenna chuckled and sighed inwardly.

How great would it be if you didn't want to become lovers…

Jenna calmly walked to the dining table and placed her items on it. Then, she glared at Franca.

"What are you waiting for? Help me!"

"Alright, alright." Franca hurried over.

Seeing that Jenna wasn't reserved or distant, nor reverted to her usual demeanor, she felt an inexplicable relief. She even began to anticipate the night's arrival.

…

Sizzle. Sizzle.

The juices from a piece of beef dripped onto the fire, transforming into smoke that swirled upwards, blending with the aroma of spices. This caused Ludwig to swallow a few mouthfuls of saliva.

However, the boy patiently waited, not rushing the cook until the beef roasted to its optimal state.

Lumian turned his body and gazed at a three-story building diagonally across from the restaurant.

The yellowish-brown house was the former residence rebuilt by Hisoka Twanaku.

Chapter 661 "Reconnaissance Tools"

During lunch, Lumian used the excuse of going to the washroom to make his way to Hisoka Twanaku's tawny house.

After ascending the wooden stairs and passing through the empty, open ground floor, he took out a new wire and picked the lock on the door.

This level was completely open-air, leaving only support pillars. At a glance, it was very spacious and simple.

Stepping onto the wooden floor, Lumian circled around but found signs that no one had lived here for a long time. He found nothing worth further investigating.

Suddenly, a voice came from behind him.

"What's the problem here?"

The voice belonged to Camus Castiya. When he saw Lumian enter Twanaku's rebuilt house from the dining room window, he found an excuse to leave the table and hurry over.

Lumian wasn't surprised at all. He looked around and said, "Nothing."

As he spoke, he ascended the stairs to the third floor.

Camus sighed silently and followed.

He felt his mentality had aged considerably when with Louis Berry, resembling someone Vice-Captain Reaza's age.

Oh, Mother Earth, I'm not even twenty-four years old!

Although I arrived in Matani at eighteen and joined the patrol team, dealing with numerous Beyonder incidents, participating in dangerous battles, and accumulating extensive experience, I am still a young man—a laidback young man who doesn't focus on appearances in daily life!

With a solemn, vigilant mindset, Camus followed Lumian through the third-floor rooms twice, searching through all the items.

"There's nothing out of place." After setting down a pen holder, Camus shared his assessment with Lumian.

Lumian hadn't gained anything either.

After a moment's contemplation, he responded, "Bring Kolobo here later and ask if there are any areas that make him uneasy, dangerous, or uncomfortable."

Having only collaborated once, he's already adept at utilizing Kolobo's uniqueness… Bringing Kolobo here… Why does it feel like a police officer asking a constable to bring a canine unit… Camus criticized inwardly and nodded.

"Understood."

As Lumian surveyed his surroundings again, he thought, I'll bring Ludwig over later and ask if he detects any fragrance of special ingredients.

Returning to the dining room with Camus, Lumian indulged in the Gwadar beverage, savoring the rich and intricate aroma of roasted beef, roasted chicken wings, roasted snake meat, roasted spiders, and roasted leeches…

After eating and drinking his fill, Lumian took Ludwig's hand and led him to "Hisoka" Twanaku's house. Camus, Lugano, and Kolobo—who wore sunglasses and walked sideways like a crab—followed closely behind.

After exploring every nook and cranny, Lumian looked at Ludwig and asked with a smile, "Is there anything edible here?"

Ludwig shook his head. "No."

Lumian led the boy down to the second level and looked at Kolobo, who had suddenly turned his back to them, and Camus.

"Do any of you sense anything unusual?"

The thin Kolobo hesitated for a moment and said, "This house feels a little cold. It doesn't sit well with me."

"Where exactly?" Lumian inquired with a calm expression.

Kolobo replied succinctly, "Everywhere."

There's something wrong with the entire house and even this land? Hisoka definitely didn't rebuild his previous home for nostalgia. He's not the original owner of that body, so he probably doesn't have much attachment to this place. He's also a true Coldblooded… Lumian pondered for over ten seconds and said to Lugano, Camus, and the others, "Stay here and guard against any mishaps."

He returned to the third floor and lay on a wooden bed with traces of someone having slept in it.

Large, black mosquitoes flew over with crackling sounds. However, in the flickering sparks, they were ignited one by one, turning into charred corpses that floated onto the bed.

Lumian quickly slipped into a deep slumber.

In his daze, he slowly awoke.

Pa! Lumian took out the golden pocket watch from Salle de Bal Brisé, opened it, and muttered to himself, "Slept for half an hour and didn't have any special dreams…"

He had always believed the Dream Festival was related to dreams, so he deliberately slept in Hisoka's house, but nothing happened. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Lumian gazed at the midday sun shining through the window and stood up thoughtfully.

Could the timing be off?

Must I sleep at a specific time and place to participate in the Dream Festival?

Therefore, most Tizamo Town residents are unaware of its existence…

When Lumian returned to the spacious but crude second level, he realized Camus and the others now had three more people with them.

One was a man in his thirties with a painted face. His light brown skin and thick lips gave him a relatively clean-cut look, and his black hair fell to his shoulders. A strong pungent smell wafted from him. The other was a young woman wearing dark leather armor. Her brown hair was tied in two strands draped over her shoulders. Her light brown skin and facial features exuded a wild beauty. She carried a hunting bow and a leather quiver of arrows on her back.

Another man, dressed similarly to Camus and the others in a shirt and thin pants, stood over 1.9 meters tall with an appearance leaning towards the Feysac Empire. He had short light-blond hair, light-blue eyes, and a face bearing signs of exposure to sun and rain.

"They're our colleagues, members of the Tizamo Town patrol team," Camus introduced.

He pointed at the man with the white paint pattern on his face and said, "Captain of the local patrol team, Maslow.

"His teammate…"

Camus turned to the wild-looking woman with a bow and arrows on her back and the tall Feysacian man and said, "Rhea.

"Loban, used to be an adventurer."

He spoke in Intisian the entire time.

Finally, Camus addressed the three local patrol team members, "This is the great adventurer, Louis Berry. The other two are his assistant and godson."

"This is the great adventurer, Louis Berry.

"The other two are his assistant and godson."

"Great adventurer…" Maslow repeated the term and cast his gaze at Loban.

Feysacian Loban shook his head, indicating he had never heard of him.

Maslow averted his gaze and asked Lumian, "Are you here to hunt?"

Tizamo Town had been a favorite hunting ground for Port Pylos's gentry for decades. There was no shortage of residents proficient in Intisian, and the patrol team had language requirements to handle the gentry's requests.

Lumian responded with a smile, "Something like that."

Hunting for Hisoka's inheritance and hidden issues was also a form of hunting.

Seeing the skeptical expressions on Maslow and the others' faces, Camus hurriedly explained, "Do you remember the telegram sent last night?"

"You mean…" With her hunting bow and arrows, Rhea couldn't help but glance at Lumian again.

Clearly, she, Maslow, and company had just arrived and hadn't had time to discuss the detailed situation with Camus and Kolobo. A telegram could only convey limited information.

Camus nodded solemnly.

"Monsieur Louis Berry is here to investigate the hidden issues behind Twanaku."

Using the excuse of inspecting the house again, he led the three local patrol team members upstairs.

Lugano glanced at the stairs and asked Kolobo, who had his back to

them, "There's a local patrol team in Tizamo?"

Based on his experience, there shouldn't be any official Beyonder teams permanently stationed in the Northern Continent's small towns and villages like Port Pylos. They would typically send someone to handle issues as they arose.

Kolobo turned his back to Lumian and Ludwig, trembling as he replied, "Most other towns don't have them. This place is rather special and is often attacked by primitive tribes. Not only did our patrol team station a permanent team here, but the Admiral Guard also has Beyonders at the military camp outside town."

Lugano glanced at the strange official Beyonder who doubled as their carriage driver and couldn't hide his curiosity.

"Why do you always have your back to us and wear black sunglasses?"

Don't you want others to discover something's wrong with your eyes?"

Kolobo fell silent, unsure if he should answer.

At that moment, Camus led Maslow and the others back to the second floor.

When they looked at Lumian again, Maslow, Rhea, and Loban's expressions turned much more serious.

Lumian smiled and asked casually, "Did anything unusual happen with this house?"

"No," Maslow had already recalled the relevant details.

With a nod, Lumian replied, "Were you transferred to Tizamo after the attack last year?"

He recalled the dossier had mentioned the three Beyonders stationed here perished in the primitive tribe's attack.

"Yes," Loban, the former Feysacian adventurer, replied in a rough

voice. "It's been nearly a year. It's been very peaceful here. No more attacks."

According to the records, the tribe in the primitive forest attacked two to three times a year in past years… Admiral Querarill's response of sending more guards and army deterred the primitive tribe from taking the risk. Did they really retreat into the forest depths? Or did the April Fool's prank cause something to change? Lumian sensed something amiss.

After conversing for a while, Lumian prepared to take Ludwig and Lugano to check into the motel.

Maslow took a few steps forward and retrieved two items from a small leather bag hanging from his waist.

There were brown candles and a glass bottle filled with a light-yellow liquid.

"Mosquito repellent candles and tranquil essential oil. I hope you get a good night's sleep," Maslow said in accented Intisian.

Camus chimed in, "What he means is that this place is close to the primitive forest, and mosquitoes and poisonous insects are everywhere. Although you're Beyonders, it won't be pleasant if you're accidentally bitten. Furthermore, you won't be able to sleep peacefully and will keep waking up."

"The mosquito repellent candles are made from plants that mosquitoes dislike. Tranquil essential oil comes from certain animals, making those damned buzzing fellows stay away from you."

At this point, Camus, Maslow, Rhea, and the others suddenly realized there were no mosquitoes on the entire second level.

Lumian turned to Ludwig and accepted the candle and oil with a smile.

Then, he gently pinched his nose to confirm the pungent smell on Maslow and the others came from the tranquil essential oil.

After Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano left Twanaku's house, Maslow

looked at Kolobo, who had his back to everyone, in confusion. He asked in Dutanese, "What's wrong?"

Chapter 662 Those Words

Kolobo finally turned around.

He took off his sunglasses and spoke in Dutanese with a weary look, "My gut tells me I shouldn't look directly at them. I can only take a quick glance at most."

"Why's that?" Rhea asked curiously, her wildness evident as she carried her hunting bow.

"Just intuition," Kolobo replied firmly, unsure of the reason but convinced he shouldn't stare.

Loban, the Feysacian, wore a pensive expression.

"What's on your mind?" Maslow, his face painted white, turned to him and asked.

The three had worked together in Tizamo Town for a year and understood each other well. Maslow could tell Loban had thought of something from his look.

Observing Camus and the others' gazes, Loban pondered for a moment before saying, "While adventuring across the Five Seas, I came across this saying: 'Don't look directly at God.'"

"Don't look directly at God…" Camus's forehead twitched as he whispered the phrase.

As a Castiya family descendant, albeit from a collateral branch, he had more extensive mystical knowledge than most Beyonders.

Could it be that Louis Berry and his godson were actual gods, unable to be gazed upon?

No, that couldn't be right. Kolobo avoided looking at Twanaku

directly, yet Twanaku was merely a Sequence 5 Beyonder of the Prisoner and Criminal pathways—not even a demigod!

"I've heard that before during the padre's sermons. It's about respecting and worshiping God, right?" said Rhea, a devout Eternal Blazing Sun believer.

"No, it's not from the Church scriptures. It's recorded in a mystical text," Loban shook his head, rejecting her explanation.

Maslow let out a deep chuckle.

"Surely the great adventurer can't literally be a deity walking among us?"

"Maybe not a true deity," Loban recalled, "But the book's notes state it refers to a 'Mythical Creature'. I'm unsure what exactly that means, but if it contains the word 'god', it must have at least some level of godhood. Could that adventurer be a demigod?"

"It doesn't seem that way currently," Camus said, gradually forming a new idea. "Perhaps the adventurer is simply one of a deity's Blessed, carrying a divine item or aura bestowed upon him. So it's true we can't directly look at 'God', but that 'God' isn't referring to him, only something he possesses."

This could explain the situation with Twanaku very well.

"You mean like the most famous adventurer?" Loban the Feysacian realized.

Adventurers, treasure hunters, pirates and merchants across the Five Seas now knew Gehrman Sparrow had been The Fool's Oracle before becoming an Angel. Visit no(v)eLb(i)n.*com* for the best novel reading experience

"Precisely." Camus nodded.

Simultaneously, he inwardly cursed.

Dogsh*t, why was I sent to watch over matters involving a deity's Blessed?

This was undoubtedly perilous. A moment of carelessness could lead to death!

Camus hadn't wanted to accept Vice-Captain Reaza's order the day before, but over the past five years, Reaza had saved him from the brink of death three times. He couldn't refuse.

Otherwise, with the prestigious "Don" prefix and Castiya family name, he could have declined his superior's orders. At worst, he could leave the patrol team and seek opportunities elsewhere. After all, he had already digested the Sequence 7 Interrogator potion. He had saved enough funds for his subsequent advancement thanks to Louis Berry's two commissions. Even returning to his family, he wouldn't be the type brushed aside.

But to repay Reaza's kindness, Camus reluctantly agreed to come to Tizamo Town and monitor Louis Berry's every move. Feeling upset, he couldn't help but inwardly curse.

As a devout and educated believer in Mother Earth, Camus wouldn't curse with vulgar phrases like "son of a…" From his view, mothers were great—birth and nurturing equally important, just as the earth nurtured all things' growth.

After discussing the adventurer Louis Berry, Loban the Feysacian turned to Camus and Kolobo, saying, "When we transferred to Tizamo, we were told we could return after a year, that we wouldn't stay forever. Now, nearly a year has passed, and you're here too. Does that mean we can return to Port Pylos?"

As a Feysacian, you appear tall, robust, boorish, and unintelligent, but you're actually dishonest… Did you discover that Louis Berry's matter might be a huge problem and want an excuse to slip away early? Camus acutely sensed Loban's hidden thoughts and joked, "There's still a week left! Don't even think about returning to Port Pylos early. We're not here for your rotation."

…

At the Brieu Motel.

This was the favorite accommodation for the gentlemen who came to Tizamo Town to hunt. Although it couldn't compare to Hotel Orella, it was at least relatively clean.

Lumian's sole reason for choosing this place was the availability of a suite.

Otherwise, he would have to rent two adjacent rooms and utilize his Hunter's precise grasp of structures to blast through the adjoining wall without affecting the overall load-bearing walls. When departing, he'd get Lugano to replace the stone bricks and repair the opening.

The ground floor was equally open, supported by stone pillars. However, the three-story building above bore a distinct Intisian flair. The beige walls, recessed statuary niches, arched windows, and venetian curtains made Lumian feel as if he had returned to Trier.

When Lugano lit the mosquito repellent candle and used its slightly pungent smell to chase away the poisonous insects and mosquitoes, it became even more reminiscent.

This is very similar to Trieriens using sulfur's smell to repel bedbugs… Lumian recalled his initial arrival in Trier.

After using sulfur's smell to chase the bedbugs into the neighboring room, playwright Gabriel ignited it and drove them back. After this back-and-forth, most bedbugs went elsewhere, leaving only a few that the doll messenger eliminated.

Lumian sighed silently, recalling Gabriel's death and the deceased tenants of the Auberge du Coq Doré.

He walked to the window and gazed at the street below.

The gentlemen in hunting attire and their servants on unicorns weaved through the dark-brown or light-brown townspeople, flowing into Brieu Motel, jungle restaurants, and other establishments like rivers.

Under the noon sun, Tizamo Town was scorchingly humid this season, making it unsuitable for outdoor activities.

On the second floor, Lumian focused his attention and observed the passersby directly below.

He attempted to discern any potential issues with Tizamo Town from their fortunes.

He was prepared for backlash or corruption.

These passersby's fortunes are normal. Some seem to have romantic encounters looming, some would lose money, and some might encounter a bloody calamity, but nothing too serious…

Lumian averted his gaze and said to Lugano, "Take Ludwig to rest. I'll take a walk outside."

"Alright." Knowing the trip to Tizamo Town might be dangerous, Lugano had no intention of wandering out unless his boss asked him to prepare food for Ludwig.

He had no choice but to go along. Otherwise, he would be the one eaten!

Tizamo Town wasn't small with streets spanning out in two directions. Lumian strolled leisurely, hands in pockets, donning a golden straw hat.

He no longer wore the straw hat to enhance Louis Berry's persona, but to shield himself from the sunlight. He had intended to do so many times before.

This was because an adverse effect of Shadow Transformation was a greater fear of sunlight than ordinary people.

Although Lumian could endure relying on his Ascetic abilities, this would impact his condition to some extent. Why make things difficult when he could resolve it with a straw hat?

Moreover, with the appearance of Louis Berry wearing a golden straw hat, the enemy wouldn't think he was afraid of sunlight.

As his gaze casually shifted, Lumian spotted a girl.

She was a typical Northern Continent native, her black hair cascading down her back like a waterfall, a few sparkling bows adorning her head. Her azure-tinged eyes accentuated her sharp, delicate nose. An unmistakable youthful aura radiated between her brows.

The girl wore a light, lace-trimmed, pleated white dress, but instead of high heels, she donned a pair of brown leather boots. As she conversed and laughed with companions, she danced, seemingly unconcerned about passersby's opinions.

Lumian glanced at her again.

It wasn't because she was beautiful. Although quite lovely, her appearance and bearing couldn't compare to a Demoness or truly beautiful humans.

Lumian simply sensed her personality differed from Trier's ladies.

In Trier, no matter how open-minded respectable middle and upper-class women were in private, they still publicly cared about image and others' opinions—a product of their upbringing.

This girl exuded an air of freedom. She could laugh loudly or spin around whenever she pleased.

This was distinct from an improperly raised lower-class woman's demeanor. This girl's attire, speech and aura indicated good education and upbringing.

"Amandina, daughter of Palms Manor's Sir Petit, and Monsieur Robert's fiancée," Camus, resembling a specter, materialized from nowhere beside Lumian with the introduction.

Palms Manor was a plantation near Tizamo Town.

A Southern Continent girl raised without Trier's upper-

middle-class societal constraints… As Lumian judged this, he thought of his sister Aurore.

Sometimes, Aurore displayed such a side.

However, the reasons were clearly different.

"Where are you headed?" Camus inquired.

Lumian retracted his gaze and replied with a smile, "The cathedral.

"Are you coming with me to praise the Sun?"

Chapter 663 Late Night

Like many cathedrals in Intis, Tizamo's had a golden dome, resembling the sun's reflection on the ground.

As Lumian passed through the door, he was dazzled by the walls, arches, gold leaf inlaid in the dome, a mural sprinkled with golden powder, and a golden statue. The sunlight streaming through the glass behind the altar made him instinctively raise his hand, wanting to press down his golden straw hat.

It was lunchtime, and many simply-dressed Tizamo residents sat in various pews, heads bowed in prayer.

They didn't mind the cathedral's dazzling, extravagant appearance at all.

This was not only because they had always believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun since childhood, but they also had numerous gold mines in the former Balam Empire. The people had a widespread fondness for gold, a hobby preserved to this day.

Lumian shared an affinity for gold, but didn't want to endure the scorching sunlight.

Beside him, Camus tried explaining, "I'm not monitoring you, nor am I saying I'll follow you everywhere to prevent accidents.

"I'm assisting you. You're still unfamiliar with Dutanese. You lack sufficient understanding of the situation in Tizamo and the people here. I can introduce you."

Lumian seized the opportunity to turn and ask with a smile, "Do you know it well?"

Camus ruffled his disheveled brown hair and replied without

embarrassment, "If there's anything I don't understand, I can ask Maslow and the others to help."

Lumian didn't mind having an official Beyonder by his side. If anything happened, he could use the extra muscle.

He nodded slightly and said, "If you want to follow, go ahead."

As Lumian spoke, he walked towards the row of seats in front of the altar under the blazing sunlight.

Camus hesitated for a few seconds before finding a seat in the farthest corner of the cathedral.

As a believer of Earth Mother, he could freely enter and exit the cathedrals of all orthodox gods, but he couldn't participate in acts of worship.

He only knew that Louis Berry had a close connection to the Church of The Fool, but he wasn't sure if his faith was with The Fool.

Lumian used his Ascetic endurance to control the twitching of his facial muscles. He sat down under the sunlight as if nothing happened and lowered his head to pray in front of the preaching padre.

The padre, a native of Port Pylos named Cali, had standard dark brown skin, sunken eyes, and a chiseled face. He only had a thin layer of black hair, not wearing a clergyman's hat.

In his forties with a solemn expression, he preached in unaccented Intisian.

Lumian, feigning prayer, found himself distracted. Thoughts raced through his mind, making him feel as if he had returned to Cordu. Back then, even when attending Mass and praying in the cathedral, he was lost in his own thoughts. When it was almost over, he quickly praised the Sun and wished his sister would always be healthy and that he wouldn't need much homework or test prep to get into university.

None of that came true.

After the padre finished preaching, Lumian raised his head and narrowed his eyes in the sunlight, focusing on observing the padre's fortune.

There was nothing special about it.

On the surface, there's indeed nothing abnormal about Tizamo… Amidst sunburn-like pain, Lumian planned to avert his gaze, but his heart stirred as he activated his Reaper's Weakness Investigation ability.

He thought of Padre Guillaume Bénet and Father Montserrat of the Church of Earth Mother.

Who said clergymen from orthodox Churches wouldn't be problematic?

In that case, he could observe the padre's weaknesses in advance. If he truly encountered clerical depravity in the future, he could quickly resolve it.

Various colors appeared on the padre's body in Lumian's eyes.

However, there was no pale-white among them!

This meant the padre had no weaknesses!

Impossible. Even if this padre is a Beyonder, his Sequence shouldn't be too high. How can he have no weaknesses? The Sun pathway isn't known for toughness and imperviousness… Could he be from another pathway? No, all likely have weaknesses… Amidst surprise, Lumian observed more closely.

Finally, he noticed a faint pallor.

It wasn't on the padre's body, but in the depths of his Astral Projection.

Does this mean his weakness lies in his spirit, fearing attacks targeting his Spirit Body? How did he manage to have no bodily weaknesses… From the looks of it, I have to dismantle his body piece by piece to kill him if I'm not targeting his Spirit Body… Lumian's

surprise quickly dissipated, replaced by joy and anticipation.

Regardless, discovering any abnormalities was a good thing!

This meant he was a step closer to the problem in Tizamo and the Dream Festival Hisoka had mentioned.

"Brother, what are you looking at?" Cali asked Lumian with a smile, clutching a Bible.

Lumian responded with a smile, "Looking at the sunlight on you.

"Praise the Sun!"

With that, Lumian stood up, spread his arms slightly, and turned to leave.

Now was not the time to delve into the abnormality in the padre's body.

Padre Cali was delighted by Lumian's response.

Firstly, the other party was subtly praising him for being bathed in sunlight, akin to a deity's blessings. Secondly, as a local clergyman without Northern blood, he had always yearned for Northern gentry's recognition.

After leaving the Saint-Sien Cathedral, Lumian casually had Camus circle the entirety of Tizamo twice with him, including the military camp, plantation, and the outskirts of the primitive forest.

Camus eagerly introduced everyone he knew.

As evening approached, Lumian made his way towards the Brieu Motel and asked, "What did you do with that dead horse?"

"I sold it to the butcher. I'm planning to buy a new one from a nearby planter," Camus replied matter-of-factly.

Lumian felt a twinge of disappointment for Ludwig. He remained silent and entered the motel.

Late at night.

In the shadows outside the Brieu Motel, Lumian emerged, no longer wearing his golden straw hat. He strolled towards the yellowish-brown house that "Hisoka" Twanaku had rebuilt.

It was nearly midnight, and Tizamo had grown very quiet. Apart from a few patrolling soldiers, drunk patrons, and their companions, no one else was walking outside.

Under the crimson moonlight, Lumian passed by the bar named Giant Boa and heard a commotion inside.

In the primitive forest a few hundred meters away, the howls of wild beasts echoed intermittently.

Lumian proceeded until he reached his destination. He ascended to the third level and found the wooden bed he had slept on earlier.

He busied himself for a while, making preparations. He wasn't in a hurry to lie down. He looked around and muttered to himself thoughtfully, "Termiboros, have you noticed anything unusual here?"

Termiboros's majestic voice reverberated within Lumian's body.

"I'm using your eyes, ears, nose, spirituality, and fate to observe the outside world—just slightly more than what you see."

Does this mean that what I see and discover will still be restricted by my body, spirituality, and level? Hold on, this fellow is becoming more and more like a riddler. He didn't directly answer if there's anything abnormal about this house or what's abnormal… Lumian scoffed.

"Are you truly an Angel of the Fate domain? I'm already a Sequence 5, and you can't use my eyes and spirituality to detect the problem here. Haven't you noticed that a Sequence 8 of the Monster pathway can sense that this place is cold?

"No way. Are Angels of the Inevitability pathway inferior to Sequence 8s of the Fate pathway?"

The Monster pathway was also known as the Fate pathway.

Lumian provoked Termiboros to see if he could extract any useful information from this Angel-level Ascetic.

He didn't hold out much hope, but at least he wouldn't lose anything.

Termiboros fell silent, as if He had vanished from Lumian's body.

"How tolerant. As expected of an Ascetic Angel," Lumian mocked. He took out the golden pocket watch he had obtained from Salle de Bal Brise and flipped it open to confirm the current time.

11:51 p.m.

Putting away his pocket watch, Lumian lay on the wooden bed in the room.

This time, he was here to see if sleeping in the house at night would trigger any abnormalities and if he could enter a special dream to participate in the Dream Festival.

To this end, Lumian had instructed Ludwig in advance to wake him up in the house rebuilt by Twanaku if he wasn't back by the time they had their second meal.

After Lumian promised there would be a feast the next day, Ludwig agreed.

With crackling sounds, the menacing spiders crawling on the outer walls of the house and the numerous mosquitoes in the room burned and fell, emitting a charred fragrance.

Relying on Cogitation, Lumian swiftly drifted into a deep slumber.
Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

In a daze, he slowly woke up. He straightened up and realized that he was still on the wooden bed, in the master bedroom on the third floor of Hisoka's house.

It was late at night outside the window, and the crimson moonlight seemed to be obscured by clouds. Only a small amount of light

filtered through, making it abnormally dim.

The howling of wild beasts in the primitive forest and the faint noise from the bar had completely ceased. The night had entered its most peaceful state, as silent as death.

There's no change… Lumian sighed in disappointment.

Just as he was about to take out his golden pocket watch to confirm the time and leave the house in the dark environment to return to the Brieu Motel, his pupils suddenly dilated and his eyes froze.

Under the dim crimson moonlight, Lumian swiftly scanned the room's floor.

He didn't see mosquito corpses!

The mosquitoes he had incinerated with his Pyromaniac powers before falling asleep should have been charred on the ground, but now, they were nowhere to be found. The floor was clean as if it had just been cleaned!

Could it be that someone came in while I was asleep and cleaned the room? I've planted several traps around me. They can't be easily bypassed… Wraith? Lumian instantly tensed up. He took out the golden pocket watch he had previously kept in his shirt pocket under his vest and flipped it open to check the time.

11:58 p.m.

Chapter 664 Confirming the Boundary

?11:58?

Lumian's gaze fixated on the golden pocket watch, his suspicions heightened by the peculiar scent in the air.

He felt as though he had slumbered for more than an hour. Why then had only seven minutes elapsed?

Though the unreliability of his instincts were plausible, other anomalies lurked. The absence of mosquito corpses and the eerie silence hinted at peculiarities.

Lumian, drawing from his past encounters, murmured to himself, Could it be that I've entered a special dream?

In the dead of night, slumbering within this tawny house leads to a peculiar dream?

Did "Hisoka" Twanaku rebuild the house to make it look less suspicious for him to stay there?

But why would such a thing happen?

Lumian bowed his head and peered ahead. His gaze seemed to penetrate through wooden planks and various obstacles, revealing the corresponding underground area.

Uncertain about the origin of this anomaly, he could only speculate based on common sense and experience.

In the silent darkness, Lumian shuffled his feet, producing creaking sounds as he left the house that once belonged to "Hisoka" Twanaku.

The street lay deserted, and many of the livestock on the ground floor of the buildings seemed to blend into the night. It was impossible to discern if they still existed. The footsteps of patrolling soldiers had vanished completely.

A warm, humid night breeze swept through the unobstructed streets, surrounding Lumian as he headed towards the entrance of the Giant Boa bar.

Straining his ears, Lumian noticed that it was so quiet that even the rustling of insects and the buzzing of mosquitoes had ceased.

His expression remained unchanged as he extended his right hand, pushing open the heavy wooden door.

Darkness shrouded the interior. With the dim moonlight filtering through the window and Lumian's sharp eyesight as a Hunter, he could barely discern the outlines of the bar counter, liquor cabinet, small round table, chairs, candlestick wall lamps, and other items, but not a single human was in sight.

The bar seemed to have been closed for quite some time.

This is even more perplexing. Before I fell asleep, this bar was quite lively. It's impossible for them to clear out the customers and clean every corner in seven to eight minutes.

Based on my experience, even though countryside bars close earlier than those in the city and aren't bustling until two or three in the morning, they usually continue selling alcohol until midnight. Also, they usually ask those who are still drinking to leave after they're done. If they encounter a drunk who refuses to leave, it tends to cause some delay… Lumian, a regular at Cordu's Ol' Tavern, felt confident in making such judgments, drawing from his various experiences in different bars.

This conviction only strengthened his belief that he was caught in what seemed to be a very real dream.

Suddenly, memories of past events in Cordu flooded Lumian's mind, causing his grip on the heavy wooden door of the Giant Boa bar to

freeze.

After a moment of contemplation, he decided to leave and headed back to the Brieu Motel.

Walking through the dark stairs and a corridor paved with aged planks, Lumian returned to his suite on the second floor at a moderate pace. He pushed open the wooden door to the child's room.

The dim crimson moonlight poured into the room, illuminating the sky-blue patterned blanket and bedsheets.

But no one was sleeping here.

Ludwig had disappeared too.

Combined with the strange sights on his way, Lumian strongly suspected that he was alone in this dream.

All the townsfolk, livestock, and outsiders had vanished, leaving him in solitude in Tizamo Town!

This can't be considered a festival unless it is named the Loneliness Festival… Lumian pondered for a few seconds before leaving the Brieu Motel and heading towards the Saint-Sien Cathedral near the cemetery.

In the dim moonlit night, the cathedral's golden dome and various decorations on the outer walls seemed to lose their glow, settling into a deep slumber.

Lumian didn't want to waste energy pushing open the front door. He pried open a stained glass window and jumped in.

In the night's darkness, the place was silent and empty. The dome above exuded an oppressive and cold aura that was absent during the day.

Lumian searched the area but couldn't find Padre Cali— who had exhibited abnormalities—the deputy padre, or any odd-job workers.

I'm truly alone…

Only those who sleep in Hisoka's house can enter this special dream?

Yes, and it has to be late at night.

How can the Dream Festival be held? One can't expect all the relevant people to line up at Hisoka's house to sleep at a specific time, right? Disregarding the question of whether we can squeeze in, how did such a widespread collective act deceive the patrol team and the army outside the town?

Moreover, it doesn't seem like everyone has been pulled into the dream. The Tizamons I previously found were completely unaware…

And the most crucial question: Since it's a dream, why am I lucid?

Lumian contemplated for a moment before reaching out his right hand to touch the wall adorned with the religious mural.

It felt cold and solid, a genuine stone.

Drawing on his extensive experience in realistic dreams, Lumian pushed aside these questions, opting to begin with the simplest reconnaissance.

He aimed to confirm the dimensions of this dream and its boundaries.

Activating the black mark on his right shoulder, Lumian connected with the spirit world. He "saw" every corner of Tizamo Town.

Through Spirit World Traversal, he disappeared and reappeared on the packed earth path leading from Tizamo Town to Port Pylos.

Teleportation is possible… That's true. Since it's a dream, nothing is impossible. As long as I believe it's feasible, I should be able to do it… Following the Cordu incident, Lumian delved into numerous dream-related books and sought counsel from Madam Justice, Madam Susie, Anthony Reid, and other Beyonders in the mind domain, gaining a profound understanding.

Slowing his pace, he headed towards Port Pylos. After walking for two to three hundred meters, the scenery ahead blurred, as if an ethereal fog was swirling. Beneath the faint moonlight, the fog

appeared pitch-black.

Suddenly, Lumian's spiritual intuition warned him that entering the misty area, veiled in an illusionary fog, might be perilous. There was a high likelihood that something terrifying would occur.

There are indeed limitations. I can't directly reach the edge of the mind… Lumian decided against taking the risk. He swiftly returned to Tizamo and began searching for the other boundary.

This was the area near the primitive forest.

After covering a distance of 300 to 400 meters, Lumian reached the forest's edge. Rainforest-like vegetation stood silently in the night, resembling dense tombstones.

Noticing no blurry areas veiled in illusory fog, Lumian proceeded cautiously and decisively.

Passing through drooping vines and trees, he delved deeper into the primitive forest, walking on the thick, humus-covered ground.

Along the way, there were no dancing mosquitoes or venomous creatures concealed among the vegetation.

After another 700 to 800 meters, Lumian sensed his surroundings becoming more psychedelic.

Some areas became blurry, others distorted, and some became clearer. However, upon closer inspection, they couldn't be seen distinctly.

The conditions in these areas continued to fluctuate.

This feels more like a typical dream… With no warning from his spirituality, Lumian took a few more steps forward.

Suddenly, the entire world shattered into scenes that interweaved and materialized around him.

Lumian's lucidity wavered, leaving him slightly disoriented.

In the next moment, he witnessed scenes of black boulders and humans in dark robes. Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

One of the humans raised his head, revealing a pale-white face with a light brown base, flaxen-colored eyes tinged with dark green, and decent facial features.

Hisoka!

"Hisoka" Twanaku!

He was "Hisoka" Twanaku!

The human in the dark robe, embodying "Hisoka" Twanaku's visage, straightened up.

His gaze seemed to transcend various scenes and fixate on Lumian.

Amidst the illusory sound, the scenes around Lumian shattered.

Lumian sat up and found himself back in the tawny building that "Hisoka" Twanaku had rebuilt. He was in the dark room with the simple wooden bed.

Quickly surveying his surroundings, Lumian retrieved a golden pocket watch from the left breast pocket of his shirt. Clicking it open, he checked the time.

1:38 a.m.

The crimson moonlight outside the window wasn't too bright, but it wasn't dim either. The nearby Giant Boa bar had already closed, yet the howl of a wild beast echoed from the distant primitive forest.

The night was silent but not deathly still.

I'm awake? That's more like it. I slept for an hour or more than 40 minutes, quite close to my estimation… Lumian got out of bed and observed the ground. As expected, he saw charred mosquito corpses and numerous insects lingering outside the window, blocked by the smell of tranquil essential oil.

Phew. He breathed a sigh of relief and contemplated the appearance of "Hisoka" Twanaku in the special dream.

Since it's a festival, Dream Festival shouldn't be held just once—that's what a party is. Could Hisoka have participated in many Dream Festivals in the past few years and left some kind of mark in the dream?

Is Dream Festival indeed related to that primitive tribe? That's why I activated certain imprints and images recorded in the dream after venturing deep into the forest. That's how I saw Hisoka…

What purpose does Hisoka intend to achieve with the Dream Festival?

Dream Festival, Dream Festival. Since it's a festival, it must be held on a fixed date. At other times, if I enter a special dream, I won't encounter anything, just like me tonight?

What date could it be?

Lumian fell into deep thought.

He quickly deduced a direction.

On December 17th of last year, the primitive tribe attacked Tizamo Town, causing numerous casualties.

Lumian perked up and swiftly confirmed today's date. Dream Festival happens on December 17th, or two or three days before it, which is when April Fool's played their prank here?

It was past 1 a.m. on December 11th.

Chapter 665 Clues

If the Dream Festival has a fixed date, as I suspect, it should be one of the coming days or span a few days…

Recently, I came to Hisoka's house every night to sleep, trying not to miss the Dream Festival. I also need to figure out the basic patterns of the special dream as much as possible before it begins. For example, how to leave the dream normally without entering the primitive forest…

Lumian closed the golden pocket watch and slipped it into the breast pocket of his shirt, concealed by his vest.

He didn't continue sleeping there. Instead, he chose to descend the stairs and enter the streets of Tizamo. First, Ludwig would have his second supper in twenty minutes. According to their agreement, if Lumian didn't return in time, Ludwig would come over and forcefully wake him up. Second, he had to update Madam Magician on his discoveries.

Just as Lumian stepped out of Hisoka's house, a voice suddenly sounded from behind.

"What exactly are you investigating?"

In a dark corner where the crimson moonlight couldn't reach, Camus Castiya emerged, dressed in a white shirt and an unbuttoned yellow vest. His disheveled hair collapsed from staying up too late.

At some point, the young leader of the Port Pylos patrol team's combat team had been waiting here.

Lumian wasn't surprised at all, as if he had sensed Camus' presence. He evaded the question and said, "Many scenes display different states during the day and at night."

"Indeed." Camus had dealt with numerous mystical incidents that matched this description. The simplest and most common situation was that certain haunted houses appeared normal under the sunlight.

As Lumian walked towards the Brieu Motel, he teased Camus with a smile, "Have you been awake the entire time, squatting in the shadows outside the motel, observing my movements?

"That's tough. Careful not to suddenly drop dead."

If Camus hadn't known that Louis Berry had a close relationship with the Church of The Fool and didn't mind him tagging along, he would have thought Lumian's teasing was a warning.

Do you think I want that? Camus laughed self-deprecatingly.

"I'll be in charge of watching tonight. It's Maslow or Rhea's turn tomorrow."

Lumian didn't engage in further conversation. As if lost in thought, he made his way back to the Brieu Motel.

Camus wanted to inquire further, but he dared not.

He then saw the adventurer stop at the motel's entrance, his back toward Camus. Lumian said calmly, "Before Twanaku died, he mentioned a term—Dream Festival.

"I've just discovered some traces in his house and confirmed that there's a special dream happening in Tizamo Town.

"Gather all the folklore related to dreams in this area and bring it to me as soon as possible."

"Uh…" Camus was at a loss at first, but then his mind cleared, as if a bucket of ice-cold water had been poured over him on a scorching summer day.

As expected, there's more to the Twanaku incident. There's indeed a huge problem lurking here! Camus wasn't too surprised, but his heart pounded.

Instinctively, he replied, "Okay."

After agreeing, Camus realized that he had unknowingly followed Lumian's instructions, as if the other man were the captain of a patrol team.

After watching Lumian enter the Brieu Motel, Camus briefly analyzed his reaction.

He felt that this situation stemmed from both the intimidation brought about by Lumian's strength and the accumulated credibility and reliability of his previous deeds.

I have to send a telegram back to Port Pylos to request reinforcements…

In addition, I need to familiarize myself with Tizamo as soon as possible and strive to move jurisdiction here within a few days…

After considering his next steps, Camus let out another sigh.

Ever since encountering Louis Berry, problems had never ceased erupting!

I initially came to Tizamo to monitor his actions and prevent any accidents. Why am I now investigating the Dream Festival?

…

Up in the suite on the second floor of the Brieu Motel, Lumian greeted Ludwig shuffling to the dining table, having just woken up. He then returned to the master bedroom.

Before pondering his letter to Madam Magician, Lumian noticed a folded square of paper on the desk.

A reply after midnight—so typical of Madam Magician, he thought with an inward chuckle. He picked up the letter and conjured a blazing white fireball above his head for light, as Tizamo lacked gas lighting.

Under the fireball's incandescent glow, Lumian unfolded and read the

letter:

"I've completed my astromancy and received a revelation about the rest of the Abscessed Hand's body.

"The remaining body is divided into three parts. One part is highly suspected to be located in the Underworld, and the other two parts have hints closely related to Lenburg's capital, Azshara, but they're not actually there. This reminds me of the City of Exiles, Morora, which seals 0-01. It has a similar situation, inside Lenburg, yet not truly being in Lenburg.

"My interpretation is that the two missing body parts of the Abscessed Hand are hidden away in the City of Exiles, Morora.

"Don't you find it too coincidental?

"No, it's not a coincidence at all. My astromancy results show that nearly three months ago, one of the two body parts was still located in the tombs of the Paz Kingdom in the Southern Continent, and the other part was related to some folklore in the south-central region.

"Get my drift?"

Wh— Almost three months ago… As a Conspirer, Lumian grasped Madam Magician's implication.

Accepting the information about the most terrifying Sealed Artifact 0-01, and masquerading as Ludwig's godfather, was akin to accepting an olive branch offered from the Church of Knowledge. Lumian had promised to pay a certain price for this knowledge…

It seemed the Church of Knowledge then dispatched high-ranking individuals to gather the two remaining body parts of the Abscessed Hand and hide them away in the City of Exiles, Morora.

What does this mean? It is clearly forcing me to journey to Morora, unless I choose to abandon my hopes of advancing to Sequence 4 and achieving the state of demi-godhood.

Heh heh, my agreement with the Abscessed Hand stated that until I found its full body, I would never be able to obtain true godhood.

This blocks any idea of trying to become a demigod without consuming potions by relying on boons instead…

Thankfully, Lumian wasn't resistant to the idea of visiting the City of Exiles, Morora, before becoming a demigod. At that moment, he didn't feel stifled or vexed by this necessity. Instead, he felt it would actually save him a lot of trouble.

After some thought, he continued reading the rest of the letter:

"My astromancy results also tell me that once the Abscessed Hand's full body is gathered and reunited, something extremely dangerous will happen. It's best to complete this reunion step while you're in the City of Exiles, and use the existence of 0-01 to try to counteract this incoming risk.

"In other words, you need to find and retrieve the body part located in the Underworld first.

"Yes, you should have an opportunity to enter the Underworld itself within the next three months. Remember to seize this opportunity when it arises. Don't ask me what opportunity it is exactly—I don't know the specifics either."

Opportunity to enter the Underworld within the next three months… Lumian repeated this crucial piece of information to himself.

Amidst his elation, the words struck Lumian as peculiar. "Entering the Underworld" and "going to hell" were two distinct phrases that conveyed the same meaning. In this world, barring a small number of individuals, no one could readily accept the phrase "you have a chance to go to hell within three months." It was worth noting that many people would curse at each other, saying, "I wish you a swift descent into hell."

For the moment, Lumian didn't have time to ponder the opportunity to enter the Underworld. He burned Madam Magician's reply and jotted down his gains for the night and his guesses about the Dream Festival. He planned to send it to the Major Arcana card holder at noon the following day.

Although he couldn't shake the feeling that Madam Magician's "schedule" bore a resemblance to Franca's, he wasn't sure if it was convenient to send a letter at that time.

…

Northern Continent, Trier.

Winter sunlight poured through the glass, filling the living room with warmth that chased away the chill.

Franca lounged in the recliner, basking in the cozy glow with half-lidded eyes.

Suddenly, she sensed something and sat upright, pulling her legs in.

In the shadowy corner, a human skull made of pure glowing silver emerged. Pale white flames flickered in its vacant sockets.

Madame Hela's messenger… Why is she contacting me? Franca watched, puzzled, as the skull's jaws unhinged, releasing a single page that drifted towards her.

She snatched the letter and scanned it quickly.

"007 hasn't heard from you in four days. He wants to confirm you're okay."

Four days without checking the group… A dry chuckle escaped her lips.

What does this mean? The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Early to bed and late to rise keeps the king fit to rule his realm! No more morning courts!

In the early morning hours, Franca manned the radio transceiver while Jenna roamed outside, seizing her opportunity to act as a Witch.

Tap tap tap! Her first telegram in days.

"Shurima! Your emperor has returned!"

Before long, 007's telegram was tapped out by the analyzer-

powered mechanical typewriter.

"Hidden Blade, where have you been?"

Ahem. Franca cleared her throat.

"Late nights breed ill health. Have you no loved ones?"

"Don't bring up such sad topics…"

"Hidden Blade, have you mastered the assassination arts—

sundering heart and soul?"

"…"

Protests arose from the other members.

At length, 007's message arrived.

"I have the intel on the last incident. Let's meet to discuss.

"The higher-ups also approved the item swap for the story you proposed."

Franca blinked, startled.

"How long did that take? I'd forgotten all about it…"

After all, understanding that humanoid Sealed Artifact's tale was Lumian's curiosity, not hers.

007's resigned telegram:

"Bureaucracy inertia. Unavoidable for any large, established organization."

"Tell me about it!" Another member, Moon King's amused agreement clattered out. "Whether public or secret, they're all bound by red

tape."

After arranging to meet 007 that night with the Moran Avigny intel and initial assassination plan, Franca rose with a stretch.

She jotted down the two tasks before performing a ritual to summon Lumian's messenger, Penitent Baynfel.

…

Southern Continent, Tizamo Town.

Lumian was just about to head to Hisoka's house for a nap when his messenger materialized from the shadows, delivering a letter.

After taking the note, Lumian noticed Penitent Baynfel didn't immediately depart back to the spirit world as usual. Instead, he lingered, surveying their surroundings with a measured gaze.

Chapter 666 New Information

?Lumian had rarely seen Penitent Baynfel act so abnormally. He asked with anticipation and curiosity, "What have you discovered?" Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Baynfel, clad in a clergyman's black robe, his charred body partially tainted by black flames, averted his gaze and replied in a deep voice, "The night conceals the flowing sin."

With that, the Penitent stepped into the void and vanished from the room.

The night conceals the flowing sin… It's emphasizing the night because that allows entry into the special dream? What does the 'flowing sin' refer to? Can't you mysterious types speak plainly? Lumian criticized, then opened Franca's letter and quickly read it.

To be honest, after such a long time, his desire to understand the humanoid Sealed Artifact's past had significantly diminished. After all, he had mainly felt the other party's state was similar to his own, triggering his emotions back then. That was why he had suggested it. Now, those emotions had long settled.

Of course, they had only settled, not disappeared. Lumian tore open the letter and jotted down the entire incident, planning to send it to Madam Magician at noon the next day.

As for whether the Major Arcana card holder would agree to such an unequal trade, Lumian wasn't too confident. However, he intuitively felt that the Tarot Club's Major Arcana holders wouldn't simply take possession of important artifacts from the orthodox Churches. Using this opportunity to make a deal was more likely.

After leaving the Brieu Motel, Lumian calmly observed Camus, donned in a yellow vest, emerge from a dimly lit street corner. Beside

him was Rhea, a member of the local patrol wearing leather armor and carrying a hunting bow.

"Why two people today?" Lumian chuckled and strode towards Hisoka's house.

Camus took a deep breath to calm his sudden surge of emotions. As he followed Louis Berry's left hand, he replied in a deep voice, "There are only a few days left until the 17th. An accident might happen at any moment. We can't act alone anymore."

Having consciously gathered various information, the patrol team had already noticed some abnormalities. This made Camus feel that staying in Tizamo was unwise. He was constantly on edge.

He felt a growing sense of being a middle-aged man burdened with heavy responsibilities.

Raising an eyebrow, Lumian queried, "Hey, you figuring out the 17th is a key date was pretty fast."

"We're not fools," Camus finally couldn't help but reply. "It's an obvious issue. Last year, Tizamo was attacked on December 17th, and in previous years…"

At this point, he fell silent.

He realized that when around Louis Berry, he constantly switched between his heavy middle-aged state and uncontrollable teenage emotions.

Lumian asked with interest, "What happened in previous years?"

Camus fell silent for a few seconds before saying, "We obtained the funeral registrations for nearly three decades in Tizamo from the Saint-Sien Cathedral and discovered a peculiar phenomenon. 80% of the annual deaths are recorded within the first three months starting mid-December.

"This place isn't like many Northern Continent places. Winters are bitterly cold there. It's difficult for the elderly and weak to survive. Even if they do, it's summer from late December to late March.

"This phenomenon is abnormal."

Lumian advanced slowly and nodded slightly.

"Is the mortality rate in Tizamo higher than elsewhere?"

"Significantly higher, but that's mainly due to attacks from the primitive forest tribe. Also, we discovered the tribe's attacks concentrated in the three months beginning mid-December. There have been two to three attacks annually, and since the one on December 17th last year, not a single one has occurred. The situation doesn't seem right." Camus was a little worried a major attack would occur in the next few days.

"Heh heh, it's understandable the tribe's attacks concentrated in those first three months. Any other abnormalities?" Lumian asked casually.

Rhea, who had been silently following, responded.

The brown-skinned, brown-haired woman, exuding a wild beauty, spoke in a raspy voice,

"In the first half of this year, many women in town and the plantations experienced symptoms of nausea, soreness, bloating—pregnancy symptoms. They believed they'd been victimized by a ghost and might birth evil fetuses, but they weren't actually pregnant. Just illusions. After Padre Cali held Mass and briefly purified them, they received psychological comfort and quickly returned to normal."

"We've also noticed similar incidents of perceived possession and attacks by evil spirits in Tizamo over the years, concentrated in that first half. It's not just pregnancy symptoms," Camus added.

Lumian halted in his tracks.

"Don't the townsfolk and the people in the surrounding plantations find it strange that mass hysteria occurs every year?"

As a member of the local patrol team, Rhea explained simply, "Everyone believes it's caused by the primitive tribe in the forest."

"Why?" Lumian resumed his nocturnal "stroll."

Rhea's vocal cords seemed damaged, and her voice was always a little hoarse.

"In the repeated attacks and conflicts, the primitive tribe displayed the ability to control corpses, ghosts, and shadows. Furthermore, some warriors seemed to continue protecting their tribe in their spirit form after their deaths."

Death domain… Heh, the entire matter seems logical on the surface. No wonder the Tizamons who left town didn't find anything amiss and didn't raise the issue… Lumian had seen records of the primitive tribe, but they weren't as specific as Rhea's description.

After inquiring about the recent information the patrol team had gathered, Lumian stopped in front of Hisoka's house and turned to glance at Rhea, who was carrying a hunting bow and arrows.

"You're from the Southern Continent, but not from Tizamo?"

Rhea nodded and calmly said, "I'm from the forest. I'm from one of the primitive tribes called Paca. We mainly live near the Paz Valley."

The rainforest of the Southern Continent spanned a vast expanse, encompassing numerous territories. From the area near the Paz Valley to the vicinity of Matani, the distance might be even greater than that between Cordu and Trier.

"Paca" meant "wind" in Dutanese.

"How did you come to Matani?" Lumian asked curiously.

Rhea let out a chuckle.

"I was sold here."

She paused for a moment before continuing, "Ten years ago, my tribe was attacked by the Loen Kingdom's army. I was captured and sold repeatedly before arriving in the Northern state. Later, I found a chance to escape and fled to Port Pylos. I received help from the Church and found work. Eventually, I was lucky enough to become a Beyonder."

The patrol team member calmly recounted her past, not dwelling on any pain or torture from those experiences, nor deliberately avoiding details.

No wonder you believe so devoutly in the Eternal Blazing Sun… Lumian ascended the stairs to the second floor and said in an even tone,

"Did you keep using a bow instead of firearms out of habit?"

"Yes. Tribes named for the wind excel at archery." Rhea's light-

brown face softened.

Lumian glanced back at her.

"Did you ever go back to take a look?"

Rhea fell silent for a few seconds.

"They're all dead…"

Lumian and Camus retreated their gazes in silence as they climbed the final stairs and entered the second floor of the house.

Lumian surveyed the spacious yet rudimentary surroundings, listening to the wild roars from the primitive forest. He sat cross-legged.

He had intended to tell Rhea, "It's impossible for your entire tribe to be wiped out. Some must have been captured and sold like you. They could still be alive on plantations, in mines, or seedy bars." But he held back.

He could tell Rhea had accepted her current life and gained the ability to live better. It seemed inappropriate to encourage her to risk traversing both continents seeking potential remaining clansmen.

Just the thought of such an endeavor was daunting. With so few clues and them likely scattered far, it could prove quite dangerous. Even spending a lifetime, one might never complete it. Not everyone with a similar experience would sacrifice a normal life for vengeance or

seeking others.

Rhea likely realized some clansmen survived, but perhaps those most important to her had perished. She chose to stay in Port Pylos.

Everyone makes their own choices. I can't ask the same of others just because of my own obsessions… Lumian composed himself and smiled at Camus and Rhea, who were still standing.

"Would you like to explore the potential venue for the Dream Festival?"

"Where?" Rhea blurted out.

Camus furrowed his brow.

"Here?"

Quickly making a guess, he asked, "Do you come here every night to sleep and access the Dream Festival's location? Is it in a special dream?"

Quite smart… Lumian praised Camus inwardly for his quick thinking, but his smile remained unwavering.

"Care to experience it?"

Camus and Rhea exchanged glances and agreed, "I'll experience it. Rhea, keep an eye on the surroundings."

"I can set some traps," Lumian offered. He stood up and spent a few minutes setting up warning traps nearby.

Afterward, he lit a mosquito repellent candle, placing it in the middle of the spacious second floor.

Mosquitoes that hadn't flown away landed on the ground, emitting flames and smoke amidst crackling sounds.

"Sleep here," Lumian instructed Camus and Rhea as he sat cross-legged again.

He had confirmed that sleeping anywhere in Hisoka's house at night allowed him to enter the special dream. Sleeping outside or sleeping two hours earlier didn't have the same effect.

Perplexed, Camus and Rhea found seats and leaned against different wooden pillars, attempting to enter a deep slumber.

After an unknown period of time, Camus suddenly woke up.

Before him was the night and the crimson moonlight outside the window. Louis Berry stood behind the flickering mosquito repellent candle, wearing a golden straw hat. The adventurer playfully remarked, "Welcome to the Dream Festival."

Chapter 667 Approaching Gentleness

?Camus's nerves tensed as he propped himself up on his left hand, surveying his surroundings warily.

He realized he was still on the second floor of Twanaku's house. Rhea, who had been leaning against a wooden pillar, stood up in a daze.

Everything around him seemed no different from before he had fallen asleep.

"Are you joking?" Camus asked Louis Berry cautiously.

What kind of Dream Festival is this?

This feels like a normal awakening after a nap!

Lumian turned and pointed out the window.

"Listen to the forest sounds."

Camus and Rhea instinctively listened, realizing that the nearby forest was eerily silent, as if all its inhabitants had fallen asleep in the night.

Wh— Rhea's eyes narrowed.

Born and raised in the primitive forest and having lived in Tizamo Town for nearly a year, she knew the forest wouldn't be in such absolute silence.

Lumian pointed at the floor beside the mosquito repellent candle.

"Look here again."

Camus and Rhea looked over, realizing that the mosquito corpses that should have been there were gone.

Lumian chuckled.

"Of course, you can also believe that I woke up early, cleaned up the environment, and secretly affected your hearing of distant voices. All of this was just a prank."

Camus pondered for a few seconds.

"I'm inclined to believe you, but I need to confirm something."

"Indeed," Rhea chimed in, carrying a hunting bow and arrows.

Lumian looked at them and nodded slightly. He calmly concluded, I can now determine that the reason I remain conscious in this peculiar dream stems from a hidden power within Hisoka's house, not any special traits of my own.

He had invited Camus and Rhea to slumber in Hisoka's house and enter the special dream not merely to share information with the patrol team and gather a few aides.

No, it was also an experiment to uncover key details!

Over the past few days, Lumian had conducted numerous similar trials, grasping the dream's nuanced patterns like a seasoned explorer mapping uncharted lands.

With hands tucked nonchalantly in his pockets, he trailed behind Camus and Rhea, who hurried downstairs. He wanted to witness how they would confirm whether this was indeed a dream.

After departing Twanaku's house, the two patrol members rushed to the nearest townsperson's abode.

Upon realizing the livestock had vanished from the ground floor, Rhea swiftly ascended to the second story and attempted to unlock the door with a simple iron-black key.

Camus opened his mouth as if to dissuade her, but in the end,

remained silent. nove(l)bi(n.)com

Observing this, Lumian nodded thoughtfully and muttered to himself, A Beyonder of the Arbiter pathway will subconsciously maintain the current order, unwilling to disrupt its fabric. If such Beyonders also bear official identities, this tendency only intensifies…

Rhea rapped upon the door and entered the dwelling. She and Camus scoured each room, but the resident family had seemingly evaporated into thin air.

Then, the pair made their way to the police station near the Saint-Sien Cathedral's hallowed grounds.

The local patrol quarters held five rooms in total.

Kolobo, Maslow, and Loban were nowhere to be found, nor were the two officers meant to stand the night watch.

"I now believe this is a dream," Camus declared to Louis Berry, who leisurely trailed with hands tucked in pockets, a golden straw hat shading his features. "Yet I'm so utterly awake that it defies the very notion of a dream."

Before Lumian could respond, Rhea's light-brown face furrowed slightly.

"When I ran down the street and searched these rooms, it felt a little… familiar."

"Familiar?" Lumian asked calmly, his brows unfurrowed.

Could there be unexpected gains from this experiment?

Rhea pondered for a moment.

"I think I've had a similar dream before."

"In my dream, it was just as dark and quiet. The streets were empty, and I was alone. I ran around, searching…"

"Was it a mere fragment or a complete dream?" Lumian pressed.

Rhea thought for a few seconds.

"I don't know. I only remember a few such scenes."

"Do you often dream of this, or only occasionally?" Lumian guided her to confirm the details.

Rhea replied with certainty, "Occasionally."

"Occasionally…"

Even if the Tizamo residents don't slumber here on a specific date, they can occasionally enter this peculiar dream, yet remain unable to stay awake. Like a normal dream?

Perhaps it's not true immersion, but rather an unconscious development spiritually spawned from the crimson moon and other environmental elements, allowing them to vaguely interact. Unfortunately, Rhea clearly doesn't recall the moon, weather, and other situational details from those dreams. If I could employ Dream Divination, I could aid her recollection…

The few Tizamons I queried in Port Pylos made no mention of such dreams. Firstly, dreams so ordinary often slip the mind. Secondly, they've been away from Tizamo for years… As Lumian's thoughts raced, he turned to Camus to see if the Interrogator had any queries.

Camus pondered for a moment before asking Rhea, "What do you think is special about the residents of Tizamo?"

Very perceptive. Since this dream seems to affect the entire town and surrounding area, it's likely these people will display some abnormality in waking life… Lumian nodded inwardly.

Rhea thought for a moment.

"Nothing special. It's just that they're very… obedient."

At this, Rhea sighed.

"They're extremely polite to others. Gentle personalities, stable emotions, very obedient. Even when angered, they quickly calm

down. When trouble arises, they tend to let the authorities handle it instead of fighting amongst themselves or causing public disturbances…"

These were all situations Lumian had heard Camus mention and seen in the corresponding intel. On the surface, nothing seemed amiss. It was a state of being tamed.

Rhea added, "Their only issue is a lack of enthusiasm. It's not that politeness masks an underlying coldness or hatred. They're simply… unenthusiastic, as if reluctant to openly display emotion."

Upon hearing this, Lumian recalled the Tizamons he'd interacted with over the past few days.

Apart from some gentlemen and ladies from the Northern Continent, the others were calm, gentle, and disinclined to argue. They always communicated politely.

Immediately after, he recalled the Tizamons questioned in Port Pylos —fear, worry, ingratiating expressions, vivid emotions.

Clearly different from the Tizamo townspeople!

Most of their emotions have been drawn away into the dream? Lumian finally pinpointed an abnormality about the Tizamons.

Their issue clearly didn't stem solely from attacks by the primitive forest tribe!

Upon hearing Lumian's guess, Camus couldn't help but hiss.

"I knew it. The Tizamons feel… strange. Too docile. Even livestock occasionally grow agitated, resists… Could the reason be…"

Rhea's heart skipped a beat as she said solemnly, voice laced with fear, "I've been here nearly a year, and I feel much gentler…

"My most intense emotions haven't dissipated. They're still in my heart, but most of the time, it's as if I'm… asleep…"

Rhea began analyzing herself. "From the looks of it, everyone in

Tizamo will gradually be affected by this peculiar dream. After leaving, they can slowly escape its influence." Lumian glanced at Camus. "For outsiders like us, who've only been here a few days, there's no issue for now. Perhaps we'll also become unnaturally gentle if we linger too long."

Without waiting for Camus's response, Lumian inquired, "When will reinforcements from the patrol team and Admiral Guard arrive?"

At the mention of this, Camus's expression soured. He gritted his teeth and cursed, "Those selfish bastards! It's very likely there won't be much support."

"The Admiral Guard said they already have a Beyonder team here and an army. Only Captain Reaza expressed backing for the patrol team. Dammit, those dogsh*t!"

Lumian was taken aback for a moment before bursting into laughter. The newly formed organization under the aboriginal admiral was indeed different from the official Northern Continent organizations.

If this were the Eternal Blazing Sun Church or Church of Earth Mother, the official Beyonders would have already devised a plan and dispatched sufficient force to resolve the issue. They'd be prepared to obliterate Tizamo if anything went awry.

The current situation is Admiral Querarill believes that with me—a famed adventurer backed by the Church of The Fool, here—I'm able to use its power to resolve Tizamo's troubles. Is there a need to send more Beyonder subordinates to aid me?

That's true. Beyonders aren't commodities. If too many powerful ones perish, not only will Admiral Querarill feel the strain, but he won't be able to effectively rule Matani…

Recruitment alone can't quickly fill such a gap, and they won't be quick to trust newcomers. Even nurturing the remaining people with the retrieved Beyonder characteristics poses huge problems. Low-Sequence Beyonders are manageable, but Mid-Sequence advancement carries high failure risk. After all, most here haven't mastered the acting method… Lumian quickly grasped Admiral Querarill's

mentality.

He said to the agitated Camus, "Let me show you around this dream realm and provide an introduction."

"Alright." Camus took a deep breath.

He and Rhea followed Lumian through the dark, silent, vacant town.

After a long while, Lumian led the two patrol members into the primitive forest. He informed them he'd seen Twanaku's image in the chaotic zone ahead, seemingly composed of dream fragments. He suspected there was a Desire Apostle mark present.

Walking amongst the trees, giants in the night, Camus felt increasingly oppressed.

Before he could inquire about Twanaku's image details, he suddenly heard a bowstring drawn taut.

Pa!

An arrow, entwined with lightning, flew from afar. Camus dodged just in time as it grazed past, piercing into a rubber tree behind him amidst crackling lightning and charred bark. Lumian, Camus, and Rhea gazed into the distance, spotting a woman standing on a huge tree branch.

The woman wore dark leather armor, holding a hunting bow and arrows. Her brown hair was tied in two strands draped over her shoulders.

Her light brown skin and wild, beautiful face couldn't hide the coldness and hatred behind her eyes.

Rhea!

It was Rhea!

Chapter 668 Dream Person?

Rhea gazed at the figure perched on the tree branch, a surreal scene playing out before her like a dream. Correction: This was a dream.

The other Rhea's frigid expression masked a deep-seated hatred as she drew the bowstring once more, causing the arrow to crackle with silver lightning.

As Lumian contemplated teleporting behind Rhea on the tree to probe her control in this eerily realistic dream and question her about her apparent "knowledge" of the situation, his surroundings quivered and fragmented into disjointed scenes.

The scenes overlapped and promptly shattered.

Simultaneously, Lumian, Rhea, and Camus opened their eyes. Crimson moonlight spilled through the window, accompanied by the primal roars of wild beasts from the nearby forest.

They found themselves still on the second floor of Hisoka's house.

Camus jolted upright, eyeing the mosquito repellent candle that had burned out, leaving behind a mere stub. Charred mosquito corpses littered the area.

"Are we awake? Have we returned to reality?" Camus questioned, uncertainty clouding his expression.

Leaning against a wooden pillar, Lumian chuckled.

"That should be the case, but I won't claim we're 100% out of the dream.

"We'll need to verify through various details in the coming period."

The simplest method involved checking Ludwig's whereabouts and

state.

Although asking Termiboros could provide an accurate answer, there was no guarantee the fellow would answer or respond truthfully.

Camus nodded, his gaze shifting to Rhea, who had remained silent since waking up. After a brief pause, he spoke.

"We seem to have witnessed another version of you at the dream's boundary."

Another Rhea, embodying entirely different emotions and states.

Rhea stayed silent for a moment before admitting, "I saw it too.

"She appears much like the intense emotions I mentioned earlier—the ones slumbering in my heart."

Lumian adjusted his golden straw hat, standing up on his own legs. He spoke thoughtfully, "Could that dream absorb the intense emotions in Tizamo and give rise to the corresponding Dream Person —an even more extreme and emotional entity?"

"So, the longer one stays in Tizamo, the more subdued they become," Camus concurred with Louis Berry's hypothesis, and Rhea nodded in agreement.

Mirror People… Dream People… How many peculiar entities lingered in the shadows of this world? Lumian massaged his temples and strode towards the stairs leading to the surface.

"That concludes tonight's attempt," he casually declared.

Camus and Rhea followed closely, confirming their escape from the dream through the return of livestock and the commotion in the house. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

They waited until Lumian entered the Brieu Motel before halting, concealing themselves in the shadows diagonally opposite.

…

Lumian pushed open the door to the suite, spotting Ludwig at the dining table, devouring a roasted banana with gusto. In his other hand, he wielded a child's fork, delving into a special salad crafted from the heart of a palm tree.

Observing this, Lumian was certain that this wasn't a dream.

He cast a glance at Lugano, who was dozing off, and nonchalantly inquired of Ludwig, "Do you dream when you sleep?"

Despite being occupied, Ludwig replied, "Yes."

Lumian nodded thoughtfully.

"Have you had any dreams in the past few days?"

Taking a moment between bites of grilled river fish, Ludwig responded, "Yes."

"What dreams did you have?" Lumian removed his golden straw hat, stowing it back into his Traveler's Bag.

Ludwig replied with a muffled voice, "Eat, eat, eat…"

Indeed, I shouldn't expect much… Lumian chuckled self-deprecatingly and turned his attention to Lugano.

"What dreams did you have?"

Is there something wrong with the dreams here? Lugano contemplated asking but decided to answer truthfully.

"All kinds of dreams…"

He paused before adding, "Perhaps it's been too long since I went out alone. Haha, I didn't have a chance to release my pent-up emotions. Occasionally, I'd dream of women and such matters, only to realize that something was amiss. Either the target transformed into a monster, or the initially alluring woman was covered in tree warts, wheat, and mushrooms… Then, I'd wake up in shock."

As an Intisian, he had no reservations discussing such topics.

According to the psychology taught by Anthony, your pent-up desires and fear of the dangers in Tizamo are a mix of unresolved factors… Lumian commented inwardly and smiled.

"You can explore the Giant Boa bar alone, find a local lady, or mingle with the ladies and maids in the plantation outside. As long as you ensure food for Ludwig, he'll manage on his own."

Initially, Lugano's heart raced, but the potential dangers outside soon came to mind.

Lumian headed towards the master bedroom, leaving a parting sentence with a smile.

"Of course, I can't guarantee those ladies won't turn into monsters or undergo anomalies after your little adventure."

"…" Lugano couldn't help but shudder at the imagined scenario.

He glanced at Ludwig, finding comfort in staying by the boy's side.

Until all the stored food was consumed, he considered himself safe!

…

In the shadows diagonally opposite the Brieu Motel, Rhea observed in silence for a while before suddenly speaking up.

"Since there won't be any new reinforcements from the Admiral Guard, and only Deputy Captain Reaza will come from the patrol team, why didn't you leave Tizamo directly? Why did you stay here and attempt to resolve the Dream Festival problem?"

As long as he escaped Matani, the Admiral Guard and patrol team wouldn't have the resources to track and punish them. At most, they could issue a wanted poster, but they wouldn't be able to pay a high bounty.

Camus scratched his disheveled brown hair, smiling wryly.

"As you know, my previous Sequence was a Public Security Officer. It tied seamlessly with the patrol team's usual work, making me yearn

to maintain order in Matani and safeguard the lives of the people here.

"The potion not only brings strength but also affects you in many ways."

He exhaled and continued, "Besides, Captain Reaza is about to arrive. I have to help him. I have to repay what I owe him."

Camus didn't disclose another reason: his confidence in the adventurer Louis Berry and the Church of The Fool behind him. He believed that with Louis Berry present, the situation would be threatening but not perilous.

Rhea didn't press further, continuing to gaze diagonally at the Brieu Motel.

Camus glanced at her.

"What about you? Why don't you leave Tizamo with Loban and the others now? The three of you can form a team. Some local admirals will be willing to take you in."

Rhea's eyes remained fixed on Louis Berry's suite as she stayed silent.

After a prolonged silence, just as Camus thought she wouldn't answer, Rhea suddenly spoke.

"When I was in the most pain and despair, it was the Church who helped me. After that, it was the patrol team who gave me a new beginning and a new life."

Recalling the cold Rhea's face filled with hatred in the dream, Camus sighed sincerely and said, "It hasn't been easy for you."

The moment he finished speaking, Rhea sneered.

"You're the most contradictory person I've ever encountered. In the past, I've often heard you talk about which states and islands the Feynapotter Kingdom should invade, which mines and valleys they should seize, and how they should establish more colonies in the Southern Continent. But now, you're showing pity towards me.

"I can sense your sincerity. You genuinely feel pain for me, but that's why I can't help but want to say something."

Camus found himself at a loss for words.

Indeed, it was a contradiction.

He also realized that Rhea's emotions had become even more turbulent after encountering herself in the dream. She seemed more willing to open up.

Could this be the result of encountering extreme emotions? Or perhaps those who hadn't spent more than a year in Tizamo might resist the dream's influence to some extent if they grasped the truth of "obedience"? Camus quickly thought of the plantations outside the town and individuals like Sir Petit, Miss Amandina, Monsieur Robert, and the others.

These gentlemen and ladies weren't easily subdued.

The special dream had evidently encompassed both the out-

of-town plantation and the garrison barracks.

Camus figured out the reason: These gentlemen and ladies spent at least half their time in Port Pylos each year.

This also explained why he was familiar with them.

…

At noon the next day, shortly after Lumian dispatched the letter, he received a prompt reply from Madam Magician:

"Did the Eternal Blazing Sun Church present this price, or was it your offer?

"Can a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact be exchanged for such trifles?

"If I didn't know the kind of person you are, I would suspect that you concealed more than half of the offer from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.

"In addition to the information related to this Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, ensure the Eternal Blazing Sun Church provides an additional 50,000 pounds worth of gold at the highest exchange rate in the past three months.

"Don't worry, gold is the last thing they need."

Gold worth 50,000 pounds… That's approximately 1.2 million verl d'or worth of gold. Why would Madam Magician require such a substantial amount of gold? Recalling the importance of gold in mysticism, the Armored Shadow's need to reconstruct its golden body, and the widespread use of gold in Death-related domains, he swiftly arrived at a realization.

A subtle detail caught his attention.

Madam Magician used the Loen Kingdom's gold pound to express the value of gold.

Does this imply her recent activity in the Loen Kingdom? Lumian nodded thoughtfully, considering whether to summon Jenna's messenger, Rabbit Chasel, to convey Madam Magician's request, or to return to Trier personally for discussions on the Dream Festival with Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

Chapter 669 Connivance

Recalling Franca's meeting with 007 tonight to discuss dealing with Moran Avigny, Lumian decided to summon Jenna's messenger, Rabbit Chasel, as he had to return to Trier tomorrow to discuss the division of labor and specific details.

After jotting down Madam Magician's request and folding it, Lumian set up a ritual, allowing the special Rabbit of Knowledge to emerge from the candle's flames.

The first thing Lumian noticed was the miniature half top hat snugly perched between the rabbit's ears. Next, he saw gold-rimmed glasses and a black trench coat that matched the vaguely rabbit-shaped creature's size. Finally, an iron-black revolver lay in the rabbit's palm.

The revolver gleamed with a metallic luster, its barrel unusually thick, and its cylinder unnaturally large and textured. It stood in stark contrast to the illusory appearance of the top hat, trench coat, and gold-rimmed glasses.

Upon seeing Rabbit Chasel, Lumian raised his eyebrows.

"Is this a real gun?"

Hidden behind the gold-rimmed glasses, Rabbit Chasel's eyes sharpened.

"Yes."

"Did Jenna customize it for you?" Lumian inquired.

Rabbit Chasel replied succinctly, "It's payment."

Quite a cold demeanor… Miss Celia Bello, have you considered the consequences of what you've done? You haven't! Because I don't

know the consequences either unless I consult Madam Magician… Lumian criticized inwardly before handing the folded letter to Rabbit Chasel.

Seeing the human-like, rabbit-shaped creature preparing to turn and walk into the candle flame, Lumian, the Prankster King of Cordu, asked with interest, "Can you shoot?"

Rabbit Chasel fell silent for a moment, as if embarrassed.

"Not yet."

Oh, you're not as cold as Gehrman Sparrow anymore… Lumian chuckled and said, "Jenna and I are friends. I'll help her pay the postage fee this time.

"Do you want to learn shooting? It involves knowledge and guidance."

Rabbit Chasel, taller than an ordinary rabbit, replied without hesitation, "Sure thing."

Lumian's smile broadened.

After finding a secluded spot at the edge of the primitive forest and earnestly teaching Rabbit Chasel how to shoot for a considerable time, Lumian strolled back to Tizamo with his hands in his pockets, planning to visit the only café for afternoon tea.

The café bore the name "Bunia" after its owner, a man named Bunia.

He was under the age of 30. Having once served as a waiter and apprentice at a café in Port Pylos, Bunia, recalling the lack of a proper café in Tizamo Town, transformed the ground floor of his house into a semi-open café.

Lumian, weaving through the tables and chairs on the street, arrived at the kitchen counter, offering a smile to the proprietor and waiter, Bunia.

"Do you have Fermo coffee?"

Bunia's brown skin, not too dark, and his features resembling those of mixed blood, showcased his Tizamon heritage.

The man in his late twenties responded with an honest smile in fluent Intisian.

"Monsieur, there's no Fermo coffee."

Lumian, intending to playfully inquire, casually switched to a cup of Corsa coffee from Matani.

Sipping the bitter and sweet liquid at a table, he noticed Camus, adorned in a vest, and Rhea, clad in leather armor, entering the café. Each ordered an Intis coffee and a corn nutcake imbued with Tizamo flair.

Upon spotting Rhea, the single Bunia became even more bashful and busier, avoiding eye contact.

As Camus and Rhea, equipped with their coffee and corn nutcakes, sought a spot, Lumian raised his arm in greeting.

As Camus and Rhea reluctantly settled into their seats across from him, Lumian inquired with a smile, "Why do you look so tired?"

Glancing at the energetic adventurer, Camus took a deep breath and slowly exhaled.

"We just finished work. We can finally rest."

Yesterday, he had monitored the Brieu Motel late into the night!

"All I want now is a good night's sleep." After exploring the dream together last night, Rhea wasn't as reticent as before when facing Lumian.

"Then why are you still drinking coffee?" Lumian replied with amusement.

It was evident that Rhea and Camus lacked the energy of a Sleepless.

"I want to endure until dinner before sleeping," Camus said with a

sigh.

Rhea shook her head.

"Coffee is useless to me."

After a brief chat, Rhea finished her corn nutcake and coffee, then headed back to the nearby police headquarters to rest. Camus continued to recline in the armchair, occasionally taking a sip of coffee.

"Has Reaza arrived?" Lumian inquired with a smile.

Camus fell silent for a moment.

"He's here. Tonight, one of the two—Maslow and Loban—will be following you with him."

As for Kolobo, there was no need for him to be on duty. If he didn't even dare to look, how could he do any monitoring?

While they conversed, Lumian noticed Miss Amandina from Palm Manor leading a short unicorn outside the Bunia café, exuding high spirits. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The blue-eyed girl was clad in off-white hunting attire today, her black hair fashioned into a half-height bun.

After entrusting the whip and reins to the brown-skinned valet, she strolled to the kitchen counter with her lady's maid, who also bore an Intisian appearance.

Along the way, she cheerfully greeted the patrons in the café and exchanged pleasantries with the locals sipping on inexpensive coffee.

Observing Camus's gaze fixed on the girl, Lumian teased, "Do you wish to engage in a duel with her fiancé?"

"No, I'm not that kind of person," Camus replied with a serious expression. "I admit that she's indeed very attractive to me, but she's already engaged to Monsieur Robert. This is a sign that she's starting a family. I can't allow myself to destroy someone else's family."

You Feynapotterians… Lumian didn't mock him but sighed with emotion.

Such values appealed to Feynapotter.

Of course, not every Feynapotterian possessed such values.

Seeing Lumian's lack of response, Camus said seriously, "Don't have any ideas about her."

Lumian regarded the young man surnamed Castiya with amusement, awaiting further "explanation."

Camus furrowed his brow slightly.

"I know you Intisians won't back down just because the other party has a fiancé or a husband. You might find it even more exciting, but you always pursue momentary pleasure. Very few are willing to take responsibility. You always satisfy yourself. When you're happy, you turn around and leave, leaving a lady to face everything that's been destroyed."

"Not every Intisian is like this," Lumian shook his head with a smile.

But most Trieriens are like that… However, neither party is innocent in such matters… he added inwardly.

The energetic and playful Amandina led the lady's maid past Camus and Lumian's table.

First, she greeted Camus, then sized up Lumian and said candidly, "I'm Amandina. What about you?"

"Louis Berry," Lumian replied with a smile.

Amandina nodded and suddenly laughed.

"You must have just arrived from Trier. You're different from the people here."

"No, I'm from a village in the south," Lumian switched to Intisian with a Dariège accent.

Amandina wasn't disappointed. She happily inquired about the folklore of the southern provinces of the Intis Republic before leading the lady's maid to a table in the corner.

Camus watched as the two of them conversed. He opened his mouth but closed it again.

…

Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.

Jenna was curled up on the sofa, engrossed in the novels she had just bought, all with elements of Witches. Suddenly, Rabbit Chasel appeared in front of her and handed her a letter.

Observing the bizarre yet adorable rabbit-shaped creature, Jenna opened the letter and scanned its contents before asking earnestly, "Do you wish to select your payment, or shall I choose a random book for you?"

"Lumian Lee has already settled the payment on your behalf," Rabbit Chasel said in a deep yet sincere voice.

Witch Jenna suddenly felt a sense of foreboding.

"What has he paid?"

"He imparted shooting-related knowledge to me and guided me through the initial stage of my practice," Rabbit Chasel raised the special revolver in his hand, briefly aimed it at the door behind Jenna, and then swiftly lowered it.

Wh— Monsieur Lumian Lee, have you considered the consequences of what you've done? Jenna chided, feeling a mix of irritation and amusement.

However, the deed was done, and she was powerless to reverse it.

As these thoughts raced through her mind, Jenna's lips curved into a sweet smile.

"The next payment will be for a genuine underarm holster. And after

that, custom-made bullets with special effects. How does that sound?"

Behind his glass glasses, Rabbit Chasel's eyes sparkled.

"Alright!"

…

In Tizamo Town, night had already fallen, and darkness shrouded the area.

Lumian stood in Hisoka's house, glancing at the stern vice-

captain of the Port Pylos patrol team, Reaza, and the local patrol team leader, Maslow, whose face was adorned with white paint. As though instructing Lugano, he said, "Watch out for any accidents."

This time, he spoke in Dutanese.

"Alright." It wasn't the first time Maslow had accompanied Louis Berry, the great adventurer, and he was already accustomed to his style.

Dressed in a sleek formal suit, Reaza remained silent, signaling that there was no issue.

Lumian retrieved the brown Mystery Prying Glasses from his Traveler's Bag.

Tonight, his first task was to use this magical item to observe Hisoka's house from various angles, hoping to unveil the source of its abnormality.

After confirming his condition and preparations, Lumian placed the brown gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose.

A familiar wave of dizziness washed over Lumian, as if his surroundings had been disrupted and reassembled.

He witnessed poisonous insects crawling in the "sky," two walls that seemed to dance in circles, and an underground water puddle deep in the soil that appeared to absorb all light.

Chapter 670 Sudden Arrival

Amidst the dizzying sensation that threatened to separate his spirit from his body, Lumian saw trees that seemed to slumber in the darkness and a pitch-black boulder…

Finally, he removed the brown glasses from his nose and arched his back slightly to alleviate the discomfort.

Even an Ascetic wouldn't be able to use the Mystery Prying Glasses for long.

Of course, this ensured his safety to a certain degree.

Through this "prying," Lumian confirmed two things.

First, the area beneath Hisoka's house was indeed unusual, but it seemed more like an illusory symbol than an actual entity. It indicated that this place had once been corrupted or influenced, with the most severe occurrence taking place underground.

Second, this influence was connected to the black boulder deep within the primitive forest.

"How did it go?" Maslow, his face painted white, asked.

Lumian stored the Mystery Prying Glasses back into his Traveler's Bag and smiled.

"The abnormality I 'saw' here originates from a black boulder deep in the primitive forest. Have you ever seen or heard of that black boulder?"

The pale-white Reaza and Maslow, his black hair falling over his shoulders, shook their heads in unison, indicating a negative answer.

Lumian wasn't in a rush to do the second thing he had planned for

the night. He glanced at Reaza, who was wearing a thin formal suit and appeared to be a mix of Intisian and West Balam heritage. He casually said, "I thought that with your arrival, some people in Tizamo would gradually leave and stay in Port Pylos for a while.

"As you know, the Dream Festival should start within three days."

Reaza calmly replied, "Based on my experience, except for those who have only arrived in Tizamo in the past two weeks, it's best not to leave this place and go elsewhere to prevent any abnormalities from spreading.

"It should only be considered after the Dream Festival ends and the primitive tribe launches another attack."

Very standardized process… I thought you would consider the opinions of Intis, Feynapotter, and other Northern Continent countries, allowing people with corresponding nationalities to evacuate in advance and protect them. For example, the owners of the plantations outside the city and their families… Yes, this is likely because the Dream Festival has never shown direct harm. It only caused some townsfolk to suffer from hysteria and attracted an attack from the forest's primitive tribe. The first situation could be resolved by a simple Mass. The second problem could be guarded against and fended off… Lumian roughly understood the mentality of Admiral Querarill and the patrol team's leaders.

Since there wouldn't be any major issues, they would act as if the Dream Festival didn't exist, merely advising the local official Beyonders to be vigilant and guard against any mishaps while hoping that the Church of The Fool could resolve the hidden dangers!

If they were to do more, they might trigger something and worsen the situation.

After discussing the matter, Lumian recovered from the discomfort caused by the Mystery Prying Glasses. He took out the unique Eye of Truth and placed it in front of his face.

The relatively handsome Southern Continent native's eyelids twitched at the sight of the pale-white flesh, dark blood vessel-like earmuff

and spectacle temple, as well as the blood-colored lens intertwined with transparent purple tubes.

How many glasses does Louis Berry own?

Moreover, each one is a mystical item!

After donning the single-lens Eye of Truth, Lumian surveyed his surroundings, seeking to uncover the truth behind reality.

As he did so, a voice gradually sounded in his ears, growing louder and more chaotic.

Each note and word seemed to materialize, flooding into Lumian's mind.

It made him feel as if his head was rapidly expanding like a balloon.

If the balloon continued to expand, there would only be one outcome: bursting with a resounding bang!

Lumian reached for his ear, ready to remove the Eye of Truth at any moment. He seized the opportunity to scrutinize Hisoka's house.

He believed that it was safer to take the risk of prying into the house's secrets before the Dream Festival, while not inside the special dream. It was safer than using the Eye of Truth and Mystery Prying Glasses within the dream itself.

Through the purple lens, Lumian couldn't discern much of the truth. Everything appeared similar to what he could see with his naked eye, but the night seemed even darker.

Without hesitation, his eye bulged, and blood vessels appeared on his body. He abruptly removed the Eye of Truth, and a slightly sharp explosion reverberated in his ears.

Phew, phew… Panting heavily, Lumian's mind was in disarray, overwhelmed by a barrage of strange knowledge. He couldn't think straight.

At that moment, even if someone were to ambush him, he wouldn't

be able to react quickly.

After more than ten seconds, Lumian finally regained his ability to think clearly. He instinctively organized the knowledge that had been forcefully injected into his mind.

"The art of sophistry…

"How to cultivate superior wheat seeds…

"Canning techniques…

"How to roast pork that's crispy on the outside and tender on the inside…

"Music to soothe a sow's emotions…

"The Revelation of Evernight…

"Favorite Positions of Celebrities—Memoirs of Those Mistresses"

"…"

What's all this nonsense? Can't there be any useful knowledge? In the past, although Aurore had been tormented by the Hidden Sage's instillation of knowledge, she had at least stumbled upon valuable mysticism insights. Wait, had she also been corrupted by such knowledge? Is that why she always portrays a rich theoretical understanding in her books… Lumian rubbed his still throbbing head and said to Reaza and Maslow, "I'm going to the edge of the forest to take a look. Do you want to come with me?"

Reaza nodded, stingy with his words, while Maslow made his stance clear by walking towards the stairs.

If Camus were here, he would undoubtedly smile wryly and say, "Do I have a choice?" Lumian mused to himself. He left Hisoka's house and made his way towards the primitive forest near Tizamo Town.

After crossing the intersection and arriving at another street, Lumian noticed a four-wheeled, four-seater carriage parked at the entrance of the Brieu Motel.

An attendant and a lady's maid stepped out of the carriage, carrying their luggage, and followed a man and a woman towards the motel.

The man was attired in a dark-gray formal suit and a half top hat. His complexion resembled that of someone from the Northern Continent, and his side profile was well-defined, with striking dark green eyes. The woman wore a light-

colored dress that allowed for ease of movement and a feathered hat adorned with pearls. She appeared to be in her late twenties, and her skin was delicate and radiant. One would easily determine that she was a beauty just from glimpsing her side profile.

Lumian averted his gaze and turned to Reaza and Maslow.

"Is it the weekend?"

"No," Maslow replied, understanding the implication behind Louis Berry's question. "Gentlemen and ladies often find time to hunt in Tizamo, not just on weekends."

Lumian turned to Reaza and inquired, "You didn't seal off this area?"

"That would only cause unnecessary panic," Reaza responded succinctly.

Lumian didn't press the matter further. He walked out of the town through the Brieu Motel and ventured into the primitive forest.

He delved deeper along the path he had become familiar with from the dream.

Finally, he arrived at the chaotic zone in reality, where various dream fragments intertwined.

It was an unremarkable place, indistinguishable from its surroundings.

Lumian found a palm tree and sat down. He turned to Reaza and Maslow and said, "Keep an eye on my surroundings. I'm going to sleep here."

He wanted to see what would happen if he fell asleep closer to the source of the abnormality, if he could enter that peculiar dream, and in what state.

Receiving affirmative responses from the two patrol team members, Lumian closed his eyes and attempted Cogitation. The sourc**e** of this content nov(***e***l)bi((n))

At some point, he drifted off to sleep.

After an unknown period, he awoke.

Catching sight of Reaza and Maslow, Lumian rose to his feet and nodded thoughtfully.

This place doesn't work either… Is Hisoka's house the only effective location?

Or should I find that black boulder and sleep near it?

Lumian gazed into the pitch-black forest, contemplating for a few moments before turning to Reaza and Maslow.

"Let's head back."

The trio swiftly returned to Tizamo.

The late night had settled in, and the streets were devoid of any passersby. No lights or sounds emanated from the houses on either side. Occasionally, the snorts of livestock on the ground floor of the buildings could be heard, accentuating the pervading darkness and silence. The dim crimson moon's light seemed to emphasize the depths of the darkness.

On this dark night, Lumian walked along a muddy road, heading towards the Brieu Motel situated deep within the street. Reaza and Maslow followed quietly behind him.

Suddenly, Lumian's mind spun, and his vision momentarily blurred before clearing.

This is… His pupils dilated as he instinctively scanned his

surroundings but found nothing amiss.

At that moment, in a vacant house on the ground floor diagonally ahead, a dim candlelight illuminated a room on the third floor.

Immediately after, glass windows on this street and throughout Tizamo Town were set aglow by the light of burning candles.

...

Rhea awoke to find that darkness had already descended, but the candles in many houses continued to burn.

This indicated that it wasn't too late.

Feeling lazy, Rhea had no desire to prepare her own food. Carrying her bow and arrows, she left the room and exited the police headquarters from the side, making her way towards the nearby Bunia café.

The streets were nearly deserted, as they were every night.

Rhea glanced at the tables and chairs still scattered along the street and approached the kitchen counter. In Dutanese, she said to the busy café owner and waiter, Bunia, who had his head lowered, "A glass of Cosa and a beef burrito."

Bunia paused in the midst of washing cups and looked up.

His naturally curly black hair gave him a mixed-blood appearance. He looked at Rhea and revealed an obvious, strange smile that made Rhea inexplicably uneasy.

Rhea knew Bunia well and was aware that he was a shy, kind, and adult man who wasn't particularly adept at communicating with women. He had never smiled like this before.

Bunia fixed his gaze on Rhea and chuckled in a deep voice.

"You've got big boobs."

Chapter 671 Beginning

Upon hearing Bunia's words, Rhea was so surprised that she forgot her anger.

It wasn't the first time she had encountered such a situation. She was shocked that a man who had left a good impression on her would show such an expression and say such words.

And this was when they weren't even friends!

At that moment, Rhea wondered if she was still half-asleep. She also questioned whether Bunia had suffered a mental illness or succumbed to hysteria as the Dream Festival drew near.

Amidst Rhea's bewilderment, Bunia's smile intensified.

He extended his hands across the kitchen counter and attempted to grab Rhea's chest.

Instinctively, Rhea leaned back, attempting to dodge.

After failing to touch her, Bunia retracted his hands, propped himself up on the kitchen counter, and leaped up. Amidst the clinking of coffee cups and glass jars, he lunged at Rhea, who was leaning back.

This reaction, this choice, and this display of power caught Rhea off guard. She didn't have time to remove the bow and arrow from her back. Her waist bent backward, and her right foot kicked up like the other end of a seesaw, sending the transformed Bunia café owner flying.

Simultaneously, a thought flashed through Rhea's mind.

Has he truly lost his mind?

Crash. Bunia crashed to the side of the kitchen counter.

Rhea exerted strength in her back and stood up straight again. Then, she took off her hunting bow, nocked an arrow, and aimed at Bunia, who had just stood up.

A look of fear crossed Bunia's face. He froze for a moment before pleading, "Don't—don't kill me!

"I suddenly lost control just now!"

Looking at Bunia's pleading and fearful face, Rhea found him both familiar and unfamiliar. The arrow on the bowstring was drawn back, but she didn't release it.

…

Entering the streets of Tizamo Town from the primitive forest, Lumian observed the illuminated houses on both sides and scoffed.

"Is this supposed to be terrifying and bizarre?"

This wasn't the first time he had encountered such a scene. In Fourth Epoch Trier, he had witnessed a similar occurrence. Not only had the dark town regained its lights, but the entire Fourth Epoch Trier had transitioned from silence to noisiness, returning to life.

Faced with this abnormality, Lumian was undoubtedly surprised and highly vigilant. However, he wasn't overwhelmed by intense emotions. On the surface, he observed his surroundings leisurely. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

He realized that Reaza and Maslow had vanished. The two patrol team members who should have been following him were gone.

Since it can silently make two Beyonders disappear right under my nose, it can definitely make me vanish just like that… In other words, I must have been affected. There's a high chance that the trance was an external manifestation…

From a mysticism perspective, the town, which had already fallen into a deep slumber, relighting without any significant turn of events, signifies that I'm in another scene, one that is originally related but different…

Could it be that I've been forced into a dream?

Has the Dream Festival officially begun?

I didn't sleep in Hisoka's house. Why am I still awake?

Combined with the ongoing investigation, Lumian quickly deduced the current situation.

At that moment, he spotted a figure emerging from a glass window diagonally ahead, surrounded by wooden planks and weeds.

It was a local man in his early forties, with dark brown skin, brown eyes, black hair, and thick lips.

Lumian had seen him before. He was a hunting guide, responsible for leading gentlemen and ladies from Port Pylos and other places into the forest for hunting.

Lumian's impression of him was that he always wore a fawning smile. No matter what others said, he would respond with a string of affirmatives. He never showed anger, even when punished by the gentlemen and ladies he guided.

Upon seeing Lumian, the hunting guide's lips curled into a cruel smile.

He pushed open the window and raised his other hand, revealing a double-barreled shotgun.

"Die, you Northern Continent dog!"

As the hunting guide cursed, he aimed his double-barreled shotgun at Lumian and pulled the trigger without hesitation.

Bang!

A massive amount of lead spread out in a cone, enveloping the corresponding area.

As the hunting guide took aim, Lumian sidestepped and rolled to the other side of the street.

What greeted his eyes were the previously quiet cows, sheep, and horses.

At that moment, the eyes of these animals seemed to turn bloodshot.

Supporting himself with one hand, Lumian leaped up. Amidst the high-pitched mooing and the hunting guide's aim, he leaped to the middle of the stairs leading to the second floor.

"Ah!" A scream suddenly pierced the air, then stopped abruptly.

The door on the second floor swung open, and Lumian was confronted by a young man drenched in bright red blood. He held a massive axe dripping with the crimson liquid, and behind him lay the mangled corpse of an old man in his fifties, the wound carved deep into his chest.

Lumian, who had been wandering Tizamo Town for days, was no stranger to these two individuals.

Lying on the ground, his eyes wide open, was the leathersmith of Tizamo Town. He would purchase the hides of wild beasts brought back by gentlemen, ladies, and town hunters who didn't want to handle them themselves, processing them and selling the finished products.

The axe-wielding figure was his eldest son, who had studied nitrification, tanning, and other leather production techniques from him. He was known as an obedient young man, and his father wasn't an old-fashioned leathersmith who resorted to physical or verbal violence.

This was a characteristic of the people of Tizamo. They were docile, calm, and devoid of intense emotions.

And now, it appeared that the leathersmith's eldest son had just cleaved his father to death.

Upon seeing Lumian, the lad's eyes overflowed with a bloodthirsty smile.

With a shout, he swung his axe at Lumian. On the other side, the

hunting guide began reloading his double-barreled shotgun with new lead rounds.

Lumian's body suddenly turned ethereal, merging with his shadow and vanishing into the darkness beside the steps.

Shadow Transformation!

After using this ability to sneak towards the police headquarters for a few seconds, Lumian suddenly heard someone pleading for mercy in fear.

He left the shadows and transformed back into a human. He saw Rhea aiming an arrow at the café owner, Bunia, but she didn't release it.

At that moment, a colossal anaconda, as thick as a barrel, emerged from the multi-layered hay at the top of the opposite house, hanging upside down.

It widened its cold eyes and foul-smelling mouth, the patterns on its scales seeming to expand and writhe.

This time, Lumian didn't dodge.

Facing the colossal boa attempting to devour him, his eyes darkened as he swung his fist upward.

In an instant, blazing white flames ignited from his fist, enveloping his entire forearm.

Bang!

Lumian's fist smashed into the colossal boa's gaping maw, tearing through the blood-colored flesh and delivering a devastating uppercut to its upper jaw.

Before it could devour its human prey, the colossal boa's cold eyes lost their luster. Its massive body plummeted due to inertia, but Lumian easily sidestepped the falling serpent and retracted his fist.

Clang!

The colossal boa crashed to the ground, its slippery scaled body engulfed in blazing white flames.

Weakness Investigation!

Lumian approached Rhea, noticing that the patrol team member was also regarding him with a vigilant and puzzled expression. He didn't attack immediately.

She… Lumian's heart stirred as a smile played across his lips.

"Looks like you're still lucid."

Wary of Bunia, Rhea observed Louis Berry for a moment, hesitating before speaking.

"Lucid, you say?"

"Yes." Lumian pointed at Bunia, who was glaring at him with undisguised hatred. "Did he attempt to attack you or even rape you?"

"Yes." Rhea didn't ask how he knew. Instead, she inquired, "What's going on?"

Lumian chuckled in response, stating, "Perhaps we've entered the dream once more, but this time, we're not alone."

He made a preliminary judgment based on Rhea's apparent lucidity.

Perhaps the reason for maintaining his own clarity of mind was falling asleep in Hisoka's house and entering the special dream recently!

He needed to find Camus for further confirmation.

Upon hearing Louis Berry's response, a term suddenly flashed through Rhea's mind.

Before she could voice her thoughts, the sound of three chimes suddenly rang out.

The bell's resonant tones reverberated through the streets of Tizamo,

as if summoning the town's inhabitants.

Rhea listened intently, her expression shifting slightly.

"It's the cathedral's bell!"

Cathedral, the Saint-Sien Cathedral? Lumian's thoughts immediately turned to the unsettling Padre Cali. He glanced at Rhea.

"Let's go and investigate."

"Alright," Rhea replied without hesitation.

She lowered her bow, no longer aiming the arrow at the café owner, Bunia, and followed Lumian towards the Saint-Sien Cathedral, which was separated from their current location only by the police headquarters.

Bunia's expression fluctuated between longing and hatred, but he didn't dare to pursue them, held back by fear.

Lumian and Rhea sprinted at a breakneck pace. In mere seconds, they traversed the distance past the police headquarters and arrived at the small square in front of the cathedral.

Padre Cali was already standing at the cathedral's entrance.

However, he was no longer clad in the Eternal Blazing Sun Church clergyman's robe with its white and golden threads. Instead, he had donned a dark and intricately designed robe.

The padre, with his dark-brown skin, sunken eyes, and stiff facial features, gazed out at the empty square before his eyes settled on the newly arrived Lumian and Rhea. He held the Bible aloft and shouted with a frenzied expression, "I hereby declare the official commencement of the Dream Festival!

"During the Dream Festival, there are no taboos or restrictions. You are free to do as you wish, including harming and killing.

"Revel in it and unleash all your emotions and desires, everyone!"

Chapter 672 Greater Trouble

Upon hearing Padre Cali's shout, Rhea raised her hunting bow and aimed an arrow wrapped in silver lightning at the clergyman in the complicated black robe. Unlike when she had faced the café owner, Bunia, the anger in her eyes was even more pronounced now, and there was no hesitation. The padre was blaspheming and apostatizing!

At that moment, a slender and powerful palm appeared in front of Rhea's hunting bow, blocking the arrow.

"You…" Rhea turned to Louis Berry, puzzled as to why he had stopped her.

Lumian replied calmly, "Let's wait and see."

As the two of them conversed, Padre Cali revealed a wanton and flamboyant smile. He turned around and walked back to the cathedral with the Bible in his arms.

The golden dome at the cathedral's top and the statues and decorations on the outer walls dimmed under the crimson moonlight.

After Padre Cali's figure disappeared through the cathedral's open door, Rhea looked at Lumian with a dark expression.

"Why?"

Lumian chuckled in response.

"After realizing that this place is suspected to be a dream, I've been pondering a question."

As he spoke, screams and piercing cries reverberated through Tizamo and the surrounding plantations, echoing through the dark night sky.

"What question?" Rhea pressed.

Without giving a direct response, Lumian said, "It's almost certain that we're participating in the Dream Festival.

"Under such circumstances, if you succeed in attacking Padre Cali, what will happen when the Dream Festival concludes and everyone wakes up?"

Without waiting for Rhea's response, Lumian smiled again.

"If you shoot him in the arm, he'll wake up feeling phantom pain in the corresponding location, as if he's suffering from arthritis and his muscles are tearing.

"If you strike his head with a hammer and knock him out, there's a high chance that he'll have a headache, dizziness, and nervous twitches when he returns to reality.

"If you rape and impregnate him, he'll likely feel nauseous, reflux, and bloated, feeling like he might have a fetus in his stomach when he wakes up.

"If you tie him up, continuously electrocute him, and incinerate him with fire, will he feel those sensations in the real world, as if possessed by wraiths or shadows. He may always feel restrained, paralyzed, or in pain."

Rhea listened calmly, not bothering to question why Padre Cali could get pregnant. The more she listened, the more alarmed she became.

This was because Louis Berry's description matched the various manifestations of mass hysteria in Tizamo that the patrol team had gathered.

Lumian turned to Rhea and asked with a smile, "If you had killed Padre Cali with an arrow, what would happen when the dream recedes?"

"He'll die immediately? No…" Rhea denied it.

Tizamo had no incidents of multiple people suddenly dying in their

dreams after a night.

Rhea immediately thought of an abnormality.

Between mid-December and mid-March, 80% of the annual deaths in Tizamo occurred, significantly surpassing those in Port Pylos and the surrounding towns.

She changed her words.

"They will gradually die in an irreversible manner within the next three months?"

With a nod, Lumian replied, "I even suspect that the primitive tribe in the forest launched several attacks in those three months mainly to eliminate those who had died in their dreams, allowing them to die reasonably in reality without revealing anything abnormal.

"From December of last year to this year, they only completed one attack. The reason should be that the attack was very successful. Those who should die are dead, and some who don't deserve to die are also dead. There's no need for them to take the risk and they also lost the motivation to come to Tizamo again."

Rhea listened attentively and pondered for a few seconds.

"The Dream Festival originates from that tribe?"

"It's possible. It's more likely that they guard or worship the source and act according to its revelations," Lumian replied simply.

Rhea nodded slightly.

"No wonder you stopped me from shooting Padre Cali. Everyone in Tizamo is likely a victim."

That's why I didn't counterattack the two assailants and only killed the colossal boa with a single punch, Lumian thought. When awoken from the dream, will the colossal boa crawl in front of me and die? If that's the case, I can add more food to Ludwig's plate…

Lumian surveyed the empty square slumbering in the night.

"Let's find Camus now and see if he's still lucid." The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

…

In Tizamo, on the third floor of the police headquarters, five rooms and one washroom belonged to the patrol team.

One room was used for day-to-day work, while another was used for storing documents and items. The remaining three apartments belonged to the local patrol team members, one for each person.

With the arrival of Camus and Kolobo, Maslow had temporarily moved to Loban's to vacate a room for his colleagues from Port Pylos.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Amidst the reverberations of the bell, Camus jolted awake.

He glanced out the window into the deep night, illuminated by a faint crimson moonlight. Momentarily disoriented, he wondered about the hour.

Just as Camus reached for his pocket watch, intending to check the time, he noticed Kolobo's absence from the makeshift bed.

A sense of unease washed over him, urging him into action. With silent determination, he rose from his bed under the eerie crimson moonlight, securing his pocket watch and weapon.

Stepping cautiously into the corridor, Camus found it unusually still, cloaked in shadowy silence. Beyond the confines of the police headquarters, eerie cries and distant wails pierced the night, emanating from various corners of Tizamo and its surrounding plantations.

Drawing on his keen awareness honed through experience as a Public Security Officer, Camus sensed a disturbance in his Jurisdiction.

Suddenly, he instinctively dropped to the ground and rolled forward.

A deafening crack echoed through the corridor as a wooden door,

which Camus would have passed by, splintered and burst outward.

In the blink of an eye, a broadsword slashed through the air, propelled by a savage force, slicing through the empty corridor.

As Camus swiftly evaded the attack, he turned to face his assailant.

It was Loban, the towering patrol member standing at over 1.9 meters, with short light-gold hair and piercing light-blue eyes.

A cruel smirk adorned the Feysacian's face, his eyes glinting with unmistakable greed.

In the dim moonlight, his features were obscured by shadows, emanating an eerie malevolence.

Upon spotting Loban, Camus's eyes sparked with determination.

Psychic Piercing!

Loban recoiled with a pained cry, instinctively shielding his head with his hands, relinquishing his grip on the broadsword.

Seizing the opportunity, Camus swiftly drew his revolver, taking aim at his teammate.

In a moment of hesitation, Camus faltered, then lowered his weapon.

Bang!

The bullet found its mark, striking Loban's knee with brutal force, tearing through flesh and shattering bone.

A Doctor from the Church of Earth Mother could mend such injuries!

Loban crumpled to the ground, writhing in agony, his attempts to curl up thwarted by the searing pain.

Camus lowered his revolver, rose to his feet, and pressed forward towards the end of the corridor.

As he descended the stairs, Camus passed by a cluttered cubicle, its contents scattered haphazardly, and caught faint murmurs from

within.

His heart skipped a beat as he whispered, "Kolobo, is that you?"

A moment of tense silence followed before Kolobo's voice, tinged with panic and fear, replied, "Stay back! Don't come any closer! Spare me!"

Camus frowned, sensing that Kolobo's demeanor was far from his usual composed self.

Though prone to bouts of fear and unease, Kolobo typically pushed through his anxieties to fulfill his duties. This level of hysteria was unprecedented.

What's wrong with Kolobo? Camus wondered.

Choosing to stay put rather than risk exacerbating the situation, Camus observed as Kolobo fell into an uneasy silence, as if attempting to fade into obscurity.

After more than ten seconds, Camus contemplated assessing Kolobo's condition. If it proved dire, he resolved to retreat and seek out Louis Berry.

Suddenly, the sound of two sets of rapid footsteps echoed from below.

Camus swiftly pivoted, training his revolver down the stairs. There, he beheld Louis Berry, sporting a golden straw hat, accompanied by Rhea, armed with a hunting bow and arrow.

Gazing at the barrel aimed in their direction, Louis Berry chuckled lightly, his tone calm.

"Welcome to the Dream Festival."

The Dream Festival? It's the Dream Festival? Realization dawned on Camus. He glanced between the smiling Louis Berry and the serious Rhea, confusion etched on his features.

"Why are we still lucid?"

Observing their composed demeanor, Camus deduced that they hadn't succumbed to the overwhelming emotions and desires that often engulfed dreamers. Yet, he kept his revolver steady, wary of any sudden developments.

"Perhaps our early entry into this peculiar dream, thanks to Twanaku's house, has granted us this lucidity," Lumian proposed, offering his deduction.

Rhea seized the opportunity to suggest that encounters within the dream might hold sway over reality to some extent, sharing the conjecture with Camus.

Initially relieved that he hadn't resorted to lethal force against Loban, Camus's expression turned grave as he addressed his companions.

"The three of us aren't the only Beyonders in Tizamo. If we adhere to the notion that we can't retaliate when attacked, it will severely hamper our ability to defend ourselves."

Lumian smiled. "Who said we can't kill? If someone poses a threat to me, they shall be killed accordingly."

Rhea and Camus fell silent.

After a moment of contemplation, Camus nodded decisively, gesturing towards the sundry compartment nestled in the stairwell.

"Kolobo's extreme reaction stems from fear. He won't pose a threat to us. Let him seek refuge there, undisturbed."

As Rhea concurred, Lumian's expression suddenly shifted.

He asked, "Is Kolobo also in this dream?"

Kolobo, who has been in Tizamo for less than a week like me, has also been forced to participate in the Dream Festival?

"Yes." Camus asked in confusion, "Is there a problem?"

A shadow crossed Lumian's features as he responded gravely.

"This suggests there may be a larger problem at play."

Perhaps one more terrifying than the Dream Festival itself!

Before Camus and Rhea could inquire further, Lumian abruptly interjected.

"Wait here for me."

With that, he vanished from the stairway, utilizing Spirit World Traversal.

Lumian reappeared on the second floor of the Brieu Motel, just outside his suite.

In the next instant, a piercing scream echoed through the air, filled with agony and terror.

It was Lugano.

Chapter 673 "Sealing" Spell

Confirming his fears, Lumian slipped his key into the lock, easing the door to the suite open without a sound.

Now, he knew without a doubt that Ludwig, the terrifying sealed creature, would unleash his hunger and frenzy at the Dream Festival.

Beneath the crimson moonlight streaming through the window, Lugano thrashed wildly, his face twisted in agony.

Lurking at the end of his flailing arm was Ludwig, dressed in a child's nightcap and sky-blue pajamas dotted with yellow stars. The sickening sounds of bones crunching and flesh tearing filled the air.

Amidst the chaos, droplets of blood splattered onto the floor.

Suddenly, Ludwig lunged forward like a frenzied animal, his jaws closing in on Lugano's arm with a sickening crack.

"Ah!"

Lugano's scream pierced the air once more, threatening to blow the roof.

Instinctively, he tried to wrench his arm free from Ludwig's grasp and shove the creature away with his other hand. Pain seared through him, and he felt himself teetering on the edge of unconsciousness.

Observing Ludwig closely, Lumian darted behind him, his nostrils flaring.

Two beams of white light shot forth from his nose, enveloping Ludwig. Ludwig paused, shutting his eyes.

But before Lumian could react, the boy's mouth resumed its relentless assault on Lugano's arm, pulverizing bone and flesh alike.

His eyes snapped open.

The Spell of Harrumph can only daze Ludwig for a moment, and that's only if he's sealed… Lumian reminded himself, taking a deep breath to steady his nerves.

He glanced at Lugano, who had noticed him but was too consumed by agony to speak. Raising a hand, Lumian motioned for Lugano to remain patient.

Though Lugano's mind raced with curses and frustration, he remained unable to voice them.

As thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian gave an imperceptible nod.

Changing his focus, Lumian bypassed Ludwig, who was engrossed in devouring Lugano, and seized Lugano's shoulder.

In an instant, Lumian retrieved a sharp straight sword he had acquired from Port Santa, pulling it from his Traveler's Bag.

What is he trying to do? Amidst the throes of pain, Lugano's thoughts scattered.

With a swift motion, Lumian swung the sword, the blade bursting into white flames.

The fiery sword crashed down upon Lugano's arm, where Ludwig had been feasting, striking at the joint.

With a sharp sound, Lugano's forearm tore away from Ludwig's grasp, leaving behind a gory, truncated limb.

Simultaneously, Lumian's form began to fade, and even Lugano, whom he had grasped, vanished from sight.

Teleport!

But Lumian hadn't gone far. Both he and Lugano reappeared at the suite's doorway.

The agony persisted, but Lugano's momentary relief vanished as Ludwig's figure once again came into view. The sight of the boy, his mouth still bloody with Lugano's remaining forearm, sent a shiver down his spine.

The fear momentarily eclipsed the pain, and Lugano's mind raced with frantic questions.

Why not teleport away from Tizamo?

Why not teleport to Port Pylos?

Why are we still lingering in front of Ludwig?

Meanwhile, Ludwig had turned his attention to the doorway, his blond hair matted with blood, his brown eyes glinting with ravenous hunger.

With the speed of a child his age, he advanced toward Lumian and Lugano,

all the while chewing and swallowing what remained of Lugano's arm.

Unperturbed, Lumian calmly returned the straight sword to his Traveler's Bag.

Under Lugano's horrified gaze, Lumian conjured an entire almond pistachio cream thousand-layer cake and hurled it onto the floor beside Ludwig.

Ludwig's sprint slowed as he seemed to ponder which delicacy to indulge in first.

Ultimately, he turned his attention back to Lugano.

The sight of blood, flesh, and marrow infused with spiritual essence seemed to intoxicate him even further.

Capitalizing on Ludwig's momentary indecision, Lumian delved into his Traveler's Bag once more, extracting a fragment of Hisoka's corpse and tossing it aside.

Ludwig's gaze followed the offering, his lips instinctively moistening, yet he made no move to change course.

It seemed he found the offering beneath his tastes, too dirty to be his top choice.

Lumian systematically tossed out ingredients brimming with spiritual energy, one after the other, creating a barrier of tempting treats around Ludwig. Cream pancakes, fruit tarts, sandwiches oozing with cream, bouchée à la reine, chocolates infused with liquor, cookies, candied plums, éclairs, Charlotte desserts, and a myriad of other delicacies

formed a tempting ring around Ludwig, impeding his advance toward Lugano.

Turning to Lugano with a stern expression, Lumian's voice took on a commanding tone. "What are you waiting for? Stem the bleeding first!"

Startled, Lugano obeyed, his left palm emitting a faint glow as he applied pressure to the stump of his injured arm.

As Ludwig indulged in the feast laid out before him, his urgency waned. Though still concerned for Lugano, he no longer rushed forward.

In the final stages, Lumian threw out boxes of biscuits, sweets, beef jerky, and assorted provisions, encircling Ludwig with a haphazard yet effective "wall" of food.

Nearly all of Lumian's seven days' worth of rations for Ludwig had been deployed from his Traveler's Bag.

"What… what's the meaning of this?" Lugano, having successfully treated his wound and eased his pain, watched Lumian's actions with bewilderment. He couldn't fathom why his employer was so fixated on feeding Ludwig in the midst of their predicament.

"Sealing that fellow," Lumian replied calmly, his hands never ceasing their task.

"Sealing?" Lugano nearly doubted his hearing.

Isn't this too absurd?

Using food to seal a monster?

He couldn't recall ever encountering such a concept, not even in the most far-fetched novels on the market. No author would dream up such a peculiar method!

Wouldn't a conventional seal involve the use of spiritually potent materials to inscribe mystical symbols and patterns, followed by ritualistic magic or the employment of a mystical artifact?

What possible purpose could hurling food at the monster serve?

Lumian smiled and sighed.

"Once he's satiated, he won't have any appetite left for you or anyone else here.

"And there's enough food to keep him occupied until dawn, and possibly even beyond."

Lumian had devised this plan upon realizing that Ludwig's sole desire was to eat. Coupled with his behavior during the Dream Festival, Lumian was confident that Ludwig was now driven purely by his insatiable hunger—a unique trait exclusive to him in Tizamo.

In this scenario, as long as Ludwig's appetite was sated, he could remain confined within the suite, feasting without posing a threat to others.

What was the distinction between this and traditional sealing methods?

Of course, the success of this makeshift seal depended on the Dream Festival concluding before Ludwig depleted the seven days' worth of food.

Otherwise, Lumian's ability to hunt in the forest might not keep pace with Ludwig's voracious appetite.

Lugano's understanding dawned upon hearing Lumian's explanation.

Indeed, this method offered a practical means of temporarily restraining Ludwig.

Who said it couldn't be deemed a seal?

Understanding one's target's preferences and weaknesses allowed for the implementation of a seal without resorting to mysticism!

Observing Ludwig still attempting to approach the door amidst his feast, Lumian realized the creature's reluctance to part with Lugano. With a swift movement, he grasped Lugano's shoulder and teleported them both to a corner of the second-floor stairwell in the police headquarters.

Ludwig briefly glanced at the vacant doorway before refocusing on his culinary conquest within the suite.

…

"Are you certain everything's under control?" Lugano inquired anxiously, the moment he exited the spirit world.

Lumian chuckled in response.

"As long as no Beyonder happens to stroll by the door, he won't abandon his feast."

Relieved, Lugano exhaled deeply, casting a rueful glance at his remaining arm. Thoughts swirled in his mind as he contemplated his future.

At least I'm still alive. As long as I'm alive…

In the future, I'll see if I can save up enough money to afford a mechanical arm from the Church of Steam. That might bolster my combat strength.

The Doctor's expertise could only do so much, as transplanting another's limb was beyond the realm of possibility.

Camus and Rhea, observing Lugano's bloody limb, furrowed their brows, recalling Louis Berry's ominous warning of a greater issue.

"What happened?" Camus inquired.

Lumian smiled.

"It's a complication caused by that big problem, but I've managed to seal it temporarily. Just remember, stay away from the Brieu Motel, especially the door on the second-floor suite."

Relieved to hear that Louis Berry had intervened, Camus assured Lugano,Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"Thankfully, it's all just a dream. You'll be fine once you wake up."

"A dream?" Lugano was perplexed.

Lumian offered no further explanation, simply remarking, "Indeed, it's a dream. But remember, if you perish in the dream, you perish in reality too."

Amid Lugano's bafflement, Lumian redirected said to Camus and Rhea, "Let's make our way to Twanaku's house now."

His primary objective in investigating the Dream Festival was to locate Hisoka's gold and the item acquired from the Nois family's Demon. He intended to assess any changes in their respective locations following the festival's commencement.

If nothing surfaced, Lumian planned to seek out Padre Cali at the Saint-Sien Cathedral.

The peculiar condition of "weakness in the depths of the Spirit Body" possessed by Padre Cali in reality set him apart from everyone else in Tizamo. This hinted at something distinctly special about the padre. Additionally, it was Padre Cali who had officially inaugurated the Dream Festival.

Camus hesitated, his silence suggesting he might have pressing matters to attend to.

In that moment, Rhea regarded Lumian with confusion, gesturing towards Lugano.

"Why is he still lucid?"

Chapter 674 Manor

Upon hearing Rhea's question, Lumian snapped to his senses and turned to Lugano.

In his haste to save and "seal" Lugano, he had overlooked Lugano's condition!

Ever since this Doctor had gotten his injuries under control, he had been responding to Lumian's questions. He was lucid and rational, a stark contrast to the other participants in the Dream Festival.

It had to be known that even Ludwig, the monster himself, couldn't effectively control his appetite and had resorted to devouring humans!

Moreover, Lugano had never slept in Hisoka's house, nor had he entered this peculiar dream realm before!

Seeing Rhea, Camus, and his employer staring at him intently, Lugano, still grappling with the lingering pain, was utterly perplexed.

"Why wouldn't I be lucid?

"Aren't you all still in your right minds?"

Everyone seems to be in the same state. Why should I be the only one with an issue?

Lumian carefully observed Lugano's emotions and asked in a calm tone, "Have you ventured outside the motel recently?"

"I did. I assisted Ludwig in purchasing roasted meat and pastries made from palm tree cores," Lugano recalled.

Lumian smiled.

"Did you sleep anywhere other than the motel?"

"No, I wouldn't dare to engage with the women here." Lugano shook his head without hesitation.

He was evidently a little regretful about this, as there were numerous mixed-blood girls in Tizamo who possessed a different allure compared to those in the Northern Continent.

As the two men conversed, Camus and Rhea meticulously searched for any abnormalities in Lugano's body. However, apart from being sufficiently lucid and lacking excessive emotions and desires, Lugano appeared to be unaffected by the strange phenomenon.

Lumian looked at Lugano with a thoughtful smile and said, "We're being forced to participate in an event called the Dream Festival. Simply put, we're dreaming. We can do anything in this dream, but if we die here, we'll die in reality too.

"Aside from us, everyone in Tizamo is under the influence of intense emotions and desires, just like Ludwig.

"They're conscious—strictly speaking—but they've chosen to show their malice and express their long-suppressed desires. If we can subdue them, we might be able to communicate, but they'll instinctively try to deceive us."

Remembering how the café owner, Bunia, had immediately changed his attitude after being targeted by her arrow and begged for mercy, Rhea agreed with Louis Berry's judgment.

The Dream Festival participants weren't stupid or crazy. Their excessive desires and emotions were the main cause of their uncontrollable evil!

"I see…" Lugano finally understood.

Realizing what Rhea's question meant, he blurted out, "Why are we lucid and rational?"

After a pause, Lugano's voice lowered as he added, "W-why can I stay lucid and rational?"

Lumian smiled.

"We can stay lucid and rational because we entered this special dream before. We left marks and auras in certain places.

"As for you, I'm not sure why."

As he spoke, he watched Lugano's face closely, observing the change in his servant's expression.

Lugano said in a daze, his voice tinged with fear, "I don't know why this is happening either…"

Noticing that Lugano remained calm even after his issue was brought to light, Lumian seized the chance to glimpse into his servant's luck.

Currently amidst a bloody calamity, Lugano might fall victim to an ailment in the coming days… The first part makes sense, considering Ludwig has just eaten half his arm. But what does the second half imply? Could the Dream Festival span several days? Impossible. If it truly lasted that long, Tizamo's predicament would have been discovered much earlier… Does this suggest that Lugano would succumb to an illness during the Dream Festival itself? An illness similar to death in the waking world, one that wouldn't be instantly cured even if he awakens and receives the Mass's blessing? Lumian quietly pondered the meaning behind Lugano's revealed fate.

Shifting his gaze to Camus and Rhea, he realized that they, too, would soon face a grim and bloody ordeal. If they failed to navigate it properly, they risked slipping further into peril.

As these thoughts swirled in Lumian's mind, he turned to Camus and Rhea and declared, "I'm taking my servant with us."

It wasn't an act of kindness or generosity. Rather, Lumian feared that leaving Lugano to his own devices, given his inexplicable lucidity and rationality, might trigger the abnormality within him and alter the course of the Dream Festival in unpredictable ways.

Better to keep him close at hand, where he could be monitored and any potential accidents prevented. If Lugano truly unleashed a dire problem, Lumian could always end his life first, eliminating any

future complications.

Camus and Rhea exchanged disgruntled glances before conceding, "It's your call to make."

"We must hurry to Twanaku's house," Lumian reiterated his earlier proposal.

Camus's gaze drifted toward the cubicle where Kolobo lay hidden, a hint of hesitation in his voice as he asked, "Any idea where Captain Reaza and the others might be?"

"They were supposed to appear beside me when the Dream Festival began, but they were nowhere to be seen," Lumian admitted, recounting the situation honestly.

Perhaps the dream's correspondence to reality was imperfect. The location where each person entered this peculiar dreamscape might be influenced by factors like their understanding, the dream's state, where they had slept, and myriad other variables.

Lumian mused that if he hadn't maintained his lucidity and rationality, he might have awoken in the master bedroom of the Brieu Motel's suite.

"Should we try to locate them first?" Camus proposed, a note of uncertainty in his tone.

Lumian let out a wry chuckle.

"Why? To engage them in combat?"

Neither Reaza nor Maslow had ever slept in Hisoka's house before. The likelihood of them lacking self-control and succumbing to malice and base desires was high.

When the time came, Lumian might not possess the strength to control the pace and intensity of the battle against such formidable Beyonders as he did with ordinary folk, not without the risk of causing deaths.

Camus and Rhea lapsed into a simultaneous silence, neither keen on

the prospect of a life-and-death struggle with their own teammates.

Just as Lumian was about to signal the two patrol team members to approach, Camus gritted his teeth as he declared, "There's somewhere I need to go before I head to Twanaku's house."

"And where might that be?" Lumian inquired, raising an eyebrow.

Camus replied in a deep voice, "Palm Manor."

Lumian chuckled.

"You wish to rescue Miss Amandina?"

Camus nodded firmly, a hint of embarrassment tinging his features.

"Yes, that's right."

"You needn't worry. This is merely a dream. If one is violated within the dream, they'll only experience a touch of hysteria upon waking. No substantial harm will befall them," Lumian stated matter-of-factly, his intention not to provoke Camus.

Camus's expression remained unwavering.

"I'm aware. But I fear she may not be able to cope with it in her dream state and might resort to drastic measures. It could lead to her demise."

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Camus spoke gravely, "You can proceed to Twanaku's house first. I'll make my way to Palm Manor and rendezvous with you later."

"By the time you're done, we might not be at Twanaku's house anymore," Rhea cautioned him.

Camus nodded gently.

"I've made this decision of my own accord. I'm prepared to bear any consequences that may follow."

Lumian locked eyes with Camus, remaining silent for a stretch.

Camus felt an indescribable pressure weighing upon him, his mind conjuring the tragic outcomes he might face, but he pursed his lips and refused to retract his suggestion.

After more than ten seconds of silence, his expression unchanged, Lumian finally spoke.

"Let us head to Palm Manor now."

Huh? Before Camus could react, Lumian's hand firmly grasped his shoulder.

Simultaneously, Lumian's other hand darted out, reaching for Rhea's arm.

Rhea's instinctive reaction was to dodge, but the memory of how Lugano had been transported flashed through her mind.

Her tense shoulders relaxed a fraction.

With Camus and Rhea securely in his grasp, Lumian shot Lugano a meaningful look.

Lugano, displaying a practiced ease, approached and latched onto a corner of Lumian's vest.

In the next second, Lumian's figure blurred, the haziness rapidly spreading to engulf Camus, Rhea, and Lugano.

As Rhea and Camus found themselves surrounded by layers of indescribable colors and formless objects, intense emotions surged within their hearts.

Could this be the spirit world?

Is this what teleportation feels like?

Was this how the great adventurer, Gehrman Sparrow, managed to appear before any pirate at a moment's notice?

Having witnessed Louis Berry's abrupt disappearance and subsequent return with his servant in tow, Camus and Rhea had speculated that

this might be the famed teleportation ability that had become the stuff of legend across the Five Seas, thanks to Gehrman Sparrow's extraordinary exploits.

It seemed their suspicions had been right on the mark!

Matani's patrol team boasted numerous adventurers among its ranks, and Camus and Rhea were well-versed in the myriad rumors that circulated the Five Seas.

The instant they experienced teleportation firsthand, their bodies departed the dream's spirit world, rematerializing before a four-story beige edifice.

This was none other than the main building of Palm Manor.

In the blink of an eye, Lumian, Camus, Rhea, and Lugano had reached their destination.Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

The manor was awash with cries, screams, sinister laughter, and high-pitched singing.

Just over ten meters from the main building, near a garden shrubbery, a mixed-blood lady's maid lay pinned to the ground by a group of slaves, her clothes half-stripped as she cried out in desperation.

She struggled with all her might, but how could she hope to resist the adult men? She was utterly helpless, pinned down and at their mercy.

Witnessing this scene, the former Public Security Officer, Camus, instinctively yearned to intervene, but he quickly reminded himself that this was a dream. Such events wouldn't truly impact reality. At most, they would result in a certain degree of curable hysteria.

It would be a waste of time to stop it, and it would only serve to delay my search for Amandina. Moreover, it would be pointless… Camus warned himself, forcibly averting his gaze as he ascended the steps into the main building.

At that moment, Rhea, who had been silent for a couple of seconds, turned from facing the manor's main building.

"You guys head in first."

With her back to Lumian, Camus, and Lugano, she spoke in a nonchalant tone. Leaning forward slightly, she strode purposefully towards the bushes at the garden's edge, making her way to the mixed-blood lady's maid who was being violated by the slaves.

Chapter 675 Evil

In a few swift strides, Rhea positioned herself behind the slaves, raised her right foot, and delivered a powerful kick.

With a resounding bang, the slave pressing down on the mixed-blood lady's maid was sent flying, landing unceremoniously in the bushes at the garden's edge.

The other three abruptly turned to face Rhea.

Before they could get a clear look at their assailant, Rhea followed up with a fluid roundhouse kick, knocking another one to the ground.

The remaining two, torn between greed, desire, and fear, took one look at Rhea and turned tail, fleeing to another part of the manor.

Rhea retracted her left foot and fixed a cold stare upon the two servants struggling to their feet. She raised her hunting bow, nocking an arrow with a smooth, practiced motion.

The two servants licked their lips in unison. Unwilling but fearful, they swiftly clambered over the bushes and vanished into the garden.

Only then did Rhea lower her gaze to the mixed-blood lady's maid, whose face was still streaked with tears and confusion.

"Are you all right?"

The mixed-blood lady's maid shook her head repeatedly. With trembling hands, she hastily tidied her half-torn dress and retrieved a dagger that had fallen beside her.

Seeing this, Rhea wasted no time.

"Find a secluded corner and hide until dawn."

With that, Rhea pivoted on her heel and prepared to dash back to where Louis Berry, Camus, and the others stood waiting at the door of the manor's main building.

As the mixed-blood lady's maid stood up, her expression darkened, and she raised the dagger clutched in her hand, plunging it towards Rhea's back.

Catching sight of the impending danger, Camus shouted, "Watch out!"

Though Rhea hadn't sensed the approaching threat, she instinctively heeded Camus's warning and reacted.

Surrendering to inertia, she fell forward and rolled to the side, narrowly evading the dagger's deadly path.

As she rolled, Rhea pivoted to face her attacker, eyes narrowing as she instinctively raised her bow, aiming at the mixed-blood lady's maid.

The mixed-blood lady's maid brandished her dagger, shouting in Intisian, her words laced with hatred, "Why can you join the patrol team, while I'm stuck as a mere lady's maid? Don't we both hail from the Southern Continent?

"Why? I even have Intisian blood coursing through my veins!"

Before she could complete her tirade, a crimson Fire Raven, its hue bordering on white, swooped in from nowhere, colliding with the steel dagger.

With a resounding clang, the dagger heated up, an explosive force wrenching it from the mixed-blood lady's maid's grasp, sending it flying several meters before clattering to the ground.

The mixed-blood lady's maid faltered, fear supplanting the hatred in her eyes.

Lumian, his black hair and green eyes striking, stood on the steps of the manor's main house, one hand casually tucked in his pocket. He called out, his voice carrying, "Where is Miss Amandina?"

Uh… A pang of embarrassment struck Camus.

In his haste to rescue Miss Amandina, he had acted with a distinct lack of professionalism!

He had been a guest at Palm Manor, but he had never been invited to visit Amandina's room upstairs. Consequently, he found himself unsure of which floor and room to search for her later.

If he were to search floor by floor, he would undoubtedly encounter countless obstacles amidst the current chaos.

The mixed-blood lady's maid's expression shifted, revealing a blatant desire and anticipation.

"She's sleeping in her room. Third floor, second room facing the rubber forest.

"Make haste. She's a vision of beauty, fragrant and pristine. Her figure is exquisite, her skin smooth as silk. She's a cut above the rest of us. Many a gentleman considers her their dream lover. Go, quickly!"

As she neared the end of her speech, the mixed-blood lady's maid gritted her teeth, her eyes alight with an illusory desire to witness something transpire.

Lugano's hair stood on end, a chill running down his spine as he confronted the stark malevolence of human nature.

Clap! Clap! Clap! Lumian shook his head, a smile playing on his lips as he applauded.

Rhea fell silent for a couple of seconds before rising to her feet and departing the area.

After a few steps, she paused, turning to regard the mixed-blood lady's maid. In a deep, solemn voice, she reiterated, "Find a secluded spot and hide until dawn."

With those parting words, Rhea turned away from the mixed-blood lady's maid and sprinted back to the steps at the main house's entrance.

Lumian averted his gaze and led the way through the open brown door.

As he, Camus, and the others entered, they were greeted by a startling sight in the living room. A middle-aged woman in a disheveled nightgown, her half-exposed body glistening with sweat and her black hair in disarray, sat astride a sturdy native slave. Her movements were intense, and she appeared utterly immersed, alternating between shouting and cursing. The native slave, clearly enjoying the experience, eagerly cooperated.

Near the staircase, a group of five or six servants and slaves, armed with an assortment of shotguns, rifles, and other weapons, intermittently fired bullets up the stairs. Occasional counterattacks emanated from the area leading to the second floor.

Camus stood frozen, his gaze fixed on the middle-aged woman's flushed face.

"You know her?" Lumian asked, a smile playing on his lips.

It was Rhea who replied, "She's Sir Petit's wife, Miss Amandina's mother, Madam Simona."

"I never imagined she would be like this…" Camus said, his voice low and somber.

Lumian smiled and applauded once more.

"Can't she indulge in her dreams?

"For the Dream Festival, this is something we should encourage. No one is being forced. How delightfully harmless."

Camus found himself momentarily at a loss for words.

Lumian then said to Rhea, "During the Dream Festival, there's a high likelihood that the person you save will also be a bad person and may even attack you."

Rhea fell silent for a few seconds before responding in a low voice, "Even if something like that happens again, I'll still save her."

Lumian dropped the subject and shifted his attention to Camus.

"Are you prepared to see the other side of Miss Amandina? Perhaps she will…"

Lumian left the sentence unfinished, instead casting a meaningful glance at Madam Simona, who was in the throes of fierce, foul-mouthed ecstasy.

Camus exhaled slowly, his voice resolute.

"I'm here to save her. It doesn't matter if she's good or bad, kind, malicious, chaste, or indulgent.

"After helping her find a safe hiding place and making sure she waits until dawn, we'll head to Twanaku's house."

I'm here to save her. It doesn't matter if she's good or bad, kind, malicious… Lumian quietly repeated the first half of the sentence, a smile playing on his lips as he regarded the servants and slaves attempting to occupy the staircase. He raised his voice, asking, "Has anyone seen Miss Amandina? Has she come downstairs?"

The servants and slaves turned their attention to Lumian and his companions, swiftly redirecting their firearms.

Lumian calmly extended his right hand, making a grabbing motion.

With this gesture, crimson flames, their hue bordering on white, ignited in the air, forming a curtain that Lumian seemed to snatch from the void.

With a deft grab and push, the fiery curtain abruptly split, transforming into Fire Birds that hurtled towards the shotguns, rifles, and revolvers before they could be properly aimed.

Amidst a series of muffled explosions, the guns dropped from the servants' and slaves' hands, clattering to the ground, damaged beyond use.Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

The servants and slaves themselves suffered only minor burns, their grip on their weapons faltering.

lightsNovɛl ƈom Since advancing to Reaper, Lumian's mastery over flames had grown. Even without the Lie earring, he could achieve this level of control.

Moreover, he hadn't unleashed his full power. He hadn't even summoned the blazing white flames in order to minimize the damage.

"Now, can we have a civilized conversation?" Lumian smiled at the servants and slaves.

Behind him, crimson Fire Ravens, their color nearly white, materialized, poised to strike at a moment's notice.

An Intisian valet, who seemed to hold some influence among the group, couldn't conceal his fear as he replied, "Amandina hasn't come down. Otherwise…"

He couldn't help but lick his lips.

"And who were you shooting at?" Lumian inquired.

"It's Petit, that bastard who deserves to rot in hell, and his butler, the one who's always wielding that damn whip!" A dark-skinned slave picked up the fallen firearm, only to discover that it was broken, just like everyone else's.

They had planned to retrieve more guns from another room on the first floor, but for now, they didn't dare make a move.

"Is that so?" Lumian nodded, a look of enlightenment crossing his features. "Carry on, then."

He turned around, leading the ten to twenty Fire Ravens that had gradually dispersed, and said to Camus and the others,

"Let's scale the side of the building to reach the third floor."

Teleportation wasn't an optimal option at this distance, not after having used it four times already.

Of course, since advancing to Reaper, Lumian could now perform 11

to 12 Spirit World Traversals without relying on the spirituality accumulated through his Ascetic abilities. It was a marked improvement from his previous limitations.

Camus and the others raised no objections. Lugano, however, trembled as he asked, "H-how am I supposed to climb?"

He swung the stump that was all that remained of his right arm.

Lumian glanced at him and said matter-of-factly, "Camus will assist you."

Me? Camus was momentarily taken aback before assessing his own skills and concluding that it was indeed feasible.

Before long, the four of them had ascended to the third floor, making use of the statues, decorations, metal pipes, and side balcony adorning the outer wall.

As soon as Camus pushed open the door leading to the corridor, he caught sight of a figure.

It was Amandina's personal maid, an Intisian lady's maid clad in a white cloth nightgown.

At that moment, the young lady's maid stood bathed in the dim moonlight, a bloody dagger clutched in her hand, her expression inscrutable.

Drip. Drip. The bright red blood from the dagger fell onto the corridor carpet, each drop a vivid splash of color.

Camus's heart clenched.

"What have you done?"

The lady's maid's face broke into a satisfied, carefree smile.

"I killed it. I've been annoyed by it for far too long!"

It? In Intisian, "she" and "it" were two entirely different words. Amidst his surprise, Camus followed the trail of dripping blood, his gaze

falling upon Amandina's beloved pet dog, lying motionless at the door of the adjacent room.

Phew… Camus breathed a sigh of relief before asking in a deep, serious voice, "Where's Miss Amandina?"

The lady's maid's expression turned resentful.

"I'm looking for her too! She left an hour ago!"

An hour ago… Before the Dream Festival began? Camus pressed further, "Where did she go?"

The lady's maid, still holding the blood-stained dagger, replied with a contorted expression, "She went on a date with my Robert!"

Camus fell silent.

Lumian shook his head. Under the watchful eyes of the lady's maid, who yearned to kill but felt outnumbered, he swiftly searched the entire third floor with Rhea and the others, but found no trace of Amandina.

"Let's go." Lumian turned to Camus, his voice firm.

Camus had no choice but to concede defeat.

The four of them immediately teleported outside Hisoka's house.

Just as Lumian was about to proceed, he sensed something and looked up at the third floor.

A face appeared through the glass window of a room on the third floor.

The face was graced with a high nose bridge, piercing blue eyes, and thick black hair tied into a simple knot atop her head. Her brows exuded a youthful, vibrant aura.

Amandina!

It was said that Amandina had gone on a date with her fiancé,

Robert!

Chapter 676 You Intisians

Camus was stunned to find Amandina here. His astonishment far outweighed any joy he might have felt.

From the window above, Amandina noticed the four figures below. Her face twisted in alarm, and she disappeared into the house's shadowy interior.

Taken aback, Camus called out, "Don't be scared! We're here to keep you safe!"

While shouting, he raced up the stairs to the second floor of Twanaku's residence.

His visit to Palm Manor had confirmed Louis Berry's theory. The Dream Festival participants had lost control of their actions, driven by hidden malevolence and desires. Yet, their minds remained lucid, allowing for communication.

Camus couldn't be sure if the possessed individuals would misinterpret others' words. Furthermore, this wasn't true clarity of thought. They wouldn't realize they were dreaming, and the experience would fade upon waking.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Camus and Rhea charged into the building, taking the steps two at a time.

Behind the house, out of sight, a glass window set in wooden planks swung open. Amandina, clad in black hunting gear, nimbly climbed out. She used the wall's protrusions and crevices to swiftly descend to the ground.

As her feet touched the earth, she noticed a figure watching her from the side.

It was Lugano, his right arm ending in a bloody stump, his face marred with crimson stains. He looked a frightful mess.

Amandina's heart clenched. She pressed her back against a pillar supporting Twanaku's house, fists tightening as she shut her eyes.

In the same instant, Lugano's eyelids drooped, his mind growing hazy.

He collapsed to the ground, falling into a deep sleep where he lay.

Amandina's eyes snapped open, no longer using her power to force the battle-worn man into slumber.

Doing so would trap her in a profound sleep, able to act only in her Nightmare form, her body immobile. And the man wasn't alone!

Before Lugano could wake naturally, Amandina turned to flee, seeking a safe haven to conceal herself.

At that moment, she heard a smirking voice.

"So you're a Beyonder too."

Amandina instinctively glanced over and saw the adventurer, Louis Berry, standing before another wooden pillar supporting Twanaku's house, not far from her.

The handsome Louis Berry, with his dark hair and emerald eyes, had one hand in his pocket as he leaned against the pillar. His feet were crossed behind him, and his lips curled into a playful smile as he looked her way.

The dim crimson moonlight of the night lent him an air of enigmatic and sinister allure.

Amandina tightened her fists once more and closed her eyes.

However, her spiritual senses told her that Louis Berry had vanished in an instant.

She couldn't find the target and couldn't use her corresponding

abilities.

Moments later, Amandina, with her heightened spiritual perception, cast her gaze towards the shadows on the ground floor of the house.

She sensed something stirring there.

At the same time, Amandina heard an illusory and ethereal voice.

"We mean you no harm.

"We're not affected by the Dream Festival."

Amandina, who was about to use her spiritual perception to lock onto the formless presence in the shadow, was taken aback.

Just then, Camus and Rhea ran to the corresponding window and called out to Amandina,

"We're here to protect you!"

"We have enough self-control."

After assessing the number and strength of the two sides, Amandina asked skeptically, "Why aren't you affected?"

As she spoke, she locked onto the formless entity in the shadow, believing it to be the strongest among the opposing group—the adventurer, Louis Berry. If she discovered anything amiss and something went awry, controlling Louis Berry first would effectively increase her chances of escape.

Lumian's body emerged from the shadows.Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

He glanced at Lugano, who had regained consciousness and stood up, and inwardly praised Amandina's keen spiritual perception. Then, he smiled at Amandina and said, "Surely you've noticed that we've been entering and exiting this house frequently over the past few days?

"What about you? How are you able to maintain your normal self-control?"

Amandina glanced at the house beside her, no longer puzzled by Lumian and the others' ability to remain lucid and rational.

She pursed her lips and said, "Robert took me on a date to Twanaku's place. I spent half the night here."

Camus's heart ached as he blurted out, "Robert knows what's special about this place?"

Amandina nodded nimbly.

"He knows the Dream Festival very well."

"What's his relationship with Twanaku?" Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Amandina pondered for a moment.

"I don't know. At the very least, I haven't noticed any romantic tension between them or any interactions."

What do you mean by romantic tension? Lumian didn't directly inquire about Mr. Robert's knowledge of the Dream Festival. Instead, he asked something else.

"Are you a Beyonder of the Evernight pathway?"

Amandina blinked and hesitantly said, "In a way…"

Upstairs, Camus inquired with concern, "Where did you obtain the potion formula and the corresponding ingredients?"

As they conversed, various movements and shouts echoed from the plantations outside the town and throughout the town.

Amandina's eyes darted around as she grinned and said, "Can I choose not to answer?""What do you think?" Lumian smiled at her.

Amandina didn't back down. She raised her head slightly and stared into Lumian's eyes without flinching.

She noticed that his smile remained unchanged, and his emerald-green yet deep eyes remained emotionless.

After more than ten seconds, Amandina averted her gaze and tilted her head slightly.

"I obtained it in this dream."

Camus, who was on the third floor, was taken aback. "You obtained it during the Dream Festival?"

He could understand obtaining a potion formula during the Dream Festival. While knowledge gains could be replicated in reality, could Beyonder ingredients used to concoct potions be brought from the dream to reality?

Could it be that after consuming a potion during the Dream Festival, one could also remain a Beyonder upon waking?

This subverted much of mysticism's common sense!

Without waiting for Amandina's confirmation, Camus thought of a possibility.

He immediately asked Amandina, "Are you a Beyonder only in this dream?"

Amandina wanted to play dumb, but after glancing at Louis Berry, who was looking at her with a faint smile, she said gloomily, "It's the same in reality, but I don't have many chances to showcase it."

How is this possible? Camus gazed down at Amandina, suspecting that the mystical knowledge he had encountered since childhood was inaccurate.

He had considered the possibility that Amandina was lying, but he wasn't willing to doubt this girl who held a special place in his heart.

At that moment, Lumian spoke calmly to Amandina, his expression unperturbed, "You haven't consumed a potion, have you?"

Amandina's expression shifted slightly. She puffed up her cheeks and muttered, "Why are you still asking me if you already know…"

Haven't consumed a potion? Camus, Rhea, and Lugano were taken

aback, but as they recalled their encounters, they gained a better understanding of Amandina's situation.

It's indeed a boon, but I'm not sure how it was accomplished… Lumian silently smiled as Camus nervously asked Amandina, "Which evil god deceived you?"

Amandina was bewildered. "Evil god? What evil god?"

Before Camus could explain, Lumian asked thoughtfully,

"How did you obtain these supernatural abilities?"

Amandina scoffed.

"Why should I tell you?"

In the next moment, she saw Louis Berry reveal a smile that inexplicably terrified her.

"It's—it's Robert," Amandina said with a shiver. "He took me into the forest outside and led me to a huge black stone. He asked me to place my hand on it."

"And then you became a Beyonder?" Lugano interrupted Amandina with surprise and curiosity, failing to abide by his duty as a servant.

Amandina shook her head.

"Then I fell asleep—in the dream. When I woke up, I had superpowers."

"Is Robert also a Beyonder? Did he obtain his powers through the same method?" Camus pressed.

Amandina let out a soft sigh and said, "He's a Beyonder, but I don't know if he obtained his abilities the same way. He brought me on a date here. Before entering this dream, he was already a Beyonder."

Black boulder… Lumian emerged from the ground floor of Hisoka's house and asked Amandina with a smile, "Where's Robert? He's not having a date with you here?"

Amandina's expression shifted between anger and amusement as she replied, "He wanted to visit his other lover before coming to me."

"He has another lover? Who?" Camus asked, suddenly angry.

Amandina's eyes darted around, and she hesitated for a moment with a strange expression.

"Padre Cali."

"Uh…" "Huh?" Camus, Rhea, and Lugano couldn't help but exclaim in shock and confusion.

Even someone as well-read as Lumian couldn't help but raise his eyebrows.

Amandina spread her hands and said, "He does like women, but he prefers men.

"He said he brought me into the dream to obtain superpowers because he felt guilty towards me. He was also grateful that I was willing to help him keep it a secret and not break off the engagement, continuing to go out with him, make out with him, protecting his image even after knowing his other side."

At that moment, Camus and Rhea remained silent, but Lumian sensed the same meaning in their eyes.

You Intisians…

Amused, Lumian asked Amandina, "And you can accept that?"

Amandina pondered seriously. "Why not? As a marriage partner, Robert excels in status, wealth, strength, looks, and skills. In the Southern Continent, there aren't many better choices. Besides, we did have a beautiful relationship. He does love me, but he also loves Padre Cali."

Amandina smiled at Lumian and said, "He also promised me more freedom."

Upon hearing Amandina's response and looking at the youthful and

beautiful girl, Camus, who was on the third floor, suddenly felt a pang of sorrow.

A certain beauty in his heart shattered.

Lumian glanced up at him and scoffed inwardly.

Hadn't he been mentally prepared to see the other side of Amandina? Amandina managed to express herself succinctly in a very self-controlled manner without demonstrating it.

Perhaps Amandina had deliberately said so much in front of Camus to prevent him from loving her out of pity.

Lumian turned to Amandina.

"In other words, Robert is currently in Saint-Sien Cathedral?"

"Yes." Amandina nodded.

Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and spoke in a commanding tone, "Then let's pay him and Padre Cali a 'visit.'"

Chapter 677 Last Year’s Dream Festival

Chapter 677 Last Year's Dream Festival

Amandina hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "You've already cornered me. What choice do I have?"

Her eyes flickered with an inexplicable excitement and curiosity as she spoke.

Her words seemed to convey a different message: I didn't want to. I had no intention of doing so. You forced me to go to Saint-Sien Cathedral! Hurry, let's go!

Are you trying to "broaden your horizons?" Lumian criticized but didn't expose her.

He pointed at Hisoka's house and said, "Before heading to Saint-Sien Cathedral, let's check this place first."

Amandina tersely acknowledged his words.

"Are you trying to find the source of its uniqueness?

"Give up. I checked during the last Dream Festival and just now, but I found nothing."

As she spoke, she followed Lumian at a brisk pace, anticipating what this seemingly formidable adventurer would discover.

Lumian reached the second floor of Hisoka's house, where Camus and Rhea were already waiting.

Surveying every corner, Lumian casually asked Amandina, "Are you familiar with Twanaku?"

Amandina wasn't surprised by the question. Since she was searching for the source of the abnormality in Twanaku's residence, she couldn't avoid gaining a better understanding of his situation. She shook her head and said,

"I'm not familiar with him. I've only encountered him once or twice.

"I was just a child when he lived in Tizamo. Most of the time, I studied at the Iris Grammar School in Port Pylos. Later, he only returned to Tizamo two or three times a year—spending a week each time."

It was evident that Amandina had secretly learned about Twanaku. After all, she had only entered the special dream because she had slept in his house. She had even remained fully lucid during the Dream Festival.

Without waiting for Lumian to ask a new question, Amandina glanced at him and added, "Twanaku returns every year for the Dream Festival.

"Last year, during the Dream Festival, when Robert and I returned from the black stone, we noticed someone approaching. We hid behind giant trees on both sides of the path and saw that it was Twanaku."

Twanaku is indeed connected to the black boulder. There are even traces of him or marks formed by extreme emotions and desires there… Lumian turned to Camus, who was watching him and Amandina stroll around the second floor, and pondered for a moment.

"Which month did Twanaku's house burn down, killing all his family members?"

Without waiting for Camus's response, Amandina exclaimed excitedly, "I know, I know!"

Yes, I'm asking you. Do you think I don't know when Twanaku

transmigrated? Lumian smiled at Amandina, signaling her to respond.

He had a clear and detailed understanding of Twanaku's matters on the surface. He had deliberately asked Camus to elicit Amandina's answer.

He wanted to see if she would lie and if she had any further information.

Amandina said smugly, "Late December. It should be a few days after the Dream Festival."

As far as they knew, the Twanaku family likely perished during the Dream Festival. Upon returning to reality, their fates began to unravel, and they were taken away by the fiery disaster. The question is, why did this house leave behind an abnormality? What happened to the Twanaku family back then, or what had they done? As the bestowed of the Inevitability domain, Lumian found a term that was very Inevitability-like to summarize the phenomenon of those who died for various reasons in the next three months after dying in the Dream Festival and returning to reality.

Reining in fate!

Of course, he couldn't be certain that death in the Dream Festival would lead to death in reality. However, judging from Amandina's expression and tone, Lumian believed that she thought the same.

After searching the second floor and finding no differences from reality, Lumian ascended the stairs to the third floor. Amandina followed closely, her excitement showing that she finally had a chance to do what a Beyonder should do.

Lumian glanced at her and casually asked, "What left an impression on you during last year's Dream Festival?"

Amandina's excited expression darkened, as if she had been reminded of something unpleasant.

She covered her mouth and nose. After a few seconds, she said, "Robert and I discovered numerous cruelly murdered individuals in the town and various plantations. Their stomachs were ripped open,

and their internal organs were removed. They wore pained expressions, as if they had been tortured to death…"

"Serial Killer?" Camus, who had been listening intently to Louis Berry and Amandina's conversation, blurted out.

This reminded him of Twanaku.

Was this Desire Apostle venting his murderous desires during the Dream Festival to show restraint normally?

So that's how it is… Lumian roughly understood how Hisoka's advancement ritual had been completed.

Following the ritual, Hisoka had killed enough people in this realistic dream and devoured their internal organs. When he returned to reality, these people died one after another. From fate's perspective, they had indeed perished because of Hisoka's murder. This fulfilled the core requirements of the ritual. Hisoka only needed to truly devour a portion of the victims' internal organs before they were buried. He should be able to complete the ritual, consume the potion, and advance to Desire Apostle.

In reality, completing a series of murders and stealing a corpse's internal organs were two entirely different matters!

What puzzled Lumian was that according to Devilology, such an advancement ritual required a three-day interval between killings. Otherwise, it was easy to lose control. The maximum interval couldn't exceed nine days, or the ritual would reset.

Hisoka had clearly used the Dream Festival to complete all the killings in one night. When he returned to reality and the primitive tribe attacked, all the "condemned" people died on the same day. It didn't drag on until the next month. Lumian believed that it was due to the April Fool's prank. They had taken advantage of the chaos to send the deceased, whom the primitive tribe couldn't eliminate in time, to hell. This could be confirmed by the statements of the peripheral members of April Fool's.

In other words, the interval of no more than nine days was satisfied,

but Lumian didn't know how Hisoka had achieved the criteria of exceeding three days.

Had he used the dream's uniqueness to avoid the three-day interval? When he killed someone in the dream, it hadn't been reflected in reality, so he wouldn't lose control so easily? As Lumian pondered Hisoka's advancement ritual, he circled the rooms on the third floor.

After searching the room where Twanaku slept, he smiled at Amandina and said, "Apart from the serial murders, what else did you encounter?"

Amandina pursed her lips and furrowed her brow. After a brief struggle, she grumbled, "If I cooperate, will I be awarded a medal when I return to reality?"

Her father, Petit, had once received the Legion of Honor medal from Intis, so he was made a knight.

Without waiting for Lumian's response, Amandina continued, "I also encountered a woman who seemed like a lunatic.

"Back then, I wanted to visit the Brieu Motel to see how the gentlemen and ladies hunting in Tizamo would react in such a dream. I was looking forward to seeing their other side.

"When I reached one of the rooms, I heard a few people singing a strange song. Then, the crazy woman appeared behind Robert and me. She remained lucid.

"She was quite beautiful, but she was very crazy. Back then, I was like a child with a new toy. I always wanted to test my abilities. I felt that with Robert's cooperation, I could easily deal with most Beyonders. One controlled, and the other attacked.

"In the end… she captured the two of us. Robert was knocked out, stripped naked, and hung from the bell tower with a bunch of mosquitoes released beside him. I-I was hung in a cesspit, descending bit by bit…"

At this point, Amandina appeared on the verge of vomiting. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

In Tizamo, other than the Brieu Motel, Saint-Sien Cathedral, the police headquarters, and a few other places, no one used a flush toilet.

Camus couldn't help but sympathize with Amandina as he imagined such a scene.

Mad Lady? Were the ones singing the peripheral members of April Fool's who participated in the Tizamo prank? Lumian circled the third-floor rooms and smiled at Amandina.

"And then?"

Amandina took a deep breath and said, "She also asked me why I stayed lucid. After I told her about Robert and Padre Cali, she happily ran to Saint-Sien Cathedral and completely forgot about me. After that, I gradually escaped my predicament."

With a nod, Lumian replied, "Let's go to Saint-Sien Cathedral now."

He planned to consider using the Mystery Prying Glasses and the Eye of Truth in Hisoka's house in the dream after obtaining more information from Padre Cali and Robert.

"Alright." Amandina tried her best to appear less eager, but she really wanted to see how Robert, her fiancé, interacted with Padre Cali.

The five of them left Hisoka's house and hurried towards Saint-Sien Cathedral. Lumian didn't use teleportation because he didn't want to waste his spirituality. He couldn't carry anyone with him in his flaming spear form either.

Fortunately, Tizamo wasn't large. They quickly followed the shadows by the roadside and returned to the intersection where the Brieu Motel stood amidst various cries.

Lumian pointed at the Brieu Motel and warned Amandina, "Don't go to the second floor of the Brieu Motel. Trust me, it'll be even more terrifying than what that crazy woman put you through."

Amandina's eyes narrowed as she said, "Okay."

The five of them turned onto another street, passing through the Bunia café, the police headquarters, and a small square before arriving outside Saint-Sien Cathedral.

Lumian wasn't in a hurry to enter. He circled to the side, pried open a stained-glass window, and peered inside.

He and Amandina, who had gathered beside him, nearly went "blind."

In the cathedral's hall, a handful of naked men knelt before the Eternal Blazing Sun's altar. They were all from the Northern Continent, including Amandina's fiancé, Robert.

Padre Cali, also naked, paced back and forth between Robert and the others with an excited expression, reciting, "He walks in the light, He sheds warmth, He illuminates the world…"

With each line, Padre Cali seemed to grow more animated, exhilarated in various ways.

Chapter 678 Absurd Orgy

Amandina scrutinized the naked preacher, Cali, from head to toe. Her gaze eventually settled on Robert, her fiancé, kneeling beside him.

The lad with brownish-yellow hair, his skin pale-white as if he had not been exposed to the sun for a long time, had abandoned his usual cold demeanor. He was equally excited, but he controlled himself and patiently waited for the padre to complete his preaching.

The other naked men grew increasingly restless, gradually stirring.

However, it was evident that they held Padre Cali in high esteem. Despite their disintegrating self-control, they refrained from directly initiating the orgy, only occasionally making small movements.

If God were watching, He would have incinerated all of them… As a believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun, Amandina subconsciously wanted to kneel to the side and bow her head in repentance. What a blasphemous scene!

Holding the open Sun Bible, Padre Cali continued to impart the teachings of the Eternal Blazing Sun to the naked men with an abnormally excited expression.

"God says, the sun shines justly upon everyone…"

During the preaching, Padre Cali's gaze frequently swept across Robert and the other purebreds of the Northern Continent, their faces, chests, and lower bodies. His expression revealed uncontrollable satisfaction, pleasure, and enjoyment.

Lumian had always felt that he was well-read. In the past, he had disrupted the Church's holy operations, but the scene before him still exceeded his imagination, leaving him momentarily dumbfounded.

Are the padres of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church among the most "outstanding" Intisians?

In an instant, information about Padre Cali and the observations of the past few days appeared in Lumian's mind.

He's a native of Port Pylos, possessing pure West Balam bloodline and a lowly native of the Southern Continent. Starting as a cathedral servant, he had seized the opportunity to change his fate. Subsequently, he had worked diligently and eventually became the padre of Tizamo Town.

He yearns for higher status and more recognition, especially from those hailing from the Northern Continent…

Such long-standing desires have distorted the desires of Padre Cali. Is he secretly targeting men from various countries in the Northern Continent, attempting to subdue them and gain his sought-after recognition?

Robert and the others are clearly relatively young. If Padre Cali had started doing such things a few years ago, they would still have been minors with immature minds. Tsk, you padres… As Lumian analyzed the current situation, he thought of his sister Aurore.

In Cordu, he had not liked entering the cathedral, attending Mass, or praying often. On the one hand, Aurore did not like it herself and set an example. On the other hand, Aurore had always been worried that Lumian, who was only twelve or thirteen years old at the beginning, would be alone with the clergyman in the cathedral. From time to time, she would use words like "Boys have to protect themselves" and "Many padres like boys."

Suppressing his sudden longing, Lumian looked at Padre Cali, who was still engrossed in his preaching. The more he preached, the more excited he became. Lumian felt that his analysis should be correct.

A lengthy holy sermon before a male orgy was clearly not something an ordinary person could come up with and put into practice. It was abnormally absurd.

However, considering that Padre Cali yearned for the Northern Continent gentlemen's recognition, especially given his identity as the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's padre, all of this became self-explanatory!

Poor Eternal Blazing Sun and Saint Sien. They have become an important prop for Padre Cali's performance art… Just as Lumian thought this, Padre Cali finally completed his "exciting" sermon.

He spread his arms and shouted, "Praise the Sun!"

Robert and the other lads, equally excited and naked, knelt on the ground, spread their arms, and sang in unison, "Praise the Sun! Praise His Grace!"

The Sun does not wish to be praised by you… His Grace… Yes, it aligns with the aspirations of Padre Cali for higher status. In this male orgy, he made all participants view him as an archbishop and preached to them… Finally, he would bestow the boon of God's holy spirit on these people? Lumian seemed to be able to imagine the ensuing scene.

Padre Cali turned around in satisfaction and solemnly placed the Bible back on the altar.

Then, he approached Robert, resembling an archbishop bestowing grace upon his believers.

The other men tangled with each other.

Camus, Rhea, and Lugano, who were observing the cathedral through another stained-glass window, were equally stunned.

In particular, Rhea felt as if her eyes, brain, and soul had been tainted despite all her tragic experiences.

Upon regaining her senses, Rhea's anger surged.

Beside her, Lumian recalled a detail. He lowered his voice and asked Amandina, "When did Robert become lovers with Padre Cali?"

Amandina retracted her corrupted gaze and pondered for a moment.

"More than a year after Padre Cali arrived in Tizamo, about three years ago."

Lumian frowned and asked, "Did they become lovers in reality, or during the Dream Festival?"

"Of course in reality," Amandina replied without hesitation.

Something's off… Padre Cali had been in Tizamo for over a year. He should have mellowed, turned restrained, and been devoid of excessive desires and emotions. Why was he still targeting Robert and the other lads? From the looks of it, there is something abnormal about Padre Cali, and this abnormality should have been related to the source of the Dream Festival. That is why he had declared its beginning… Just as Lumian thought this, he saw Rhea raise her bow angrily and aim it at the cathedral, where the scene was becoming increasingly unbearable and foul.

Almost simultaneously, the energetic Padre Cali turned his body.

Suddenly, Lumian, with one hand in his pocket, saw the native padre with dark brown skin, sunken eyes, and thin black hair. His naked figure was reflected in Lumian's eyes.

He felt a chilling aura emanating from Padre Cali's body, attempting to completely freeze and replace his spirit.

Wraith Possession!

So, Padre Cali possesses the ability to transform into a Wraith. It is no wonder that when I investigated his weaknesses, I realized that it only existed deep within the body, within the spirit… Heh heh, a Wraith preaching in the Eternal Blazing Sun cathedral and under the sunlight… Who would have thought such a thing would happen? Padre Cali's Wraith powers definitely had not come from drinking potions. They would definitely have been discovered and purified… A boon? Lumian came to a realization.

Relying on the strength of his Sequence 5 Spirit Body, Lumian struggled to wrestle control of his body from Padre Cali.

He was not in a hurry to activate the Blood Emperor's aura brand.

Instead, he looked at Amandina and said with difficulty, word by word, "Let… me… and… Cali… enter a dream…"

Lumian knew that Amandina's ability to forcefully pull people into a dream could only be used one-on-one. However, Padre Cali was currently attached to him and entangled with his Spirit Body. Perhaps she could treat them as a unit.

As for whether Wraiths dreamed, Lumian did not know for now. After all, he still had a backup plan.

With a resounding crash, Rhea's arrow shattered the stained-The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

lightsNovɛl ƈom glass window, sending shards crashing to the ground.

The arrow, entwined with silver-white lightning, crossed a distance of more than ten meters, pierced the location where Padre Cali had been, and nailed it to the wooden table with the candlestick.

Amidst crackling lightning, the long wooden table shattered and collapsed to the ground, sending burning candles tumbling in all directions.

Robert, clearly taken aback by the sudden departure of Padre Cali, reacted. He opened his mouth and uttered strange words in a strange language.

Ooo! As if a cold wind from the Feysac Empire's extreme north blew, a blurry, strange, and inhuman figure materialized out of thin air and burrowed into Robert's body.

A layer of armor-like ice materialized on Robert's body, and a colossal, sharp, and crystalline frost scythe materialized in his hand.

Clutching the massive scythe, Robert sprinted toward Rhea, Camus, and the others.

Wherever he passed, the ground froze, and icicles materialized on the walls.

…

On the fourth floor of the Brieu Motel, in a room near the intersection, two figures emerged from behind the curtains as Lumian and his companions made their way to the street where Saint-Sien Cathedral stood.

One of them was a man with distinct Northern Continent features. His dark-green eyes stood out against his dark gray formal suit and black silk top hat. The other was a woman with delicate skin, exquisite facial features, and deep blue eyes. She wore a light-colored dress that allowed for easy movement and a feathered hat adorned with pearls. They were the couple Lumian had seen moving into the Brieu Motel late at night.

They had arrived in Tizamo a mere ten minutes before the official Dream Festival began.

At that moment, the man and woman's eyes were clear, devoid of any excessive emotions or actions.

"The patrol team's sudden arrival in Tizamo is indeed because they discovered the problem here," the beautiful woman said in a deep voice, gazing out the window at the street below. "From the looks of it, they've also found a way to remain lucid and rational in this special dream."

The man's expression was cold as he nodded slightly and said, "But they don't know much yet. They're moving in the wrong direction."

"Let's get moving." The woman in the feathered hat led the way to the door.

The two of them descended the stairs swiftly, one after the other.

As they passed the second floor, the woman in the light-

colored dress suddenly stopped and whispered, "Do you hear something strange?"

The man in the half top hat listened intently for a few seconds before hearing faint chewing sounds coming from a room deep on the

second floor.

The sound persisted without pause.

Chapter 679 Spirit Medium

Seeing Robert, clad in ice armor and dragging a frost scythe, sprinting towards the stained-glass window facing him, Rhea, and Lugano, Camus immediately drew his custom-made revolver and aimed it ahead.

At that moment, his feet turned cold, and his body froze, causing his joints to become sluggish and his wrists to tremble.

From the corner of his eye, Camus observed that although Robert hadn't truly approached, the frost on the ground and the icicles on the wall had already reached him.

Within a radius of ten to twenty meters, the chill intensified, resembling the extreme north.

With a swoosh, Rhea shot another arrow entwined with silver lightning.

Robert didn't dodge or evade. Exerting strength in his arms, he swung the frosty scythe forward.

Clang!

The scythe knocked away the arrow, leaving behind a small amount of lightning that raced towards Robert's body.

Amidst the sizzling sounds, Robert felt numb for a moment before continuing to sprint towards Rhea and the others.

Camus was taken aback.

He wasn't surprised that Robert could control the frost scythe so effortlessly and create a considerable frozen domain. Instead, he was surprised that Robert had rushed up to him and was about to enter a

five-meter range.

Doesn't he know about my Psychic Piercing ability?

Doesn't he realize that Psychic Piercing's effective range is five meters?

Could it be that he has never encountered or fought a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Arbiter pathway?

That's true, Camus thought. No one in the patrol team or the Admiral Guard knows that Robert and Miss Amandina are Beyonders. After obtaining Beyonder powers during the Dream Festival, they probably don't use them much in the outside world. They can only unleash their full potential during the annual Dream Festival. There aren't many Beyonder enemies to choose from...

As these thoughts raced through Camus's mind, he seized the opportunity. As Robert stepped within five meters, his eyes lit up with brilliant lightning.

Psychic Piercing!

Two bolts of lightning shot out and pierced Robert's head.

Robert let out a blood-curdling scream and tumbled forward, writhing in pain.

He had tossed the frost scythe aside.

Rhea's arrow was once again nocked to the bowstring, instinctively following Robert's roll. Fury blazed in her eyes, erupting from within her body, and her muscles bulged with the surge of power.

Raging Blow.

This was the Raging Blow Rhea had accumulated through her anger.

It came from Sequence 8 Folk of Rage from the Sailor pathway. By releasing accumulated anger, her attack was greatly enhanced.

Rhea was currently at this Sequence, but the hunting bow in her

hand was a powerful Beyonder item. It was a formidable weapon she had spent all her savings on before arriving in Tizamo. It was called Thunderclap Explosion and could be used for two years.

Soon, Robert ceased his tumbling, but he couldn't shake off the intense pain caused by Psychic Piercing. He froze in place for a moment.

Without hesitation, Rhea watched the arrow, engulfed in dazzling lightning, and released her grip on the bowstring.

The arrow shot out, but the lightning on it strangely split into two. One continued to ensnare the arrow, while the other darted to the right.

Wh-- Rhea's pupils dilated, unable to comprehend why such a thing had occurred.

Instinctively, she turned her head and followed the separated bolt of lightning to its destination.

Then, she saw Louis Berry leaning against the window, his eyes tightly shut as he slid down.

A few seconds ago, upon hearing Louis Berry's words, Amandina had locked onto him with a mix of confusion and excitement.

Since you said it, I won't stand on ceremony!

In her spiritual perception, Louis Berry's soul was intertwined with the sinister soul, fiercely resisting while using various parts of his body as a battlefield. However, the owner of the body was clearly at a disadvantage.

Amandina couldn't separate them under such circumstances.

She vaguely understood why Louis Berry had instructed her to lock onto the other party's head and entangled soul with her spirituality.

Lumian, who had Amandina use her abilities, stammered as he struggled to move his left hand in his pocket.

His left hand wasn't in his trouser pocket or shirt pocket, but in his Traveler's Bag.

After arriving outside Saint-Sien Cathedral and prying open the stained-glass window, Lumian had inserted his left hand into his Traveler's Bag, ready to retrieve a suitable mystical item at any moment.

He was preparing for the impending battle.

If this wasn't a dream, he would likely have his hand in his left shirt pocket--where Mr. K's finger was.

Before being fully controlled by the Wraith, Lumian relied on the strength of a Reaper's soul to struggle and retrieve a brooch from his Traveler's Bag.

It was the grayish-white, lightning-shaped brooch known as Fury of the Sea!

Lumian gripped the brooch tightly and observed Amandina leaning against the wall. She clenched her fists and closed her eyes.

His thoughts suddenly blurred, and his eyelids grew heavy.

He fell asleep and slowly slid down the wall. Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Padre Cali fell silent in his body.

The Wraith appeared to be asleep as well. It was unknown if he would fall asleep on his own or if he was affected by the negative effect of now possessing a body.

Amandina opened her eyes and was delighted to see this. She wanted to praise herself.

With a crackling sound, the bolt of lightning detached from Rhea's arrow struck Lumian, transforming into numerous tiny electric serpents that slithered around him.

This was the downside of the Fury of the Sea brooch!

Even if Lumian only carried it, there was a high chance of being struck by lightning when he went out in the rain. And if he wore it without attacking anyone else, the likelihood of encountering such a thing would significantly increase.

Lumian believed that since the Fury of the Sea brooch had a chance of attracting lightning strikes on a rainy day, it held a special allure for lightning.

In such a situation, although it wasn't raining, what if there was another source of lightning nearby? What would happen?

There was a high chance that it would attract a portion of someone else's lightning!

Stimulated by the pain of the electric shock, Lumian, no longer affected by the Nightmare ability, snapped out of his dream. He regained his senses, but his body remained numb.

He experienced this, as did Padre Cali.

As soon as the Wraith regained consciousness, he instinctively detached from Lumian's body to distance himself from the harm of the electric current.

His face materialized on the nearest pane of glass, his form indistinct.

Seizing the moment, Lumian donned the grayish-white, lightning-shaped brooch and retrieved his revolver from his Traveler's Bag.

He raised his right hand, aiming at Wraith Cali, who remained in a daze. The Wraith's various colors reflected in Lumian's determined eyes.

The pallor rapidly expanded in Lumian's line of sight.

Bang!

Lumian calmly pulled the trigger, firing a yellow bullet.

As he did so, silver-white lightning flickered on the Fury of the Sea brooch, instantly entering the bullet and wrapping around its surface.

This was one of the brooch's abilities. It could grant the wearer an Electric Shock effect with every strike!

After temporarily losing the Pride Armor, this had become one of Lumian's most effective methods against soul-type creatures.

The yellow bullet, engulfed in silver-white lightning, struck the stained glass, shattering it and sending tiny electric currents in all directions.

However, it missed Padre Cali. As Lumian pulled the trigger, the Wraith vanished from the glass and instantly leaped onto the glass-like surface of the crystal chandelier high above the cathedral.

Mirror Blink!

On the other side, Rhea's arrow struck Robert with precision, emitting a resounding bang like a heavy object colliding.

Crack!

The ice armor covering Robert's body instantly cracked, shattering into fragments that fell to the ground.

Under the assault of crackling electric serpents, the blurry shadow attached to his body broke free and vanished into the void.

With the ice armor shielding him from most of the damage, Robert remained relatively unaffected. However, his chest tightened, and his body briefly went numb.

At that moment, he regretted not wearing clothes. The various ingredients needed for his spirit channeling were hidden in his clothes, such as Full Moon Essence Oil or Corpse Incense Medication.

There were very few spirits that could allow him to communicate safely without the use of materials. The one just now was the most powerful.

Seeing Camus's special revolver and Rhea's arrows aimed at him, Robert grew anxious. He thought of a spirit channeling method that could be completed under such circumstances.

Frowning and fearing the pain, he bit the tip of his tongue.

Pfft!

He spat out the blood from the tip of his tongue mixed with his saliva, emitting a strange sound from his throat.

A pair of weathered, stone-like hands reached out from beneath the cathedral's stone bricks, seized Robert's body, and pulled him underground.

At some point in time, the ground had softened like a swamp, and the blood in the air abruptly vanished.

Camus's bullets and Rhea's arrows arrived one after another, but they only caused sparks on the stone bricks on the ground.

Spirit Medium? Camus used this opportunity to revise his judgment of Robert's pathway and Sequence.

He's actually not from the same pathway as Miss Amandina?

Hadn't he also obtained his superpowers from the black boulder?

Camus hastily took a few steps back, retrieved a cartridge bag, and began reloading the revolver.

As a member of Matani's authorities, obtaining Beyonder bullets with different effects was relatively easy, even though the patrol team wasn't wealthy or had much accumulation. After all, there was the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, the God of Steam and Machinery Church, the Church of Earth Mother, and numerous adventurers coming and going. Furthermore, the patrol team needed to be vigilant against certain branches of the Rose School of Thought and the Numinous Episcopate. They had to make targeted preparations.

Camus swiftly inserted the golden Purifying Bullets into the revolver's cylinder and snapped it shut.

At that moment, Padre Cali, who had leaped onto another stained glass window, reappeared.

He opened his mouth and emitted a piercing shriek that harmed one's eardrums and Spirit Body.

"Ah!"

Wraith Shriek!

Chapter 680 Combat Experience

Camus, who had just loaded the Purifying Bullets into his revolver cylinder, heard a sharp sound of static in his mind.

Before his eyes, the world seemed to separate from him, a chunk of transparent glass forming a barrier between him and reality. Under the Wraith's Shriek, cracks appeared on the glass, extending into the Spirit Body.

A faint shattering sound reverberated in the ears of Lumian, Rhea, Lugano, Amandina, Robert, who had just crawled out of the ground near the altar, and the other naked men frantically dodging. It brought sharp pain to their eardrums, blood to their noses, and agony from the depths of their souls.

Almost everyone froze in place, like fragile porcelain caught in an invisible storm.

The naked men, who appeared ordinary, fainted without a sound. Blood seeped from their eyes, nostrils, mouths, ears, and skin. However, Lumian, who had advanced to Sequence 5 Reaper, suffered the least damage and recovered the fastest.

Thin ice crystal arrows shot at him, their arrowheads flickering with a cold light.

In an instant, Lumian made a decision.

He didn't transform into a shadow creature or enter the shadows to dodge the damage, nor did he attempt to duck.

Instead, blazing white flames ignited over his body.

He transformed into a burning-white spear and hurled himself towards the stained-glass window closer to the door, facing the ice

crystal arrows.

Padre Cali, with his dark brown skin and sinister expression, stood there.

Amandina was the second to recover from the Wraith's Shriek. She witnessed the majestic blazing-white flaming spear collide with the ice crystal arrows hurtling towards them.

Silently, a portion of the ice crystal arrows facing the blazing-white flaming spear evaporated into sizzling white gas, while the surrounding ones quickly melted and turned to steam.

White mist caused by water steam filled the air. Although the blazing white flaming spear had dimmed significantly and stopped burning violently, it still pierced through and headed straight for the stained glass that revealed Padre Cali's figure.

Similar ice crystal arrows pierced through the white mist, striking Amandina, Camus, Rhea, and Lugano. However, they either melted or shrunk significantly, reducing their speed.

Amandina and Camus, who had just escaped the Wraith's Shriek, easily dodged. Although Rhea and Lugano couldn't react in time and were hit by the ice crystal arrows, they only felt a slight pain, as if a child had hit them with a snowball. It was a little painful, but mostly wet and cold.

They seized the opportunity to snap out of their daze, almost at the same time as Robert at the altar.

Crack!

The blazing-white flaming spear struck the stained glass, shattering it into countless pieces. However, Padre Cali had already leaped onto the window that Lumian had pried open, narrowly escaping the attack.

As the flames of the burning white spear dissipated, Lumian's figure emerged from the fading light.

Without hesitation, he ignited white flames once more, transforming

into a majestic spear that shot towards the window where Padre Cali had appeared, determined to pursue his enemy.

He deliberately refrained from teleporting and repeatedly transformed into a flaming spear, hoping to lull Padre Cali into overlooking such possibilities. Then, at a critical moment, he would unexpectedly appear beside him and use the Spell of Harrumph, catching the Wraith off guard.

Otherwise, it would be challenging to catch a Wraith that could constantly jump through mirrored objects, using them as portals to evade capture.

Furthermore, Lumian knew that Wraiths could be considered spirit world creatures to a certain extent. They could also use the spirit world to complete teleportation, although they couldn't compare to spirit world creatures specialized in this area. Nevertheless, it wasn't an ability to be underestimated.

As the fireball spear hurtled toward the window Lumian had pried open, Robert rolled to the side of the altar where their clothes were, intending to retrieve the ingredients used for spirit channeling.

Swoosh!

An arrow pierced the stone bricks in front of him, forcing him to change the direction of his roll at the last moment, narrowly avoiding the projectile.

As soon as Rhea regained her composure, she aimed at Robert and launched an attack.

Both she and Camus believed that Louis Berry could handle Padre Cali on his own, so their mission was to restrain Robert and capture this key figure, preventing him from interfering in the battle.

As a gunshot rang out, Padre Cali's figure vanished from the stained-glass window, leaving no trace of his presence.

The eyes of Amandina, who was nearby, reflected the image of the naked fallen padre.

Amandina wanted to resist, but her body quickly turned cold, gradually defying her will as an unknown force took control of her actions.

Amidst the sloshing sounds, Lumian's blazing-white flaming spear pierced through the stained glass and landed outside the cathedral, three to four meters away from Amandina, its heat radiating in the cool night air.

As the flames dissipated, Lumian appeared, clad in a golden straw hat, a white shirt, and a black vest.

At that moment, Amandina's hands had already "involuntarily" risen. The corners of her beautiful face curled into a sinister and smug smile.

Come on!

Attack me!

Amandina would be the first to be injured and die. If the body can't protect me, I can still jump and shift positions in time!

Padre Cali was wary of Amandina's ability to forcefully pull people into dreams, a power that could easily turn the tide of battle. This time, he chose to possess her instead of Louis Berry, an enemy at a higher Sequence, hoping to use her as a shield against Lumian's attacks.

As Padre Cali manipulated Amandina's body with a sinister and smug smile, he saw Louis Berry's lips curve into a radiant smile.

As a Wraith, Padre Cali had a strong spiritual premonition, and he suddenly sensed extreme danger.

"Ha!"

A pale-yellow light burst forth from Lumian's laughter and landed on Amandina, who stood three to four meters away, enveloping her spirit and Padre Cali, who couldn't use Mirror Blink in time.

Lumian honestly found it a pleasant surprise.

You know about Nightmare's abilities, but don't you know how to guard against the Spell of Harrumph?

Oh, you really don't. You don't know this ability, nor do you know that I'm capable of it.

However, as a Wraith, you can continuously "mirror- jump," yet you insist on attaching yourself to one of my teammates and remain within a few meters of me. What kind of belief is this?

Don't you have enough combat experience?

Even if you didn't know the Spell of Harrumph, you have to guard against abilities like Psychic Piercing!

Oh, you think Camus is far away, so there's no need to worry about it. As a Sequence 5 of the Hunter pathway, how would I know this? Are you hoping to use me to quickly kill Amandina?

Haven't you considered the existence of mystical items?

My original plan was if I failed to finish you off after using teleportation to deliver the Spell of Harrumph and Cull, I would feign a strategic retreat and find a small space to set up the Bottle of Fiction. Then, when you caught up, I would fight you in a cramped and sealed space, just like how I dealt with Hisoka back then. To my surprise, you delivered yourself to me…

As Lumian criticized wildly, Padre Cali and Amandina fainted and collapsed to the ground.

Had it been during his battle with Hisoka some time ago, Lumian would have hastened to follow through with the subsequent steps. This was because the Spell of Harrumph couldn't render a Sequence 5 enemy unconscious for long. However, now that he had advanced to Sequence 5, his Spell of Harrumph had become significantly stronger. The time he could control a Wraith had increased, although it was still limited to a few seconds.

Lumian retrieved a few special bullets from his Traveler's Bag. They had been purchased through Camus from the patrol team.

Two Exorcism and two Purification Bullets, both golden in color.

Lumian swiftly loaded the four bullets into the cylinder of his revolver and aimed at Amandina, who lay on the ground.

Catching sight of this from the corner of his eye, Camus jumped in fright and shouted, "What are you doing?"

"Saving her," Lumian replied calmly.

Then, he pulled the trigger.

Bang!Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The golden Exorcism Bullet struck Amandina's shoulder, causing her to bleed and emit a golden sunlight.

Amandina woke up in pain, and the apparition of Padre Cali detached from her body, his face warped under the "sunlight."

Originally, with the strength of the Exorcism Bullets, it would have been impossible to expel a Wraith from the victim's body in an instant. However, Padre Cali was unconscious and unable to react effectively.

Lumian raised his gun, his eyes reflecting the color on the surface of Padre Cali's Spirit Body. He locked onto the pallor that had become evident.

Bang!

A golden Purifying Bullet, imbued with Cull's power, struck the Wraith's forehead.

The apparition of Padre Cali froze as he "saw" the bullet shatter on its own, transforming into balls of golden holy flames that spread throughout his body, igniting dust and his soul.

The bright, sun-like golden flames swiftly enveloped Padre Cali, causing him to let out a tragic scream.

This wasn't a Wraith Shriek, but it still made everyone's heads and

ears hurt.

Lumian endured these sensations and calmly said to Amandina,

"Drag him into a dream and inquire about the source of the Dream Festival."

Padre Cali had already been subjected to Cull and was severely weakened, teetering on the brink of true death. Amandina could effectively restrain him!

"But…" Amandina's shoulder and head ached, but she didn't dare complain when she saw Louis Berry's cold and calm expression.

Lumian turned to Lugano and said, "Treat her gunshot wound."

"Alright." Lugano winced from the pain in his eardrums, but he still rushed over.

At that moment, Padre Cali, purified by the Cull, instinctively withdrew from his Wraith state and transformed back into a human to escape the ongoing damage.

Seeing this, Amandina took a deep breath, clenched her fists, and closed her eyes.

She and Padre Cali entered the dream at the same time.

Chapter 681 Tomb

Robert rejoiced that the two patrol team members dealing with him had also been affected by Padre Cali's scream.

He didn't know what had happened to his lover, nor could he confirm it. Enduring the swelling in his head and the pain in his eardrums, he rushed towards the altar.

Pfft!

Rhea's arrow struck the pile of clothes, but that wasn't Robert's destination—it was quite a distance away.

After landing on the ground, he rolled and hid behind the altar.

Rhea drew the bowstring again, but she didn't release the arrow immediately.

Robert's body was completely blocked by the altar, making it impossible for her to aim. As a devout believer of the Eternal Blazing Sun, it was also impossible for her to use the hunting bow's unique abilities together with Raging Blow to directly shatter the altar.nove(l)bi(n.)com

Witnessing this, Camus, knowing his revolver's power was insufficient, leaped over the shattered stained-glass window and sprinted towards the altar.

After a brief moment of hesitation, Rhea raised her hunting bow and shot an arrow wrapped in lightning into the air.

The arrow flew high into the air before swiftly descending, bypassing the altar's obstruction and landing behind it.

Since she hadn't been able to aim properly, the arrow grazed Robert's

body and struck a crevice between two stone slabs. A sizzling electric current dissipated, creeping over Robert's body and temporarily paralyzing him.

After breaking free, Robert abandoned the idea of retrieving his spirit channeling ingredients. He had no intention of saving his lover, Padre Cali.

He planned to bite the tip of his tongue again and complete the spirit channeling. With the special ability of the natural spirit, he could escape back to his plantation, where he still had plenty of spirituality-rich ingredients for backup.

At that moment, from the corner of his eye, he caught sight of Camus's light-colored pants and leather shoes with holes. He felt a whip formed by electric currents appear in his mind.

The whip struck his soul,

and Robert, crouched behind the altar, felt his knees buckle, and he collapsed, trembling as extreme numbness and pain surged through him simultaneously.

Whip of Pain!

Interrogator's Whip of Pain!

Camus rushed to Robert's side, leaned down, and delivered a left hook—one that more or less bore a personal grudge.

Bang!

Camus, skilled in interrogation techniques, inflicted pain on Robert without going overboard. Robert fainted, yet suffered no substantial harm.

After restraining Robert, Camus glanced at the naked man and selected nearby clothes to cover his private parts.

He then picked up Robert and returned to where Lumian and the others were.

At that moment, Lugano had already retrieved the bullet that had struck Amandina's shoulder, allowing the wound to contract and heal.

…

Padre Cali was dreaming of the interior of Saint-Sien Cathedral.

Dressed in a white robe with golden threads, he knelt before the altar, muttering with a pained expression, as if repenting.

Amandina, clad in a black hunting suit, approached Padre Cali down the aisle between the pews. Remembering Louis Berry's instructions, she asked, "What's the origin of this special dream?"

Padre Cali looked up, his face contorted as he replied, "That… that strange tomb."

"Tomb?" Amandina suspected the Dream Festival she had just attended was a sham.

What tomb?

Suddenly, a flash of inspiration flickered.

"That colossal, black boulder?"

It's actually a tomb?

Padre Cali nodded.

"Yes."

It's really a tomb… Intrigued, Amandina asked proactively, "Whose tomb is that? Why is it so special?"

Padre Cali remained kneeling, shaking his head.

"I don't know. Even the gravekeepers don't know. They only know their mission is to guard that strange ancient tomb."

"Gravekeepers? Who are they?" The more Amandina asked, the more she felt she didn't know about the Dream Festival.

Padre Cali looked up at Amandina and said, "The elders of the forest tribe."

"I see…" Amandina's mind raced with questions. She picked one and asked, "Did you take Robert to Twanaku's house to sleep and allow him to maintain his lucidity? Then, you took him to the ancient tomb where he obtained superpowers?"

"Yes." Padre Cali lowered his head, facing the altar, his voice laced with pain. "I'm sinful."

Just as I thought… Amandina inquired further, "How did you know you could obtain superpowers there? And how did you maintain lucidity? You've only been in Tizamo for about five years, and I grew up here," Amandina inquired further.

Blood vessels bulged from Padre Cali's neck. "Twanaku, Twanaku, bewitched me."

"He used his body to tempt you?" Amandina suddenly felt a surge of excitement.

Padre Cali was taken aback.

"He saw through my desire for status and recognition and gradually demonstrated his abilities. He also told me there was a way for me to quickly and easily obtain strength. And with great strength, I could do more for the Church and receive more rewards and recognition… That demon!"

Amandina asked in disappointment, "You were bewitched just like that?"

Padre Cali nodded slowly. "That's right. Twanaku needed someone to help him monitor the changes in the dream and host the Dream Festival after he left Tizamo. First, he got me to sleep at his house. Then, during the Dream Festival, he took me to that strange ancient tomb."

"Did you also obtain superpowers by touching that tomb?" Amandina asked casually.

Padre Cali shook his head again. "No, Twanaku opened a crack in the tomb and let me reach in…"

"What did you touch?" Amandina couldn't help but urge upon seeing Padre Cali's pause.

"I touched a hand—a cold hand without temperature. Then, I fainted. When I woke up, I had superpowers. I did it three more times during the subsequent Dream Festivals, eventually becoming a Wraith." Padre Cali recalled the situation, his face filled with uncontrollable fear—both of the cold hand and the ease with which he had obtained superpowers.

"The hand of the corpse in the tomb?" Amandina quickly reviewed what Padre Cali had said and thought of a problem. "Didn't you say there were gravekeepers? Why weren't we stopped when Robert and I went?"

Padre Cali's voice deepened.

"People who have lived in Tizamo for a long time often have a projection formed by suppressed emotions and desires in this special dream. They usually hide in the chaotic area brought by the tomb, at the edge of the dream. They watch over the ancient tomb with the gravekeepers to protect it from others.

"When the Dream Festival begins, these projections will return to their true forms, forming complete Dream Festival participants who can no longer suppress their emotions and desires. As for the gravekeepers, it's unknown where they go."

Strange… Amandina was puzzled by the gravekeepers' whereabouts. She was a little worried.

After a moment of contemplation, she asked with concern, "Do I have a projection of emotions and desires in this dream?"

Padre Cali shook his head.

"No. You don't spend enough time in Tizamo every year. Even for those who originally formed a dream projection, once they leave this place long enough and stop suppressing themselves, the

corresponding projection will gradually fade until it disappears.

"Those who can remain lucid in this dream will have their corresponding projections gradually dissipate over time. details."

"However, this lucidity isn't absolute. After the Dream Festival begins, everyone will have a tendency to flaunt their emotions and desires—including those who maintain their lucidity. However, they won't completely lose control like those who have fused with their dream self. They can continue restraining themselves like normal, their desires revealed in some details."

Amandina recalled her performance during the two Dream Festivals and revealed a look of enlightenment.

Initially, she believed that because this place was a dream, as long as no one died, it was equivalent to a game. That was why she appeared more self-centered and unrestrained than in reality. She didn't expect this to come from the effect of the Dream Festival.

Thankfully, I've always had self-control… Amandina had ticked off most of the questions that Louis Berry wanted clarified, leaving only those that the Padre Cali himself wasn't aware of. Thus, she changed the subject.

"You've already become a Wraith, yet you still dare to preach and host Mass…

"Aren't you concerned that God might notice you and unleash His wrath upon you, purifying you into ashes?"

Being in the Southern Continent, Amandina knew the power of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church better than many gentlemen and ladies in Trier. She had no doubts about the existence of God.

Moreover, over the past year, she had been diligently obtaining mysticism knowledge from Robert and the various sources she could come into contact with. She knew that the Rose School of Thought, the key characters of various terrifying rumors, was renowned for its numerous Wraiths, and Wraiths were most afraid of sunlight that came with purification.

Padre Cali sighed and said, "I had such concerns, but Twanaku told me he had a way to help me hide a Wraith's power. Unless God watches this place personally, I won't be discovered."

"What is it?" Amandina asked curiously.

Padre Cali replied truthfully, "After touching the corpse in the tomb and obtaining superpowers, don't rush to leave. Touch the tomb itself again, the black boulder.

"This concealed all my superpowers. The effect will last for more than a year."

That's possible? What would happen if I touched the black boulder and then touched the corpse's hand? Amandina pondered for a moment and asked a question of personal concern, "How did you entice Robert? Why did he become your lover?"

Amandina sized him up but couldn't find anything about Padre Cali that attracted Robert, other than his strength.

Could love truly be blind?

Padre Cali fell silent for a moment before saying, "I ignited his desires, dismantling his self-control."

"You've never displayed such abilities…" Amandina hadn't noticed Padre Cali arousing any desires in the battle before.

Padre Cali's voice was once again tinged with pain. "I'm sinful. I'm praying to the Demon Twanaku mentioned…"

Before Padre Cali could finish, the entire dream suddenly trembled and collapsed inch by inch.

Chapter 682 Cull

Unable to control the dream anymore, Amandina opened her eyes and woke up.

Beside her, Padre Cali snapped out of his slumber, his human form once again becoming hazy and indistinct.

Instinctively, he transformed into a Wraith, as if losing all restraint. Stiff black hair even sprouted from his body.

Reflected in Padre Cali's eyes was Lumian's figure—Louis Berry, with his black hair, green eyes, and golden straw hat, holding a revolver aimed directly at the Wraith's forehead.

Bang!

Lumian smiled and pulled the trigger, a golden Purifying Bullet exploding from the muzzle and instantly heading straight for the pallor in the Wraith's forehead.

Cull!

Simultaneously, Lumian waved his empty left hand at Padre Cali, as if to say, "Bye, you won't be missed!"

The Purifying Bullet exploded, and golden flames instantly ignited the ethereal Padre Cali's entire body.

Padre Cali couldn't even scream, his agonized thoughts manifesting as an invisible gale sweeping outwards.

Lumian endured the backlash, watching with a grim smile as the enemy was consumed by the purifying flames, reduced to scattered ashes.

Lumian felt his Reaper potion digest a little more.

Using Cull to reap a powerful foe's life was a core principle for Reapers—the higher their Sequence and strength, the more potent the acting effect.

With the addition of Cull, the relatively ordinary and common Purifying Bullet ended the life of a Wraith with just two strikes.

Lumian found it inexplicably amusing to witness the true incineration of the Padre Cali.

Why do I always encounter fallen Eternal Blazing Sun padres and cleanse and purify them?

Is this repayment for my past faith?

As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian glanced at the risen Amandina and asked with a smile, "What did he say?"

Amandina's first reaction was to check the wound on her shoulder. She exclaimed, "It's completely healed, not a trace left?"

If it weren't for her torn clothes and sore shoulder, she would have imagined herself to be uninjured.

Miss Amandina, don't act as if you've never seen the world. Although you're a believer in the Eternal Blazing Sun and won't seek treatment from the clergyman of the Church of Earth Mother unless you are particularly ill, there are many Feynapotterians in Matani. Haven't you come into close contact with them? Lumian criticized her and looked at Amandina coldly without responding.

Lugano, on the other hand, saw the beautiful girl's reaction and explained smugly,

"That's the power of a Doctor from the Planter pathway."

Amandina expressed her gratitude, then recounted her conversation with Padre Cali while massaging her shoulder to relieve the lingering sourness.

At the end, she spat at the spot where his ashes had fallen.

"He became the Demon's mouthpiece, using its power to violate Robert and the others.

"Luckily, he preferred men. Otherwise…"

Recalling how she had frequented Saint-Sien Cathedral over the years and had been a girl with limited knowledge, far from adulthood, Amandina shuddered inwardly. She sympathized with Robert and the others, but she also felt fortunate.

Lumian had another question in mind.

Could Hisoka's Wraith abilities also originate from the Dream Festival and the strange black tomb, rather than a direct boon from the Mother Tree of Desire?

That would explain a few things better.

As far as Lumian knew, when evil god believers prayed for boons, they needed to perform a ritual and offer sacrifices. The higher the level of the boon they prayed for, the higher the requirement for the sacrifice, and the larger the ritual.

As a member of Port Pylos's patrol team, Hisoka could cover up one or two sacrifices, but it was difficult to suppress all the sacrificial incidents. It was just like how Hisoka had only completed one serial murder case in Port Pylos.

Previously, Lumian had believed that he had relied on Mad Lady's help to complete the sacrificial rituals in the Southern Continent's even more chaotic places. But now, it seemed that there was no need for such trouble. He just needed to touch the cold corpse once a year during the Dream Festival.

Hisoka and Padre Cali have participated in at least five Dream Festivals and have become Wraiths for some time, but they haven't made a breakthrough since then… Is this because the cold corpse can only bestow a boon up to Sequence 5? Did Hisoka obtain the large amount of gold and something from the Nois family's Demon to wait for this year's Dream Festival to complete the corresponding matters and obtain a higher boon? Lumian turned to Robert, who had been

dragged nearby, and asked for confirmation, "He's a Spirit Medium?"

"Yes," Amandina replied. "Padre Cali said Robert gained powers by touching that black boulder too. But why am I a Nightmare while he's a Spirit Medium?"

Higher-level, composite power… Just as the Great Mother can bestow three different powers, Apothecary, Planter, and Villain, respectively… Lumian wasn't surprised by this situation at all. Camus and Rhea were as puzzled as Amandina.

Lumian couldn't be bothered to explain this complicated and high-level problem. He turned around and said to Rhea,

"Your dream projection should still exist. Be careful from now on. The question now is whether the death of your dream projection will affect your life."

Rhea nodded thoughtfully.

Lumian shifted his gaze back to Robert, recalling the Demon that had assisted Padre Cali.

That should be the Nois family member who established a connection with Hisoka…

Demons don't do 'good deeds' for no reason. Whether it's establishing a connection with Hisoka or responding to the Padre Cali's ritual, it must have its own motives. Although witnessing a padre of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church gradually degenerate should be commendable and interesting for a Demon, this isn't a sufficient reason for its close involvement…

What does it want during the Dream Festival?

The cold corpse in the black ancient tomb can bestow a Prisoner pathway boon, and Prisoners are adjacent to the Criminal pathway which Demons are part of…

Lumian roughly grasped the situation and muttered to himself, "The crucial question now is, where do the gravekeepers go during the Dream Festival? Why aren't they protecting the black ancient tomb

anymore?"

No one could answer him.

Seeing him staring at the unconscious Robert, Amandina hesitated before saying,

"Can you let him go? He's a victim too, don't kill him."

Am I a homicidal maniac in your eyes? Lumian replied with amusement, "As long as Robert doesn't seek revenge and try to kill me to avenge Padre Cali, I won't waste my spirituality on him."

Phew… Amandina sighed in relief, then muttered while rubbing her shoulder,

"You're so cold-blooded. I thought you'd kill me to deal with the padre. That shot hurt, you know!"

Lumian scoffed.

"Between being possessed by a Wraith until you die and getting shot, which would you have preferred?"

"I don't care what you think or the sacrifices—I made the right choice to save you, didn't I?"

Amandina, who was just grumbling out of habit, asked with interest upon hearing Lumian's response, "So you're willing to make big sacrifices and make correct choices to help important people?

"If, and I mean if, my desires were inflamed by a Demon and I'd become a monster without venting them, would you sacrifice yourself to help me?"

Lumian chuckled and said, "Don't have such unrealistic expectations of me. But don't worry, I'll find someone else willing to make that sacrifice for you."

His gaze swept over Camus, Lugano, and the unconscious Robert.

Amandina just muttered, "How lame…"

Camus inwardly sighed, feeling he'd escaped the beautiful dream world.

Lumian looked at Robert again and said to Amandina, "Wake him up and talk to him. I need a favor from him."

If Robert refused, Camus, the interrogation specialist, was there to persuade him.

"Alright," Amandina replied crisply, jolting Robert awake and informing her fiancé of their current predicament.

She consciously omitted mentioning Padre Cali's death to maintain the illusion that the Wraith had fled.

"Will you help if I let you go?" Robert asked warily as he struggled to his feet.

Lumian gestured to Camus and Rhea. "You may not trust me, but do you trust the patrol team?"

Robert fell silent for a moment before saying, "What's the favor?"

Lumian chuckled. "Go to Twanaku's house and do something for me."

…

Brieu Motel, second floor.

The man in the dark gray suit and the woman in the feathered hat heard soft chewing sounds coming from the corridor—a stark contrast to the shouts, cries, and moans echoing through the motel, as if it shouldn't be happening during the Dream Festival.

Suddenly, the chewing stopped.

Almost instantly, the man in the gray suit jumped up as if stabbed in the waist by a red-hot iron rod. The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

His face tense with sweat beading on his brow, he sprinted to the first floor, traversing the entire staircase in the blink of an eye.

He ran all the way out of the Brieu Motel to the intersection before stopping, his expression twisted with fear and lingering dread.

"What's wrong?" the woman in the light-colored dress asked, suddenly appearing beside him with confusion and seriousness.

The man in the dark gray suit panted heavily.

"Phew, phew, phew, didn't you feel it? That terrifying malice!

"The feeling of my heart being ripped out, my tongue torn away, my brain churned into thick soup…"

Chapter 683 Dance

Hearing her companion's words, the woman in the light-colored dress's expression turned solemn.

"I had a similar feeling, but it wasn't as specific as yours."

The man in the dark-gray suit visibly calmed down and glanced back over his shoulder.

"Let's hurry to our destination. There seem to be many abnormalities beyond our grasp here."

The woman in the light-colored dress gave a single nod of acknowledgment.

After ascertaining their direction, they quickened their pace and swiftly left the intersection behind them.

…

Lumian, wearing a golden straw hat, led Amandina, Robert, and the others back to the small square from the side of Saint-Sien Cathedral.

At that moment, Camus spotted figures lingering in the cemetery on the other side.

Startled, he focused his gaze and realized they were pale-white bones hung with tattered cloths and humanoid phantoms made of fine ashes. Many upright tombstones lay on the ground, and many graves had clearly suffered damage.

"The awakened dead?" Camus furrowed his brow and asked Amandina. "The Dream Festival can also awaken bones and ashes?"

Regardless of life or death, they had to celebrate the Dream Festival?

Amandina nodded nimbly.

"Isn't that normal? Robert obtained superpowers from the Corpse Collector pathway during the Dream Festival. That's the Death domain, so the Dream Festival itself has such—uh, characteristics."

Amandina was secretly pleased that her knowledge surpassed that of a seasoned patrol team member in this area. She consoled Camus, "Don't worry. The bones and shadows in the cemetery are very peaceful. They're completely different from the humans at the Dream Festival. As long as you don't approach them, they won't attack you. They'll only wander around their graves."

"Of course they're peaceful," Lumian, who was leading the way, chuckled. "They usually don't have emotions or desires to suppress. They won't form an intense projection in this dream."

The dead were emotionless!

Of course, excluding those who had perished with resentment and hatred, those buried in Saint-Sien Cathedral's cemetery must have undergone purification.

"That's not funny." Amandina wanted to console her silent fiancé, but she felt she didn't have the right after witnessing his indecency and being complicit in killing his lover. Everything she said seemed hypocritical, so she had no choice but to speak to Louis Berry instead.

She muttered inwardly, Hmph, as his fiancée notarized in the cathedral, it's my legitimate right to punish my fiancé's lover. It's a little overboard, but in the face of the blasphemer, the demon who preyed on a minor, being a little overboard is a revelation from God!

The more she thought about it, the more right she felt.

Lumian walked swiftly along the shadows beside the road. After some thought, he said, "Will those killed during the Dream Festival awaken and become undead?"

"Yes, but it takes a long time. I've only encountered them near the end of the Dream Festival. They're cold and aggressive," Amandina recalled.

Seizing the opportunity, Rhea asked, "When will the Dream Festival end?"

Amandina replied with a smile, "Haven't you noticed? The wall clocks and pocket watches are still ticking. The Dream Festival ends just before dawn."

"Is there a way to leave the Dream Festival early?" Lugano was concerned over this question.

Amandina glanced at Robert, who remained silent.

"There's no way. We can usually escape by sleeping in Twanaku's house and being stimulated at the edge of the dream. Once the Dream Festival begins, we can only wait for it to end naturally."

Lugano shut his mouth in disappointment and unconsciously took two steps closer to Lumian.

Camus observed Amandina's brisk strides and fell silent for a few seconds before asking, "Aren't you going back to Palm Manor to protect your parents? Aren't you worried they'll die during the Dream Festival?"

Amandina pursed her lips and said with a complicated smile, "During last year's Dream Festival, I rushed back to protect them. I didn't expect them to have a 'happy' time and not be in any danger…

"My mother prefers the lowest-class, filthiest, yet relatively muscular slaves to do the deed while she curses them. I don't know what mental issues that stems from or which areas that indulges, but this way, the male slaves definitely won't kill her. Instead, her jealous lady's maids and female slaves who get too close will be subdued and forced to join if they approach.

"As for my father, he relied on his career in the Southern Continent to obtain the Legion of Honor medal. When awake, he's always afraid of attacks and slave riots. He built several bunkers in the manor and stockpiled food and weapons. He constantly practices combat, shooting, and military tactics. Even during the Dream Festival, it would be very difficult for the servants and slaves to take him down.

They'd have to break through layers of defenses until he retreats to a bunker."

"Unless a Beyonder deliberately goes after them, they'll be very safe. If I stayed to protect them, it might be more dangerous—I mean I'm more dangerous. I might not tolerate the 'love' of those men or the jealousy of those women. I don't wish to kill too many people either."

Could it be that she's more afraid of sensing the malice hidden in her family and friends' hearts during the unconstrained Dream Festival? She'd rather gallivant outside and see others' dark sides than experience that herself? Lumian could understand Amandina's rationale.

He dropped the subject and turned to the silent Robert. "How different is your spirit channeling during the Dream Festival from usual? Will those spirits become more violent and difficult to communicate with?"

Robert, now in a white shirt and black pants, was silent for a few seconds before saying, "It's no different."

Could the excessive emotions and desires of the special dream exclusively target living creatures, leaving spirits unaffected by their typical lack of self-control? Or is the spirit world and its denizens fake—part of the dream aligning with Robert's imagination? It's likely the latter possibility. Spirit Mediums don't just connect with local spirits to borrow power. Robert didn't say some channeling was impossible in the dream… As Lumian's thoughts raced, he made a speculation.

Lumian led Camus and the others through the intersection, quickly returning to Twanaku's house.

He had asked about spirit channeling because it closely related to what he planned to do.

Standing on the second floor of Hisoka's house, Lumian said to the cold and slightly effeminate Robert, "Have you ever completed a spirit channeling here?"

"I've tried. I can establish connections with surrounding spirits, but there's nothing special about it," Robert replied honestly.

Amandina chimed in, "He tried it in reality, in the dream, and during the Dream Festival.

"We're all curious about this place's uniqueness and want to figure out the reason, but those spirits don't know anything about it."

Lumian nodded, took out his golden pocket watch, glanced at it, and said, "Come up to me in two minutes and help me with a designated spirit channeling. All of you can come up."

Robert breathed a relieved sigh, realizing he wouldn't face this alone.

On the third floor, in Hisoka's bedroom, Lumian spread his arms and performed the Dancer's Summoning Dance once more.

Previously, using the Mystery Prying Glasses in the real world, he realized this place had a mysterious connection to the black boulder. Just now, Padre Cali had mentioned that the black boulder was actually an ancient tomb—the source of his, Robert's, Amandina's, and even "Hisoka" Twanaku's superpowers, as well as the Dream Festival itself.

In that case, performing the Summoning Dance in Hisoka's house might attract special, strange items connected to the black ancient tomb. Perhaps he could obtain important information about the tomb or the corpse inside.

It was much safer than using the Mystery Prying Glasses or dancing after reaching the tomb. New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Furthermore, Lumian had no intention of directly attaching any summoned entity to himself. He had enlisted Robert's help to ensure safer, more effective spirit channeling.

A Spirit Medium could communicate with surrounding spirits or through specific directions and descriptions. However, they couldn't rely on the Summoning Dance and a location's uniqueness to attract more distant, hidden spirits like a Dancer could. A Spirit Medium could borrow spirits' power to achieve supernatural effects and

communicate with them in detail. A Dancer could choose to obtain a trait, ability, or limited memory fragment.

Amidst Lumian's contorted, sonorous, bizarre dance, his spirituality combined with the environment's unique power, spreading in all directions. As the intense dance neared its climax, something finally emerged from underground and condensed on the glass-enclosed window.

A human-like shadow wore a black robe, strikingly resembling the tomb keeper Lumian encountered at the dream's edge, yet with differences.

The hooded face seemed fixated on Lumian, eager yet sensing The Fool's seal and the Blood Emperor's residual aura, not daring to truly possess him.

Lumian didn't force orders. He continued the Summoning Dance until Robert and the others arrived, then slowed to a halt.

During this, he pointed at the black-robed figure and told Robert, "Hurry up and communicate with it."

Robert nodded slightly, retrieving a bottle of Full Moon Essence Oil from his pocket.

Chapter 684 Two Answers

Observing Louis Berry's peculiar sacrificial dance drawing to a close, Robert wasted no time. He hastily poured some Full Moon Essence Oil into his palm, utilizing his abilities to fuse it with his spirituality and rapidly dissipate it.

Camus, Amandina, and the others immediately caught a refreshing, psychedelic fragrance. They felt their spirits were drunk, about to float out of their bodies.

Robert's voice echoed softly, distantly in their ears, causing their thoughts to drift farther and farther away. Fortunately, they weren't channeling targets, so they managed relative control.

The black-robed figure gradually left the glass window, approaching Robert.

Suddenly, the shadow vanished. Robert lowered his head, then slowly looked up, his face tainted by the night sky yet with an obvious sinister aura. His eyes were dark.nove(l)bi(n.)com

Observing this, Lumian ended the Summoning Dance, positioning himself three meters from Robert.

Although he'd intended for Robert to channel the spirit directly while he provided questions, the peculiar shadow had instead attached itself to Robert.

This too was a form of spirit channeling—many Spirit Mediums allowed a target's spirit to communicate through their mouth, answering certain people's questions.

Gazing at the sinister-looking Robert, Lumian pondered briefly, then said, "Do you know what happened to the people who lived here six years ago?"

He planned to start simple, least likely to cause anomalies, constantly adjusting direction, tone, and terminology based on the actual situation.

Robert opened his mouth, letting out a shrill voice unlike his own.

"Affected, performed a ritual, all perished."

This answer puzzled the others, including Camus, unsure if significant information was hidden.

Apart from Lugano, everyone guessed Louis asked about the fire engulfing the Twanaku family, with the spirit's answer implying a cult or evil gods' influence.

As a Conspirer, relevant information instantly surfaced in Lumian's mind.

The suppressed emotions and desires of everyone in Tizamo would be absorbed by the dream, gradually accumulating to form corresponding dream projections.

Like the gravekeepers, these projections would hide in the dream's chaotic zone, guarding the black ancient tomb.

In previous explorations, I saw the black-robed gravekeeper and projections surrounding the ancient tomb in dream fragments. One projection was the remaining figure of "Hisoka" Twanaku.

"Hisoka" Twanaku returned to Tizamo two or three times yearly for about a week.

After leaving, his corresponding projection would gradually fade until vanishing.

"Hisoka" Twanaku had become a Devil pathway Beyonder after the fire incident.

The Nois family's Demon…

This information appeared simultaneously in Lumian's mind, like disconnected nodes in a spider's web.

Soon, Lumian made a guess.

"Hisoka" Twanaku returned to Tizamo once or twice outside the Dream Festival, each visit lasting a week or more? Was this to ensure his dream projection didn't completely disappear, allowing the dream to absorb some of his malice?"

Do the projections and gravekeepers stay around the ancient tomb because it has something special that unknowingly affects them, like the tomb or the cold corpse inside?

If sacrificial rituals were part of the tomb's defense, when the Dream Festival commences and the projections return to their bodies, would some deeply affected humans attempt to imitate the gravekeeper's actions and perform a ritual? If they failed, would their entire family perish, corrupting the house and forming a subtle connection to the black ancient tomb?

Yes, that's a possibility, but I can't fit the Nois family's Demon or Hisoka becoming a Devil pathway Beyonder into this web of information…

What would happen if I inserted that?

Lumian's heart stirred as he considered another possibility.

It wasn't just the black ancient tomb or its cold corpse affecting the Twanaku family. The Nois family's Demon was also affected!

Perhaps the Demon had been coveting the corpse or the source of abnormality. For this reason, it secretly influenced the Twanaku family, giving them knowledge. Once the Dream Festival began, through its influence in the real world, it magnified their corresponding desires in the dream. Coupled with the loss of self-control and wild indulgence brought by the Dream Festival, the Twanaku family took the initiative to attempt the sacrificial process from the ritual or dream projection given by the Demon, leading to subsequent abnormalities?

Had the Demon discovered Hisoka's uniqueness and lured him to the Devil pathway?

Yes, this explains why only the Twanaku family did such a thing when everyone has a dream projection and why is this house unique enough to allow lucid dreaming…

The next crucial task is guarding against the Demon. It probably can't participate personally, but its minions would definitely appear…

As these thoughts raced, Lumian gained a deeper understanding of the situation.

He looked at the shadow possessing Robert and changed his question.

"Where are the gravekeepers? Where have they gone?"

Robert's shadowed face replied shrilly, "Dream Festival begins, the tomb opens. Need to hide."

Need to hide? After commencement, does the tomb become abnormally dangerous or pose a hidden danger to the gravekeepers? Lumian glanced at Amandina. This lady, Robert, and Padre Cali arrived at the black ancient tomb during the Dream Festival, easily obtaining powers through contact.

Where is this hidden danger? How is it dangerous? And where are the gravekeepers?

Something must be amiss.

Amandina felt inexplicable fear under Louis Berry's gaze. Her voice trembled as she asked, "Is there a problem with this answer?"

Lumian chuckled. "The gravekeepers need to hide. Why didn't you two?"

Before Amandina could delve deeper, she saw Robert's cold, dark face contort in agony.

Seeing this, Lumian sighed, "End the spirit channeling."

If it continued, something would happen to Robert.

Robert retained complete autonomy and a certain mobility level. He

immediately uttered two words in ancient Hermes to make the spirit leave his body.

The shadow attached to him remained unresponsive, and the agony on his face intensified.

Slowly, Robert drew a dagger and stabbed his finger.

Drops of bright red blood, mixed with his Spirit Medium spirituality, sprayed towards the window like bead chains.

While doing so, Robert bellowed in ancient Hermes, "Leave!"

The black-robed shadow detached from Robert's body, chasing after the blood and vanishing from the glass window.

Witnessing this, Lumian retracted his consciousness from his right hand, no longer preparing any "snorting."

He breathed a relieved sigh and said to Camus, Amandina, and the others, "Wait for me on the second floor."

"What now…" Amandina muttered, turning to head downstairs.

In just over ten seconds, silence returned to the third floor.

Lumian retrieved ingredients from his Traveler's Bag and set up a ritual, attempting to summon Madam Magician's messenger.

Unfortunately, being a dream prevented success.

Having anticipated this, Lumian wasn't overly disappointed. Though the early Dream Festival arrival prevented reporting the latest situation to Madam Magician, adding significant risks, such problems were bound to arise. He was mentally prepared.

Though Hunters liked to plan ahead, they weren't afraid of battle.

Lumian was even a little excited, not just from the Dream Festival's faint influence.

After stowing his belongings, Lumian descended to the second floor

and said directly to Robert and Amandina, "Which one of you will take me to the black boulder?"

He had analyzed their situations, realizing that Amandina, Robert, and Padre Cali had easily arrived at the black ancient tomb and obtained powers, all led by those who had touched it.

Of course, they shared more than one thing in common.

Robert fell silent, wanting to say "Didn't you promise to let me go after helping?" but not daring.

Amandina glanced at the silent Robert, pursed her lips and said to Lumian, "Me!"

Then, she added, "I want to see if I can obtain more superpowers."

Lumian nodded and told Robert, "You may leave."

Robert glanced at Lumian, then Amandina. Without a word, he walked out of Twanaku's house.

"Gosh, he might think I brought you to the cathedral to deal with Padre Cali and embarrass him. Gosh, I was the one who brought you there," Amandina exclaimed after Robert left.

Rhea, who had already picked up most arrows, earnestly consoled her, "But you purified the cathedral for God. Praise the Sun!"

Amandina spread her arms as well. "Praise the Sun!"

After their exchange, Lumian said to Camus and Rhea, "Next, I'm going to the black ancient tomb. It's up to you to decide if you want to go."

"I…"Lugano tried to speak, but Lumian interrupted with a smile. "You must go."

Lugano shut his mouth.

Camus and Rhea exchanged glances and spoke in unison, "I'm coming too."

Lumian didn't persuade them, simply nodding. "Then let's set off now."

Chapter 685 Illusion

Outside Tizamo, near the entrance to the forest, Lumian and his companions heard gunshots and shouts echoing from the direction of the military camp. The population was denser here compared to the town and plantations, and more heavily armed. Many lives were lost each year in this area.

Camus retracted his gaze and let out a sigh of resignation, like a world-weary middle-aged man. He knew he was powerless to stop the violence. His only hope was to find a way to end the Dream Festival as quickly as possible, so that more people might survive. This was why he had chosen to follow Louis Berry to the black ancient tomb.

If Camus were alone, the rational choice would be to find a secluded corner and hide until dawn, until the Dream Festival concluded—just like Kolobo planned to do. However, after witnessing Louis Berry's formidable strength and realizing the adventurer was willing to take the risk of approaching the black ancient tomb, Camus felt compelled to take action himself.

Lumian gazed ahead, trailing Amandina's light footsteps as she turned onto a narrow path threading into the forest. He harbored no illusions about single-handedly putting an end to the Dream Festival. His objectives for this mission had always been clear: Find the gold Hisoka had obtained, along with the item he had procured from the Nois family's Demon. Uncover what the key April Fool's member was scheming, to prevent Hisoka's legacy from materializing.

This was both the duty of a Tarot Club Minor Arcana card holder, and a reflection of Lumian's wariness towards Hisoka. After discovering the dream projection Hisoka had left behind, Lumian feared his adversary might exploit pre-arranged measures and the dream projection to resurrect himself to some degree during the Dream Festival, returning to the real world as a Wraith or evil spirit.

He was determined not to give Hisoka that chance.

After hearing Padre Cali's confession, Lumian's suspicions only intensified.

Hisoka returned to Tizamo each year to participate in the Dream Festival. He required no other host, and this unique dream usually proceeded without any abnormalities. It didn't appear that anyone needed to constantly monitor it.

It was important to note that prior to the fire that wiped out Hisoka's family, the special dream had existed for innumerable years. The Dream Festival had taken place countless times, yet no one had detected anything amiss. Under such conditions, the more individuals who knew the truth, the greater the danger of the information leaking out. Nevertheless, Hisoka still enticed Padre Cali and guided him to the black ancient tomb to acquire Beyonder powers.

This anomalous conduct led Lumian to surmise that Hisoka Twanaku had enlisted Padre Cali's aid in monitoring the dream to verify the status of his dream projection.

The dream projection would gradually dissipate as Hisoka departed Tizamo, ultimately vanishing altogether. If Hisoka desired its continued existence, he would need to return for a time after it had faded to a certain point. Given that the dreams surrounding the black boulder were typically in a state of disarray, the rate at which the dream projection dissipated might be erratic. This necessitated daily monitoring. As soon as the situation was deemed to have deteriorated, an urgent telegram would be dispatched to summon Hisoka back.

Naturally, as a Devil, Hisoka would never divulge his true intentions to Padre Cali. He would undoubtedly be on guard against Padre Cali exploiting the dream projection to eliminate this lurking threat. When instructing Padre Cali on what needed to be done, there was a high probability Hisoka was really having him monitor the shifting dynamics within the dream.

How could Padre Cali keep tabs on the evolving dream? Through the dream projections and the condition of the gravekeepers beside the

black ancient tomb!

Regrettably, Lumian couldn't enter the dream himself. He could only entrust Amandina with questioning Padre Cali. The intelligence gleaned was superficial, not delving into the crux of the matter. It could merely aid in analysis.

If he had interrogated Padre Cali directly, he would have been able to roughly ascertain Hisoka's objective, rather than just harboring suspicions.

At present, the leads concerning the gold and the Demon's gift both pointed to the black ancient tomb. Lumian naturally had to investigate and do what he could. If the challenge truly proved insurmountable, he would decisively retreat to Tizamo and conceal himself on the third or fourth floor of the Brieu Motel, allowing the "danger" to confront Ludwig, whose appetite had grown voracious.

Amandina guided Lumian and the others through the rainforest, drawing near to the boundary of the dream.

Abruptly, Lumian raised his right hand and whispered, "Stop."

He sniffed the air, detecting the unmistakable scent of blood.

With a Reaper's keen sense of smell and meticulous nature, Lumian could discern that the blood didn't originate from jungle animals hunting each other. It was human blood, rich in spirituality.

"What's wrong?" Amandina asked, taken aback, as if recalling her first venture into this forest with Robert.

lightsNovɛl ƈom Camus quickly sensed the problem and pointed in the direction of the blood's scent.

"Something's not right over there."

Insects were gathering in that area.

Although Lumian was eager to reach the black ancient tomb to thwart Hisoka's plan, he knew that the more impatient he felt, the more cautious he needed to be. He had to remain vigilant of any

abnormalities along the way to avoid walking into someone's trap or missing crucial information and rashly starting a conflict.

Aurore had once mentioned that Emperor Roselle might have said that haste makes waste.

Lumian walked towards the source of the blood's scent at a measured pace.

As he drew closer, he caught a whiff of the pungent odor of blood mingled with decay.

The latter originated from the tranquil essential oil used to repel mosquitoes.

Lumian circled a few more trees crawling with poisonous insects and saw a corpse lying face-up on the humus soil.

The corpse's eyes were wide open, and its black hair was disheveled. Its face was smeared with white paint. It was Maslow, the captain of the Tizamo patrol team!

At the beginning of the Dream Festival, Maslow, who had "disappeared" behind Lumian, had reappeared in the forest as a corpse!

"Maslow!" Camus and Rhea exclaimed in surprise.

Before they could fully process their grief, Lumian's gaze shifted downward as he examined Maslow's cause of death.

The captain of the local patrol team had deep wounds on his chest and abdomen, as if he had been attacked by spears, triangular blades, and other weapons, but the edges showed signs of tearing.

Large amounts of blood had already flowed into the ground, attracting lingering mosquitoes. There were obvious signs of decay on Maslow's body, and a yellowish-green liquid seeped out, as if he had been dead for two to three days.

After ascertaining the situation on the corpse's surface and examining the surrounding battle traces, Camus said in a somber voice,

"Attacked by the power of the Death domain…"

Death domain? The image of a cold, middle-aged man in a thin suit suddenly surfaced in Lumian's mind.

Reaza, the vice-captain of Port Pylos's patrol team!

He was a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Death pathway!

At the beginning of the Dream Festival, Reaza had "disappeared" along with Maslow.

Camus glanced at Rhea, who wore a pained expression, and hesitantly said, "They were affected by the Dream Festival and lost control of themselves. They attacked each other. One died, and the other escaped?"

This was the most plausible conjecture for the Dream Festival.

Lumian imagined a similar scene, but he frowned in confusion and said, "Why are they in the jungle?"

Shouldn't they appear where they were in the real world?

In reality, Reaza and Maslow had already returned to Tizamo with me…

Did something lure them into the forest?

As the only member of the Port Pylos patrol team supporting Tizamo, Reaza had known from the beginning that something was amiss here. Was the true target the black ancient tomb?

Lumian looked at Camus and Rhea thoughtfully and casually asked, "Were Maslow and Reaza on good terms?"

"Excellent terms," Camus replied with a sigh. "Captain Reaza recruited Maslow into the patrol team and provided him with extensive guidance."

Lumian fell silent for a moment before saying to Amandina and the others, "Let's continue forward."

Rhea and Camus seized the moment to gather some branches to cover Maslow's corpse. Then, they quickly followed the team.

After walking along the forest path for a while, Amandina suddenly slowed her pace and pressed her hand to the side of her head.

"What's wrong?" Lumian asked keenly.

Amandina frowned and said, "My head feels a bit heavy, and I'm experiencing hallucinations."

"What kind of hallucinations?" Lumian raised his eyebrows.

Amandina replied in puzzlement, "I saw the black boulder I touched previously—no, the black ancient tomb. It felt like I had returned to the past. Do you understand? The past appeared in my mind in the form of an illusion, in front of my eyes, beside my ears."Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian pondered for a moment before saying, preempting Camus, "Let's go a little further and see what happens."

The hallucinations didn't incite Amandina's desire to retreat. With an experimental mindset, she followed the familiar jungle path for another few dozen meters.

"How is it?" Lumian, who was beside her, inquired.

Amandina organized her thoughts and said, "The hallucinations are becoming clearer and more pronounced."

"The closer you get to the black ancient tomb, the stronger the hallucinations become?" Lumian suggested a possibility before asking, "Did anything similar happen to Robert when he brought you here last time?"

"No," Amandina replied with certainty. "He was quite normal the entire time."

Camus speculated, "Perhaps he had already grown accustomed to the hallucinations after approaching more than once."

"Who knows…" Amandina muttered and looked at Louis Berry. "What should we do now?"

It's not a big deal if it's just hallucinations… Lumian pondered for a moment and said, "Let's continue forward."

"Alright." Amandina wasn't sure what the hallucinations represented. She endured the discomfort and said, "We'll reach the ancient tomb in a few minutes."

She continued forward.

As they walked, Amandina suddenly extended her right hand and pressed it against the forest trees beside her, bending her back.

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire, she recounted the changes in the hallucination and spoke intermittently, "I see myself… after touching the ancient tomb last time… I didn't… I didn't fall asleep immediately… I… I was still awake!"

"I… I see… someone ahead!"

Chapter 686 Illusion and Reality

"What kind of person?" Lumian perked up.

He hadn't expected Amandina's hallucination to yield unexpected insights.

"I can't see clearly, I can't. It's not that he isn't clear… It's just that I can't make out the details." Amandina straightened up again, as if she had recovered slightly.

She pondered for a moment and said, "So I didn't fall asleep immediately after touching the black boulder—no, the black ancient tomb. When I woke up, I realized that I had gained superpowers. There were still some events that transpired in between, but I don't remember them at all. It felt like I had fallen asleep.

"The hallucinations I'm experiencing might have originated from the depths of my subconscious, from forgotten memories. No, not forgotten. They're just in a deep slumber. They're starting to become active and awakening bit by bit…"

Amandina carefully assessed her condition, searching for the source of the abnormality.

Pretty smart with a good attitude. She managed to maintain basic composure... Lumian evaluated inwardly.

Amandina's behavior was unfamiliar to Camus.

In his impression, Amandina was not only beautiful but also cheerful, optimistic, and lively. She was the kind of girl who could infect those around her with joy. However, due to her young age, she still appeared naive, childish, and inexperienced.

Unexpectedly, after their encounter in the Dream Festival, she

gradually displayed an openness, maturity, and calmness he hadn't anticipated.

Amandina was puzzled.

"Why didn't Robert mention any dormant memories or the fact that I didn't fall asleep immediately after touching the ancient tomb? Padre Cali also talked about fainting and awakening with superpowers.

"The number of times they have participated in the Dream Festival in their lucid state and visited the black ancient tomb must have been more than mine…"

Lumian understood what Amandina was trying to convey.

Firstly, why did Padre Cali and Robert, who had been to the black ancient tomb many times, still believe that they had fainted on the spot and regained superpowers upon waking up? Why didn't they experience hallucinations similar to Amandina's?

Secondly, Robert had seen Amandina touch the black ancient tomb. Didn't he know if she had fallen to the ground or not?

Lumian pondered for a few seconds and said, "Perhaps the person you see standing in front of you has caused the relevant memories to fall into a deep slumber. And you're from the Evernight pathway, a Nightmare. Therefore, there's something special about dreams and slumber. The closer you get to the black ancient tomb, the more likely it is to awaken the slumbering memories, causing the hallucination."

Amandina tersely acknowledged his hypothesis of her being special and proceeded with confidence.

After two minutes, Lumian suddenly raised his right hand and pressed it down. He lowered his voice and said, "Hide nearby."

He had heard soft footsteps.

Camus immediately rolled to the side and hid behind a palm tree. Rhea crawled to another tree and concealed herself among the leaves.

Lugano glanced at the forest, where countless poisonous insects and snakes lurked. He kept telling himself, "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid. I can heal myself if I'm bitten."

He quickly shrank behind a pile of huge, brightly colored mushrooms.

Amandina had experience hiding in such places. Back then, she had witnessed Twanaku heading to the black ancient tomb.

Using the cover of the night and relying on her spiritual perception, she nimbly weaved through the low green plants and hid behind a huge tree in the distance.

Suddenly, a thick vine hanging from the tree came to life and swung towards Amandina, opening its blood-stained mouth.

It was a dark-green python!

Amandina's eyes snapped shut, and she clenched her fists.

The python fell into a deep slumber, reverberating weakly. It swayed a few times before finally landing on the ground.

Seeing that his teammates had hidden themselves, Lumian's body suddenly vanished, blending into the shadows brought about by the night.

After ten to twenty seconds, a figure traversed the path ahead.

High above, through the gaps in the leaves, Rhea spotted the figure clad in an intricate black robe with obvious layers. A fluffy black hat rested on his hair, and a gently swaying white feather protruded from the edge.

Lumian, in his shadow creature form, also saw the rough appearance of the figure.

lightsNovɛl ƈom His mind suddenly tensed as confusion welled up within him.

Isn't that Iveljsta Eggers?

Why would this temperance faction member of the Church of The Fool appear in a dream and become a participant in the Dream Festival?

Over the past few days, Lumian had explored the interior of Tizamo, the surrounding plantations, and the military camps outside of town. He clearly knew which outsiders had recently arrived, and Iveljsta was not among them!

Did he arrive here after the Dream Festival began?

Yes, he once mentioned that his original mission was to investigate something in the primitive forest around Port Pylos. Then, he received a last-minute order to deal with Hisoka's contact… Could the matter he's investigating be related to the black ancient tomb? The temperance faction belongs to the Prisoner pathway, and the Eggers family is descended from Death. It's normal for the black ancient tomb and the cold corpse inside to attract the temperance faction's Eggers…

Did Iveljsta Eggers encounter the Dream Festival while searching for the primitive tribe in the forest?

As Lumian analyzed Iveljsta's appearance, he scrutinized his expression through the shadows.

He saw an indescribable ferocity on the temperance faction member's pale white face. His dark brown eyes emitted a ferocity reminiscent of a wild beast, tinged with blood under the dim crimson moon's glow.

Although he's not affected by the dream projection formed by extreme emotions and desires, it's still difficult to control oneself and be restrained during the Dream Festival… Lumian wasn't surprised.

Ludwig and Kolobo were examples.

Considering Iveljsta's current state, Lumian didn't emerge from the shadows. He patiently waited for him to leave the area as the footsteps gradually receded.

From the looks of it, he's also headed for the black ancient tomb…

Lumian transformed back into a human and stood on a path overgrown with weeds, gazing at the spot where Iveljsta's back had disappeared.

He raised his right hand and snapped his fingers.

"You can come out now."

Camus, Rhea, and Lugano left their hiding spots one after another. Camus even went to wake Amandina.

Amandina looked at Lumian and asked, "Do we continue?"

Lumian replied without hesitation, "Yes."

This time, they proceeded cautiously, paying close attention to their surroundings.

After another three to four minutes, Lumian, having prepared to deal with Iveljsta and Reaza, followed Amandina's guidance and slipped through a gap between a few giant trees.

A black, colossal, and familiar boulder came into view.

At a glance, it looked like a house-sized boulder, but upon closer inspection, one could see patterns on it. There were abnormal protrusions and depressions, and thread-like cracks that ordinary eyes couldn't detect.

It was indeed not just a stone.

Around the black boulder, tree roots emerged from the ground, covering an area the size of a square, resembling the protruding blood vessels of every human. However, they had been dead for a long time and were withered.

At that moment, the place was empty, devoid of anyone.

Iveljsta didn't come here? Isn't Reaza's destination here? Did they get lost midway? Or could it be that only those who have received the boon of an ancient tomb or a corpse can truly reach this area? Lumian surveyed his surroundings in confusion.

Amandina's brows furrowed once more, and she couldn't help but press her hands against the sides of her head.

She said with a hint of pain, "Th-the hallucinations have become clearer. I-I see more.

"The figure approached me, extended his hand, and pressed it against the top of my head!

"He… He's wearing a strange hat…"

Camus, Rhea, and the others didn't interrupt Amandina to see if she could recall more or awaken more dormant memories.

Amandina muttered to herself, "Was this how I was given superpowers?"

As Lumian listened to Amandina's words, he fixed his gaze on the black boulder that was said to be an ancient tomb.

He felt a sense of familiarity.

As a Conspirer, Lumian quickly jogged his memories for the source of the familiarity.

Soon, he had an answer.

The black ancient tomb reminded him of the Samaritan Women's Spring when it wasn't pale white!

It's indeed closely related to the Death domain… Lumian examined the Blood Emperor's remnant aura in his right hand and confirmed that it wasn't affected or showing signs of activation.

At that moment, the surroundings fell into an abnormal silence.

The rustling in the forest, the cries of wild beasts, and the gunshots and screams from Tizamo seemed to have vanished. The deep night fell into complete silence.

Amandina looked up and shouted in horror, "I remember now. I remember now. When I obtained superpowers, this place was also

this quiet. It didn't seem like the Dream Festival at all!"

In the next moment, Amandina's pupils dilated.

"He… He… That figure… That figure has appeared!"

Huh? Rhea, Camus, and Lugano looked at the black ancient tomb solemnly and blankly. They didn't see anyone or anything unusual.

Amandina's voice turned shrill.

"Can't you see? He… He's walking towards me… He's walking towards me!"

For a moment, Lumian and company couldn't determine if Amandina's illusion was so vivid that it was almost real, or if something had indeed happened.

"No! Don't come any closer!" Amandina shouted, her expression breaking down as she gazed at the empty area ahead.The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

With this shout, Lumian felt the entire area tremble slightly, and his surroundings blurred.

In the blurriness, scenes appeared, like different fragments of a dream.

These scenes centered on the black ancient tomb, but different people stood beside it.

In some scenes, Reaza stood in a thin black suit. In others, Iveljsta stood in a feathered hat. A man and a woman approached side by side, while others surrounded black-

robed humans.

One of the black-robed humans turned to Lumian with a smile.

His skin was light brown, and his flaxen eyes were tinged with dark green. He was none other than "Hisoka" Twanaku.

Chapter 687 Gaining Immortality

Lumian raised his eyebrows and returned Hisoka's gaze with a radiant smile.

The two individuals in different scenes exchanged glances through the blurry void, each casting their eyes in opposite directions.

Reaza, Iveljsta, and the man and woman who had just arrived in Tizamo had clearly seen the people in the other scene. They were astonished and dumbfounded by this incomprehensible, bizarre situation, but they couldn't interact with each other.

The gravekeepers in the same scene as Hisoka appeared to be praying, oblivious to the changes in their surroundings or treating them as if nothing unusual had occurred.

Lumian surveyed the area and vaguely comprehended the situation.

Regardless of how real this place seems, various encounters will mirror reality to different degrees. At its core, it remains a dream. And under the influence of the black ancient tomb or the cold corpse within, this area has fragmented into multiple dream shards. Each time a new group arrives, a fresh fragment is generated…

If not for Amandina's or my arrival triggering some abnormality, it would be impossible for people in different scenes to interact. They wouldn't be able to attack each other, nor could they see, hear, or detect one another's presence.

This must be why the gravekeepers vanish every time the Dream Festival commences.The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

They don't disappear. They're simply in different dream fragments

from the Dream Festival participants.

Based on the results of the previous spirit channeling, is this some kind of concealment?

But the black ancient tomb hasn't been unsealed yet…

As Lumian's thoughts raced, Amandina's voice grew increasingly shrill, filled with terror.

"He's right in front of me! Save me! Save me!"

Lumian stared at Amandina, who was retreating in an attempt to evade the invisible creature, but he couldn't perceive the figure she described.

In the brief span of more than ten seconds since Amandina's panic attack, Lumian had used his Spirit Vision, Weakness Investigation, Luck Observation, and other abilities, but he hadn't detected anything unusual.

He was on the verge of taking out the Mystery Prying Glasses and the Eye of Truth.

Lumian reached into his Traveler's Bag. Without a rough grasp of the situation, he didn't know how to rescue Amandina, who had broken down from fright.

Just as his fingers brushed against the Mystery Prying Glasses, Amandina was suddenly taken aback.

After a moment, she turned to Lumian and said in bewilderment, "He —he turned and left. He seems to have recognized me…"

"Recognized you?" Lumian felt compelled to confirm Amandina's mental state.

Amandina replied in confusion, "Yes, he nodded at me and left."

Is this why, after the Dream Festival begins, anyone who wishes to approach the black ancient tomb must be guided by someone who has received the boon of the ancient tomb or the corpse? Robert and

Padre Cali likely played the same role in similar scenes, but they don't belong to the Evernight pathway and lack dream-related abilities, so they didn't notice… Did the people in the other dream fragments also receive the boon of the black ancient tomb or the cold corpse? Lumian's heart stirred as he asked Amandina, "Where did he go? Where did that figure go?"

Amandina's gaze shifted to the periphery of her surroundings.

Her eyes widened with lingering fear and excitement. She raised her palm and pointed at the dream fragment where the man and woman were.

"He went there.

"He's gone through! He's gone through!"

Amandina's explanation made Lumian and the others feel the black ancient tomb solidifying and becoming heavier. The entire area shook even more violently.

Simultaneously, Lumian sensed a familiar burning sensation on his left chest, but he didn't hear any ravings that seemed to come from an infinite distance.

In a daze, he saw a huge aqua-colored vortex, a dim village shrouded in gray fog, and figures within the village.

Shepherd Pierre Berry, who believed in Inevitability, and Lumian's friend, Azéma Lizier, raised their pale-white arms, as if silently shouting.

Lumian also spotted his semi-subterranean two-story house and Aurore, sitting quietly on the orange roof with her arms crossed.

Lumian no longer resisted the illusion.

He roughly understood what was happening.

As the figure entered other dream fragments, the black ancient tomb's abnormality intensified. It contained the power of the Death domain, "awakening" the Cordu villagers within the seal.

These villagers were already deceased, with only soul fragments remaining. Naturally, they would be affected by the power of the Death domain.

This realization made Lumian feel pain, sorrow, and bitterness that he hadn't experienced in a long time.

He "watched" Aurore, clad in a light-blue dress with thick, long blond hair and light-blue eyes. She didn't attempt to resist the invisible power of death.

"He walked to that woman," Amandina continued dutifully.

That woman? Camus, Rhea, and Lugano turned their attention to the corresponding dream fragment.

Having just arrived in Tizamo that night, the lady in the light-colored dress didn't hear Amandina's words. She only knew that the patrol team was looking at her.

Her spirituality gave her a sense of foreboding. She hurriedly turned to her companion and asked, "Devajo, do you sense any malice?"

The man named Devajo, dressed in a dark gray suit, slowly shook his head and said, "Nothing."

In the dream fragment where Lumian and the others were, Amandina explained in high spirits, "He… The figure… extended his hand! He pressed his hand… on that woman's head!"

Just as Amandina finished speaking, Devajo saw his companion, the lady in the light-colored dress, suddenly collapse to her knees. Her expression was stiff, and her face was abnormally pale-white.

Ooo!

In all the dream fragments, an ice-cold wind howled.

Lumian "saw" Aurore standing up on the orange roof, her expression dazed as she gazed into the sky, as if sensing something.

She opened her mouth and spoke almost instinctively.

Lumian didn't know the corresponding language, but he had heard something similar before.

It was the language used by Armored Shadow Chen Tu, a language that Franca occasionally uttered a word or two of!

Although he couldn't understand, Lumian vaguely grasped what his sister was talking about, perhaps due to the connection between them at the soul level.

She muttered to herself, "An immortal blessed my crown, bestowing upon me the gift of eternal life.

In the dream fragment where Devajo was, the light-colored lady's hat, which had unconsciously fallen to her knees, suddenly flew off.

On her neck, the backs of her hands, and the surface of her face, pores opened one by one, producing white feathers tainted with faint yellow stains.

Devajo observed this scene with a solemn expression. He didn't attempt to interrupt his companion's abnormality and instead took a few cautious steps back.

He couldn't comprehend what was happening. Although he hadn't sensed any malice directed at him, he prudently distanced himself from the anomaly.

The lady in the light-colored dress's azure eyes had lost focus, appearing abnormally vacant and lifeless.

In the blink of an eye, the white feathers, tainted with light-

yellow oil stains, seemed to possess a consciousness and life of their own. They frantically emerged from the gaps in the fabric of the dress.

Within moments, the lady in the light-colored dress was enveloped by white feathers tainted with light-yellow oil stains.

Her body grew light and gradually floated, becoming increasingly illusory.

Her azure eyes fixed on Devajo as she shouted in a hollow and agitated voice, "I've become a god! I've achieved immortality!"

The white-feathered monster hovered above the black ancient tomb, incessantly shouting, "I've become a god! I've achieved immortality!"

In another dream fragment, Lumian heard Aurore change her words.

With a fearful expression, she whispered, "Immortal Ascension…"

In the next instant, the ethereal monster, covered in white feathers, flew towards the black ancient tomb in the dream fragment.

She passed through the stone wall on the tomb's surface and vanished.

Suddenly, the frigid wind ceased, freezing.

The black ancient tomb shook visibly, and the tomb door, outlined by hair-like cracks, emitted the sound of dull rubbing, as if someone was trying to push it open from within.

Aurore, "in front" of Lumian and the "surrounding" Cordu began to fade, as if erased by an eraser.

Lumian glanced at the slowly opening tomb door and turned to "Hisoka" Twanaku, who was in another dream fragment.

The dream projection wasn't surprised by the abnormality, nor did he show any fear. Instead, the silent gravekeepers around him rose to their feet.

Amidst the illusory sound of water, the tomb door of the black ancient tomb opened completely.

Accompanied by this change, all the dream fragments that appeared in the blur seemed to be pulled by an invisible force, fusing together.

Devajo, Reaza, Iveljsta, Hisoka Twanaku, and the gravekeepers materialized in front of the black ancient tomb, near Lumian and the others.

"Hisoka" Twanaku smiled, as if he had anticipated that one of the outsiders would transform into a "god" and that the ancient tomb's door would open at this very moment.

He retrieved a golden mask from his black robe.

The mask appeared to be crafted from pure gold, its eyes and face smeared with white and black paint, giving it an unsettling appearance.

Twanaku donned the golden mask and, unlike the other gravekeepers, didn't retreat. Instead, he sprinted towards the black ancient tomb and the open tomb door.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

Lumian heard a distinct heartbeat.

It emanated from within the black ancient tomb.

Chapter 688 - 688: Preparations

Translator: CKtalon

As Lumian heard his heartbeat, a palm reached out from the open door of the black ancient tomb.

The palm showed no signs of decay or yellow bandages. Its surface was covered in gold, shimmering with a mystical hue under the dim crimson moonlight.

Upon seeing the golden palm, Lumian felt an invisible force compress his soul, instantly severing its connection to his body.

Immediately after, he realized his body had transformed into a cold, solid wall, preventing his spirit from spreading or being controlled by his consciousness.

At that moment, Lumian's soul felt trapped in a cage, unable to escape. He could only see limited scenes through his eyes and hear relatively loud voices with his ears.

Everyone present turned into statues, frozen in place.

Faced with this situation, Lumian suddenly recalled a saying: The body is a cage for the heart, and the world is a cage for the body.

In the stillness, the only person still moving was "Hisoka" Twanaku.

The golden mask on his face emitted a hazy glow as he swiftly approached the black ancient tomb and the golden palm extending from it.

Although Lumian couldn't move or use his abilities, his soul was merely "imprisoned"—it didn't affect his thoughts.

Seeing that "Hisoka" Twanaku was almost unaffected by the golden

palm, Lumian quickly deduced several things.The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

There's a high likelihood the gold Hisoka seized from Devise—the gold mine city—was used on the cold corpse in the black ancient tomb.

The item he obtained from the Nois family's Demon is likely the golden mask he now wears.

The former was an attempt to revive the cold corpse. Its equivalent to Franca's mention of creating a complete body. The latter ensures Hisoka can approach the target unaffected after the cold corpse's "resurrection" and achieve a certain goal.

Did Hisoka once plan to use this to control the cold corpse and attain demigod-level strength?

When 1 killed him in the real world, did the him in the dream attempt to "resurrect' through this?

Yes, Hisoka's Wraith power comes from the same source as the cold corpse. Perhaps there's a way to make the corpse believe he's its original spirit and accept his lead…

Based on the information I've gathered and what just transpired, humans who have received the boon of the black ancient tomb and the cold corpse can open the tomb without waking the corpse. To awaken it, an intruder must be bestowed with immortality by an invisible figure, ascend to godhood, and enter the ancient tomb.

And intruders will only be attacked by invisible figures without the Dream Festival's bestowed guides…

It's best for an intruder to remain lucid?

How did Hisoka know outsiders would participate in the Dream Festival this year and arrive at the black ancient tomb?

He didn't have such a plan to begin with? That's because he didn't know he was going to die. If he can't complete his plan during this year's Dream Festival, the dream projection will completely dissipate

in the next few months, causing him to lose his last hope of revival…

The involvement of outsiders was a pleasant surprise for him?

No, its too much of a coincidence. Reaza's rushing over can be explained by his discovery of me investigating the Dream Festival and his worry that he wouldn't have a chance to obtain what he wants after this year. But why did Iveljsta coincidentally come to this primitive forest to investigate something? Why did two Beyonders who can remain lucid in the special dream arrive just before the Dream Festival began?

Moreover, why did the Rose School of Thought send someone to Matani in the last few mon ths of the year to gather detailed day- to – day information ?

"Hisoka" Twanaku originally planned to complete his plan during this year's Dream Festival. He deliberately leaked some information and clues to attract different factions of interest.

The information these factions received wasn't detailed enough. They had no choice but to dispatch personnel in advance to conduct the corresponding investigations or bribe members ofMatani's patrol teams…

This may very well be the truth, a truth that doesn't rely on coincidence. The only thing Hisoka didn't anticipate was his demise before the Dream Festival began.

Now, the Dream Festival is his last and only hope for resurrection.

If he fails to achieve his plan, he will die completely after today!

No wonder he's so secretive about Tizamo despite being honest about everything else in the dream…

Hisoka is truly a cunning Devil skilled at manipulating people's hearts. If he hadn't been bent on killing me and his identity had given him a good opportunity to choose to stay in Port Pylos, he wouldn't have been easy to lull. Yes, if 1 had played by the book and lacked the goodwill of a high -ranking entity, 1 might have died at his hands.

The Demon of the Nois family also has designs on the cold corpse in the black tomb and wants to use the Dream Festival. Therefore, when Hisoka mentioned the Dream Festival in his dream, he was immediately attacked by the shadow… Among those present, who is the Demon's minion?

Or could it be that the Demon from the Nois family hasn't arrived yet and wants to wait until the end, when the situation is clear, before taking action and completing the harvest?

If it's just a dream projection, without the main body's cooperation, there should be a huge loophole in Hisoka's plan. Where is the loophole?

Trapped in his body, Lumian couldn't stop Hisoka. He watched helplessly as Hisoka ran to the open door of the black ancient tomb.

Wait…

Since the black ancient tomb reminds me of the Samaritan Women's Spring, 1 can try that method…

Lumian acted without hesitation, focusing his attention on his Spirit Body's right hand.

Alista Tudor's remnant aura didn't just permeate his body!

And the Blood Emperor was closely linked to the Samaritan Women's Spring!

Wearing a golden mask, Hisoka's body began to etherealize uncontrollably.

Just as he was about to grasp the hand of the corpse protruding from the black ancient tomb, he suddenly sensed an extremely terrifying, frenzied, and violent aura appearing behind him. It soared into the sky explosively, sweeping through the surroundings.

The crimson moon's glow dimmed, and "Hisoka" Twanaku's body instinctively stiffened, trembling violently.

Splash!

An illusory sound of water echoed from the black ancient tomb, and the golden palm seemed to be dragged back into the tomb by some unknown force.

The feeling of their souls being imprisoned within their bodies dissipated. Lumian hurriedly halted the dissipation of the Blood Emperor's aura.

Although Amandina, Camus, Devajo, and the others instinctively felt fear, the confinement of their spirits and fixed line of sight prevented them from discovering the source of the aura that conquered everything.

Ignoring the search for the origin of the terrifying aura, the fierce-eyed Iveljsta followed his instinctive desire and retrieved an item from his hidden pocket.

It was a palm-sized rag doll, dressed in a black Gothic dress entwined with eerie vines. It had long golden hair and blood-red eyes.

The doll was sinister. Just the sight of it made Lumian's flesh crawl beneath his skin.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The heartbeat in the black ancient tomb intensified, becoming resounding.

Beside the tomb door, "Hisoka" Twanaku felt a chill run down his spine, as if targeted by an evil being.

Instinctively, he recalled something.

Years ago, gravekeepers had found a half-withered evil heart near the black ancient tomb.

The gravekeepers believed that the ancient corpse in the tomb had been lost due to some mutation. After all, the characteristics of its power were the same, and the levels seemed similar. Therefore, they placed the heart back into the tomb.

Just a moment ago, the long-dead heart had begun to beat, but now

it beat stronger and faster!

Not far from Iveljsta, Reaza also made a move.

He produced a mask.

The mask, also made of gold, bore a striking resemblance to the one worn by Hisoka. Varying shades of white and black paint adorned the eyes and face!

The difference between the two golden masks was that the one in Reaza's hand was darker, as if touched by death.

Then, Reaza produced a human skull carved from crystal.

He placed the dark golden mask on the crystal skull's face.

A frigid wind gusted, engulfing the crystal skull in a massive vortex. The crystal skull, adorned with the golden mask, levitated, as if it had grown an invisible body made of wind.

An intense coldness spread in all directions, condensing a layer of frost on the ground.

The man named Devajo reached behind his head and grasped something in his hair.

With a sudden tug, he ripped off his skin, along with his dark gray suit.

Devajo took on a different appearance. He had black hair, brown eyes, a cold expression, and high cheekbones. He was in his thirties or forties, dressed in a white shirt and black pants.

He flipped the human skin in his hand, revealing dense, dizzying blood embroidery beneath.

Devajo opened his mouth and spat out mouthfuls of blood, emitting a strong sulfuric smell.

The blood protruded from the human skin, forming a green-eyed man in a dark gray suit.

With a playful smile, the “man” approached the black ancient tomb.

Lumian quickly scanned the area, his eyelids twitching three times.

He couldn’t help but criticize, Do you all possess godhood-level powers that you can utilize?Although they all seem to be one-time use… Are you bullying me for not having any?

Despite Lumian’s criticism, he quickly recited an honorific name in ancient Hermes.

It was Madam Magician’s honorific name.

However, it failed to penetrate this special and hidden dream.

Lumian wasn’t dejected. His goal wasn’t the black ancient tomb, nor was it the cold corpse or its beating heart.

Now that he knew the whereabouts of Hisoka’s gold, there was only one thing he wanted to do.

Eliminate Hisoka’s dream projection, take away the golden mask, and let him perish completely!

Chapter 689 - 689 Precision

The three items hadn't reached the point where Lumian couldn't be under their gaze simultaneously, and they appeared to last only a few minutes. However, they displayed certain humanoid characteristics, as if they possessed the ability to think and make decisions on their own. If targeted by them, it would be no different from facing weakened Sequence 4 demigods.

Under such circumstances, Lumian naturally wouldn't take the initiative to enter the eye of the storm and help "Hisoka" Twanaku share the burden. He even felt that if his rival was killed by an outsider whom he had personally attracted, it would be cause for celebration. It was inevitable—after all, since he had already killed Hisoka once, he wasn't obsessed with obliterating the other party's resurrection. Having someone else "do it" for him could reduce his spirituality expenditure.

As Lumian gazed at the open tomb door, he retreated a few steps to the edge of the area. He quickly said to Amandina, Camus, Rhea, and Lugano, "Retreat to the edge!"

Upon hearing this order, Lugano's face lit up with happiness. He was the first to turn around and sprint away.

Rhea raised her hunting bow, aiming left and right, taking slow steps back to guard against any attacks. Camus's performance was similar to hers, but he held his custom revolver.

Amandina glanced at the sinister rag doll, the crystal skull adorned with a golden mask, and the green-eyed man with bulging human skin. She felt lightheaded, as if she was too exhausted to control her body.

She instantly realized that these were things she shouldn't come into contact with. What transpired beside the black tomb was beyond her

ability to interfere.

She swiftly turned her back to the ancient black tomb and prepared to follow Lugano to the edge of the area.

At that moment, Lumian, wearing a grayish-white lightning-shaped brooch, glanced at the gravekeepers who were also hurriedly retreating and thoughtfully asked Amandina, “Where’s that figure?”

Amandina ran nimbly, synchronizing her movements with her breathing as she replied, “I don’t know! He’s gone!”

As soon as she finished speaking, the illusory water reverberating in the black tomb ceased.

The palm-sized evil rag doll in the Gothic dress suddenly floated up, escaping Iveljsta’s grasp.

It hovered in midair, with “Hisoka” Twanaku’s figure reflected in its blood-red eyes.

Twanaku, who was about to reach into the ancient black tomb, suddenly felt the golden mask on his face come to life. It first pressed inward, as if it wanted to crush his skull, then pulled outward, as if trying to escape.

Hisoka instinctively raised his right hand to press the golden mask back, only to realize that his sleeve had tightly wrapped around his arm, immobilizing it, almost like it was tied up.

Remembering the fate of a godhoodless individual losing the golden mask at the tomb’s entrance, Twanaku didn’t hesitate. His body became completely ethereal as he transformed into a Wraith.

Then, he vanished from in front of the black tomb and reappeared in the pupil of one of the gravekeepers who had removed their golden mask.

Due to the untimely demise of Hisoka’s physical body and his inability to get “assistance,” Hisoka had no choice but to modify his plan and wait for the three factions vying for the cold corpse in the ancient black tomb to begin fighting.

When the chaos reached its peak and the corresponding items were nearly depleted, he would re-enter the fray and compete for the corpse.

As Hisoka temporarily retreated, the area in front of the ancient black tomb became vacant.

Just as the palm-sized evil rag doll was about to float over, the crystal skull, adorned with a golden mask, flew diagonally, enveloped by a vortex-shaped body formed by the cold wind.

Pale-white flames ignited in its eyes, with a hint of darkness at the center.

In response, illusory black water seeped out of the black tomb's walls, forming a silent river that blocked the entrance.

The river was clearly similar to a stream, but it gave Iveljsta, Devajo, Reaza, and the others a vast and expansive feeling.

Their bodies gradually turned cold, and their lives drained faster, irreversibly.

The evil rag doll, clad in a black Gothic dress, hovered in midair, not attempting to cross the silent river.

The crystal skull, adorned with a golden mask, descended into the river.

The wind vortex that constituted its colossal body howled and expanded, as if transforming into an invisible ferry that floated steadily on the surface of the silent river.

The crystal skull, adorned with a golden mask, steered the ferry against the current, slowly approaching the open door of the ancient black tomb.

The green-eyed man, dressed in a dark gray formal suit made of human skin and blood, stood at the back, observing the scene.

With a smile, he opened and closed his mouth, as if silently muttering to himself.

Almost simultaneously, the crystal skull on the invisible ferry emitted a cracking sound.

The pale-white flames in its eye sockets flickered violently, and tiny patterns appeared on its crystalline surface, causing invisible dust to fall.

The ferry itself alternated between expansion and contraction, becoming extremely unstable as it slowed down on the River of Death.

Lumian paid no attention to the battle unfolding in front of the ancient black tomb. With a single glance, his body ignited with intense white flames.
Swoosh!

He transformed into a flaming spear and crossed a distance of 20 to 30 meters, aiming at the gravekeeper whose body had been possessed by “Hisoka” Twanaku.

Hisoka raised his head, revealing a face with light-brown skin and wild beauty.

Rhea!

The gravekeeper whose body had been possessed by Hisoka was Rhea’s dream projection!

Facing the rapidly expanding reflection, transforming from a speck of white light into a blazing white flaming spear with a burning tip, Hisoka didn’t dodge. He assumed a stance allowing Lumian to attack.

The blazing-white flame spear was incredibly fast. He didn’t have time to raise his hunting bow, aim, or shoot. He only slightly bent his arm.

He felt a searing pain, as if his body and soul were about to be pierced.

Hisoka showed no fear. Instead, he chuckled.

The blazing-white flaming spear passed over his shoulder and landed

behind him, failing to strike him.

The flames dissipated, revealing Lumian.

The Hisoka in Rhea's dream projection's eyes vanished.

Rhea's dream projection spun around, her expression cold and filled with hatred. She raised her hunting bow, aimed at Lumian, and drew the bowstring.

She was a dream projection formed by excessive desires and emotions, unable to control herself.

"Hmph!"

Two beams of white light shot out from Lumian's nose. Before Rhea's dream projection could release an arrow wrapped in lightning, her eyes closed, and she fainted, collapsing to the ground.

Rhea, who had just arrived at the periphery, trembled.

Her eyes reflected the black-robed "Hisoka" Twanaku.

The strength of their souls differed significantly, and Hisoka easily possessed and seized control of Rhea's body.

Taking advantage of the fact that Camus, Amandina, and Lugano hadn't noticed Rhea's abnormality, he changed the direction of his bow and aimed it at Camus.

Sizzle, sizzle, sizzle. The arrowhead became engulfed in bright lightning.

As soon as Rhea aimed her bow and arrow at Camus, he sensed her incongruent state and noticed her abnormal behavior.

As a member of the patrol team with considerable combat experience, Camus looked at Rhea without hesitation, his eyes flashing with blinding lightning.

Simultaneously, Hisoka, who had anticipated this, detached from Rhea's body and leaped into Amandina's beautiful azure eyes.

Two blinding lightning bolts shot out of Camus's eyes and drilled into Rhea's head.

Rhea's eyes bulged, and her mouth gaped open. She leaned back, as if she had suffered a heavy blow, but she couldn't make a sound of pain.

Psychic Piercing!

Camus's Psychic Piercing struck her before her arrow could leave the bowstring, causing her to feel pain from the depths of her soul. Her mind went blank as she stood rooted to the ground.

Poof. The arrow, engulfed in bright lightning, shot out unsteadily, missing Camus and flying a short distance away.

Amandina, with "Hisoka" Twanaku's figure reflected in her azure eyes, felt a chill run down her spine. A dense coldness enveloped her, freezing her soul and rendering her unable to control her limbs.

Behind her, Lumian's figure swiftly materialized.

"Ha!"

Lumian opened his mouth and decisively spat out a faint yellow blob of light.

However, Hisoka had no intention of stopping. He shifted his position with another Mirror Jump.

Thud!

Amandina collapsed to the ground, unconscious.

Compared to Padre Cali, Hisoka clearly excelled in combat, possessing a wealth of experience and outstanding talent.

This time, Hisoka appeared on a water droplet on the surface of a leaf more than ten meters away. He leaped out and looked at Lumian and the others with a smile.

He wanted to use Wraith Shriek to attack Lumian Lee and his

companions in a wide range, rendering some of them unable to fight and temporarily immobilizing the rest.

Upon realizing this, Lumian chose not to teleport outside Wraith Shriek's range. Instead, he withdrew his palms.

A blazing white fireball condensed, the size of the black tomb.

"Ah!"

Amidst a piercing howl of pain, the colossal white-hot fireball flew out.

With a smile, Hisoka vanished from the tree and leaped into Camus's pupils, where blood flowed from his eyes, nostrils, and ears.

At that moment, the colossal blazing white fireball split into dozens of smaller ones.

Accompanying this transformation, the grayish-white Fury of the Sea brooch on Lumian's chest erupted with bright, silver-

white, and innumerable bolts of lightning after he was struck by Wraith Shriek.

The lightning coiled around the incandescent white fireballs and split into dozens, enveloping the area.

Rumble!

Amidst the consecutive explosions, Rhea, Lugano, Amandina, and Camus were sent flying by the wind and waves. They suffered burns and were struck by a net of lightning.

Camus's entire body went numb, and his gaze lost focus. Hisoka, who was attached to him, also suffered an electric shock. Due to his Wraith state, he was severely injured and couldn't undergo a new round of Mirror Jumps.New n***o***vel chapters are published on

Lumian recovered from the Wraith Shriek's assault. He looked at Hisoka, who had emerged from Camus's body, and his lips curled up.

He was using Precision.

The goal was to attack every target indiscriminately and ensure the damage was acceptable.

And when he launched an attack, he didn’t need to consciously control it. The Fury of the Sea would automatically add an electric shock to all his offensive fireballs!

Chapter 690 Death's Symphony

Lumian endured the pain in his soul and eardrums as he activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

His figure abruptly vanished, swiftly materializing beside Camus and Hisoka.

As the residual silver-white electric currents surged into the ground, Hisoka, in Wraith form, was about to escape the paralysis's effects. Lumian activated the black mark on his right chest.

This corresponded to the Spell of Harrumph.

Just as he was about to harrumph, a sudden premonition of danger struck him. He abruptly turned around and stepped back.

A spear condensed from the light of dawn hurtled from afar, spanning a distance of 30 to 40 meters. It flew past Lumian and plunged into the soil behind him, leaving a deep hole as thick as an arm.

Lumian saw his attacker--one of the gravekeepers on the verge of escaping to the periphery.

He was tall, and even in his black robe, his robust strength was evident. A broadsword of light had already condensed in his hand.

A Dawn Paladin? A gravekeeper who received a boon from the Warrior pathway from the black ancient tomb? Lumian wasn't surprised at all. Instead, it only confirmed his suspicions.

What made his scalp tingle was that the other gravekeepers had also turned to face him.Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

The dozen or so bestowed locked their gazes onto Lumian.

Hisoka had already broken free from the paralysis caused by the electric shock. Worried about the Spell of Harrumph's control, he endured the pain and leaped into the eyes of one of the gravekeepers. Then, he broke free and transformed back into a human.

He looked at Lumian, who was dozens of meters away, and his smile widened.

I'm also a gravekeeper now. Harming me means harming the gravekeepers!

Although they won't actively assist me and will try to escape once the tomb is opened using the current method, they will undoubtedly react if you threaten me.

This is one of the reasons I dared to "invite" outsiders to the Dream Festival and guide them here.

Unfortunately, my main body is dead, and I can't obtain the promised godhood item from the Celestial Worthy and Loki to resist the outsiders' high-level powers. For now, I can only wait patiently.

According to the original plan, if something went wrong, I could choose to abandon the corpse in the tomb and help the Nois family's Demon obtain it to aid the Rose School of Thought in exchange for other rewards. Now, I must obtain the corpse and become its "spirit."

Only then can I survive after the Dream Festival and maintain my consciousness and rationality as a demigod-level undead creature.

However, these matters don't concern you, Lumian. You have to face a Guardian and multiple Spirit Warlocks, Gatekeepers, Soul Assurers, Spirit Guides, and Dawn Paladins...

No one below Sequence 4 can withstand the assault of such a Beyonder "army!"

Lumian watched as the gravekeepers' gazes fell upon him. Some of them even condensed broadswords of light. As they charged forward, Lumian tensed up. He reached out, grabbed Camus's shoulder, and teleported away from his current position.

Not long after they vanished, the ground silently collapsed, and pale-white palms extended outward.

Lumian appeared beside the severely injured Rhea with Camus and grabbed her shoulder with his other hand.

Then, the trio swiftly vanished, reappearing beside Amandina, who had awakened from the electric shock.

The distance between them and the gravekeepers widened to nearly a hundred meters.

Lumian clamped his feet around Amandina's arm, releasing the accumulated spirituality and strength in his body.

His condition returned to normal, and he activated the black mark on his right shoulder once more.

This time, the four of them teleported to Lugano, who was self-healing.

As Lumian continued to flash, some of the gravekeepers' Beyonder powers failed to hit them. The remaining ones were forced to change directions repeatedly, preventing them from closing the distance.

Just as Lugano was about to tell his employer, "Let's escape quickly. Teleport us back to Tizamo," he saw Lumian toss Camus and Rhea towards him.

Thud!

The three of them collapsed together, followed by Amandina.

"Ha!"

Lumian spat out a pale-yellow light, enveloping the four of them.

Lugano, Amandina, and the others lost consciousness. With their souls' strength, it would take them at least a minute to regain consciousness without external stimulation.

With this done, Lumian teleported away once more, preventing

himself from being targeted by the gravekeepers whose abilities were effective at this distance.

His body vanished, and the gravekeepers, including Hisoka, lost sight of him.

Lumian silently materialized behind the gravekeepers, appearing in front of a palm tree.

Leaning against the rough trees, he retrieved an item from his Traveler's Bag.

It was a blackened bone flute with blood-colored holes.

Symphony of Hatred!

Lumian's lips curled up as he brought the sinister bone flute to his lips with a smile.

Almost simultaneously, "Hisoka" Twanaku felt a strong premonition of danger. He abruptly turned around, spotted Lumian, and locked onto him. He activated his Devil form, transforming into a pitch-black monster nearly three meters tall with curved goat horns and bat-like wings.

Hisoka instinctively abandoned his Wraith form, forsaking the plan of possessing Lumian Lee and restraining him. He found it impossible to remain calm under the aura capable of conquering everything and reflexively fled from the other party.

Accompanied by Hisoka's movements, the gravekeepers also turned.

Lumian's lips touched the black bone flute, emitting a bloody scent, and he played the first note.

The smile on his face widened.

In the real world, facing such a large group of Sequence 7, 6, and 5 Beyonders, he could only teleport Lugano and the others back to Tizamo. However, this was the Dream Festival. Apart from the few who had recently arrived and could remain lucid, the others were either fused with their dream projections or allowed the

corresponding dream projections to move independently.

Dream projections were formed from excessive desires and emotions, and they would lose control during the Dream Festival.

Realizing that Hisoka's dream projection could also become a gravekeeper and maintain a certain level of lucidity and rationality, Lumian believed that it wasn't that the gravekeepers didn't have dream projections, but that they had fused with them. Using their uniqueness and their self-control in their lucid state, they barely suppressed them.

Such targets were the Symphony of Hatred's favorite prey.

It could inflict an attack on the weakness of an enemy's mind or body who heard the corresponding melody. Those with unstable minds might experience symptoms akin to madness. Those with psychological issues might have latent problems triggered. There's even a chance that excessive desires could cause them to explode on the spot. Individuals with illnesses or old injuries would inevitably face severe consequences. Those less fortunate might find themselves trapped in extreme misfortune.

Faced with the dream projections—against the gravekeepers who might have fused with them, Lumian felt that the Symphony of Hatred could be miraculously effective, igniting 100% of the targets' excessive desires and emotions!

Therefore, he chose to make such an attempt. If it failed, he would teleport back to the unconscious Amandina and company, hold onto them, and return to Tizamo.

A melodious and sorrowful melody sounded, but "Hisoka" Twanaku, who was too late to stop Lumian, instinctively burned the two curved and mysterious goat horns on his head.

Mental Shock!

Lumian's emotions swelled, and the melody he played was filled with unmistakable pain and hatred.

He also saw many spirits, as well as the gravekeepers wielding

broadswords of light, rushing towards him in various ways.

He continued playing the Symphony of Hatred.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Apart from the unconscious Rhea's dream projection, all the gravekeepers, including Hisoka, halted with contorted expressions.

They heard illusory explosions in their bodies and minds, and their eyes instantly turned bloodshot. They lost control of their bodies, and their ears were filled with buzzing sounds.

They couldn't see, hear, or think. Their bodies and souls had been severely injured.

The same went for "Hisoka" Twanaku. In essence, he remained a dream projection formed by extreme emotions and desires.

However, as he suffered the Symphony of Hatred's weakness attack, he also ignited Lumian's emotions and desires from the impact.

Lumian's mind buzzed, and blood vessels bulged in his green eyes. A viscous liquid reeking of blood flowed from his nose, and his internal organs seemed to suffer varying degrees of damage.

The Symphony of Hatred fell to the ground with a thud.

More than a hundred meters away from Lumian, near the forest, the unconscious Amandina, Lugano, and company's faces contorted, as if they were trapped in different nightmares.

Devajo, weakened by spitting out blood to the human skin, silently approached the edge of the forest, ready to escape at any moment. However, he heard the Symphony of Hatred's melody.

He froze, vomiting copious amounts of bright red blood that reeked of sulfur. His entire being weakened, and he nearly lost control.

Iveljsta watched as the evil rag doll emitted a silent shriek, transforming the crystal skull with its golden mask and its invisible "ferry" into a pale-white goat. Just as he was about to approach the

silent river in front of the black ancient tomb in delight, his pale-white face instantly flushed red, and dark-red blood flowed from the corners of his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears.

He had also suffered the explosion of emotions and desires, but he wasn't a dream projection, nor had he fused with one. Therefore, he was only severely injured, unlike the gravekeepers and Devajo, who were pushed to the brink of death.

Reaza, who had maintained his lucidity and rationality without a dream projection, panted heavily, as if caught in a struggle of his own. His cold eyes became rather lost.

lightsNovɛl ƈom In the area where the black tomb resided, only the evil rag doll, the human skin man, and the pale-white goat with the golden mask remained unaffected by the Symphony of Hatred.

Relying on his Ascetic endurance, Lumian quickly recovered from the severe damage caused by the explosion of desire and emotions.

Gazing at Hisoka and the others, who had yet to recover, he smiled and extended his right palm.

A colossal white-hot fireball swiftly condensed, engulfed in silver-white lightning, and launched.

Upon reaching the gravekeepers' area, it split into nearly 20 smaller lightning fireballs that blasted at "Hisoka" Twanaku and the gravekeepers.

Precision!

Rumble!

Blazing white flames and silver-white lightning surged simultaneously. Lumian watched as the gravekeepers, already on the brink of death, collapsed like straw, their lives extinguished one after another.

This is what Culling means… Lumian closed his eyes and took it in.

Rumble!

Apart from the unconscious Rhea's dream projection and the Guardian struggling to hold on, the gravekeepers were all dead. Only "Hisoka" Twanaku, his body still emitting silver- white lightning, remained.

His eyes were bloodshot, on the verge of losing control.

At that moment, he saw a flaming spear wrapped in silver-

white lightning fly over and collide with the side of his nose.

Amidst a sizzling sound, the blazing white flaming spear pierced through his skull, igniting his brain and flying behind him, leaving behind raging silver-white electric snakes.

As the flames dissipated, Lumian's figure appeared, his back facing "Hisoka" Twanaku.

The Devil-form Hisoka's eyes glazed over. He swayed a few times before collapsing to the ground.

Weakness Investigation!

Cull!

Chapter 691 Pursuer

As the blazing white flames rapidly dissipated, Lumian turned his back on "Hisoka" Twanaku and fixed his gaze on the Guardian, who was swaying unsteadily more than ten meters away. With a chuckle, he declared, "Before, I needed my team's help to defeat you. But now, I can take you down alone."

His words were aimed squarely at Hisoka.

Collapsing to the ground, Hisoka's consciousness gradually faded as he caught Lumian's remark. He instinctively tried to clench his fists, but lacked the strength to do so.

A desperate gasp escaped his throat, his pupils dilating and losing focus.

Hisoka cursed himself for choosing Devil Transformation over Wraith Transformation when confronting Lumian Lee. If only he had opted for the latter, he could have disrupted Lumian's attempt to play the blackened bone flute with Wraith Shriek. Alas, he had no way of knowing the specifics, only able to sense the presence and source of a malicious intent. Given Lumian Lee's ability to infuse bullets, fireballs, and other attacks with electric shocks and target weaknesses with precision, Devil Transformation had seemed the more versatile choice, offering protection against various contingencies.

As for why he hadn't summoned a barrage of Sulfur Fireballs, even at the cost of mutual destruction—Hisoka sensed the considerable distance separating them. By the time he could conjure and launch ten to twenty fireballs, Lumian Lee would have already finished playing the flute. With teleportation at his disposal, Lumian could effortlessly evade the clustered assault. Moreover, spells like Language of Foulness had a limited range.Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

Left with no other recourse, "Hisoka" Twanaku could only resort to Emotional Shock and Desire Detonation, targeting Lumian Lee's weakness. He hoped that after both of them sustained grievous injuries, their recovery rates would be comparable, granting him an opportunity to mount a different response.

However, despite the pain, blood loss, and abnormal look in his eyes, Lumian Lee managed to maintain his balance. Fighting through the debilitating effects, he executed a precise area-of-effect bombardment enhanced with electric shocks. The effort inflicted fresh wounds upon himself and temporarily paralyzed him.

"Gasp…"

Hisoka Twanaku mustered his remaining strength to drag Lumian Lee down with him in a final, desperate gambit of losing control. But his life force had reached its limit. Darkness engulfed his vision as his consciousness slipped into oblivion, a maelstrom of indignation, resentment, and agony consuming him.

The colossal Devil's body spasmed a few times before falling still.

Hisoka's last glimmer of hope for revival was extinguished.

He was well and truly dead.

As Lumian spoke, he drew his revolver and trained it on the nearby Guardian.

Disoriented and reeling, the Guardian instinctively condensed a broadsword of light. Dropping to one knee, he plunged it into the ground before him.

The sword merged with the earth, erecting an impenetrable invisible wall.

As a gravekeeper merged with a dream projection, this Guardian had no effective defense against the Symphony of Hatred. His companions, the Spirit Warlocks and Soul Assurers, caught off guard by the attack, couldn't pull him into a dream in time to avoid the melody's direct impact. He could only rely on his own physical and spiritual fortitude to withstand the detonation of desire and emotion.

For Beyonders with dream projections, this assault posed a mortal threat.

Before the gravekeeper could regain his bearings, another incandescent white fireball wreathed in lightning struck him, triggering a violent explosion.

Fortunately, his boon as a Guardian spared him the fate of his companions, who were culled like stalks of wheat. Without it, he would have been unable to mount even a token defense on pure instinct.

Lumian's green eyes took on an iron-black cast as he stood tall and squeezed the trigger.

Bang! Bang!

Twin yellow bullets, trailing blazing white flames and silver lightning, slammed into a single point on the invisible wall.

Rumble!

The already destabilized wall shattered. The Guardian could only watch helplessly as a searing white spear enveloped in lightning hurtled towards him, piercing his chest and sending him flying.

Another Cull, another bout of digestion.

Clinging to the last shreds of consciousness, the Guardian scattered the broadsword of light into countless minuscule fragments.

These luminous shards coalesced into a hurricane that raged in all directions.

Hounded by the storm of light, the blazing white flaming spear soared twenty to thirty meters before finally coming to rest.

As the flames ebbed away, Lumian straightened his posture, clad in a white shirt, black vest, dark trousers, and a golden straw hat.

Behind him, the bright and terrifying Hurricane of Light gradually petered out, thinning the ground. The corpses of the fallen

gravekeepers and "Hisoka" Twanaku lay broken and strewn about.

Reeling from the Symphony of Hatred's influence, his injuries abnormally severe, Devajo's gaze flicked from the bodies littering the ground to Lumian, who stood facing him from afar. His already pallid complexion turned even more ashen.

What in the world is happening?

Is he even human?

Devajo, in whom thoughts of vengeance had fleetingly stirred following the blow, swiftly abandoned any such notions. Igniting the sulfurous blood he had spat out with azure flames, he hastily retreated into the forest.

He wanted to escape!

In any case, he could offer no aid to the human skin the archduke had crafted through ritual. Lingering in the vicinity of the black ancient tomb would only expose him to greater peril.

Lumian paid no heed to Devajo's flight. Though weakened, his spirituality remained abundant. Transforming once more into a blazing white flaming spear, he traversed dozens, nearly a hundred meters in a blink, coming to rest beside Lugano, Amandina, and his companions.

The four Beyonders lay unconscious, spared the Symphony of Hatred's melody—the effects were minimal, a mere nightmare, but still wracked them with pain. Their contorted expressions gradually eased as they roused from their comatose state.

Seeing them open their eyes and regain their faculties, Lumian instructed, "Leave this place at once and return to Tizamo. Find somewhere to lay low."

The conflict unfolding before the black ancient tomb was not something Lugano and the others could influence. Lumian himself dared not approach, so he intended to send his four temporary allies to safety.

He had previously consented to Camus and Rhea accompanying him, believing the former's Psychic Piercing and the latter's Lightning Arrows could synergize effectively with his own abilities to counter Hisoka's dream projection, Reaza, and the others. Amandina's power to compel others into dreams was also quite useful. Moreover, following her was the only way to approach the black ancient tomb without falling prey to the invisible figure's attacks. To his surprise, Hisoka had displayed combat prowess far exceeding Padre Cali's. With the area unsealed and devoid of preset traps, not only had Camus, Amandina, and the rest failed to render aid, they had ended up hindering each other and becoming a liability.

Reflecting on his two prior battles—the attempt to capture Hisoka alive and the confrontation with Padre Cali—Lumian grasped a fundamental principle.

At times, there was strength in numbers. But in other situations, solitude was preferable. Facing different foes under varied circumstances demanded adaptability, lest one court disaster by adhering to a fixed approach.

Lumian recalled a maxim Emperor Roselle had once shared, as explained by his sister Aurore:

In warfare, as in the flow of water, there are no constant conditions.

"We can return to Tizamo? Even me?" Lugano couldn't contain his pleasant surprise. Instinctively, he extended his remaining hand, pressing the flickering light against Lumian's wounds.

As a Doctor, Lugano was unable to treat a patient's internal organs directly. He needed to open the cavity and make contact with the injured site. It was akin to performing surgery.

Lumian nodded and replied,"Indeed, but you'll need to remain under Camus and Rhea's supervision."

He planned to linger a while longer, to see if he could aid Iveljsta Eggers, a member of the Church of The Fool's temperance faction.

It was the duty of a Tarot Club's Minor Arcana card holder.

Of course, Lumian had no intention of venturing into the area immediately fronting the black ancient tomb. He might well perish before even realizing what had struck him. His aim was to ascertain whether he could sway Reaza and the others to interact with the corresponding godhood items, or utilize the golden mask upon Hisoka's corpse to some end.

At that moment, Devajo, who had only just arrived in Tizamo that very night, had already vanished back into the forest, retracing his steps.

lightsNovɛl ƈom Mustering his dwindling strength, he started sprinting.

As he ran, Devajo abruptly halted, casting a perplexed gaze towards the path's bend, obscured by the trees.

Beneath the dim, crimson moonlight, a short figure approached.

It was a boy of seven or eight years, garbed in blue pajamas speckled with yellow stars and a matching nightcap. His plump face and the short blond hair peeking out from under the cap were smeared with cream, blood, biscuit crumbs, cake fragments, and sundry other substances. His brown eyes blazed with intense hunger and desire.

In his mouth, a vibrant, cold, and slick viper's tail writhed and shook as he gulped it down, segment by segment.

The boy's cheeks bulged as he chomped vigorously.

In the next instant, he caught sight of Devajo.

A wave of intense, terrifying malice flooded Devajo's mind.

…

Lugano, having secured permission, was on the verge of informing Camus, Rhea, and Amandina of their impending return to Tizamo when a petrified scream rang out from the forest.

They froze in their tracks.

Mere seconds later, a pitch-black monstrosity, towering nearly three meters tall with curved goat horns, came barreling out of the forest. It charged from the direction of Tizamo, making a beeline for the black ancient tomb, panic etched in its every movement.

That man just now? He's a Devil too… A minion of the Nois family's Demon, perhaps? Could the green-eyed figure fashioned from human skin be a manifestation of the Nois family's Demon, projected into the Dream Festival? Lumian's gaze shifted to the shadowed forest at the Devil's back, an ominous feeling washing over him.

He made a snap decision and addressed Lugano, Amandina, and the others.

"Grab hold of me!"

Lugano swiftly returned to Lumian's side, seizing his arm.

Camus, Rhea, and Amandina followed suit, startled but mimicking Lugano's action.

The five of them winked out of existence, reappearing in close proximity to Hisoka's corpse.

The instant Amandina's form finished coalescing, her eyes flew wide.

Voice quavering, she turned to Lumian and said in a deep voice, "T-that figure… it's appeared once more…"

Chapter 692 Death before Rebirth

Appeared once more? Lumian motioned for Lugano and the others to loosen their hold and inquired of Amandina, "Where is he?"

Amandina's sky-blue eyes locked onto the entrance of the black ancient tomb situated at the terminus of the motionless river.

"He's sitting cross-legged over there."

As the words left her lips, Amandina shut her eyes and turned away. Minuscule protrusions emerged from her previously flawless and supple skin, each on the cusp of rupturing and giving rise to something unknown.

This reaction stemmed from her glimpse of the phantasmal, stagnant river and the ashen-white goat adorned with a golden mask, grappling to traverse the shallow waters.

The pallid goat's limbs, devoid of all fur, were extensively decomposed, exuding a nauseating yellow pus that swiftly encroached upon the remainder of its body.

Under the sway of the Symphony of Hatred, Reaza's wan and frigid countenance surrendered its final vestige of color.

The decay gradually consumed the back of his hand, neck, and cheeks, lending him the appearance of a long-deceased cadaver.

This decelerated the deterioration afflicting the pale goat's body.

Concurrently, the still river conjured by the black ancient tomb grew ever more illusory, its breadth and depth visibly diminishing.

The rag doll, shrouded in a sinister Gothic gown, drifted onward once more, shadowing the retreating river of quietude.

Abruptly, it pivoted to regard the green-eyed man composed of human flesh and blood, who, coincidentally, reciprocated its gaze.

Loathing, enmity, and lunacy erupted from the sinister cloth doll's crimson eyes. Its black Gothic attire, ensnared by baleful vines, ruptured into myriad holes, scattering fabric shreds and leaving it in tatters.

The green-eyed man in the dark gray suit seemed unscathed, yet as he advanced, he imprinted two footsteps saturated with vivid red blood, the aroma of sulfur swiftly dissipating.

One stride, two strides, three strides. Each step emblazoned bright red footprints, while dark fluid seeped from his human skin.

Iveljsta Eggers at last recovered from the onslaught of emotions and cravings unleashed by the Symphony of Hatred. He cast a glance at the tattered evil cloth doll and retrieved an object from his concealed pocket--a palm-sized puppet.

The puppet appeared to have been stitched together by a young child's hand. Its limbs were askew, its legs reaching its posterior, and its visage daubed with red, yellow, and white pigments, evoking the image of a circus clown.

Iveljsta infused the misshapen puppet with his spirituality.

It shimmered into intangibility and vanished from his grasp, materializing within the dark brown eyes of the Eggers family scion before vaulting into the green orbs of the man clad in human skin.

This caused the figure in the dark gray suit to stiffen and decelerate.

Lumian dared not prolong his gaze and hastily averted his eyes.

As Amandina closed her eyes and turned away, the minute protuberances adorning her skin receded.

Intrigued, she stole a glance at the monstrosity, suspected to be a

Devil, hurtling towards the green-eyed man, seemingly on the precipice of succumbing to terror. She swiftly surveyed her environment.

Her eyes then fell upon the colossal Devil's incomplete carcass sprawled on the ground and a charred bone flute that had tumbled beneath a palm tree.

"There, there's something over there," she whispered, tugging at Lumian's sleeve.

Could it be a potent artifact discarded by a gravekeeper?

Lumian peered over and murmured to Amandina and the others, "Feign ignorance. Refrain from touching or even nearing it."

He had purposely abandoned the Symphony of Hatred there, deferring its retrieval.

In such circumstances, wielding it anew was far more prone to endangering his allies than exploiting an adversary's vulnerability. As a Reaper, he had no need to employ the Symphony of Hatred to pierce the target.

Thus, he feigned a lack of opportunity to reclaim it, hoping an enemy would attempt to turn it against him.

If a similar scenario unfolded, Lumian and the three godhood items would be the sole survivors capable of weathering the ensuing cataclysm unleashed by the Symphony of Hatred. At that juncture, he would whisk Amandina and her companions away via teleportation. Upon later return, he anticipated discovering the enemies' lifeless husks and acquiring fresh spoils of war.

It was a trap he had laid in passing.

As Devajo, transformed into a colossal Devil, retreated to the proximity of the human-skinned man and drew near the ebbing river of silence, a short silhouette walked out from the forest trail--a boy of seven or eight years old, clad in endearing sleepwear and a nightcap. His yellow hair and countenance were begrimed, besmirched with grease, dregs, and blood.

Catching sight of the boy, Lugano experienced a piercing agony in his absent right hand.

"Man... Man... Man...." He gnashed his teeth in dread.

Observing his abnormal reaction, Camus and the others inquired in astonishment, "What's wrong?"

Tracing Lugano's line of sight, Amandina, Camus, and Rhea spotted the boy.

The former swiveled to Lumian in bewilderment, "Isn't, isn't that your godson? Why is he here? It's very dangerous!"

"No, he's not in danger." Camus recollecting Kolobo's exaggerated reaction upon encountering Louis Berry and his godson. He recalled some of the words of his companion from the Fate pathway and said with a solemn expression, "We should be the ones in danger."

Without waiting for Amandina and Rhea's misgivings, Camus regarded Lumian and knitted his brow.

"What do we do?"

As a godfather, you should have a way to control your godson, right?

Lumian's gaze flitted to Ludwig pursuing the Devil, then to the corpses and Hisoka's Devil form strewn on the ground. He replied with a grin, "It's not a big problem."

There was ample food here to form an effective seal!

As to why Ludwig had trekked to the black ancient tomb, Lumian roughly had an idea.

The man and woman who had freshly arrived in Tizamo tonight and taken lodging at the Brieu Motel were likely minions of the Nois family's Demon. By some means, they maintained lucidity in this special dream. Once the Dream Festival commenced, they left the motel and hastened towards the black ancient tomb.

During this process, they passed the second floor, inducing Ludwig to

catch wind of delicacies. He forsook the insipid fare and shadowed them closely, matching the pace of a seven- or eight-year-old child.

At that moment, Ludwig's brown eyes were fixed solely on Devajo, the Devil.

"Why isn't it a big problem?" Amandina wore a look of skepticism.

Lumian smiled and indicated the massive Devil who had fled in proximity to the green-eyed man.

"He's here to hunt down that monster."

"Hunt? Him?" Amandina glanced left and right in confusion.

A seven- or eight-year-old boy in azure star-spangled sleepwear, pursuing a pitch-black Devil almost three meters in height, with curved goat horns and bat wings sprouting from his back? This is indeed a dream, right?

As he neared the green-eyed man formed of human flesh and blood and the black ancient tomb, Devajo sensed a tinge of respite. Yet, his mind remained haunted by visions of his tongue roasting, his brain scooped out by a soup spoon, and his arms and legs gnawed by the boy.

What kind of monster is this? Devajo watched in abnormal fear as the boy strode towards him.

At that juncture, Amandina, who had stolen a glance their way, exclaimed, "That figure is looking at the man in the black robe."

Iveljsta? Lumian peered over but discerned nothing amiss with Iveljsta Eggers.

Amandina averted her gaze, taking a moment to regain her composure before looking again.

She quickly explained, "He's not looking at the man in the black robe. He's looking at the Devil!"

Amandina abruptly halted, withdrawing her gaze and furrowing her

brow.

"That figure seems to utter something… I don't know the language, but I understand the meaning."

"What did he say?" Lumian pressed.

Amandina dared not look towards the black tomb. She organized her thoughts and said,

"Basically, it means:

"Everyone in the world knows that crawling insects can spin cocoons. After the cocoon fractures, butterflies take wing.

"A common insect can transform into a fluttering butterfly and alter its form of life. Why?"

Unknowingly, Amandina's voice shifted, as if swayed by some influence.

She paused for a moment before answering the question in a low, cold voice, "Death before rebirth. Ascension into godhood…"

Before Amandina could finish her sentence, Devajo, in his Devil state, stiffened.

He beheld his flesh swiftly decaying, fragments sloughing off to bare ghastly white bones.

Within seconds, the Devil lost consciousness and crumbled into a mound of putrefying flesh and bones.

The remains fused as if alive, intertwining to form a human-nove(l)bi(n.)com

sized cocoon.

It rapidly shattered, and a human-headed avian monster draped in white plumage emerged.

After absorbing all the flesh and blood, the monster expanded

significantly, its form undergoing a transformation.

The lower portion of its head rapidly elongated and expanded, as if possessing a body of its own. The flesh at its "waist" melded with the avian body, mantled in pale-yellow feathers.

"Hahaha!" Devajo, with innumerable white feathers sprouting from his eyes, nostrils, visage, and fingertips, erupted into laughter.

He slapped the white-feathered bird body below and soared skyward, as if riding it.

Devajo ascended higher and higher, gradually turning ethereal. Then he spiraled downward and entered the black ancient tomb.

Witnessing this, Lumian glanced once more at the entrance of the black ancient tomb but still could not perceive the unseen figure Amandina had mentioned.

His heart stirred as he took two steps forward and retrieved the peculiar golden mask from Hisoka's corpse.

Chapter 693 Golden Corpse

Lumian looked at the gold mask in his hand, white and black paint covering the eyes and face. Without hesitation, he put it on.The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

A cold sensation quickly seeped into his skin, and the weight of the gold felt unusually real.

His mind spun as he gazed through the mask at the entrance of the black ancient tomb and the end of the still river, which had mostly receded.

This time, he finally saw a slightly indistinct figure.

The figure wore a strange rusted iron crown and a dark robe with peculiar patterns. Its skin was milky-white, and its eyes were so dark they seemed to hold the entire night. A pale-white beard fluttered around its mouth and chin.

The old man sat cross-legged, hands tucked into his sleeves. He leaned against the open door of the black ancient tomb, his expression cold and impassive, like a statue.

As Lumian looked over, the old man met his gaze. His dark eyes seemed to reflect Lumian, as if numerous phantoms had appeared.

Splash!

Behind the old man, an even more illusory, nearly lightless water wave rippled in the void. The colossal figure in blood-stained armor roared angrily, attempting to approach.

Lumian's right palm instantly burned.

The old man in the rusted iron crown and strange robe withdrew his

hands from his sleeves.

His hands had pale, dark skin that was still smooth. The backs were cracked, each crack either covered in white feathers stained with pale yellow oil or dripping with decaying yellow pus.

Upon seeing this, Lumian's thoughts vanished, and he felt as if he were descending into endless cold darkness.

A familiar burning sensation emanated from his left chest. Combined with the burning, frenzied, violent sensation in his right palm, it awakened Lumian's consciousness, allowing him to find a lifeline in the darkness.

Using this opportunity, Lumian regained the ability to think. He saw nearly black blood vessels protruding from the dark eyes that seemed to hide the entire night. They were tainted with madness that threatened to bury and end everything.

The eyes closed, and the illusory ripples and colossal figure behind the old man vanished.

Lumian's vision began to clear, and his perception of the outside world fully returned.

A sharp pain coursed through him.

Lumian glanced down at his right hand and realized disgusting bumps bulged from his wrist to the back of his hand. His hair seemed to have thickened and turned whiter.

He flipped his palm over and saw that the mark left by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor's remnant aura had completely surfaced. It was a vivid red.

Surrounding these marks was decaying flesh, seeping pus, and pale-white skin.

Lumian frowned.

Despite the Blood Emperor's remnant aura being fully activated, Amandina, Lugano, and the others around him didn't show any signs

of panic or fear. He didn't sense any extremely frenzied or violent thoughts either!

Wait…

The figure in the blood-stained armor seems to be Blood Emperor Alista Tudor…

This place feels similar to the Samaritan Women's Spring… Could the figure sitting at the tomb's entrance be the Underworld Daoist mentioned by the Armored Shadow?

Why are he and the Blood Emperor appearing here again? Shouldn't they be at the source of the Samaritan Women's Spring? Are the two connected?

Did the Underworld Daoist discover the Blood Emperor's residual aura on me and conveniently seal it? Even if I fully activate it, I won't be able to unleash the crazy Red Priest's aura?

Uh, I don't know if it's because of Mr. Fool's seal or because I'm wearing Hisoka's golden mask, but the Underworld Daoist didn't directly allow me to undergo immortal ascension, nor did he force me to lose control…

Lumian quickly grasped his predicament. As the immortalized Devil entered the black ancient tomb, the situation inside changed once more.

The tomb, which had fallen silent, emitted a rustling sound, accompanied by the clang of metal colliding with stone.

The next instant, a golden figure materialized beside the Underworld Daoist at the tomb's entrance.

The figure was covered in gold, with long limbs and a golden mask streaked with white and black paint.

It belonged to the same type as the one on Lumian's face and the pale-white goat's head!

The golden-masked figure stiffened, as if its limbs were dead. Relying

solely on the strength of its waist, it sat up from lying flat like a corpse.

Eyes closed, it turned its head towards the pale-white goat closest to it.

The pale-white goat's aura instantly turned ordinary, making it unable to walk on the still river. It rapidly decayed, sank, and quickly vanished.

The golden figure, eyes still closed, turned its head to the tattered, sinister cloth doll.

The eerie vines on the cloth doll's Gothic dress suddenly came alive, coiling around the doll, rendering it powerless and immobile.

The corpse's head turned to the slowly walking green-eyed man.

The green-eyed man, his eyes reflecting the ugly puppet, suddenly halted. With a bang, his body transformed into a bloody piglet.

The ugly puppet landed beside the piglet, motionless, as if it had turned into the most ordinary and common puppet.

Ludwig's eyes lit up as he jogged over.

He leaped up like a massive frog and pounced on the bloody piglet. He grabbed its head and bit down.

Amandina closed her eyes in shock.

Louis Berry's godson turned out to be such a monster?

The pig wailed fiercely. The golden-masked corpse closed its eyes, turned its head, and faced Iveljsta Eggers.

Lumian's forehead throbbed. He wanted to break through the sudden paralyzing pressure and teleport over to rescue Iveljsta, but he hesitated.

Previously, he had restricted himself from approaching the black ancient tomb. At most, he would take a glance or two. Now, he didn't

want to break this self-imposed "rule." Violating it meant immense risk.

However, Iveljsta was from the Church of The Fool.

Just as Lumian made his decision, the golden corpse turned its head again, but Iveljsta remained unchanged. He was still severely injured, his aura weak.

What's going on? Why did the cold corpse in the ancient tomb spare Iveljsta? The Underworld Daoist didn't do anything to him when he looked at him… Lumian was puzzled as the corpse's golden mask faced Reaza.

After the pale-white goat vanished, Reaza summoned an undead creature to envelop him and blinked to the edge of the ancient tomb area. He was about to escape into the forest, but before he could do anything else, his body froze.

Pop, pop, pop. Huge, wet warts erupted from Reaza's face, neck, and the backs of his hands, accompanied by disgusting mucus.

The vice-captain of Port Pylos's patrol collapsed, rapidly disintegrating into countless bloody warts that squirmed in the gaps of his thin suit.

The undead creature summoned by Reaza transformed into thin human skin and gently landed.

Lumian's scalp tingled as he watched. Finally, he broke free from the paralysis caused by the corpse sitting up. He said to Lugano, Amandina, and the others,"Grab hold of me!"

He was about to teleport back to Tizamo!

At that moment, the corpse's golden-masked face turned towards him.

Lumian's body turned cold. Ignoring Camus and company, he immediately activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

Suddenly, he saw the cold corpse's face, its eyes peeking out from under the golden mask with white and black paint, open.

It was a pair of cold, icy-blue eyes.

Icy-blue eyes? Lumian was taken aback, finding them familiar.

These are…

These are Naboredisley's eyes!

Dammit, why is Naboredisley here? Why is he a cold corpse in the black ancient tomb?

What right does He have to bestow the Beyonder powers of the Prisoner pathway?

It can't be real. It's not Naboredisley, but its eyes resemble…

Amidst Lumian's thoughts, he saw a smile in the icy-blue eyes, a smile of playfulness, understanding, and certainty.

This was a stark contrast to the pained expressions in the icy-

blue eyes on Hanth Island.

Suddenly, a half-withered, violently beating dark-red heart soared from the golden corpse's hand and flew out of the completely disintegrated still river.

A short figure pounced on the heart like a frog and grabbed it. It was Ludwig, his mouth filled with blood.

The smile in the golden corpse's icy-blue eyes grew more relaxed.

He nodded at Lumian and willingly fell back to His original position. He had no intention of seizing the opportunity to leave the black ancient tomb.

With a splash of illusory water, the tomb's open door gradually closed.

Seated by the door, the figure suspected to be the Underworld Daoist vanished.

Wh— Naboredisley's corpse doesn't seem willing to leave the tomb…

How did He end up lying in there? Lumian couldn't figure out the reason, so he looked at Ludwig and realized the boy was holding a half-withered dark-red heart to his mouth.

Lumian wanted to stop him but lacked the ability. The surrounding corpses didn't seem to attract Ludwig as much as the half-withered heart.

Clang!

The tomb door slammed shut, causing the entire area to tremble.

Lumian and the others witnessed dream fragments one after another, and their surroundings blurred.

After a brief daze, Lumian realized he was lying in the middle of an unlit street. The crimson moon was bright in the sky, casting its light.

This was inside Tizamo.

Chapter 694 A "Deal"

The Dream Festival came to an abrupt end? Lumian jolted upright, realizing he was holding the strange golden mask he had received from Hisoka.

For a moment, he couldn't tell if he was still dreaming or if the mask had somehow followed him from the dream into the waking world.

Lumian turned to look behind him.

Reaza and Maslow, who had died during the Dream Festival, were lying in the middle of the street, just starting to regain consciousness.

Taking advantage of the moment while they gathered their wits and slowly got to their feet, Lumian focused his attention on their luck.

He could see clear signs of death on both of them. Their fates were about to undergo a rapid transformation, irreversibly tainted by darkness.

Reaza's luck, in particular, was changing even more swiftly and dramatically, like a river suddenly plunging over a cliff to form a waterfall.

At that instant, Reaza remembered what had happened to him during the Dream Festival. Uncontrollable fear washed over his pale, cold face.

Pop, pop, pop. Huge, mucus-oozing warts erupted all over his body, just as Lumian had witnessed in the dream.

Seeing Reaza's eyes turn frenzied and his body start to disintegrate, Lumian raised his free right hand, pointing it at Reaza's mouth as if it were a gun.

A condensed bullet of blazing white flame shot from Lumian's fingertip, shattering Reaza's teeth as it entered his mouth.

Boom!

Reaza's head split apart inch by inch, engulfed in roaring flames.

The vice-captain of Port Pylos's patrol team collapsed heavily, his body covered in a thin black suit made up of countless slimy warts.

Lumian turned to Maslow, who was shocked by Reaza's grotesque transformation and terrified by the death he had experienced in the dream. Calmly, Lumian asked, "Who was he working for?"

As he spoke, Lumian tucked the golden mask into his Traveler's Bag and checked to make sure the Symphony of Hatred and his other belongings were still there.

Everything was accounted for, including the food he had thrown at Ludwig.

Maslow paused for a few seconds before answering, "We're all part of the Numinous Episcopate."

Numinous Episcopate… Lumian chuckled. "Do you still believe in Death?"

Wasn't Death already dead?

Maslow considered the question for a moment before saying, "Reaza told me that Death is on the verge of returning. There have been signs recently that prayers are being answered again."

Hearing Maslow's words, Lumian nodded pensively.

"Which faction of the Numinous Episcopate do you belong to?"

As far as he knew, the Numinous Episcopate was divided into numerous factions. There were the Royals, led by the descendants of the Eggers family, who sought to restore the Balam Empire's rule; the Artificial Death faction, which had somehow recreated Death itself; and the less influential Repose and Underworld factions.

"We're from the Royal faction," Maslow admitted.

"Did you infiltrate the patrol team on purpose?" Lumian asked nonchalantly.

Maslow shook his head.

"No, Admiral Querarill has been secretly working with us."

Admiral Querarill, the de facto ruler of Matani, is closely tied to the Numinous Episcopate's Royal faction… Combined with the Church of Earth Mother and the remaining Intis faction, this must be what Franca meant by dancing on three eggs. Judging by the situation, Reaza wasn't a traitor after all… It's no wonder Admiral Querarill didn't send backup. If the Numinous Episcopate and the Church of The Fool can't handle the problem, it won't matter how many people he sends… His mind now clear, Lumian asked, "Was participating in this Dream Festival a direct order from the Royal faction's upper ranks?"

"Yes." Maslow glanced at Reaza's body, now unrecognizable as human, and said, "Apparently the order came straight from the Empress."

Empress… The Pale Empress of the Numinous Episcopate's Royal faction? Lumian instinctively scanned his surroundings.

A sudden thought struck him. He drew the straight sword he had bought in Port Santa, picked up Reaza's clothes, and quickly searched through the items he had left behind.

There was no sign of the death-corroded golden mask or the crystal-like skull.

Even though the skull had turned into a goat in the dream and the golden mask had sunk into the tranquil river, Lumian reasoned that it had still been a dream, after all. No matter how unusual it was, it was ultimately just a dream. When someone died, they died in reality, but the same might not hold true for objects. It was similar to how some of the food Ludwig had eaten in the dream had reappeared in the Traveler's Bag.

Even if the items were going to disappear, it would have to happen later. For now, they should definitely return to the real world!

However, Reaza had nothing on him.

A chill ran down Lumian's spine. Lowering his voice, he asked, "Termiboros, did you notice anything?"

Termiboros's majestic voice echoed in Lumian's ears."Do you only now know fear?"

"Tch." Lumian felt a lingering sense of dread, but he didn't let it show. "Was the Pale Empress watching?"

Termiboros replied in a deep tone, "It's not just Her."

Her? The Pale Empress is an Angel? Lumian composed himself and turned his attention back to Maslow.

Just as Maslow was wondering why Louis Berry was talking to himself, the other party suddenly asked, "Why did Reaza kill you?"

Maslow stayed quiet, offering no response.

Lumian chuckled. "Did you betray him?"

Maslow's lips trembled, but he didn't say a word.

Lumian smiled casually and said, "It doesn't matter. If you don't want to answer, don't. You won't be alive much longer anyway."

Maslow's face turned ashen as he considered the ramifications of his death during the Dream Festival.

Lumian nodded, then added, "Go on and do whatever you want. Just don't do anything bad. It'll make you die sooner."

With that, Lumian glanced at Reaza's corpse, which was starting to produce the Beyonder characteristic. Greed welled up inside him, but he suppressed it with an Ascetic's self-

control.

He decided that regardless of whether Reaza had been a traitor or not, his Beyonder characteristics should be left for Camus and the Matani patrol team.

To stop himself from giving in to greed and with a grave matter coming to mind, Lumian's expression shifted subtly. He activated the black mark on his right shoulder and teleported away.

Maslow stared at the street that had been empty a moment before and the lights that had been stirred by the explosion, looking as though his soul had left his body. With a dazed and despondent expression, he turned and walked toward the forest outside Tizamo.

…

In the second-floor suite of the Brieu Motel.

The instant Lugano woke up, he noticed he couldn't move his right forearm.

It's okay, it's okay. I'll be fine after a psychiatric treatment or two. The people in Tizamo can be healed by Mass without needing Beyonder effects… Lugano tried to console himself as he endured the pain in his right forearm.

Just then, he heard hurried footsteps coming from the living room outside his door.

Crack!

The door to Lugano's bedroom flew open. In the crimson moonlight pouring through the window, Ludwig appeared, dressed in blue pajamas with yellow stars and a matching nightcap. He was clutching a half-withered, blood-stained, dark red heart.

Badump! Badump!

Lugano could hear his own heart pounding, and he felt like his soul was about to abandon his body out of sheer terror.

Had Ludwig come back for seconds because he had woken up early and hadn't gotten his fill during the dream?

A moment later, Lugano saw a figure float in through the doorway.

lightsNovɛl ƈom The figure was semi-transparent, wearing an elaborate, opulent, black dress. There was no head on its neck, just a clean cut. In its hand, it held four identical blonde heads with red eyes and beautiful features.

"Return…" "It"… "To"… "Me"…

The four heads uttered different words in ancient Feysac, forming a complete sentence.

Ludwig's image was reflected in their eight crimson eyes.

"Mine!" Ludwig ran to Lugano's bed and spun around, looking like he wanted to bring the heart to his mouth, but he seemed to hesitate.

The four heads held by the translucent figure spoke one by one, "Idiot"… "Eating"… "Your"… "Own"… "Brain"…

"That"… "Is"… "My"… "Heart"…

"If"… "You"… "Don't"… "Return"…

"I"… "Will"… "Turn"… "You"… "Into"… "Pig"…

Almost at the same moment, Lumian materialized next to Ludwig, taking in the scene and hearing the corresponding words.

Lumian glanced at the strange-looking lady, then at Ludwig, who wore a resolute expression as if he would defend his food to the death. After a moment's consideration, Lumian said,

"Madam, perhaps you could try trading him other spiritually rich materials for it."

In Ludwig's current state, Lumian didn't dare try to take the item from him by force.

The lady in the intricate black dress, holding four blonde, red-

eyed heads, went silent.

After a short while, one of her heads spat out a gleaming gold coin and held it between its teeth.

A gold coin? You want to buy it with a gold coin? Ludwig doesn't care about money… Lumian was about to point this out to the lady when he suddenly realized the gold coin looked familiar.

It was a Loen gold coin, worth 1 pound.

Uh… Lumian glanced over at Ludwig.

Ludwig wavered.

After a few seconds, he finally held out his hands and gave the half-withered dark red heart to the woman's head.

The blonde, red-eyed head let go, dropping the gold coin into Ludwig's hand. Quickly, it sank its teeth into the half-withered dark red heart.

The translucent lady stepped back and vanished from Lugano's bedroom.

Ludwig hastily popped the Loen gold coin into his mouth, as if trying to hide it in his stomach. But then he seemed to think better of it and fished it back out. He wiped it off on his pajamas and carefully put it in his pocket.

Just as I thought, it's the same as Jenna's lucky gold coin… A Loen gold coin closely connected to Mr. Fool? Lumian nodded to himself, comprehension dawning.

A twinge of disappointment ran through him.nove(l)bi(n.)com

Two people close to me have gotten lucky gold coins. Why don't I have one?

Chapter 695 Kolobo's Worry

Lumian snapped out of his daze and glanced at Ludwig, who had regained his composure. Turning to Lugano, who was shrinking into a corner of the bed, he said, "We'll head back to Trier tomorrow and find a psychiatrist for you—a real, genuine one."

This decision wasn't made out of concern for Lugano, but rather something that had long been on Lumian's agenda. 007 should have already provided feedback in the early morning hours. Lumian, Franca, and the others would discuss how to handle the Mirror Person, Moran Avigny.

Moreover, Lumian intended to seize this opportunity to extract Termiboros's power and obtain a Fate Appropriator boon.

His most significant gain from the Dream Festival was the substantial digestion of the Reaper potion.

He knew the Southern Continent was filled with conflicts and combat opportunities, which would help him digest the Reaper potion. However, he never anticipated that less than two weeks after advancing, the potion's digestion progress would skyrocket, much like a mercury thermometer's column shooting up when touching a living person's armpit.

Culling Padre Cali, Hisoka's dream projection, and nearly 20 others bestowed with strength equivalent to Sequence 6 or Sequence 5 made Lumian acutely aware of life's fragility. It was like straw under a scythe, constantly collapsing with a simple cull and scattered by the wind.Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Furthermore, after experiencing the acting of the first four Sequences, Lumian felt the Hunter pathway had a distinct characteristic of bringing calamity. Reapers were no exception.

With this acting, he believed the Reaper's destructive characteristics that brought calamity were more apparent.

At the same time, Lumian greatly benefited from an enemy's destruction.

As his mind raced, he summarized his first Reaper acting principle: "Culling is about destroying the target and reaping a harvest for yourself."

If I had three or four more similar culls, I wouldn't need to comprehend other acting principles and put them into practice to digest the Reaper potion. However, such good fortune is rare… Lumian sighed silently.

This required gathering more than ten Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 Beyonders with obvious flaws he could exploit without interference.

Meeting each of these conditions was challenging, let alone all of them simultaneously:

First and foremost, whether humans consumed potions or gained superpowers through boons, their pathways and Sequences differed in their flaws. They couldn't all be burdened by dream projections like the gravekeepers in the Dream Festival, where emotions and desires exploded at the slightest trigger. Even if the bestowed were deeply influenced by evil gods and had mental issues to some degree, exploding emotions and desires weren't inevitable. Some might simply have mutated personalities.

Secondly, Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 Beyonders were uncommon, especially the latter, who formed the backbone of various factions. Even without factions, they could create their own teams and dominate a region like the Pirate Admirals. Gathering more than ten to twenty such Beyonders was no easy task.

Moreover, if a major incident caused the first two conditions to be met, the Beyonders' common flaws might not be countered by Lumian and his mystical items.

Finally, during the battle, a Sequence 5 Beyonder, a key member of

the various factions, might draw the attention of the corresponding demigod.

A mysticism event like the Dream Festival, with its inherent limitations and natural problems, was unusually suitable for Lumian. Perhaps there had only been one such event in the Northern and Southern Continents in nearly a millennium.

Sigh… Lumian couldn't help but sigh again.

At that moment, Lugano was thrilled to hear he could return to Trier at dawn. He quickly replied, "Alright, alright!"

Back in Trier, his boss had more trusted companions. He probably wouldn't need to take care of Ludwig anymore!

Lumian thought for a moment and glanced at the curtains emanating the crimson moonlight. Casually, he asked Lugano, "Have you saved enough for the Harvest Priest potion formula and the corresponding ingredients?"

Lugano was taken aback.

"No, I'm still a bit short of the potion formula's price."

Most of his current "savings" came from Lumian, amounting to around 15,000 verl d'or. Based on his knowledge, a Sequence 7 potion formula usually cost between 16,000 to 20,000 verl d'or.

Lumian nodded pensively.

"I'll keep an eye out for the Harvest Priest potion formula and the necessary ingredients for you. If you're short on funds, I'll help cover the difference. Consider it a share of the spoils from this adventure."

Lugano was stunned momentarily before tears welled up in his eyes, blurring his vision.

I made the right choice!

My future truly lies with the boss!

With a hint of unease, he asked, "But that was a dream adventure. Can the gains be brought back to the real world?"

Lumian didn't elaborate. He retrieved Hisoka's golden mask from his Traveler's Bag.

It's possible… Some special items are possible? Lugano felt a sense of relief.

Lumian turned to Ludwig, who seemed to have acquired a cherished toy, and nodded slightly.

"You may go back to sleep."

Ludwig, wearing a blue nightcap, blinked and reached out to touch his stomach.

Groan. Groan. His stomach churned violently.

Lumian laughed self-deprecatingly and took out the portion of food Ludwig had eaten in the dream, including almond pistachio cream cake, liquor-infused chocolate, éclairs, and more.

After Ludwig began his "quiet" meal, Lumian returned to his room and conjured a blazing white fireball. He unfolded the letter, picked up a fountain pen, and penned a letter to Madam Magician.

This took precedence over dealing with other matters.

As he wrote, Lumian pondered something.

If I killed all the elders of the gravekeepers, would the primitive tribe still possess the ability to attack and eliminate the dead?

Or are they still alive in the real world, waiting to drag those already dead down with them when they attack Tizamo?

Or would the deceased find another way out, like the fire that had engulfed the Twanaku family?

…

On the third floor of the police headquarters in Tizamo Town.

Camus snapped out of his reverie and instinctively glanced at the temporary bed opposite him. He noticed the blanket had been lifted, and Kolobo was nowhere to be found.

Am I still dreaming, still in the Dream Festival? Camus sat up cautiously and heard a sound near the door in the corner.

In the darkness, under the crimson moonlight seeping through the curtains, he saw Kolobo crouched there, curled up and trembling.

Camus lowered his voice and gently asked, "What's wrong?"

Kolobo's voice quivered as he replied, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!"

The sky is falling? Camus found it amusing and looked at Kolobo.

"Did you misinterpret your premonition?"

How could the sky possibly fall?

…

Outside Tizamo, at the edge of the primitive forest.

Maslow, his face adorned with white paint, slowly advanced into the forest.

It was a terrible feeling to know about his impending yet unavoidable death.

He regretted betraying the Numinous Episcopate, but there had been no choice. Shortly after arriving in Tizamo, he had been secretly controlled by Twanaku, who had returned for a "vacation." He had become a fallen one monitoring the situation of Padre Cali and Tizamo.

Subsequently, although he knew Twanaku had been killed, the other party's dream projection appeared in his dream, telling him the matter wasn't over.

Maslow advanced step by step, yearning to return to the forest and become nourishment for a tree, just like his ancestors.

As he walked, he spotted nearly 20 people emerging from the nearby barracks.

The men seemed to sense something amiss and prepared to inspect their surroundings.

At that moment, Maslow felt the night suddenly brighten.

Subconsciously, he looked up at the sky and saw a burning boulder descending with a crimson flame tail.

In an instant, the burning boulder filled Maslow's vision.

It crashed into the area between the forest's edge and the barracks.

Rumble!

The wind and dust stirred by the meteorite swiftly filled the area, rising into the air and dissipating, obscuring the crimson moon and the starlight.

Rumble!

The entirety of Tizamo seemed to experience a violent earthquake. Buildings shook violently, and glass shattered.

Several houses with weak foundations quickly collapsed, burying their occupants.

With great difficulty, Camus regained his balance. Once the building stabilized, he rushed to the shattered window and looked out.

He saw the "sky" was gray and murky, so close he could touch it if he jumped up.

The "sky" has really fallen… For some inexplicable reason, this thought flashed through Camus's mind.

…

In the second-floor suite of the Brieu Motel.

Clutching the letter and fountain pen, Lumian watched the smoke and dust outside with amusement, sensing the "heavy blow" not far away.

"How direct…" he sighed sincerely.

A meteorite had descended from the sky!

From the looks of it, the catastrophe had likely eliminated most of the deceased.

Lumian turned to look at the door, which had swung open due to the building's shaking, and saw Ludwig still focused on eating.

Nothing from the pile of food had fallen to the ground.

After sending Lugano out to assist the injured, Lumian returned to his room and continued writing.

Upon completion, he immediately set up a ritual and summoned the "doll" messenger.

Just as the "doll" messenger emerged from the expanding candle flame, it suddenly shrank.

Slowly, she glanced to her left and then to her right. After confirming there was no problem, she tiptoed and cautiously approached Lumian's letter.

lightsNovɛl ć̓om Lumian had never seen the "doll" messenger act like this before. He watched in confusion and amusement as she picked up the folded letter like a thief. She waved at him and quickly retreated into the candle flame.

Lumian chuckled and shook his head, no longer pondering the "doll" messenger's actions.

At the very least, it seemed harmless, and he had several things to do.

Lumian left the bedroom, entered the corridor, and went to the first

floor. He grabbed the motel owner, who had come out to check on the situation after waking up, and asked, "Which room are the lady and her companion who arrived tonight staying in?"

Chapter 696 Feathers

In Twanaku's house in Tizamo Town, Amandina woke up amidst the violent shaking of the building.

She stood up groggily and looked out the window. The sky had turned gray and was pressing down, completely obscuring the crimson moon and stars.Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

In the near-absolute darkness, Amandina turned and cast her gaze not far away. Dressed neatly, Robert rose slowly, his sluggish movements suggesting he was struggling to adapt to the lightless environment.

When the tremors in the ground and buildings finally ceased, Robert used his Spirit Vision to spot Amandina. After a moment's hesitation, he asked, "Are we awake?"

He recalled that before entering the Dream Festival, he and Amandina had used a date as an excuse to rendezvous. When they ended up in the special dream, they temporarily parted ways—one stayed put while the other went to Saint-Sien Cathedral.

Glancing at the suddenly noisy street outside, Amandina thought for a few seconds before replying, "Probably… but I don't know what's going on."

As Robert recalled the dream encounters, both fell silent. Eventually, he asked in a deep voice, "What happened to you in the end?"

Amandina suddenly chuckled. "Nothing much."

Robert closed his mouth again. With her night vision, Amandina looked at him, smiling with mixed emotions. "Is there anything else you want to ask?"

After a long pause, Robert said, "What did you experience afterward?"

Taking in the silence of the house, Amandina finally whispered, "I saw the one who granted me powers."

"The one who granted you powers?" Robert asked, surprised.

Amandina laughed. "We didn't actually fall asleep after touching the black ancient tomb. We only truly fainted after receiving the powers."

"How is that possible…" Robert looked incredulous.

Amandina didn't try to convince him. Instead, she muttered, "Upon acquiring superpowers, one immediately falls into a coma or slumber. When they wake up, they completely grasp that power. Their spirit and flesh undergo a certain transformation…

"Is this considered a low-level death before rebirth?"

"What are you talking about?" Robert's confusion grew.

It was completely incomprehensible!

Amandina's eyes darted around as she smiled.

"That person told me. Perhaps it's a form of guidance."

"Guidance…" Using his Spirit Vision, the only way to ascertain her condition in the darkness, Robert gazed at Amandina.

He felt his fiancée was different, as if she had grown up overnight.

Amandina wanted to recount the encounter in detail as usual, but swallowed her words.

Sighing, she said, "Aren't you going to check on Padre Cali? He might not have long to live."

Snapping out of his reverie, Robert blurted out, "He fled to the ancient tomb and was killed?"

"He's indeed dead," Amandina confirmed.

Robert's expression shifted, but he didn't inquire about the murderer's identity. After a moment's thought, Amandina said, "Before you go to

Padre Cali, I need to tell you something.

"The desire you felt when you first faced him didn't come from your heart. He prayed to a Demon through a ritual and obtained the power to influence you."

Robert's eyes widened, his mouth gaped, but no sound came out.

Without further ado, Amandina strode past him towards the staircase.

Pressing down on the railing, she paused and tersely acknowledged, "Let's find an excuse to annul the engagement. I can accept other things about you, but I can't accept how my fiancé allowed me to follow Louis Berry alone to find the black ancient tomb under those circumstances.

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone about your matters. Those who knew in my dream won't tell either."

Robert spun around, his gaze fixed on the staircase as Amandina descended step by step, the darkness engulfing her spirituality's light.

Leaving Twanaku's house, Amandina stepped onto the street.

She glanced at the dark, low sky, the sporadic lights on both sides, and caught a whiff of the dusty air.

With her hand covering her nose, Amandina made her way towards the manor, her steps gradually quickening.

…

On the third floor of the police headquarters in Tizamo Town, just as Camus felt Kolobo's trembling subside, as if he had composed himself, painful curses echoed from the next room.

His heart stirred as he lit a candle and pushed open the slightly deformed wooden door. Inside, he saw the Feysacian, Loban, lying on the ground, clutching his knee and screaming in agony.

The member of the Tizamo patrol team had woken from the earthquake-like commotion and tried to get out of bed to find cover,

but one leg strangely lost strength, accompanied by intense pain, causing him to collapse.

Before Camus could organize his thoughts, Rhea's voice echoed beside him.

"Don't worry. It's the mass hysteria mentioned in the investigations. You'll recover after going to the corresponding Mass."

Having cooperated with Camus to investigate the abnormalities in Tizamo, Loban quickly understood Rhea.

Cursing, he struggled to his feet, retrieved a military flask from under his pillow, and downed a few gulps of liquor.

After drinking until color returned to his face, Loban sighed with relief.

"I feel my knee has recovered a little. Sometimes, alcohol is more useful than Mass!"

Breathing a sigh of relief, Camus turned to Rhea, realizing his teammate's expression had turned colder.

After what just happened, her dream projection has completely vanished. Have the emotions and desires returned to her body? Will the special dreamscape still exist, and will there be a Dream Festival next year? Camus instantly made many connections.

At that moment, Rhea said to him, "Let's go out and see if we can save some people. Those who died during the Dream Festival shouldn't be the only ones injured."

lightsNovɛl ƈom Taken aback, Camus replied, "Okay."

Joy welled up in his heart, sensing Rhea hadn't undergone any fundamental changes due to the return of her emotions and desires.

…

Following the Brieu Motel owner's instructions, Lumian arrived on the fourth floor and opened the corresponding room's wooden door.

The near pitch-black darkness receded under a blazing white fireball's illumination, revealing everything to Lumian.

Some items had fallen due to the tremors, tables and chairs had shifted, and a small amount of dust had sprinkled from the ceiling. The window was tightly shut, but the glass had shattered. Apart from this, there was nothing noteworthy, and no sign of humans.

Scanning the area, Lumian found no trace of the man or woman.

Frowning, he muttered to himself, According to the original Dream Festival's rules, death in a dream doesn't equate to immediate death. Did they leave Tizamo after waking up? I planned to take care of their corpses and inherit their Beyonder characteristics…

Lumian didn't believe the man and woman couldn't leave just because the door and window were tightly shut. After all, they were two Mid-Sequence Beyonders, and one was even a Devil. Perhaps they had special abilities to resolve that problem.

As Lumian contemplated searching for traces and chasing after them to eliminate the deceased on behalf of the Dream Festival, he casually examined the room's various details. Suddenly, his pupils dilated, and his eyes froze.

He saw a feather lying quietly under the recliner by the window

—a white feather stained with light-yellow oil!

Lumian's scalp tingled as he silently took two steps back into the corridor.

Like Reaza, were the man and woman already dead and had undergone an abnormality? What about their corpses?

Disappeared?

Would humans who had ascended to godhood exhibit different behaviors after leaving the Dream Festival?

With a blazing white fireball floating behind him, Lumian scrutinized the room, filled with questions. Perhaps the man and woman's

"corpses" were still here, but he couldn't see them.

Cautiously entering, he approached the recliner, sensing nothing unusual and discovering no signs of the formless object. Lumian retrieved the Mystery Prying Glasses and the Eye of Truth from his Traveler's Bag, donning them one by one.

He still couldn't see the man and woman. His vision was filled with chaotic darkness, a dark river, oily feathers, and imprisoning darkness.

Upon returning to reality, did they immediately undergo immortal ascension and leave this place? Lumian pondered for a few seconds before activating the black mark on his right shoulder, teleporting to a spot in the forest at the special dream's periphery.

As a Hunter, Lumian had memorized the correct route and environmental characteristics after Amandina led him to the black ancient tomb. After nearly fifteen minutes, he arrived at an area where numerous tree roots protruded from the ground, resembling blood vessels.

However, the place where the black stone-like ancient tomb should have stood was empty.

Does that black ancient tomb only exist in dreams and can't be encountered in reality? Lumian speculated seriously. So the Pale Empress and the other Angels can't descend personally and can only send people to participate in the Dream Festival?

As his thoughts raced, Lumian's gaze darted back and forth across the land corresponding to the black ancient tomb. It was indeed a little different from its surroundings—no intertwined tree roots protruded from the ground, and it was flat and stoneless.

Approaching thoughtfully, Lumian took out his straight sword and used it as a shovel, attempting to dig into the soil. Just as he dug a small pit, his eyelids twitched.

Buried in the dark brown soil were two white feathers stained with light-yellow oil!

Taking a slow breath, Lumian dug deeper.

Before long, a palm-sized, dark, slightly moist, and sticky soil lump came into view.

Chapter 697 Madam Magician's Explanation

As Lumian gazed at the peculiar soil, he couldn't help but recall the scene of Hela retrieving the Samaritan Women's Spring.

After a moment of contemplation, he retrieved gold bars and coins from his Traveler's Bag and ignited a blazing white fireball in his palm.

As the flames surged, the gold gradually melted under the control of his spirituality, forming a small golden box.

Lumian then used the flames as a blade to fashion a cover for the box.

Once the gold had cooled and solidified, he used the straight sword as a shovel to transfer the palm-sized clump of soil into the box before closing the lid.The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

After stowing away the golden box, Lumian noticed that the straight sword in his hand had become rusty and decayed.

Rather than being alarmed, Lumian was delighted. He muttered to himself, "That soil is indeed magical…"

This was one of his gains from the Dream Festival.

Despite not obtaining the Beyonder characteristics of Reaza and Maslow, and the mysterious disappearance of the man and woman who served the Demon, Lumian had finally acquired something of value.

He continued searching the area but found no other traces. Left with no other option, he teleported back to the second floor of the Brieu

Motel.

By then, much of the smoke and dust caused by the meteorite had dissipated. The crimson moon's light cast an eerie glow over Tizamo.

Lumian noticed a folded letter on the master bedroom's desk, with a thin brass-like metal sheet on top.

Madam Magician's response is swift tonight… Lumian picked up the brass plate and examined the mysterious patterns and words etched upon it, but he couldn't discern their meaning or purpose. He couldn't even sense the corresponding spirituality glow.

Shaking his head, Lumian temporarily set aside the brass sheet. With a gentle grab of his right hand, he conjured a floating incandescent white fireball.

Under its glow, he sat down and began reading Madam Magician's reply.

"There's no doubt about it. From what you've described, the corpse in the dream tomb belongs to Naboredisley.

"As for Naboredisley, there's a high likelihood that it's an alias of Devil Monarch Farbauti or a real name that can be used under certain circumstances.

"Don't you find it strange that Naboredisley, as a Devil Monarch and one of the eight ancient gods who once ruled the world, can bestow superpowers from the Prisoner pathway?

"This abnormality is quite normal for the ancient gods.

"They didn't advance according to the paths of the divine, but were born directly for some unknown reason. Their characteristics were a mix of Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristics from other pathways, or even more than one. Considering Demon Warlock Burman's situation, you can see how unhinged and violent the ancient gods were.

"There's a significant difference between ancient gods and subsequent true gods, but this doesn't mean that They are weak. They might even be stronger.

"Among them, although Farbauti is the Devil Monarch, He blends in Sequence 1 Abomination from a neighboring pathway. Therefore, His state is one of the best among the eight ancient gods. He has also become the only ancient god alive in Their original form.

"In fact, if Farbauti were to gather the ingredients of the Devil pathway as a Sequence 1 Abomination and complete the deity-ascension ritual to advance, He would be equivalent to a true god now—a stronger true god. He wouldn't be an ancient god described by words like madness, cruelty, violence, and bloodlust.

"Of course, as the Devil Monarch, even if He had done so, He will inevitably exhibit the characteristics of I am the Abyss, the Abyss is Me, experiencing strong influence from this pathway. As for the state of a Devil, you should be well aware. Therefore, Farbauti is also one of the two or three most unhinged ancient gods. This doesn't contradict His better state.

"That's all for the ancient gods. That's not my primary purpose in writing.

"In short, the one in the dream tomb is indeed Naboredisley, the other Naboredisley in the form of an Abomination."

Is that so… Ancient gods possess Beyonder characteristics of neighboring or non-neighboring pathways, and Naboredisley has already displayed the ability to separate different desires and emotions… Lumian no longer harbored any doubts about the cold corpse's ability to bestow Wraith powers.

After some thought, he reread Madam Magician's letter.

"You mentioned that Naboredisley took the initiative to lie back in the dream tomb and continue in a dead state. This is a very rational choice for Him.

"Furthermore, I must say it's a good death. Continue in this dead state until after the apocalypse!

"You don't need to know the exact reason. To put it simply, you can see that Naboredisley, or the Devil Monarch Farbauti, is in a terrible

state. As an Abomination, His demise is more suitable than Him living. It's better for both Him and this world.

"Of course, this can't be a simple death. He chose a good place to die. This will allow His corpse to enjoy peace and tranquility, safe from the Mother Tree of Desire's harassment.

"Now, you should understand. That entity had written a story and created a coincidence, allowing you to come into contact with Naboredisley in the Feynapotter Kingdom. Then, you went to Hanth Island and the New City of Silver. His goal was to send information to Naboredisley in the dream ancient tomb, allowing Him to continue sleeping and be a corpse instead of being resurrected. Simultaneously, this also prevents various factions from trying to obtain the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic.

"Tsk, as expected of a remnant from ancient times. He's the protagonist who personally ended the rule of the ancient gods. The secrets and various key matters He knows perhaps exceed all of us combined.

"Apart from Him and the Evernight Goddess, who else would know about mysticism festivals like the Dream Festival, which you forget when you wake up? Who would have thought that the corpse was part of the Devil Monarch?

"The substantial digestion of the Reaper potion, the acquisition of the golden mask, and the formation of the corroded soil should be the rewards He promised.

"Remember to give me that corroded soil. It's useless to you, but I can help you exchange it for something. It might also present an opportunity, but I can't discern what it is for now.

"And with that golden mask, you can boldly venture into the Underworld when the opportunity arises in the future. Otherwise, the living won't be able to stay in the Underworld for even a second.

"Those golden masks come from the fallen Death, the ancestor of the Eggers family. They were originally created to assist Death's direct descendants in entering and exiting the Underworld and Death's

kingdom.

"Their purpose is twofold. Firstly, to protect the wearer from the corrosion of the aura of death. Secondly, to transform the wearer into an undead creature. Their bodies no longer have vital points, while their minds and consciousness can maintain their living state.

"Do you understand why Naboredisley's corpse wore the Death mask? If it didn't, it would have died completely in the dream tomb, with no possibility of revival.

"Similarly, knowing the golden mask's functions and the state of the corpse, you should understand why Hisoka put on the golden mask. It allows a corpse to mistake Hisoka for one of its kind without affecting him. It also protects Hisoka from the corrosion of the tomb's aura of death.

"The first phantom that experienced an Ascension activated the corpse's sleeping spirit under the golden mask's protection, but without awakening His consciousness. In this state, Hisoka can use His resemblance to the corpse to make the corpse mistake Him for His spirit and accept His dominance. Isn't this style familiar? That Celestial Worthy is indeed the strongest god who seeks out errors and exploits loopholes.

"By the time the second phantom that underwent Ascension entered the dream ancient tomb, the corpse's consciousness would have been basically awakened. Even if Hisoka were still alive, he wouldn't be able to complete his grand plan.

"That's the gist of the matter. The Numinous Episcopate's purpose is the ancient tomb itself, the golden mask that has endured the corresponding corrosion in the tomb for over a millennium. The Nois family's archduke, a collaborator of the Rose School of Thought, desires Naboredisley's corpse, while the temperance faction seeks to retrieve Miss Messenger's heart. Their goals were actually different, yet they fought to the death. I have to say, it's quite humorous and ironic.

"Of course, this is mainly because they can't trust each other, and there's indeed a possibility that it's a situation where the winner takes

all. Does Miss Messenger want to consume Naboredisley's Abomination body? Of course She does!"

Miss Messenger… The lady who used the lucky gold coin to buy the heart from Ludwig? Why is she called Miss Messenger? It's impossible for Her to be someone's messenger, right? She's an Angel! Uh… Mr. Fool's messenger? So that's why there's a lucky gold coin closely related to Mr. Fool… Lumian was sharp, and he quickly made a guess.

He continued reading the last part of the letter.

"I forgot to mention that wearing that golden mask also poses problems.

"As you can imagine, once you transform into an undead creature and don't have any vital points on your body, the purification of sunlight and lightning will be fatal to you. Moreover, if a living person wears that golden mask for too long, they will truly become deceased. When that time comes, once the mask is removed, their mind and consciousness will be unprotected and they will die immediately.

"Let me see what else I haven't mentioned…

"Yes, you said that the Underworld Daoist and Naboredisley's corpse had looked at Iveljsta Eggers without doing anything to him. That gave me some ideas.

"It's highly likely that the one who helped bury Naboredisley's Abomination corpse and construct the dream grave was the ancestor of the Eggers family, the deceased Death.

"After He went mad, perhaps He interacted with the Underworld Daoist, who guarded the river and the Blood Emperor's afterimage. And for some reason, He agreed to Naboredisley's request for help, causing His Abomination corpse to slumber in a special dream.

"Therefore, be it the Underworld Daoist or Naboredisley's corpse, even if they only have their instincts left, they will still treat the Eggers family's bloodline specially."

Chapter 698 Aftermath

Considering Madam Magician's conjecture, Lumian suddenly felt that the deceased Death, the ancestor of the Eggers family, was indeed legendary.

After becoming a true god, He seemed to have gone mad. He incited the Pale Disaster. His demise created the Berserk Sea, isolating the Northern and Southern Continents for more than a millennium. He had a connection to the mysterious Underworld Daoist. He buried the Abomination corpse of the Devil Monarch. He left behind the massive Balam Empire with numerous descendants. The golden mask He created for His descendants to enter and exit the Underworld is still being fought over to this day…

Lumian retrieved the golden mask he had obtained from Hisoka from his Traveler's Bag. He caressed its cold surface and sighed silently.

This is a true deity's creation…

With a sigh, Lumian read the last two pages of the lengthy letter.

"Back to yourself. The Underworld Daoist mark on you only seals the influence of the Blood Emperor's remnant aura on the outside world. It doesn't eliminate its existence.

"In other words, you can no longer use Alista Tudor's remnant aura to scare others. However, it can still be useful when you need to verify your corresponding 'identity.'

"There are pros and cons to this situation. Although you've lost your potent means of intimidating others, you don't have to worry about attracting the attention of certain high-ranking individuals by using the Blood Emperor's remnant aura. Furthermore, the Underworld Daoist mark might have a special effect in the future.

"Emperor Roselle once said that since you can't resist, try to enjoy yourself."

Lumian turned his right hand over and looked at his palm. Compared to the decay in his dream, only a small pale-white mark remained. Beneath the pale-whiteness, a faint red scarred mark could be seen.

What special use can it have? To intimidate the undead? Lumian muttered to himself in puzzlement, momentarily at a loss.

At the end of the letter, Madam Magician wrote:

"This year's Dream Festival may have ended, but the special dream and ancient tomb haven't disappeared. The Dream Festival will still happen next year.

"When the time comes, the Demon from the Nois family and His Rose School of Thought allies, who confirmed the ancient tomb's situation this year, might continue their attempts. They might even bring more targeted and powerful items, Beyonders, or projections.

"Not only do we have to stop them when the time comes, but we also have to make preparations in advance.

"Furthermore, for the special dream to still have dream projections as guardians, we can't relocate the entirety of Tizamo. Therefore, we have to do something for the people here.

"Of course, after completing the last task, the subsequent problems of the Dream Festival will have nothing to do with you unless you become an Angel by then. But isn't that too far-fetched?

"The last thing you need to do is enter that special dream with the half-finished brass charm I sent with the letter and perform the following ritual before the black ancient tomb.

"The complete process of the ritual is:

"..."

After carefully reading the ritual's description, Lumian assessed his spirituality and stowed away the half-finished brass charm.

Then, he retrieved the golden box containing the peculiar soil, unfolded the letter, and penned a reply:

"Honorable Madam Magician,

"I will follow your instructions and complete the ritual.

"This is that strange soil…"

Lumian paused and added:

"Remember to send back the box containing it."

It was made of gold!

Recalling Lugano's promise of compensation and Ludwig's growing appetite, Lumian, who was quite wealthy, felt the need to be frugal.

He didn't need to worry about the potion formula, Beyonder ingredients, or mystical items for the time being, but he needed to provide for two people now!

Furthermore, gold played an important role in mysticism. Franca had been accumulating gold in recent months, hoping to forge a golden body for "Armored Shadow" Chen Tu.

After writing the reply, Lumian set up a ritual and summoned the "doll" messenger.

The messenger remained cautious and furtive, not uttering a word.

What did it sense? Lumian was about to inquire when he suddenly thought of a possibility.

Could it be because Miss Messenger, whom Madam Magician mentioned, had been here?

They are both messengers, so they might know each other and be related. And that person is an Angel…

Lumian shut his mouth and watched as the "doll" messenger retreated into the candlelight with the golden box.

He extinguished the candle, stowed away the ritual-related items, and returned to the living room. He sat across from Ludwig, who still had half his food left untouched.

Lumian looked at Ludwig, who wore a blue pajama hat with yellow stars, and smiled.

"Lend me something."

Ludwig raised his head, his mouth moving as he inquired with his eyes.

Lumian maintained a friendly smile.

"The gold coin from earlier."

Ludwig lowered his head and focused on eating a piece of beef jerky, as if he hadn't heard Lumian.

"It'll only take half an hour. Yes, half an hour. I won't cause any harm. I'll definitely return it to you as it was," Lumian said with a sigh. "I've been providing for you for a long time, giving you food and drink…"

At this point, Lumian suddenly stopped. After a few seconds, he continued, "Isn't that worth lending me your lucky gold coin for half an hour? When have I ever lied to you?"

"Often," Ludwig mumbled.

He looked up at Lumian for a few seconds before retrieving the Loen gold coin from his pocket.

"Twenty minutes, tops."

"Deal!" Lumian swiftly accepted the lucky gold coin with a radiant smile.

To conserve his spirituality, he refrained from teleporting. Instead, he moved swiftly through the shadows and arrived at "Hisoka" Twanaku's house.

Robert and Amandina had already left.

Lumian found a spot and leaned against the wall. Using Cogitation, he quickly drifted off to sleep.

…

In the special dream, in the primitive forest.

Using the shadows in the darkness, Lumian reached the edge of the dream and found himself in the chaotic zone.

After some thought, he left the shadow and donned the golden mask crafted by Death.

Amidst the cold corrosion and heavy pressure, Lumian saw a dream fragment of a black ancient tomb and the path leading to it.

He quickly reached his destination. The corpses had vanished, leaving only the ancient tomb, resembling a black boulder, standing silently.

Lumian removed the mask and observed for a moment. Using a raised tree root as an altar, he placed candles, essential oil, herbal powder, a cauldron, and the half-finished brass charm on it. He followed the instructions in Madam Magician's letter and dealt with them one by one.

Finally, Lumian placed the lucky gold coin between the two candles corresponding to Mr. Fool.

Instead of creating a wall of spirituality, he lit the candles in the order from god to person, from left to right, and took two steps back.

Lumian gazed at the burning candle flame and recited in ancient Hermes,

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…"

Silently, a thin gray fog emanated from the void, enveloping the area around the black ancient tomb and the entire special dream.

Lumian's left chest heated up slightly, preventing his thoughts from slowing down, and his body showed no signs of disintegrating.

He quickly took two steps forward and ignited the corresponding essential oil extract and herbal powder. He placed the half-finished brass charm in the center of the altar.

Then, Lumian straightened up and said in Hermes, "I implore you,

"I implore you to grant this charm power.

"I implore you to allow this power to control this dream…"

After reciting all the remaining incantations and completing the remaining steps of the ritual, Lumian saw the lucky gold coin emit a hazy glow. One of the candles representing Mr. Fool darkened, and the other took on a brass hue.

Immediately after, the darkness and brass candlelight entangled with the half-finished brass charm.

The brass charm emitted a blinding light, and Lumian couldn't help but close his eyes.

By the time he adjusted and opened his eyes, the brass charm had vanished. The soil, rocks, and tree roots in front of the black ancient tomb surged, forming a tombstone-like object.

Ancient Feysac words appeared on the tombstone one after another:

"All living beings are equal before the law. Even Angels can be killed by ordinary people.

"Lost items are regarded as abandonment.

"Anything can be done during the Dream Festival, but not killing or rape.

"Murderers shall die.

"Rapists shall die.

"…"

What… What pathway's power is this? It resembles the Arbiter pathway… Killing isn't allowed for the next Dream Festival? Even an Angel can be harmed by me? Lumian hadn't expected Madam Magician's preparations.

He swiftly packed his belongings and planned to leave the area.

Finally, Lumian had an idea when he saw the "tombstone."

With a smile, he retrieved a card from his Traveler's Bag, bent down, and placed it on the ground beneath the tombstone.

It was a tarot card depicting a man in green holding a wand against attacking wands at the foot of a mountain.

Minor Arcana card, Seven of Wands!

Lumian didn't know if the tarot cards representing him could remain in the dream or in front of the tombstone. He simply wanted to give it a try. After all, he hadn't done so since becoming a member of the Tarot Club.

…

Upon returning to the real world, Lumian reached into his Traveler's Bag and examined it.

As expected, the half-finished brass charm had vanished, as had the Minor Arcana card, the Seven of Wands.

The rules of the special dream are indeed a little different… Lumian nodded thoughtfully and returned the lucky gold coin to Ludwig at the Brieu Motel.nove(l)bi(n.)com

Then, Lumian stepped onto the street. In the darkness, he passed Camus, Rhea, Lugano, and the others, who were busy rescuing and treating people, and arrived at Saint-Sien Cathedral.

All the candles in the cathedral had been lit, but only Padre Cali was present.

Dressed in a white robe adorned with golden threads, he knelt before the altar and the Sacred Emblem, his head bowed in anguish.

Lumian walked in step by step and took a seat in the front row. He watched Padre Cali quietly without disturbing him.

Chapter 699 Who is to Blame?

The smoke and dust caused by the meteorite had mostly dissipated, and the commotion on the street had gradually subsided. The injured had largely escaped danger thanks to swift treatment, but some still perished, eliciting occasional cries of anguish.

Inside Saint-Sien Cathedral, Padre Cali completed his penance. He stood and turned to face Lumian, who sat silently in the front pew, observing him.

Lumian chuckled and asked casually, "Is repentance still of any use?"

Without waiting for a response, he added habitually, "You must know your fate is sealed. You won't survive more than a few days."

Paleness showed through Padre Cali's dark-brown complexion as he calmly replied, "If repentance worked, it wouldn't be true repentance."

This statement seemed to bring him a measure of peace.

"I repented because I wanted to, not to bargain for understanding or redemption. Looking back, I have indeed made many mistakes. I yearned for higher status and the approval of you Northerners. That desire blinded me, and I succumbed to the Demon's temptations."

Lumian scoffed upon hearing this.

"Is that truly the case? Did desire actually cloud your judgment?"

Noting the padre's bewildered expression, Lumian leaned back and gazed up at the Sun Sacred Emblem.

"Did your ambition for prestige and recognition from Northerners force you to collaborate with Twanaku, compel you to become a

Wraith as an Eternal Blazing Sun padre, make you receptive to the Demon's allure, or drive you to exploit those boys? No, you chose this path of your own volition."

Padre Cali's lips quivered as if to object, but he couldn't find the words.

Lumian smiled and continued, "Many in this world still crave elevated status and the recognition of certain groups. Most of them simply work hard to contribute and combat evil with all their strength. They never consort with Demons, hoping to attain their goals through righteous means. Even in the face of repeated failure, they don't descend into the abyss.

"They share the same desires, yet they maintain self-control while you could not. Desire didn't cloud your mind—your mind chose depravity."

Padre Cali fell silent, at a loss for words.

Lumian sighed with a smile.

"A relative once told me, 'Intense desire fuels human progress, but it's also the demon that drags humans into the abyss. Good or bad, light or darkness—it all hinges on us, on that single thought in a pivotal moment.'"

His face growing ever paler, Padre Cali lowered his head and rasped, "I have sinned…"

Lumian pressed a hand to his chest, his expression settling.

He looked at Padre Cali and laughed self-deprecatingly.

"I too have strong desires. Everyone does. If harboring intense desire is a sin, then you are a sinner, and so am I. We are all guilty."

Padre Cali's expression froze momentarily before he slowly turned around.

Kneeling once more before the altar, he gazed up at the immense Sun Sacred Emblem and spoke in a deep voice, "You are innocent. Desire

itself is not sinful, but I am a true sinner."

He bowed his head as his body gradually became ethereal and transparent.

Thus, Padre Cali manifested as a Wraith before the Sacred Emblem.

An icy, sinister aura emanated from him, triggering a reaction from the emblem and altar.

The entire cathedral trembled slightly. A brilliant, sunlight-

like radiance seeped from the altar, emblem, stained glass, and religious murals, rapidly converging at the domed ceiling.

A dazzling golden pillar of light, accompanied by a hymnal voice, descended upon Padre Cali.

The Wraith-form padre trembled faintly but did not evade.

Under the searing holy light, his body disintegrated into ashes.

Lumian observed this scene expressionlessly, feeling neither joy nor sorrow.

As the dome's holy glow dissipated, leaving only candlelight illuminating the cathedral, Lumian remained seated in the front pew, quietly contemplating the spot where Padre Cali had been purified.

After an indeterminate span, Camus and Rhea entered the cathedral, having finished their disaster relief efforts.

Camus sighed in relief upon seeing Louis Berry in the front row.

He smiled and said, "We still lack composure, prone to panic when calamity strikes. We were so focused on aiding the injured and trapped that we never anticipated a detestable man like Padre Cali suddenly going mad and trying to drag others down with him. It's fortunate you were here."

Rhea surveyed the surroundings and asked, "Where is Padre Cali?"

Lumian stared ahead at the altar and replied plainly, "After repenting, he utilized the cathedral's accumulated spirituality and the Sacred Emblem's unique properties to purify himself."

Rhea fell silent. After a few seconds, she spread her arms and proclaimed, "Praise the Sun!"

She then took a seat in the front pew on the opposite side, clasped her hands, bowed her head, and prayed fervently.

For a moment, Camus was unsure whether to sit or remain standing.

Lumian turned to him. "Have you recovered Reaza's Beyonder characteristic?"

Camus paused before responding, "Yes."

"And Maslow's?" Lumian shifted his gaze back to the Sacred Emblem.

"Its whereabouts are unknown," Camus replied.

Lumian stated calmly, "It should be in the meteorite impact zone."

Camus was taken aback. "Was the meteorite meant to claim most of the deceased? Is the Dream Festival's power truly that immense?"

"More potent than you realize," Lumian replied, as if discussing the next day's weather. "Reaza and Maslow belong to the Numinous Episcopate's Royal faction. Admiral Querarill is aware of their identities and that Reaza came to Tizamo to fulfill a mission assigned by the Royal faction's superiors."

Camus's expression shifted as he exhaled slowly.

"Even without you mentioning this, I wouldn't have harbored any ill will towards Captain Reaza. He did save me on multiple occasions, and this time, he didn't overtly betray me but rather the patrol team. My sense of belonging to the team isn't that strong.

"Now, I'm just relieved he's not a traitor."

Lumian smiled provocatively and said, "It benefits you as well. Port

Pylos's patrol team now has a vacant vice-captain position, and your rival is already dead."Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Camus didn't rise to the bait, smiling wryly instead.

"I plan to leave Matani.

"Thanks to your generosity, I've nearly saved enough to advance to Sequence 6. It's safer and simpler to return to my family and contact the main branch than to search the outside world.

"The patrol team is a small organization, after all. Sequence 6 is the limit. To reach Sequence 5, I'd need to forge close ties with the Numinous Episcopate, Rose School of Thought, Intis Bureau 8, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church, or the Church of Earth Mother, or become Admiral Querarill's trusted aide. Given my Castiya surname, the choice is clear."

If the Castiya royal family truly accepts you, your potential would be far greater… Lumian chuckled and said, "I thought you were leaving this place of sorrow due to a failed romance."

Camus abruptly choked on his saliva and coughed several times.

After Rhea concluded her prayers, she departed the cathedral with Camus.

Lumian lingered in the front pew, savoring the solitude.

After a while, Amandina appeared at the entrance, clad in black hunting attire.

"Why are you alone here?" the girl muttered, her gaze darting about as if searching for something.

"Why have you come?" Lumian asked nonchalantly.

Amandina sat beside him and chuckled.

"I wanted to see if Robert would come looking for the dying Padre Cali, but surprisingly, you're the only one here."

"Padre Cali purified himself. I doubt Robert has been here," Lumian answered truthfully.

"Is that so…" Amandina felt a pang of disappointment. "If he had really come to confront Padre Cali, it would mean he still is a man…"

Lumian remained silent.

Amandina faced the altar and Sacred Emblem, offering a brief prayer.

Her task complete, she glanced around eagerly and asked, "Will there be another Dream Festival next year?"

"Yes." Lumian didn't hide anything.

lightsNovɛl ć̓om Joy instantly lit up Amandina's features.

"Is that black ancient tomb still there? Can I gain superpowers by touching it again?"

"Of course," Lumian turned to her, smiling. "But the outsiders participating in next year's Dream Festival will be even stronger and more terrifying, surpassing the evil cloth doll, crystal skull, and human skin man you encountered."

Amandina's expression fell.

"Really? In that case, I'll find an excuse to stay in Port Pylos during next year's festival and bring my parents along."

"Have you returned to Palm Manor?" Lumian inquired.

Amandina sighed and smiled.

"I went back briefly. Not wanting to disrupt their facade of love, I left again."

She paused, eyes sparkling with curiosity.

"Besides touching the black tomb, are there other ways for me to advance my Sequence?"

"You can buy formulas and drink potions to progress along one of

three paths—Sleepless, Corpse Collector, or Warrior," Lumian divulged the relevant mystical knowledge without reservation. After some thought, he added, "Also, it wasn't the black tomb that granted you superpowers. It was that figure…"

Lumian was suddenly perplexed.

What was the connection between Amandina, Robert, and the Underworld Daoist?

Typically, boons were bestowed upon believers by deities or angels, but Amandina and Robert had no faith in the Underworld Daoist. They weren't even aware of His existence.

Considering the conventions of various secret organizations and the customs Franca occasionally mentioned, Amandina should have addressed the Underworld Daoist as "Teacher"!

Chapter 700 Return

In the special dream, Amandina mentioned that the figure, known as the Underworld Daoist, had nodded at her… "Armored Shadow" Chen Tu is suspected to be related to the Underworld Daoist… Franca is accumulating gold to create a golden body for Chen Tu to obtain more information… Lumian's mind raced with these thoughts.

He turned to Amandina with a smile.

"You won't only encounter that figure during the Dream Festival."

"It's possible normally?" Amandina asked, surprised.

What kind of smarts do you have… Lumian inwardly criticized, shaking his head and smiling.

"What I mean is, it's not just in Tizamo where you can encounter that figure on a specific date."

Amandina pondered for a few moments before grasping the underlying meaning behind Louis Berry's words.

"Have you seen that figure elsewhere?

"I thought you couldn't see him and could only observe through me?"

Thankfully, you're not that dense… Lumian retrieved the golden mask from his Traveler's Bag.

"I could see after putting this on."

Without waiting for Amandina's response, Lumian added with a smile, "I did encounter that figure elsewhere."

He used "encounter" instead of "meeting" to ensure his statement couldn't be more truthful.

He wanted to say, "I even know His name," but didn't feel like explaining to Amandina why he used the pronoun "He" to address the Underworld Daoist respectfully.

Amandina's expression turned excited. "Where?"

"In Trier," Lumian replied honestly.

This was the information he wanted the other party to know.

"Trier…" Amandina felt a mix of captivation and fear.

As an Intisian born and raised on the Southern Continent, she had heard countless rumors about the Capital of Joy and understood its vibrancy and prosperity. Trier had nearly become her dream paradise, but the furthest she had ventured was Port Pylos, never leaving Matani. If given the chance to visit Trier, fear was her initial reaction.

After all, she was still a girl under 18.

Lumian continued candidly, "In the future, I know someone who might interact with that figure. I hope you can provide her with some assistance—the non-combat kind.

"To that end, I can take you to Trier and help you enter the area where the figure might appear. I can also provide some protection.

"How about it? Do you want to strike such a deal?"

"I-I…" Amandina hesitated, instinctively seeking an excuse. "My parents won't allow me to leave Matani for Trier now. At the very least, I have to wait until I get a chance to attend university there."

Lumian found it amusing and remarked, "I'm not asking you to permanently relocate to Trier. You can go on Saturday and return on Sunday."

"Huh?" Amandina was taken aback.

She had imagined a long-distance voyage, hiking through mountains and wading across rivers, forever bidding farewell to her home.

Lumian arched an eyebrow.

"It's not like I haven't teleported you in the dream before."

"B-but isn't that just a small area?" Amandina's eyes lit up. "Can you really teleport directly from Matani to Trier?"

Lumian nodded slightly.

"Yes, I might need to make a transit once or twice along the way, but it will still allow you to reach Trier quickly."Updated from novelb(i)n.c(o)m

"Quickly…" Amandina's interest was piqued. She yearned to experience such wonders.

However, she didn't make a decision immediately.

Lumian didn't rush her.

"No need to decide right away. Meeting that figure again is actually quite dangerous. You should first truly come into contact with Matani's mysticism circle and learn the basics about Beyonders from Rhea. Only then should you consider accepting this deal. It might take three months, half a year, or even a year."

Amandina breathed a sigh of relief. "Understood."

Curious, she asked, "Is your friend a woman?"

He had used the pronoun "she."

In our hearts and minds, she has always been one. As for how she identifies, sometimes yes, sometimes no… Lumian inwardly criticized Franca and nodded slightly.

"Yes."

Amandina asked excitedly, "Your lover?"

Lumian chuckled.

"Of course not. Why do you always fixate on such matters?"

As Lumian spoke, he retrieved a post-it note and fountain pen from his Traveler's Bag. He scribbled a few lines and handed them to Amandina.

Amandina took it and carefully read it under the cathedral's candlelight:

"A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee."

"What's this?" Amandina was bewildered.

"My messenger. Set up a ritual once you've made up your mind. Use this incantation to summon my messenger and inform me of your decision," Lumian explained simply.

Amandina grew increasingly perplexed.

"What ritual? What summoning? This isn't a conventional messenger?"

Lumian raised his eyebrows again.

"Have you never heard of a messenger in the mysticism domain? Don't you know about summoning rituals?"

Amandina smiled sheepishly and said, "I came into contact with superpowers last year and gathered some information about the pathways of the divine through Robert and a few mysticism enthusiasts. I know about rituals, but I'm not sure about the details."

Then, her eyes lit up.

"You'll teach me, won't you? Otherwise, I wouldn't be able to summon your messenger.

"Also, is your real name not Louis Berry, but Lumian Lee?

"Y-you took a pen and paper from that coin bag. You also took your previous items from there. What kind of mystical item is this?

"…"

Lumian couldn't help but glance up at the golden spherical dome.

…

The following morning, Lumian left the Brieu Motel with Ludwig and Lugano. They passed through streets still strewn with ruins and arrived at Bunia's café.

The owner, Bunia, maintained his usual shyness and politely inquired about their needs.

Lumian ordered three cups of Cosa coffee and three servings of Matani's specialty breakfast, Ocapa.

Ocapa was made from rice, chicken, eggs, potatoes, and common local spices wrapped in leaves from the Ocapa trees. It was filling and fragrant, and one couldn't stop eating once they started.

Lumian gazed at the spread of Ocapa, picked up his cutlery, and scooped a spoonful into his mouth.

The fragrance of the leaves, the salted egg yolk, the weightiness of the rice, the tenderness of the chicken, the softness of the potatoes, and the strange rich aroma combined to create a unique texture.

As Lumian ate, he casually surveyed the pedestrians and café patrons on the street.

After the sorrow and fear of the previous night, they had become gentle again, no longer revealing excessive emotions. When they spoke to others, they always had a faint smile on their faces.

After Ludwig finished his second meal of the morning, Lumian found a secluded corner, changed into winter clothes, and disappeared from Tizamo with him and Lugano.

This time, Lumian refrained from teleporting directly to Franca, as Lugano, Ludwig, and the two Demonesses were unfamiliar with each other.

Lumian chose the rarely used entrance to Underground Trier in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative. The trio swiftly outlined themselves on the steel steps.

Upon returning to the surface, Lumian spotted a few college students carrying carbide lamps and lanterns. They jested as they passed by the trio and entered Underground Trier.

As he turned onto the nearest main street, the first thing Lumian saw was a scantily clad man in chains. He crawled slowly along the street in a dog-like manner. If anyone dared to glance at him, he would glare back and bark twice.

In the next moment, the street artists on the corner played a rhythmic melody. Passersby more or less danced with relaxed and satisfied smiles on their faces. The man acting as a dog and trembling in the cold wind also raised his hind leg.

This was very different from the streets in the market district.

Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative was renowned for its numerous universities.

Lumian averted his gaze from the pedestrians' smiles and led Lugano and Ludwig to Anthony's nearby rented house.

It was on the fourth floor, near the end of the corridor.

Knock! Knock! Knock! Lumian knocked on the door without hesitation.

Soon, he saw Anthony, who was dressed differently from before.

In a white shirt, light gray cashmere sweater, black tweed coat, dark-red bow tie, gold-rimmed glasses, and a light-

yellow wig, his beard was cleanly shaven, and his face was no longer greasy. The black grime in his pores was gone. He had the air of a successful member of high society.

"Are you in a relationship?" Lumian jested.

Anthony replied with a smile, "I'm attending a banquet hosted by the Trier Psychiatrist Guild today."

This was a necessary prerequisite for completing Madam Justice's mission.

Lumian entered the room and asked casually, "Have you obtained a psychiatrist license?"

Anthony nodded.

"I acquired a genuine identity and educational background. During the interview, I successfully 'convinced' the examiner."

"A genuine identity? Where's its original owner?" Lumian asked thoughtfully.

Anthony glanced at Lugano and Ludwig but didn't directly answer Lumian's question.

"What can I do for you?"

Lumian understood Anthony's meaning and temporarily abandoned the question. He briefly mentioned the Dream Festival's situation and the aftereffects of Lugano losing his arm in the dream.

He didn't mention how Lugano had lost his arm.

Anthony listened attentively and looked at Lugano.

"Such hysteria is easily resolved. Do you need a faster solution, or do you want it to be slower and gentler?"

Lugano replied without hesitation, "The faster one."

He had lost control of his right forearm!

Anthony's gaze shifted to Lugano's left side, furrowing his brow.

Lugano subconsciously turned to his left and followed suit.

At that moment, Anthony produced a dagger from nowhere and thrust it at Lugano's right forearm.

Lugano swiftly retracted his hand and blurted out, "What are you doing!?"

Anthony sheathed his dagger and replied calmly, "The treatment is over."

"Huh?" Lugano looked at his right hand in confusion and realized that it had "retracted" to his chest without being impeded.

Lumian chuckled and said to Lugano, "Keep an eye on Ludwig. Remember to prepare food for him."

Without waiting for Lugano's response, Lumian turned to Anthony. "Let's go find Franca and Jenna now."

Anthony glanced at Lumian and adjusted the gold-rimmed glasses he was unaccustomed to. "Alright."

Chapter 701 The Cheerful Franca

In Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca, dressed in a camel-colored cashmere coat, shivered and said to Lumian, "As soon as I have the money, I'm definitely renting a villa with underfloor heating!"

The concept of underfloor heating was proposed by Emperor Roselle. By laying metal pipes in the house during construction, boiling water could flow through them, providing summer-like warmth in confined spaces and keeping out the cold weather.

This was a must-have amenity for Trier's current upscale residences.

"Why would a Demoness like you be afraid of the cold?" Lumian scoffed.

He glanced at Jenna and noticed she was wearing a black cotton dress and dark makeup, as if portraying a Witch or Vampire in the little details of her daily life.

"I'm not a Pyromaniac. A Demoness's black flames have no temperature!" Franca retorted with a smile.

Lumian casually settled onto the divan.

"Aren't Demonesses skilled with ice? Don't they have resistance to frost and cold?"

Franca reclined in her recliner, pulled up a cashmere blanket, and chuckled.

"I admit my performance just now was a little exaggerated, but Trier's winters really are cold. It's mainly because it's so humid. It's like being soaked in a semi-frozen lake."

After the small talk, Franca sighed and said, "I've already obtained more information about Moran Avigny and the corresponding security detail. We can put the capture plan on the agenda. And you, my friend, are about to participate in the Dream Festival. Talk about a scheduling conflict."

Lumian's expression remained unchanged as he replied, "The Dream Festival is over."

"Huh?" Franca and Jenna were taken aback.

Already?

Lumian recounted everything that had transpired during the Dream Festival, including Madam Magician's subsequent explanation.

Of course, as the name Farbauti couldn't be pronounced in any language, Lumian referred to it as the Devil Monarch and replaced Naboredisley with "the Demon with a long name."

Franca's breathing quickened upon hearing that Lumian had donned a golden mask and spotted the suspected Underworld Daoist. Lumian's description of the Underworld Daoist's attire made her eyes light up like sunlight dancing on a lake.

Thankfully, her self-control was impressive. She endured until Lumian finished explaining the entire situation before asking anxiously, "Will there be another Dream Festival next year?"

"You want to participate in next year's Dream Festival and come into direct contact with the Underworld Daoist?" Lumian could guess Franca's thoughts.

Franca nodded emphatically.

"I believe that if the Underworld Daoist can bestow the Evernight pathway's power on Amandina, I, uh, a Demoness, shouldn't have any issues either. I wouldn't mind taking Him as my master!Foll*o*w

current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"Don't worry. As long as I remain lucid, I won't unleash my bestial instincts during the Dream Festival."

She teased herself.

Originally, you wanted to say that you're from the same homeland and not a Demoness, right? Lumian chuckled and said, "It's not impossible, but you have to become an Angel first."

"…" Franca fell silent.

Jenna pondered and said, "There's something I don't understand. Isn't it the case that after obtaining the ability to stay lucid in the special dream, the corresponding dream projection will gradually dissipate? Why didn't Hisoka's?"

Lumian had already considered this question.

"Perhaps this is one of the reasons Hisoka had to leave Tizamo.

"The ability to stay lucid in the special dream shouldn't be permanent. Once you leave Tizamo, it will gradually fade. Therefore, Hisoka not only had to leave Tizamo, but also had to return two to three times a year for at least a week each time to maintain the existence of the dream projection."

After discussing the Dream Festival, Franca briefly recounted the information she had obtained from 007 the previous night.

"Moran Avigny's family has a long history. Members span the military, political, artistic, and business worlds. Combined with the information Madam Judgment gave us, I suspect this is a branch of the Tamara family. Their dark-gray eyes are one of the defining characteristics of the Tamara bloodline!

"Of course, not everyone with dark-gray eyes belongs to the Tamara family. It's more that members of the family are likely to have dark-gray eyes.

"Based on the close connection between a large branch of the Tamara

family and the Demoness Sect, it's very likely that Demoness of Black Clarice also shares the Tamara family's bloodline.

"Following my hypothesis, the Demoness of Black might be a mixed-blood descendant of the Sauron family who pledged allegiance to the Demoness Sect and the Tamara family."

This was the only explanation for Demoness of Black Clarice's reaction when she heard about the Sauron family. It was also the only explanation for her indulging Browns Sauron!

Lumian didn't interrupt as Franca continued, "We need to face not only Moran Avigny but also the hidden Tamara family and the Mirror People faction. Moran Avigny might possess powerful Beyonder powers himself. Furthermore, Bureau 8, Purifiers, and Machinery Hivemind rotate daily, with a regular Beyonder team providing protection.

"What my friend means is that if we're unafraid of sacrifice, there's still a chance of assassinating Moran Avigny. However, capturing him alive or channeling his spirit is very difficult and dangerous."

What 007 truly meant was that the Purifiers wouldn't go easy on us or provide overt assistance. However, if Moran Avigny's true nature as a Mirror Person is exposed after his death, 007 would find a way to allow us—the captured assassins—an opportunity to escape, just like when Jenna killed Hugues Artois. However, if we didn't want to obtain more information about the Mirror People through Moran Avigny, wouldn't it be better to inform the authorities and let them handle the arrest? Lumian pondered for a moment and said to Franca, "Let's not rush into a plan. We'll discuss it tomorrow."

"Why wait until tomorrow?" Franca asked, holding the stack of papers 007 had given her.

Lumian chuckled.

"After I find a safe place to complete my advancement and become a Fate Appropriator, perhaps a special, mixed ability related to fate will appear. That might help us obtain new ideas and come up with more effective solutions."

In the current four-person team, it was no secret that Lumian possessed the power of the Inevitability pathway.

Franca blurted out in surprise, "You can obtain a new boon so quickly?"

"Didn't I just mention it?" Lumian smiled. "I culled nearly 20 Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 bestowed in one go, significantly digesting the potion."

Franca pursed her lips and signaled to Lumian with her eyes: Look, look into my eyes! They're filled with jealousy!

Lumian turned to Anthony and asked, "What did you mean by genuine identity?"

Anthony, who had been listening quietly and was on the verge of being forgotten, explained simply, "Actually, it was a hint from Madam Justice. That identity is very strange. His background, education, and experiences are all real, but there's actually no such person. And the people who might expose this are either long dead or out of town, the kind who won't return for years."

Franca made a judgment based on her experience. "It seems it was meticulously crafted years in advance as a disguise."

Since they weren't discussing a plan to deal with Moran Avigny today, Anthony didn't stay long. He had to prepare for tonight's banquet.

"Where do you plan to advance to Fate Appropriator?" Jenna asked Lumian. "The sacrificial square in the catacombs?"

It belonged to two orthodox gods and could protect advancers from additional interference.

"I'm afraid I'll trigger a taboo and be purified by sunlight," Lumian dismissed the suggestion with amusement. "Advancing to Conspirer is different from advancing to Fate Appropriator."

One belonged to the pathways of the divine, while the other belonged to an evil god's domain!

Lumian had already decided on a location to advance.

It was the Nation of the Evernight!

Termiboros's well-behaved nature kept Lumian concerned that He was waiting for an opportunity to stir up trouble. And as a Fate Appropriator began to involve core abilities in the Inevitability domain, it was very likely that Termiboros would tamper at this Sequence.

Therefore, Lumian had to be cautious. He planned to advance in a safe place that could eliminate many external influences.

Among them, the Nation of the Evernight was the best choice. Furthermore, Lumian had planned to contact Hela in the next two days to share information about the Underworld Daoist and the Dream Festival.

Franca looked at Lumian in enlightenment. "You want to advance at our mysticism gathering?"

"Yes." Lumian nodded slightly.

Franca, who was in a good mood, took the initiative to help. "I'll help you write the letter!"

After she entered the bedroom and closed the door, Lumian looked at Jenna and said, "You're very quiet today."

Jenna smiled. "An excellent theater actress must know how to act like a lady."

Lumian glanced at Franca's door.

"Madame Red Boots seems to be in high spirits today. She's cracking jokes left and right."

"It's true she's been in a good mood recently," Jenna replied truthfully.

Lumian nodded thoughtfully and didn't probe further.

Jenna's lips curled into a smile. "Why don't you keep asking?"

Lumian leaned back on the sofa and laughed self-

deprecatingly.

"My sister once taught me that there's no need to inquire too deeply about certain matters. If I know too much, I might regret it. I might even have to face problems I'm unwilling to face."

Jenna listened attentively, placed her hand on her cheek, and asked with a smile, "What are you afraid of?"

Lumian strategically took a sip of black tea and said, "It's not fear; it's respect."

Jenna gazed at him and suddenly laughed.

She didn't press further and chatted with Lumian about the details of Tizamo.

Before long, Franca opened the door and exclaimed with a smile, "It's on for tonight!"

…

At 10 p.m., in the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight, Lumian and Franca swiftly materialized, and Hela was already waiting.

Chapter 702 Fate Appropriator

Before Lumian had a chance to say anything, Franca eagerly recounted the events involving the Underworld Daoist during the Dream Festival.

She said excitedly, "The interaction between our two worlds is even more intricate than I had imagined!"

"Who would have thought there was another point of interaction beyond the Samaritan Women's Spring, and it's all tied to that mysterious illusory river."

Silently, Franca mused, It's a shame we still haven't located the man believed to be from our world who was seen on the fourth level of the catacombs… Seriously, what's taking 007, no—the Eternal Blazing Sun Church so long? They haven't even tracked down the traitor who worked with April Fool's…

Once Franca had finished speaking, Lumian provided a concise explanation of the origins of the black ancient tomb and the ancient corpse.

Hela, still in her black widow attire, listened intently, gently nodding her head.

"It's now evident that the illusory river isn't a reference to the River Styx. It must be something far more significant than that."

"Absolutely." Lumian wasn't caught off guard by Hela's statement. "The black ancient tomb doesn't just embody the power of the Death pathway; it also represents the Evernight and Warrior pathways."

In the current world, all the legends surrounding the River Styx were connected to death.

Lumian speculated that this might involve beings such as the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, the Mother Tree of Desire, and the Great Mother, who held multiple thrones linked to various pathways.

Hela glanced at Franca, falling silent for a moment before speaking.

"If the Armored Shadow is right, the Underworld Daoist is in a precarious state. If you intend to interact with Him, you must exercise extreme caution and ensure you have an escape route from the corresponding area."

The Armored Shadow had described the Underworld Daoist as having "sacrificed himself to enter the river," implying the sacrifice of one's physical form or life.

"I understand." Franca let out a sigh. "I'll give this matter more thought once I reach Sequence 5."

As she sighed, a smug thought crossed her mind, The Pleasure potion has been largely digested lately. Even without additional opportunities, I can start preparing for the Demoness of Affliction's advancement ritual within two to three months… I need to begin gathering the necessary potion ingredients now…

I can't mention it, I mustn't mention it—I can't let Lumian know. Bragging would make me seem crass and disrespectful to Jenna…

Lumian's curious gaze alternated between Hela and Franca a couple of times.

He sensed that Madame Hela had something crucial to tell Franca but refrained from doing so.

It was rare for Lumian to perceive Madame Hela as having something on her mind. Her glance at Franca and few seconds of silence gave him the impression of hesitancy.

Regrettably, Franca often has a carefree nature and doesn't pay much attention to details. Otherwise, she might be able to extract some information from her through direct questioning… Lumian's mind raced, and he concluded that if Madame Hela chose not to say

anything at this point, she must have her reasons. Thus, he suppressed his curiosity and gestured towards the front of the dilapidated palace.

"I'll get the ritual ready."

"Sounds good," Franca responded with enthusiasm.

While she had witnessed Lumian acquire Ascetic powers, that had taken place in Fourth Epoch Trier. A myriad of dangers had intertwined, causing her to shudder with fear. She had to maintain constant vigilance of her surroundings, unable to "appreciate" the situation with the same level of ease as she could now.

After a moment of contemplation, Lumian retrieved a metal canister from a hidden pocket and tossed it to Franca.

"If things start going poorly for me later on, forcefully break through the wall of spirituality and throw this in front of me or on me."

"Should I unscrew the cap for you?" Franca asked, a smile playing on her lips.

"What do you think?" Lumian arched an eyebrow.

"Naturally," Franca replied, her smile unwavering. "I'm just trying to lighten the mood. I want you to feel at ease."

"I appreciate it!" Lumian turned and made his way to the massive stone chair in the depths of the ancient palace.

His intuition suggested that the huge, mottled stone chair might have a connection to Mr. Fool.

This would enable him to draw Mr. Fool's attention during the impending ritual.

As Franca and Hela watched Lumian arrange the corresponding items on the stone chair, setting it up as an altar and placing a Loen gold pound reverently in front of the grayish-white candle symbolizing the deity, Hela calmly remarked, "Don't be concerned about not receiving a response. The secrets will remain secret, while the rest will be

revealed."

Lumian felt himself relax as he consecrated the ritual silver dagger, erecting a wall of spirituality.

The voices of Franca and Hela faded into the background, as if emanating from a great distance.

Rather than rushing into the ritual, Lumian lowered his voice and proactively provoked Termiboros.

"I'm about to extract your power once more. Any thoughts on the matter?"

He aimed to enrage Termiboros to a certain degree. Only then might Termiboros inadvertently expose any concealed issues in His response, allowing Lumian to discern whether this Inevitability Angel was secretly plotting something.

The sooner he uncovered it, the sooner he could address it and find a resolution!

Termiboros's imposing voice resonated.

"The further you venture, the closer you draw to the end. This is an inevitability—irreversible."

"Is that how you console yourself?" Lumian scoffed at Termiboros's enigmatic behavior.

Termiboros's voice reverberated within Lumian's body.

"Boons bring the recipient closer to the bestower. You may believe you're extracting my power, but in truth, you're steadily aligning your fate with mine, becoming more and more like me.

"This grants me glimpses through your eyes and your fate.

"You and I are merely bugs ensnared by fate. Apart from the greatest of existences, all living beings share this commonality.

"In the near future, you will come to understand: "Death is the end of

all things, and madness is an eternal melody."

That's essentially the same as saying nothing… Is Termiboros implying that I will face a setback in the near future? Lumian chuckled and said, "Are you deliberately saying this to make me obtain the power of a Fate Appropriator while burdened with worry and fear, hoping I'll die here?

"Don't concern yourself. Death and madness won't deter me."

Without awaiting Termiboros's reply, Lumian fixed his gaze upon the candle flame and recited in a deep, resonant voice, "Power of Inevitability!

"You are the past, the present, and the future;

"You are the cause, the effect, and the process;

"…"

As the ritual progressed, Franca and Hela bore witness to the transformation of all the items on the altar. Stones softened, candles expanded, and the ground decayed into a swamp. Countless strange insects loomed in the void.

The darkness outside the dilapidated palace intensified. A silver-black liquid flowed from Lumian's chest, enveloping him like corrupted mercury.

Lumian writhed in agony. Throughout this process, his body alternated between contortion and normalcy, occasionally assuming postures that defied human anatomy. It was as though he were boneless, his skin and flesh infused with mercury.

Franca was startled and experienced an inexplicable, illusory pain.

Amidst the excruciating and familiar pain, Lumian caught sight of Aurore.

Aurore, with her thick, long blond hair, was attempting the Soul Summoning Spell!

Lumian stepped forward and intervened, stopping Aurore.

Just as he rejoiced in the belief that the problem had been nipped in the bud and Aurore wouldn't fracture into the evil personality of Roche Louise Sanson, he was horrified to discover that Aurore's body had undergone a drastic transformation. In a bloody state, she had expanded into a monster with three heads and six arms, sitting cross-legged.

Lumian witnessed Aurore seeking assistance from Hela. Reluctantly, he offered his help, preventing his sister from forgetting this matter. However, when Hela arrived, Aurore had already transformed into a colossal three-headed, six-armed monster, despite the final ritual not having been performed.

Aurore, at various stages of life, appeared before Lumian. They were on the verge of making pivotal choices.Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

Lumian desperately tried to alter the Aurores' fates and prevent them from descending into the abyss. However, each time, although he managed to redirect fate to another tributary, Aurore's spirit and flesh ultimately crumbled, transforming her into a three-headed, six-armed monster.

Is this inevitability? Is this an irreversible outcome? Lumian's eyes turned bloodshot as he made increasingly futile efforts.

At that instant, he caught a whiff of an elegant and sweet scent, and a soothing chant echoed in his ears.

Lumian quickly regained his senses and clarity of mind.

The Aurores before him abruptly vanished, leaving only the quietly burning candle flames.

Instinctively, Lumian glanced behind him and realized that Franca and Hela were nearby. The wall of spirituality had been shattered.

Simultaneously, Franca observed the flickering silver and iron-

black colors in Lumian's eyes before they merged and settled into a

silvery-black hue.

Lumian exhaled, recognizing that he had evaded danger and successfully acquired the power of a Fate Appropriator.

Yet, a profound sense of frustration and disappointment lingered within him.

What he had just experienced in the illusion seemed to foretell the ultimate outcome of his desire to resurrect Aurore.

After ten to twenty seconds, Lumian finally broke free from those emotions and regained his determination.

How could anyone give up without even trying!

Franca breathed a sigh of relief, screwed the cap back on, and asked with a smile, "How did it go? Any new abilities?"

You really don't consider yourself an outsider. How can you nonchalantly inquire about someone's new Beyonder powers? Lumian silently criticized Franca as he meticulously observed his transformation.

His eyes, which had just returned to normal, once again turned silvery-black, reflecting the images of Franca and Hela.

Then, he perceived the mercury-colored illusory river that corresponded to the two ladies. He saw the sparkling light representing their past and present river trunks and the numerous tributaries that had branched off from the present.

The illusory river slowly advanced, devouring all the tributaries, leaving only one behind, transforming it into the main bulk. The main bulk continued to split into new tributaries…

Lumian noticed that one of the tributaries, regardless of whether it belonged to Franca or Hela, emitted a faint black hue.

Chapter 703 Fused Ability

Black… When it comes to luck, this color signifies they'll face a deadly calamity… If the hue isn't dense, could it mean the calamity is potentially fatal but avoidable—that there's a chance of overcoming it? Yes, I'll watch others going forward. I might spot dense black. Maybe that implies if the corresponding tributary is selected, a deadly fate is sealed… Lumian continued observing Franca and Hela's fates, forming a related hypothesis.

Since the tributaries constantly shifted, Lumian couldn't fully grasp a target's future fate. He could only catch glimpses of a few possibilities. The black "mark" let him pinpoint the critical junctures.

This wasn't covered in the mystical knowledge accompanying a Fate Appropriator's power. Lumian strongly suspected that once Luck Observation evolved into Fate Observation, it could merge with a Reaper's Weakness Investigation to create this unique ability.

It was like exposing a target's physical and spiritual weak points—the tributary leading to their demise!

As I suspected, the Hunter and Inevitability pathways' visual abilities have combined… Lumian used the chance to examine Hela and Franca's fate rivers, realizing he could perceive fragments of their past and present destinies, similar to when he used Fallen Mercury to discern others' fates.

The difference now was that he could see it directly, without extending his spirituality. With the right abilities, he could touch the ethereal river that shimmered with mercury-like ripples, woven from intricate symbols.

Put another way, he could "see" part of a target's fate without their awareness.

Naturally, compared to touching the corresponding fate river through abilities, there were clear limits to relying on eyesight. Most life scenes in the mercury river were quite hazy in such cases. The nearer to the present, the sharper they became. Likewise, the less they involved high-level matters, the clearer they appeared.

Franca and Hela's life scenes presented a vivid, striking contrast in this regard.

Past and present fragments manifesting in Hela's fate river's mercury ripples seemed veiled in fog, while others appeared cloaked in night, making them indiscernible. Only a handful could be perceived. Franca's was far clearer. Especially in the last week or two, Lumian could see everything except scenes with high-level entities like the Evernight Nation, Madam Judgment, and the Demoness of Black.

During his exploratory observation, Lumian was abruptly startled.

After a few seconds, he looked away, unsettled.

"What's the matter?" Franca inquired, curious and concerned. "If you prefer not to disclose your specific abilities, that's fine."

Only then did she realize she had been too eager to ask about the Fate Appropriator's situation and potential abilities in front of Madame Hela.

Lumian couldn't help swallowing hard. Composing himself, he met Hela's gaze.

"There's nothing I can't share.

"I can no longer just observe luck. I can directly perceive the fate river corresponding to each of you. It ranges from the main course to the tributaries, but most is indistinct. I can only clearly detect it when actively using my fate-hunting ability, and there's a time constraint.

"Indeed, among the fate river tributaries I saw, one likely leads to death…"

Lumian succinctly recounted his initial theory, the hue of his eyes gradually normalizing.

"If death isn't inevitable, it should be termed a death calamity," Franca remarked, focusing on the symbolic import of "black."

Death calamity? Lumian and Hela turned to Franca, awaiting clarification.

Franca laughed self-consciously.

"Simply put, if you navigate a catastrophe, crisis, or incident that could cause death, you might emerge alive."

I see… Lumian considered briefly before saying, "Then I'll dub this ability the Eye of Calamity—eyes that can perceive death calamities."

The name mattered little to him. Its utility was paramount.

Lumian then absorbed the mystical knowledge that had entered his body along with a Fate Appropriator's power.

A Fate Appropriator's core actually lay in fate appropriation, split into three abilities.

The first was Fate Appropriation. By touching the target's fate river, he could appropriate and extract the desired fate.

This differed somewhat from Fallen Mercury's abilities. One needn't kill the target to Appropriate their fate, but it required time. The less weighty the corresponding fate, the quicker the process, and vice-versa.

A fate fragment's weightiness denoted its significance to the target's overall fate.

Naturally, Lumian could also Appropriate a fragment of the target's fate by slaying them. Moreover, the target's overall fate would be locked without further changes. The time to complete the Appropriation was very brief.

As a Fate Appropriator, Lumian could compress two fate fragments within himself, surpassing Fallen Mercury's single one.

Usually, there could be three, but Lumian hadn't been a Dancer or

acted as an Alms Monk. He hadn't even signed a full set of special contracts. Meaning, during the Inevitability domain's initial trio of stages, he had seldom neared the power bestower in daily life. The fusion with the powers was comparatively weak.

Had he not cultivated an Ascetic's core spirit, perhaps he could have stored merely one fate fragment.

The second ability was Fate Exchange, where one's accrued fate was traded for a specific fate of the target.

Ideally, the fate fragments' weightiness should match. Light for light, heavy for heavy. If not, the exchange would be quite slow, maybe taking five to six minutes.

The fate fragment's importance was one facet, while its importance to the individual was another. Together, they would influence the exchange speed. Still, generally, it was swifter than directly Appropriating the corresponding fate—

barring Appropriating from a slain target.

Be it Fate Appropriation or Fate Exchange, there were limits barring him from attacking targets until he finished them.

In this respect, it lacked Fallen Mercury's convenience and flexibility.

The third ability was Compelling Fate. It entailed expending an enormous amount of spirituality to directly compel the target's future toward a tributary.The sourc**e** of this content nov(*e*l)bi((n))

Originally, this ability didn't function this way. It primarily swayed the target's future fate via rituals, curses, and other means. Yet, after fusing with the Reaper trait, it could directly compel fates.

This combination with the Eye of Calamity allowed Lumian to discern certain possibilities.

Naturally, after careful assessment, he deduced his dual spirituality as a Reaper and Fate Appropriator could only permit two compulsions.

A Fate Appropriator's core abilities are the deepening and

streamlining of the Luck Transference Spell… Lumian gave an overall appraisal.

Upon becoming a Fate Appropriator, the ceiling of contracts he could withstand as a Contractee had hit twelve. The endurance stemming from being an Ascetic had also risen markedly.

This spurred Lumian to mull signing two to three more contractual abilities down the line to diversify his combat style and bolster his related trump cards.

However, he wouldn't truly sign all twelve, not even ten. That would surpass an Ascetic's endurance. Lumian had no wish to become a pseudo-inferior Beyonder like Padre Guillaume Bénet, whose weaknesses could be readily grasped and actions predicted.

Another notable shift in an Ascetic was the accumulation of external fate fragments. It had genuinely become a vital component of a Fate Appropriator.

As for rituals such as the Animal Creation Spell, they could be streamlined. For instance, Lumian previously had to drape the target with a ritual sheepskin to transform them into sheep by chanting the incantation. Now, he could use a more symbolic sheepskin to cover the other party to meet the prerequisite.

His flexibility as a Dancer had also grown. Lumian could now perform horrific and incredible actions. If ordinary folk merely glimpsed the corresponding shadows he cast, they would deem him a monster.

Furthermore, Lumian's spirituality had climbed substantially. The most basic yardstick was that he could employ up to 17 Spirit World Traversals.

Nonetheless, both a Fate Appropriator and a Reaper had scant impact on his physical prowess.

After verifying his transformation, Lumian thanked Madame Hela and asked when the next Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society meeting would be before returning to the real world with Franca.

Having returned The Fool's gold coin to Jenna, Lumian briefly outlined a Fate Appropriator's abilities and stated,

"Given my ability to directly perceive some fate fragments, I'll settle on the concrete plan after observing Moran Avigny up close."

"Okay." Franca thoroughly endorsed any step that could lessen the risk.

Lumian rose and said to Franca and Jenna,

"I'll head out first then. Don't forget to help me inquire at your mysticism gatherings if there's the Harvest Priest potion formula and the matching Beyonder ingredients."

lightsNovɛl ƈom "Got it." Seeing Lumian off, Franca turned to Jenna, puzzled. "Why is he acting a bit odd? Doesn't he usually rile people up and quip before leaving?"

Jenna also found this atypical and sank into deep thought.

Abruptly, her expression changed.

Jenna glanced down at the book in her hand, saying pensively, "Perhaps he just received the boon's power and isn't in a stable state. He needs to hurry back and rest."

Franca nodded, understanding. "Fair point."

She didn't linger on it or bother to. The night was lovely, and she couldn't squander it on such trivial matters.

…

Avenue du Boulevard, outside the Champs-Élysées' Rose Conference Room.

Numerous reporters stood before the hotel's signature indoor golden fountain, awaiting the arrival of Minister of Industry Moran Avigny, who had finished negotiations with the Loen Kingdom's delegation.

Lumian had switched into a pre-prepared black tweed coat and half

top hat. He held a rented, new black-and-white camera without a tripod. With his unremarkable, passerby-

like appearance, he mingled with these individuals as a fake reporter.

Chapter 704 Fragment of Fate

The reporters waiting outside the conference hall displayed no signs of impatience or dissatisfaction, despite the passing time. They were well accustomed to such situations.

At last, the heavy doors of the Rose Conference Hall opened, revealing the Minister of Industry, Moran Avigny. Dressed in a sharp formal suit, his dark-gray eyes and chiseled features stood out as he emerged alongside the leader of the Loen Kingdom's delegation.

Snap! Snap! A flurry of loud camera flashes illuminated the scene, and Moran Avigny responded with a graceful wave to the reporters.

Lumian refrained from pushing his way to the front, choosing instead to observe Moran Avigny from a distance, hidden among the crowd.

Shielded by the camera, his azure eyes rapidly shifted to a silver-black hue.

Eye of Calamity!

In Lumian's enhanced vision, a river of mercury materialized on Moran Avigny's body, composed of ethereal water droplets. Each droplet was adorned with intricate, interconnected symbols.

As Moran Avigny delivered a concise speech announcing various industrial cooperation agreements between the Intis Republic and the Loen Kingdom, Lumian meticulously analyzed the Minister of Industry's past, present, and future, uncovering the fragments of fate concealed within each mercurial droplet.

The more distant the past, the greater the ambiguity. Lumian concentrated on the events of the preceding two weeks.

He witnessed Moran Avigny residing in a government-provided villa,

attending weekly gatherings at cafés to discuss matters of state, exemplifying Trier's café politics.

Furthermore, Lumian observed Moran Avigny's attendance at salons, balls, banquets, operas, concerts, theaters, and art exhibitions. The Minister indulged in polo, poker, hunting in the suburbs, and flirtations with courtesans. He leveraged his position to secure favors, such as appointing the husband of one of his lovers as the deputy general manager of the Intis Industrial Credit Bank's Southern Continent branch—a coveted role known for its prestige, generous compensation, and influence. The sole drawback was the necessity of leaving Trier for the Southern Continent for two to three years, initially without the companionship of spouse and children.

These observations aligned perfectly with Lumian's preconceived notions of Trier's elite society.

Amidst the hazy fragments, two particular instances captured Lumian's attention.

In one, Moran Avigny sat alone in his study, perusing a document. Abruptly, he jotted down a note and reached into a nearby mirror. His hand, seemingly incorporeal, passed through the glass surface, depositing the note within.

The other featured Moran Avigny's fleeting encounter with an unfamiliar individual during a hunting excursion in the West Lognes Forest. What piqued Lumian's interest was the thin, white fog enveloping this fragment, rendering it indistinct.

This peculiar obscurity differed from the typical vagueness of most fate fragments.

The first fragment confirmed Moran Avigny's identity as a Mirror Person. Among the 22 paths of the divine, Demonesses proficient in mirror magic could not transmit information or objects through mirrors until attaining the rank of Sequence 4 demigods. If Moran Avigny were a demigod-level Demoness, his existence as a man would be impossible.

Lumian could only surmise two possibilities:

First, Mirror People possessed an innate mastery over mirrors, surpassing even Demonesses in the realm of mirror magic.

Second, Moran Avigny had originally been a Demoness at the demigod level who later consumed a higher Sequence Hunter potion, successfully transforming into a man. This implied that the Minister of Industry was at least a Sequence 3 Saint, if not an Angel.

Considering the intelligence gathered by Franca and the others, the information provided by 007, and the clearer fate fragments, Lumian concluded that Moran Avigny had never exhibited any Hunter-related traits. He was undoubtedly a Mirror Person, albeit an extraordinary one.

The second fate fragment intrigued Lumian due to its relative uniqueness. It might contain crucial information, but deciphering it eluded him for the moment.

Shifting his focus to Moran Avigny's future, Lumian examined the myriad potential fate tributaries.

As anticipated, one tributary bore a faint black tinge.

This mercurial offshoot, like many others, "rehearsed" Moran Avigny's interview and subsequent return to the Ministry of Industry in a private carriage. However, it diverged when, upon entering his office and sitting for a while, Moran Avigny willingly stepped into the full-body mirror near the coat rack and vanished.

Lumian's foresight extended no further.

Based on his observations, Lumian deduced that if Moran Avigny ventured into the mirror world before noon, he would face a life-threatening calamity.

Yet, the probability of Moran Avigny taking such an action was minimal. Among the numerous fate tributaries, only one represented this possibility.

Certainly, if Lumian disregarded the risk of exposure, he could harness nearly half of his spirituality to manipulate Moran Avigny's future, steering it towards that specific tributary. However, such an

act would be futile.

Moran Avigny's demise in the mirror world would merely prevent them from accessing his corpse and conducting the spirit channeling ritual.

The Demoness of Black likely possesses the ability to enter the mirror world as well. However, with her as the spirit channeler, obtaining the relevant information would prove impossible. Even if Franca has fully earned her trust, certain knowledge would remain undisclosed until she attains a specific Sequence… Lumian noticed Moran Avigny's posture signaling the conclusion of the interview, and his bodyguards began navigating through the reporters. Consequently, Lumian ceased using the Eye of Calamity and captured a black-and-white photograph, maintaining his façade.

Subsequently, he gradually retreated from the throng of reporters and made his way to the public washroom. He stashed the camera within his Traveler's Bag, donned Lie, and transformed back into Ciel Dubois. As a guest, he entered the annex restaurant of Champs-Élysées.

Franca awaited him there.

Following the waiter to his designated spot, Lumian noticed a man and a woman engaged in coffee.

The woman possessed black hair, brown eyes, and an alluring beauty. Her attire accentuated her slightly exaggerated aura. The man, by contrast, appeared ordinary, clad in a double-

breasted flannel coat, wrinkled pants, buckled leather boots, and a top hat adorned with soft fur—the favored ensemble of Trier's bankers and financiers in recent times.

Lumian noticed that the man and woman weren't attracted by any aura of wealth. Instead, he recognized the beautiful woman with foreign features.

She, of course, had no knowledge of him. He had only glimpsed her photograph in Ghost Face.

She was Perle, a theater actress from Loen and a courtesan in Trier.

DuVar, the inventor of DuVar's broth and proprietor of the esteemed restaurant, had once lavished a substantial sum on her. He had even attempted suicide because of her, albeit unsuccessfully.

At present, Perle and the middle-aged man, presumed to be a banker, had not yet begun their meal. They were simply savoring their coffee.

The middle-aged man picked up Perle's empty coffee cup and gestured to the grounds, explaining something unknown to Lumian. The courtesan listened intently.

As he passed by, Lumian's keen senses allowed him to briefly eavesdrop. He swiftly grasped that the middle-aged man, believed to be a banker, was immersed in the art of coffee ground divination.

This popular divination method in high society was more akin to a game.

"If the remaining coffee grounds after drinking form a circle, it signifies recent signs of love…"

Upon hearing the middle-aged man's words, Lumian couldn't help but silently critique: Are you going to suggest that you'll be the love she's about to encounter?

Any other woman, even aware of the man's true intentions, would be secretly alarmed by divination results indicating traces of love. They might believe it to be fate's guidance. The various patterns naturally formed by the residual coffee grounds were thought to hold corresponding revelations about one's destiny, a notion widely accepted and impossible to manipulate.

However, given Perle's experience as a seasoned courtesan and her bold demeanor, Lumian had cause to suspect that she had deliberately manipulated the coffee grounds into a circular formation through her drinking technique.

After walking a short distance, Lumian spotted Franca.

The Demoness of Pleasure was dressed as a lady today, perfectly

suited for the occasion. Lumian almost failed to recognize her.

Naturally, Franca still refrained from wearing a dress, opting instead for a pantsuit.

Observing Franca's elegantly styled hair, no longer in a ponytail, Lumian chuckled and remarked, "Jenna did your hair for you?"

"Indeed!" Franca responded, not with humiliated rage, but with a sense of smugness.

Before they could delve into their observations, a nearby waiter approached, presenting them with two identical menus.

Lowering her voice, Franca addressed Lumian in ancient Feysac, "The lunch set costs 7 verl d'or. If we order individually and indulge in some decent red wine, the bill for the two of us will amount to at least 50 verl d'or. That sum could easily feed your godson in the market district."

Franca found the restaurant at Grand Champs-Élysées not only expensive but also intriguing.

Switching to Intisian, Franca inquired of the waiter, "Any recommendations?"

The waiter, who had been sneaking glances at Franca, responded eagerly, "Would you like to try the Fürth fish?Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

"In Trier, apart from certain private banquets, we are the sole establishment that serves Fürth fish."

"What makes it so special?" Lumian asked, curiosity piqued.

Addressing Franca, the waiter explained, "Fürth fish appear semi-charred and can only be found in a specific section of Trier's underground river. Legend has it that long ago, they were ordinary fish. One day, an individual named Fürth caught one and set up a frying pan by the underground river, intending to cook it. Midway through the process, the fish managed to escape the frying pan and return to the river. It survived and spawned numerous descendants,

all bearing the semi-charred appearance.

"The skin of this fish is fragrantly browned and oily, yet the flesh within is exceptionally tender…"

Trier's underground river… Half-burnt… Alive… Lumian extracted the keywords and suddenly speculated that this might be a consequence of the leakage of Fourth Epoch Trier's Hunter powers.

Smiling at Franca, he proposed, "Shall we each have one?"

"Very well." Franca had already been contemplating giving it a try.

Chapter 705 - 705 Past

Glancing around to ensure no one could overhear, he quietly recounted the detailed fate fragments of Moran Avigny. As Franca listened, her expression gradually morphed, a frown creasing her lovely brow.

“That white, thin fog you described… it reminds me of something,” she said. “Does it have a mercurial, ever-shifting nature?”

Lumian considered briefly before nodding. “Yes, it does.”

Franca let out a soft sigh. “It must be the same phenomenon then. You know how I told you about Jenna and I getting tailed by that entrustee of the vanished Deep Valley Cloister gatekeeper at the mysticism gathering? The one we ended up fighting?

“Well, when I channeled the guy’s spirit and asked about his organizational ties, his physical form and spirit abruptly detonated. My mirror cracked from the blast, but right before shattering, it filled with that same thin, mercurial white mist.”

Franca paused, collecting her thoughts.

“According to the intel I passed along, 007 ran into a similar fog during their investigation of Deep Valley Town. Albert Goncourt, the Carbonari’s leader, was spotted there too.

“As you’re aware, the Carbonari played a role in stoking the riots during the Hostel plan. Their other leader, operating under the alias General Philip, spearheaded that particular scheme.”

Lumian swiftly connected the dots Franca was laying out.

“So you suspect the Carbonari is in league with multiple evil god cults, this peculiar white fog being tied to one of them—and that

Moran Avigny is also entangled with this group. Meaning our supposedly chance encounter with him in the West Lognes Forest was anything but."

"Precisely." Franca took another sip of her liqueur. "And what's the ultimate endgame for these Mirror People? Surely not mere replacement of their originals."

The mirror version of Gardner Martin had failed to succeed the real one, understandably using the Hostel plan to deal with his counterpart. But Moran Avigny, also a Mirror Person, had quietly replaced the original for decades, even fathering an illegitimate daughter and living a cushy life. Why collaborate with cults?

Smiling, Lumian replied, "The goals of Mirror People as a whole versus as individuals are bound to differ. Investigating should reveal the former. Back in Fourth Epoch Trier, Mirror Gardner Martin mentioned their loyalty and service to someone who holds all the answers. Learning that person's identity should tell us the Mirror People's endgame."

Franca concurred succinctly, "We can plan our next moves around this strange fog. Deal with Moran Avigny to get more info on the Mirror People, which is already a lead. And capturing him or channeling his spirit could present other opportunities."

Franca smiled. "Looks like 007 will be busy again."

Their discussion of Moran Avigny complete, Lumian picked up some roasted pre-meal bread, chewing as he recounted his encounter with Courtesan Perle and the coffee ground divination he'd witnessed.

"She's unlikely to be a Demoness," Franca concluded, a hint of disappointment in her voice.

Based on Lumian's description and reaction to Perle's appearance, she could tell the courtesan wasn't a Demoness.

Unless deliberately feigning ugliness, a Demoness's charms were impossible to conceal. Even gay men couldn't resist sneaking a few extra glances.

“Definitely not…” Lumian suddenly paused, remembering something.

Shifting to casual conversation, he asked, “Does coffee ground divination actually hold mystical significance? Can it truly provide revelation?”

Franca finished her bread, took another sip of the colorful liqueur, and smiled. “Of course mysticism is involved.”

Noting Lumian’s lack of divination knowledge compared to his skill in reading fate, Franca explained with a smug grin.

“You don’t need to put divination on some holy, unattainable pedestal.

“Our Astral Projections constantly interact with the spirit world, obtaining information and receiving revelations. These get reflected in reality through various forms.nove(l)bi(n.)com

“It’s true for both Beyonders and ordinary people. But those unskilled in divination struggle to proactively obtain revelations or effectively interpret them.

“For example, if a Beyonder chokes on a fishbone while eating, they’ll quickly realize it’s a warning from their spirit, containing a revelation needing interpretation. But if regular folks have the same experience, they’ll just think they were unlucky or careless. It won’t stand out enough to warrant deeper consideration or deciphering.

“Of course, getting a stuck fishbone doesn’t always indicate a spiritual warning. Usually it’s just lack of care. Skilled diviners can tell the difference between a true revelation and a random occurrence. The unskilled tend to overthink, scaring themselves while ignoring what’s truly concerning.”

Given their upcoming fish course, Franca had used a relatable example.

Lumian nodded, gaining a clearer understanding of divination.

He asked thoughtfully, “So without deliberate control over the drinking method, coffee ground patterns can reveal something—but

ordinary people's interpretations may be inaccurate?"

"Precisely!" Franca said excitedly. "In the most rational environment, the decades-popular coffee ground divination can come extremely close to reality. Each divination session can refine the standard interpretations until the meaning of every ground formation is definitively established. Then even regular people could interpret with reasonable accuracy.

"Sadly, reality is no bastion of pure rationality. Believers in coffee divination subconsciously work to make even mistaken interpretations come true. Non-believers plainly see the interpretations don't match up. These conflicting approaches get all tangled together, preventing the codification of standard, reliable answers. In the end, it's just a game."

As they conversed, the waiter served the various dishes, clearing used plates as part of the set procedure.

The fried Fürth fish arrived as a later main course.
Lumian cut a piece and tasted it—tender flesh with an intriguing blend of charred and oily notes, the pepper and salt seasoning just right.

"Delicious," Franca praised. "And warming too."

Lumian also felt a current of warmth spread through him as the Fürth fish reached his stomach.

"Some special ingredients indeed," he concluded, teasing Franca. "Just don't eat too fast—wouldn't want you choking on a bone."

Franca laughed. "You think a few bones can choke me?"

Glancing around to confirm the waiter's departure, she asked,

"I've been pondering something the last couple days. I still can't grasp the difference between using rituals and curses to influence a target's future fate versus directly compelling a fate change.

"I get the ritual part—it relies on the target's blood, close relatives, certain items, and mystically significant contact to alter their future

fate. But how is that different from a curse?”

Lumian organized his thoughts before explaining.

“In the mysticism knowledge of Fate Appropriators, a curse is a curse of fate. Compared to rituals, curses are simpler, with fewer required conditions. But that significantly limits the ultimate effect. Nothing too outlandish can be achieved.

“Many bestowed of Inevitability like to call this type of curse Magnified Fate.

“It can only target fate tributaries within the next ten seconds, and must align with the current environment and circumstances. Meeting those prerequisites enables the fate curse to succeed. And the targeted fate tributary needs a certain probability of manifesting in the first place, or the success rate plummets.

“Simply put, one first uses or alters the environment to enable certain possibilities, then magnifies those possibilities—

assuming they weren’t extremely unlikely to begin with.”

Lumian looked at Franca, raising his right palm to gesture as he mischievously provided an example.

“For instance, while you’re eating fish, I could use a curse to magnify the chance of you choking on a bone. But I couldn’t magnify the chance of your chair suddenly collapsing, impaling you with wood splinters.”

The moment he finished speaking, Franca froze, gasping twice as her throat worked. Within seconds, she spat out a bloody fishbone.

“You actually did it?” Franca grumbled. “Luckily my Sequence grants strong throat control. I handled it myself. Uh…” Franca suddenly paused. After a few seconds, she said, “Otherwise we’d be seeking a doctor’s aid. How embarrassing would that be!”

Lumian chuckled. “I could’ve helped pull it out, magnifying the fate tributary of successful extraction.”

Franca was briefly speechless.

After eating another bite of Fürth fish, she nodded.

“I understand the differences now.

“Curses, or Magnify, suit combat. They’re mainly for interfering with and influencing enemies, not accomplishing anything too exaggerated.

“Rituals are done in advance. With the right items, they can largely steer a target’s fate as desired.”

“But only in a general direction,” Lumian added. “No real precision. I could make someone have a bad day, but not dictate the exact flavor of misfortune.”

Franca nodded.

“So compelling fate is like a streamlined ritual for live combat that still packs a punch?”

“Perhaps even stronger and more precise effects,” Lumian mused. “Plus, many abilities transformed in unique ways when Fate Appropriator and Reaper fused, bringing with them the relevant mystical knowledge. I can’t fully distinguish the inherent from the individualized—I only know the Eye of Calamity and Compelling Fate came from Reaper.”

They enjoyed the rest of their lunch. As the meal concluded, Lumian pointed to the half-eaten Fürth fish, instructing the waiter, “I’d like this wrapped up to go.”

The waiter complied respectfully without question. Franca smiled teasingly. “How frugal of you.”

Lumian chuckled. “This is expected of a godfather. Besides, I’m curious what makes this fish so special.”

Chapter 706 The Utility of Delicacies

In another apartment on Rue Orosay in the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Lumian placed the cold Fürth fish in front of Ludwig.

Ludwig's eyes lit up when he saw the pan-fried fish in the exquisite wooden box. He quickly turned to Lugano, who understood his meaning and handed over a child's knife and fork he had found in the newly rented room.

Lumian leaned back in his chair and watched as Ludwig sliced the remaining half of the fish into pieces, chewing and swallowing the meat along with the bones.

Without waiting for Lumian to inquire, Ludwig narrowed his eyes, seemingly enjoying himself, and said, "The Fürth Firefish is a mutated fish resulting from the corruption leaking from Fourth Epoch Trier. Its breed stabilized 769 years ago and mainly resides in the Danro section of the underground Madar River. Its meat and blood can be concocted into a 'warm cocktail' with various sunflowers. After drinking it, one can resist the effects of the cold to a certain extent for half an hour.

"A Fürth Firefish that has lived for over a decade is an ingredient rich in spirituality. Using its meat, blood from a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway, ice, and lemon juice, one can cook Ice Lemon Fish fillets. After anyone eats them for the first time, they permanently enjoy reduced damage from flames. Eating them later will enhance the effect, but it only lasts for half an hour."

Lumian nodded in enlightenment. In Franca's words, the first time it's eaten, it adds some permanent fire resistance. The subsequent enhancements are temporary…

Lugano was taken aback.

Ludwig actually knows cooking?

Moreover, it involves cooking with superpowers!

Can I help him get ingredients rich in spirituality and have him make similar delicacies for me?

It seems capable of permanently enhancing some of my abilities!

After Ludwig finished his meal, Lumian suddenly thought of something.

Franca's ritual for advancing to the Demoness of Affliction involved being burned at the stake—without using a substitute—for fifteen minutes and surviving without going mad.

If Franca eats Fürth Firefish's Ice Lemon Fish fillet to increase her fire resistance, although the pain won't abate, her chances of surviving the incineration will greatly increase. When the time comes, she can eat some more temporarily before the ritual. Lumian's thoughts raced as he quickly made up his mind.

Today, he would head to Underground Trier to search for Fürth Firefish that had lived for over a decade!

From his Traveler's Bag, Lumian retrieved a map of Underground Trier reconstructed from his memories, derived from the one Gardner Martin had once displayed. He searched for the location of the Danro section of the Madar underground river.

As Lumian scrutinized the map, he asked Ludwig with a smile, "How do you know the precise name of the source? Do Fürth Firefish have knowledge of the rivers they inhabit?"

Ludwig licked his lips, unsatisfied.

"Indeed, they do. From years of fishing, humans inevitably mention the names of rivers and specific sections. Even if Fürth Firefish don't comprehend the meaning, they instinctively retain this information in their corresponding cells when repeatedly exposed to it."

"Interesting." Lumian had posed the question in jest, not anticipating such a serious response.

Pointing to himself, he inquired curiously, "Will consuming the Ice Lemon Fish fillet reduce the burn damage I sustain?"

As a Reaper, flames inflict relatively minimal damage to him.

Ludwig picked up a minuscule remnant of the fish, no larger than a grain of rice, from the exquisite wooden box and presented it to Lumian. "Only this much."

Without hesitation, the boy promptly popped the morsel into his mouth.

"Well, that's better than nothing," Lumian remarked with a smile and a sigh.

He intended to secure a special serving of Ice Lemon Fish fillet for himself, with additional portions for Jenna, Anthony, Lugano, and Ludwig!

To accomplish this task, Lumian proactively inquired, "How does a Fürth Firefish that has lived for over a decade differ from its ordinary counterparts?"

Ludwig's response sounded as if he were reciting from a textbook, "A Fürth Firefish that has survived for more than a decade can grow to nearly a meter in length and tends to reside in caves at the riverbed. They rarely approach the surface but exhibit a keen sensitivity to blood and spiritually rich food. These fish are highly aggressive and willing to take significant risks driven by their instincts.

"Their skin has hardened, rendering them impervious to fishing spears. Sharp teeth fill their mouths, enabling them to devour any humans who happen to fall into the river. Additionally, their blood possesses a distinct burning characteristic."

After attentively listening, Lumian calmly assessed the information.

Despite their longevity of over a decade, Fürth Firefish did not possess Beyonder characteristics or acquire supernatural abilities

through boons. They belonged to a species that had undergone corruption but had since stabilized.

If they were to continue living in such an environment for tens of thousands of years, they might evolve into creatures with their own intricate society, akin to the Batings Black Insect.

As he put away the map and stood up, Lumian turned to Ludwig and asked thoughtfully before leaving,

"Apart from the permanent enhancements, does this special cooking method involve any adverse effects, such as corruption?"

Ludwig scrutinized Lumian and remained silent. Lumian suspected that Ludwig was internally mocking him.

For someone already deeply corrupted, the concern over a minuscule amount of additional corruption seemed trivial.

After a brief pause, Ludwig replied, "As a child, I lack understanding of such matters. What I do know is that if one desires to indulge in finer and more delectable cuisine, they must be willing to accept the associated risks. Those unwilling to take the risk can simply choose not to partake…"

Ludwig instinctively added, "If you don't wish to eat, you can always leave the food for me."

With a slight nod, Lumian opened the door and exited the apartment.

…

In the depths of Underground Trier, the Madar River flowed through a tranquil, deserted, and dimly lit cave, its gentle splashing echoing in the distance.

Emerging from the shadows, Lumian, Franca, and Jenna made their way to the riverbank. One carried a carbide lamp, while the other two traveled empty-handed.

Although ingredient suppliers seeking to monopolize Fürth Firefish guarded this section of the subterranean river, it posed no significant

challenge for a Hunter and two Demonesses. Utilizing the shadows, they deftly navigated through the patrolled area and successfully reached the water's edge.

Raising his carbide lamp, Lumian discovered that the underground river was not only expansive but also incredibly deep. Submerged caves lined the riverbed, inhabited by peculiar fish.

After a quick survey, Lumian set the carbide lamp down, rolled up his sleeves, and crouched beside the river.

Without hesitation, he plunged his right arm into the frigid water.

"Is this your preferred method of fishing?" Franca inquired, well aware of Lumian's penchant for "fishing." However, she hadn't anticipated him employing the same technique when his prey was, quite literally, fish.

"What alternative do I have?" Lumian chuckled. "Would you prefer I strip down, dive into the underwater caves, and catch them with my bare hands?"

"That's not an impossibility," Franca replied with a playful smile. "It would provide an excellent opportunity to admire your physique."

Ignoring her comment, Lumian focused his spirituality, causing a thin layer of white flames to emanate from his thumb.

The flames, resistant to the water's extinguishing effect, took the form of a small knife and carefully sliced his index finger. A single drop of blood seeped out, rapidly dispersing into the surrounding water.

The Fürth Firefish swimming in the shallows seemed to detect an ominous presence and swiftly retreated from the area where the blood had spread.

Moments later, enormous Fürth Firefish, their skin charred and hardened, emerged from the caves along the riverbed.The source of this content nov(el)bi((n))

One particularly swift specimen reached Lumian's right hand in a flash, its mouth wide open to reveal sharp, gleaming teeth. Before it

could sink its teeth into his flesh, Lumian's palm abruptly clenched into a fist. Instead of withdrawing, he thrust his hand forward, punching directly into the fish's gaping maw.

With a resounding bang, Lumian grasped the creature's skull and hauled the colossal Fürth fish out of the river.

Silently, cold and sinister black flames ignited in the river, incinerating Lumian's blood that had merged with the water.

It was Jenna.

"We can return now," Lumian declared, tossing the massive Fürth fish to Franca.

As Franca caught the ingredient, freezing it and storing it in her Traveler's Bag, she appeared lost in thought.

Keenly observing her demeanor, Lumian asked, "What's on your mind?"

Pointing in a specific direction, Franca responded, "I remember that nearby, we entered a unique mirror world and acquired the classic silver mirror that granted Anthony and me access to Fourth Epoch Trier."

"Indeed," Lumian acknowledged, gesturing for Franca to continue.

Averting her gaze, Franca expressed her thoughts, "I'm contemplating whether we could utilize the mirror world to stage an ambush against Moran Avigny. Specifically, I'm referring to the conventional mirror world that interconnects all the mirrors in this world."

In the conventional sense, the mirror world functioned more akin to a conceptual amalgamation of doors rather than a tangible realm. It served as an intricate network of passageways linking various mirrors and enigmatic lands. In essence, if Franca could harness the mirror world and pinpoint the precise location, she could conceal herself behind the mirror frequently used by Moran Avigny and launch an attack the moment her target entered.

"What is it that you truly wish to convey?" Lumian raised his

eyebrows.

Franca eagerly elaborated, "Considering that a portion of the corruption from Fourth Epoch Trier has seeped into this area, giving rise to unique creatures like Fürth Firefish and the extraordinary mirror world we previously explored, is it plausible that within this vast underground expanse, there exists a secluded corner influenced by the corruption of a select few high-level Demoness powers over an extended period?

"Could it be possible for one to traverse through the mirror and enter the mirror world without attaining the status of a demigod Demoness?"

After a moment of serious contemplation, Lumian replied, "It's a possibility."

Jenna's eyes darted around as she suggested, "Could it be the location where you discovered the special mirror? That area must have been corrupted by the power emanating from Fourth Epoch Trier's mirror world."

"We can investigate," Lumian said with a smile. "There's no need to rush. If it proves unsuccessful, we can bide our time. Once Hisoka's Beyonder characteristic is transformed into a Sealed Artifact, perhaps we can assume the form of Wraiths and conceal ourselves within the mirror. However, I'm uncertain whether Wraiths possess the ability to navigate the mirror world."

"Let's prioritize the search!" Franca declared, retrieving her Mirror World Fragment. She hoped that this item might provide some unique means of detection.

Lumian glanced at the fragment and, after a brief contemplation, advised seriously, "Holding the Mirror World Fragment is unlikely to yield any benefit. Instead, take out the Primordial Demoness figurine."

Chapter 707 Compulsion

In the dark, silent tunnel, Franca advanced slowly, holding the Primordial Demoness figurine made of bone. Her footsteps were so soft they were nearly inaudible.

Lumian, clutching his carbide lamp, and Jenna trailed silently behind her.

With a Hunter's keen understanding of the terrain and memories, the three had finished exploring the area where they had obtained the classic silver mirror. They had even expanded their search to include the nearby underground tunnels and connected quarry caves.

However, the Primordial Demoness figurine showed no abnormal reactions, and neither Franca nor Jenna sensed anything out of the ordinary.

Franca sighed. "Well, this is disappointing. Bold assumptions leading to a shameful failure!"

She had no intention of giving up, but wanted to return to the surface first and contact 007. She hoped to use the authorities' detailed records of underground abnormalities to search for any areas where a high-level Demoness's power might be seeping out.

Having experienced numerous mystical incidents, Lumian surveyed the area, pondering for a few seconds.

"Let's investigate again. This time, I'll extinguish the carbide lamp.

"In mysticism, Demonesses and the mirror world are always associated with darkness, evil, and quiet depth. Perhaps subtle reactions can occur in the absence of light."

"Subtle reactions… What is this, a chemistry experiment?" Franca

scoffed, but chose to comply. She turned to Jenna. "Hold your Mirror World Fragment in your hand. If we're giving this a shot, we should try everything."

Jenna took out the Mirror World Fragment she had obtained from the Tamara family tomb, and Lumian turned the switch to extinguish the carbide lamp.

The silent tunnel plunged into absolute darkness. As a Hunter, Lumian couldn't see a thing.

"You can hold onto my sleeve," Jenna suggested calmly. "Or activate your Spirit Vision and follow our spiritual light."

Lumian replied with a smile, "That would make me look weak. I suspect you're deliberately showing off. Have you forgotten? I can gain night vision by changing my life form."

Jenna was silent for a moment before retorting, "Dammit! Would it kill you to be a bit nicer about it?"

"She's right," Franca agreed. "Jenna was just trying to help. It's fine if you don't want her assistance, but there's no need to mock her."

"That's a Hunter for you." Lumian chuckled as he activated the black mark on his body, transforming into a shadow creature.

He blended into the shadows and followed Franca and Jenna as they explored the area for the second time.

As Franca passed a corner of a quarry cave, she suddenly felt the bone figurine in her hand tremble slightly.

"There's a reaction! There's a reaction!" she exclaimed joyfully.

Lumian immediately left the shadows, transforming back into human form, his blue eyes tinged with silver-black.

In the absolute darkness, he saw the mercury rivers of fate belonging to Franca and Jenna.

As his spirituality rapidly depleted from the brief observation,

Lumian found a possibility among the tributaries symbolizing Franca's future fate.

This was something that might happen in ten seconds or more. Furthermore, the probability of it occurring was extremely low—something Curse, or rather, Magnify, couldn't influence.

Without hesitation, Lumian extended his right palm toward Franca.

Franca, with her night vision, witnessed his actions and noticed his silver-black eyes. She jumped in fright.

"W-what are you doing?"

She didn't dodge, fully trusting Lumian.

Lumian roused his spirituality, transforming it into a violent illusory river that surged out of his palm.

Franca's fate was instantly thrust into a future by the mighty torrent.

Compelling Fate!

Franca suddenly had an idea.

"Are you influencing my future, allowing me to successfully utilize the corrupted fate fragments here to make it a reality?

"Dammit, I really do have an idea. Maybe I should give it a try!"

Lumian, his spirituality greatly depleted, chuckled. "Life is short, why not give it a try?"

"…" Franca could clearly detect the mockery in his tone. She gritted her teeth. "I'll deal with you later!"

As she spoke, Franca placed the Primordial Demoness's bone figurine on a protruding rock in a corner of the mine. Then she took out a mirror and placed it in front of the figurine.

Lumian conjured a blazing white fireball and observed as Franca retrieved essential oils, extracts, perfume, and herbal powder from

her Traveler's Bag, preparing for the ritual.

Uh… Lumian turned to Jenna, who happened to look back at him.

Franca simultaneously turned to face them.

The three were taken aback for a moment before bursting into laughter.

"You two thought of it too?" Franca said happily. "Jenna shouldn't stay here. The Primordial Demoness might cast Her gaze here later."

As a pure female Demoness, it would definitely not bode well for Jenna to be noticed by the Primordial Demoness. It could even mean death.

Lumian replied with a smile, "I'll send Jenna back first and come back after the ritual."

With that, he reached out and grabbed Jenna's shoulder.

Jenna said to Franca, "Be careful."

"Don't worry, I'm a skilled worker," Franca replied, waving her hand cheerfully.

As a member of the Demoness Sect, she regularly prayed to the Primordial Demoness through the bone figurine, following the Demoness of Black's instructions. Occasionally, she even held a solo Mass.

Of course, this was the first time she would be praying to the Primordial Demoness through a ritual.

After Lumian teleported away with Jenna, the quarry cave returned to darkness.

With the bone figurine, Franca decided to use a dualistic ritual.

After lighting the candle representing herself, she drew her needs on a faux goatskin with the corresponding symbols and patterns, drawing upon her extensive mysticism knowledge.

Following that, she sanctified the ritual silver dagger and created a wall of spirituality. She dripped rose essential oil, musk, and perfume into the candle flame.

Franca's heart skipped a beat as the alluring, complex scent quickly entered her nostrils. She couldn't help but inhale deeply.

After completing all the preparations, Franca took two steps back and recited the Primordial Demoness's honorific name in Hermes.

"The source of all catastrophes, the symbol of destruction and the apocalypse, the Demoness who controls Chaos."

In the altar, a small amount of moss suddenly grew, entangling into vines that rose high, as if staring at Franca.

The ground softened, and a frigid wind blew, causing Franca to tremble.

Simultaneously, Franca sensed the fragrance in the area grow sweeter, carrying a warm charm that made her blush.

This invigorated her specific desires, and charming scenes surfaced in her mind.

Suppressing the heat in her body and shaking off her discomfort, Franca briefly recounted how Moran Avigny was a Mirror Person and how she wanted to capture him. Then, following the ritual's standard procedure, she said,

"I pray for the power of the mirror.

"I pray for the power of chaos.

"I pray for God's protection.

"I pray for a fixed entrance to the mirror world to appear here.

"Roses, a herb that belongs to the Demoness, please pass your power to my incantation.

"Musk, a herb that belongs to the Demoness, please pass your power

to my incantation…"

After reciting the incantation, Franca ignited the faux goatskin and placed it on the mirror in front of the bone figurine.

As the faux goatskin burned away, Franca felt the candle flame dim, as if a layer of translucent mullioned glass had materialized around it.

A strange power was activated, gathering in the mirror.

The human-head-sized mirror suddenly darkened, turning shadowy and illusory.

It melded with the protruding rock where the figurine was placed and vanished.

In the next moment, the candle flame returned to normal, and the fragrance lingering in the air still unsettled Franca. Her thoughts raced, requiring immense strength to control herself.

After tidying up the bone figurine and other items, Franca took a deep breath and exhaled slowly.

Dammit, just the charm and pleasure emanating from the ritual nearly made me lose myself. All I wanted was to approach the source of the charm and enjoy the pleasures bestowed by Her.

As expected of the Primordial Demoness who controls pleasure and feminine charm…

Dammit! I'm an idiot. Why did I take a deep breath? The smell here hasn't dissipated!

I need to quickly confirm if there's an entrance to the mirror world before heading back to Jenna…

As these thoughts raced through Franca's mind, she saw Lumian's figure swiftly materialize at the edge of the quarry cave.

Franca jumped in fright. "Why are you back already?"Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Lumian chuckled. "You're in pretty good shape. Didn't I say I'd return after your ritual…?"

As he spoke, Lumian noticed Franca's lake-blue eyes rippling under the dim candlelight, as if they could captivate one's soul.

Lumian's words faltered.

After a brief pause, he added, "Besides, Jenna was worried about you and asked me to come check on you.

"I believe the Primordial Demoness can understand that a Demoness of Pleasure has a friend who cares about her."

"Yeah." Franca nodded gently, bit her lip, and pointed at the protruding rock. "That spot seems to have become a fixed entrance to the mirror world. Let's see if we can enter."

Lumian didn't inquire further. He approached the protruding rock and, together with Franca, extended his right palm, pressing it against the cold stone.

A faint light flickered, and the two vanished on the spot.

After a brief moment of vertigo, a dark, illusory path appeared before Lumian and Franca's eyes. Surrounding them were numerous similar "tunnels," intertwining to form a complicated and mysterious colossal spiderweb.

Chapter 708 Remnant Influence

Is this an ordinary mirror world? Lumian gazed at the dark, illusory paths around him that resembled a mosquito landing on a complicated spiderweb. For some reason, he felt a surge of fear, as if a colossal, warped, pitch-black spider could crawl out from the depths of this strange land at any moment and drag him and Franca into the darkness that symbolized destruction.

"Is every illusory path connected to a mirror?" Franca's voice suddenly echoed in Lumian's ears, so close he could hear her breathing.

Simultaneously, Lumian caught a whiff of a warm, sweet fragrance. His blood vessels inexplicably pulsed, and his body and mind relaxed slightly.Foll*o*w current nov*e*ls on nov*e*lb((in).(com)

At some point, Franca had moved to his side, her eyes flickering as she surveyed their surroundings.

Lumian nodded slightly. "In theory, yes."

"No!" Franca rejected her speculation. "They might also be connected to some mysterious alternate space."

"That's right…" Lumian recalled his understanding of the mirror world.

He exhaled and took a step forward.

"I believe those situations should also be connected to mirrors, mirrors that belong to those mysterious alternate spaces."

Without waiting for Franca's response, he pointed at the dark illusory path ahead and said,

"Before understanding the mirror world's coordinates and location, recklessly traversing this place is likely very dangerous. If we're lucky, we might only end up at the wrong mirror and have no choice but to return to the real world. If we're unlucky, we'll reach a mirror representing a dangerous place. When we leave, we'll have to face terrifying enemies. If we're super unlucky…"

At this point, Lumian paused.

Franca squeezed to his side and asked in a soft voice, "What happens if we're super unlucky?"

"W-we'll vanish from this mirror world forever. We won't be seen alive, and if we're dead, our corpses will go missing." Lumian composed himself and took another step forward.

All of a sudden, he sensed the dark, illusory path morph into a massive vortex, tugging him into its depths.

Franca experienced a comparable sensation, her spirituality sending her a powerful warning.

They both stepped back in unison, evading the absorption of the fearsome vortex.

"How treacherous," Franca sighed. "Just getting close to these illusory paths without going further can make you plummet into an unknown mirror. Maybe we can only count on the luck of Winners in a situation like this. Let's hope our destination isn't too terrible. Uh, your Magnify or Compelling Fate abilities should come in handy."

Lumian nodded.

"I initially thought the mirror world was closely tied to the spirit world, and teleportation would work here too. But from what I can see, while there is a connection, it's not strong enough to enable my teleportation. It's not that I can't teleport, but it's way too risky. There's nearly a 100% chance of getting lost.

"Without comprehending the abilities associated with the mirror world, I don't suggest using this place to ambush Moran Avigny, unless we're aided by a high-level Demoness or a high-level

Apprentice."

Noticing Franca nod pensively, Lumian sighed in relief and intentionally taunted, "Have you recovered?"

"Huh?" Franca was startled momentarily before her embarrassment morphed into anger. "What other option do I have? When I use a ritual to seek aid from the Primordial One, I'm inevitably impacted. Sometimes I'm lured, sometimes I'm in pain, and sometimes I'm dejected, as if I've temporarily developed a mental disorder. Sometimes I go rigid for a while, as if I've been petrified…"

Since officially joining the Demoness Sect, the Demoness of Black had shared extensive mysticism knowledge with Franca, particularly concerning prayers to the Primordial Demoness.

On such topics, the Demoness of Black explained: As the ritual's host, the ritual itself granted a degree of protection. The extent to which she was influenced by the Primordial One's overflowing presence was quite minimal. Once the ritual concluded, she would recover after withstanding it for ten to twenty seconds. The only thing to watch out for was the desires arising from their typical reaction to being entranced by the Primordial One. Their fading would be comparatively gradual, but what Demoness didn't have numerous lovers? There was no need to be overly concerned about this.

The longer Franca talked, the more forceful she became, even a tad aggrieved.

"That's a genuine deity. How can I possibly resist a genuine deity's overflowing influence?

"If I weren't the ritual's host, I would've been unable to restrain myself and would've unleashed my primal instincts."

Franca couldn't suppress a chuckle at the reference to her primal nature.

Within the mirror world, she had consistently called the Primordial Demoness the Primordial One to prevent blasphemy.

After pondering for a moment, Lumian replied, "Praying to a different

genuine deity won't lead to anything comparable unless someone present is blasphemous."

"It's the Primordial One's fault for being in such a terrible state." Franca had already come up with the justification. "Don't assume you can withstand it simply because you're an Ascetic. If you had been there and not the ritual's host, I would've witnessed your primal nature erupt."

At this juncture, she appraised Lumian and grinned.

"It's not like you didn't react. Were you worried you couldn't restrain yourself, so you purposely exposed me and created an awkward situation?"

Subconsciously, Franca's breathing turned labored again.

Lumian scoffed.

"When I got there, the scene's lingering effects hadn't fully dissipated, and a peculiar fragrance permeated the air. That was a genuine deity. How could I withstand even the tiniest bit of a genuine deity's overflowing influence?"

He echoed Franca's words.

"Really? Is it merely due to the lingering aroma?" Franca's lake-blue eyes narrowed menacingly, as if challenged.

The aqueous light in her eyes resurfaced, glittering like shards of sunlight.

Lumian exhaled and stepped to the side, grasping Franca's upper arm.

"I'll send you back first. Jenna is waiting for you."

"We're heading back already?" Franca asked, surprised. "Won't you explore the mirror world further and consider how to utilize this place?"

"I have a plan." Lumian tugged Franca away from the illusory tunnel's spiderweb-like darkness.

As they returned to the quarry cave, Franca, her focus diverted, inquired, "What plan?"

While Lumian tried to activate the black mark on his right shoulder, he responded impassively, "Contract ability."

He intended to establish a contract with a Beyonder creature possessing a mirror world traversal ability to acquire the corresponding characteristics!

Regardless, he hadn't determined which three abilities to contract this time. This could be one of them.

"You're right, a contract ability…" Franca was thrilled.

She then noticed Lumian was still motionless. Comprehending, she murmured into his ear, "Didn't you want to teleport? Why haven't we departed? Does your Spirit World Traversal activation always take this long, or are you enduring something?"

As Franca completed her sentence, the pair vanished from the gloomy quarry cave.

…

That evening, in Lumian's rented apartment, the nearly one-

meter-long Fürth Firefish was set on the dining table. Ludwig used a child's table knife to break through the charred and tough fish skin, cutting the fair fish meat into pieces.

Lumian glanced at Franca, who had donned a light-colored hunting suit, and noticed the Demoness of Pleasure's gaze was elusive, brimming with embarrassment.

She appeared to be lamenting: Kill me! This is too mortifying. I don't want to live anymore!

Lumian, who had been feeling slightly embarrassed himself, smiled.

He mouthed to Franca,

"Post-nut clarity is truly remarkable."

Despite Franca's inability to lip-read, she still sensed Lumian's ridicule.

Pleasure is detrimental! Pleasure is detrimental! Irrespective of gender, when thoughts of pleasure dominate one's mind, one will invariably engage in various actions that result in their own ruin!

How humiliating!

I don't want to live!

In that instant, Franca longed for a crevice in the ground to conceal herself.

Anthony, sitting silently at the dining table, glanced at Lumian, then at Franca, before looking away.

At last, Ludwig removed the inedible parts and sliced the fish fillets into three soup pots.

Franca sealed one of the pots with ice and stored it in her Traveler's Bag for later use. Ludwig slid the other one to Lugano and spoke in a childish tone, "Can we have fish fillet and clam cream broth tonight?"

"Sure," Lugano promptly agreed.

He made an effort to avert his gaze from Franca and Jenna, the two Demonesses, believing it was disrespectful to his boss.

From his viewpoint, these two Demonesses were probably the boss's lovers.

He couldn't help but marvel inwardly.

As expected of the boss. He really has Demonesses as his lovers, and there are two of them!

Back then, Emperor Roselle only had one.

After adding a generous amount of lemon juice to the pot of fish

fillets, Ludwig slid them toward Lumian.

His intention was evident. He required the blood of a Mid-

Sequence Beyonder of the Hunter pathway.

"How much do you need?" Lumian inquired.

"Enough to stir it up," Ludwig replied, acting as if this was the bare minimum.

Jenna frowned and asked, "How much does each person need to eat to gain that permanent effect?"

Ludwig answered innocently, "Different physiques and Sequences need different quantities. You'll only find out when you actually eat it."

Lumian raised his eyebrows and poured the rest of Gardner Martin's blood into the soup pot.

Noticing it was still insufficient, he used a ritual silver dagger to slice his hand and dripped 20 to 30 milliliters of blood into it.

Ludwig observed with anticipation.

"Aren't you concerned about corruption?" Lumian asked with a smirk.

Ludwig shook his head. "The quantity here isn't substantial."

Franca tried her best to act normally and remarked with amusement, "Discussing toxicity without considering dosage is just playing the rogue."

"Indeed." Ludwig concurred with Franca and stirred the fish slices in the soup with a spoon.

Gradually, the tender-white fish soaked up the seemingly searing blood, and the fish slowly started to brown.

"Add some ice," Ludwig instructed Franca and Jenna.

The two Demonesses rose in unison and extended their hands toward

the soup pot.

Drops of white frost condensed and descended like rain, noticeably slowing the browning of the fish until it ceased.

Ludwig leaped off his chair and dashed into the kitchen, returning with a few silver plates. He distributed seven to eight Ice Lemon Fish fillets to each of them.

"Is that all?" Jenna asked with a surprised smile.

"If it's not enough, you can have two or three more," Ludwig replied earnestly.

Jenna instinctively wanted to say something, but she refrained when she saw Ludwig's childlike demeanor.

She pointed at their plates and said, "Did you request so much of Lumian's blood just to eat such a small portion of the fish?

"Why not prepare less and save the remaining half of the pot for tomorrow?"

Ludwig hugged the soup pot in front of him and shouted, "Mine!"

"…" Jenna suddenly felt like a witch stealing candy from a child.

He's definitely abusing his power… Lumian glanced at Ludwig and shook his head in amusement. "At least you have some sense when it comes to food."

With that, Lumian polished off all the Ice Lemon Fish fillets on his plate.

Chapter 709 "Chef"

The sour lemon flavor, tender fish texture, scorching aroma, and subtle sweetness with hints of fish and oil burst forth in Lumian's mouth. The taste exceeded his expectations.

He had anticipated dishes like this would be unpalatable and jarring, similar to a potion, but he never thought they would be considered delicious.

When given a choice, Ludwig has a genuine preference for delicacies and doesn't fool himself… Lumian chewed and swallowed the seven or eight fish slices.

A mild burning sensation spread from his throat to his stomach, reminiscent of drinking a glass of liquor.

The sensation quickly faded, and nothing unusual happened.

"That's it? It worked?" Lumian glanced at Ludwig.

Ludwig shook his head.Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

"Give it another two to three minutes for your stomach to absorb it."

"So fast?" Franca asked, surprised.

She respected mysticism, but having taken potions before, she knew they worked instantaneously. Ludwig's delicacies, however, seemed to require digestion and absorption by the stomach, contradicting how the organ typically functioned.

Plus, the stomach didn't absorb everything!

Ludwig responded seriously, "A Chef's creations can be rapidly absorbed by the stomach."

Chef… Lumian nodded, deep in thought.

He remembered Ludwig frequently commenting on various things like a food connoisseur.

Without further explanation, Ludwig buried his face in the soup pot before him and polished off the remaining Ice Lemon Fish fillets.

Jenna and the others promptly finished the fish slices on their own plates.

Two minutes later, Lumian felt his body growing warm, with a tingling sensation in his skin and flesh.

The effect on him was minimal. It paled in comparison to drinking a potion, let alone the pain of burning himself with flames.

Soon, Lumian returned to normal, his expression unaltered.

He glanced playfully at Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, waiting to see how the Ice Lemon Fish fillet would affect them.

A minute later, Jenna and the others suddenly flushed, as if they had eaten incredibly spicy food from the Feynapotter Kingdom highlands.

"Hiss…" Lugano let out a pained gasp, feeling a searing sensation in his breath.

Originating from within his body, he couldn't have treated it even if he wanted to.

Frost enveloped Franca's body, seemingly trying to soothe the pain in her skin and flesh.

It was futile.

Jenna and Anthony grimaced but made no unnecessary movements. They bore the discomfort, waiting for the Ice Lemon Fish fillet to finish transforming their bodies.

This lasted for ten to twenty seconds before the quartet's expressions relaxed.

"How does it feel?" Lumian asked with a smile.

Franca instinctively recalled the sensation and said, "It was like every inch of my skin and flesh had been burned. Hmm, not quite that intense—relatively mild…"

While speaking, she took a matchbox from her Traveler's Bag and experimentally lit two matches. She held them to the back of her left hand for a bit.

Franca's expression gradually contorted. She endured the pain in her left hand momentarily before pulling it back and shaking it.

The matchbox fell to the ground.

"It still hurts!" Franca reported the experiment results to Lumian and Jenna through gritted teeth.

Ludwig hastily replied, "It doesn't reduce pain."

"How's the wound?" Jenna asked, concerned.

Franca immediately checked the back of her left hand, seeing only slight burn marks on her pale skin with minimal physical damage.

"It works, even though the flame temperature wasn't that high, to begin with…" Franca's expression eased.

Across the dining table, Anthony carefully considered his words before saying, "I think I'm a bit more irritable than usual, but within reasonable limits."

Jenna added, "I'm grumpy too, but not drastically."

Franca and Lugano confirmed experiencing the same thing.

Swallowing the Ice Lemon Fish fillet, Ludwig explained, "That's to be expected. Effectiveness comes with corruption."

Jenna and Franca turned to Lumian.

Lumian spread his hands, smiling. "I don't feel any different."

For him, the Ice Lemon Fish fillet's corruption was negligible.

Franca wasn't sure whether to feel envious or sympathetic. After a moment's thought, she said, "This is like a milder version of being a Contractee—tolerating certain negative effects in exchange for corresponding Beyonder traits. Sure, the effects are noticeably weaker, but the upside is it's passive. Plus, the negative effects are minimal.

"Going forward, when you get similar ingredients, you need to clarify the permanent and negative effects. You can't just eat everything. Choices have to be made. Otherwise, things can easily go wrong."

Lumian glanced at Ludwig and said, "That depends on the individual."

Maybe a Chef, or the Gourmet pathway, had Sequences that mitigated the corresponding impact, akin to Alms Monks and Ascetics who were Contractees.

Franca grasped Lumian's implication and continued excitedly,

"Dishes and concoctions without permanent effects are like various Apothecary pathway agents.

"I've always envied Contractees. I wanted the freedom to mix and match abilities, creating a unique character build. Now, without accepting an evil god's boon, I finally have a chance, albeit a diluted one."

Jenna's heart raced, and the two Demonesses gazed at Ludwig, eyes shining.

To them, he was no longer the gluttonous monster child Lumian had described, but a Beyonder chef deserving of their care and attention.

Ludwig concentrated on eating the leftover Ice Lemon Fish fillet, not reacting further.

…

In a quarry cave in Underground Trier.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony stood beyond the spirituality wall, observing Lumian conduct the ritual to acquire new contract abilities.

Having thoroughly reviewed Madam Magician's information on spirit world entities and possessing the strange creature knowledge granted by the boon, Lumian swiftly identified two potential contract targets with mirror travel abilities.

The first was a spirit world being called Bloody Jack. According to the information, in the Loen Kingdom's south, some mysticism enthusiasts and folklore academics were playing a divination game when they spotted a blurry figure in the mirror wielding a large axe, drenched in blood. This figure would emerge from the mirror, assaulting and slaughtering everyone present.

The second was the Daratra Diamond Maggots, mentioned in the Contractee's mysticism knowledge. They could grant Mirror Traversal in exchange for sacrificing a crystallized meteorite. The drawback was that one's body would become denser and shorter.

Lumian undeniably wanted to summon Bloody Jack but wasn't certain if it possessed an ability akin to Mirror Traversal.

Gazing at the three lit candles, Lumian stepped back twice and chanted in ancient Hermes, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era;

"You are the ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"I beseech your shelter.

"I pray for your attention.

"I!

"In the name of the great Fool, I summon:

"The peculiar creature that wanders about the unfounded, the slaughterer hidden in the mirror, Jack from the bloody world…"

The bluish-black candle flame instantly swelled, forming an illusory

door adorned with enigmatic patterns amidst the pervasive, eerie gray mist.

The door gradually opened, and darkness poured out, engulfing the mirror Lumian had placed on the altar.

The mirror abruptly levitated, pointing directly at Lumian. Within, an indistinct figure in a blood-stained old jacket dragged a massive axe.

Opening his mouth, Lumian made his throat and chest resonate as he spoke the Mystical Language of Fate.

Silver-black words akin to symbols materialized in midair, descending onto the faux goatskin at the altar's edge, forming a concise and ominous contract.

Upon the contract's formation, Lumian connected with Bloody Jack, comprehending its abilities and traits. He "listened" to its demands.

Bloody Jack possessed three mirror-related abilities and traits, which Lumian named Mirror Mark, Mirror Concealment, and Mirror Traversal.

Mirror Marks could invisibly mark a mirror, inverted from reality, to pinpoint a target. Mirror Concealment allowed the user to hide within the dark tunnels, avoiding being pulled into another mirror. Mirror Traversal enabled swift passage through the illusory tunnels.

Bloody Jack's demand was the sacrifice of 99 living humans.

Lumian pondered briefly, concluding that Mirror Mark was the optimal choice. Locating targets was paramount, and Mirror Traversal could be substituted with Spirit World Traversal. Rapid travel wasn't essential when he could arrive directly.

His eyes suddenly glinted silvery-black, mirroring Bloody Jack's river of fate.

He wasn't seeking information about Bloody Jack. Instead, under the ritual's protection, he aimed to verify something.

After a quick observation, Lumian switched to ancient Hermes and

asked Bloody Jack, "Can I alter the request?"

He was unsure if Bloody Jack would comprehend or respond, but asking was harmless. If not, he would have to write to Madam Magician, inquiring about other suitable mirror entities.

Having asked, Lumian immediately employed Magnified Fate, gaining a sharper view of Bloody Jack's fate for the next ten seconds.

Feigning nervousness, he moved his right hand as if to touch his face.

He Magnified a fate tributary!

Two to three seconds later, Bloody Jack's thoughts reached Lumian through the connection forged by the Mystical Language of Fate.

"Pull me out of the mirror!"

Lumian raised his eyebrows and stepped forward twice, extending his right hand toward the mirror hovering above the altar.

The moment his finger touched the glass mirror, he felt it dissolve into nothingness.

As Lumian fully inserted his palm into the mirror, a cold, damp, and distinctly sticky hand abruptly grasped his wrist.

Chapter 710 "Communication"

Lumian wasn't surprised when his wrist was grabbed by the wet hand.

He even chuckled. "Not bad. You only stained my wrist, not corrupt my entire arm."

As he spoke, he pulled back with all his might, feeling the abnormally heavy force opposing him.Updat*e*d fr*o*m nov*e*lb(i)n.c(o)m

Lumian's muscles swelled, and his body appeared to grow slightly larger.

At last, he saw the bloody figure in the jacket being dragged out of the empty mirror.

A bluish-black mist materialized, permeating the faux goatskin containing the ominous contract.

The contract burst into flames on its own, morphing into silver-black symbols and words. They linked together from end to end, creating an intricate and illusory pattern that abruptly passed through his clothes and settled between Lumian's chest and abdomen.

Having pulled Bloody Jack out of the mirror, Lumian had fulfilled the other party's request, and the contract was automatically fulfilled!

At that instant, Bloody Jack, who had regained his footing in front of the altar, raised his head.

His mutilated face turned towards Lumian as he lifted the blood-dripping axe with both hands.

Lumian's eyes, tinged with an iron-black hue, mirrored a two-toned figure of Bloody Jack.

One was a vivid red, enveloping every crevice of Bloody Jack's body, permeating every inch of space. The other was a pale white, no larger than a thumb. It was located at Bloody Jack's abdomen, enveloped by layers of bright red.

Much like Padre Cali in his untransformed Wraith state, he has only one vulnerability from head to toe, but it's not in his Spirit Body; it's concealed within his physical form… This seems to be composed of viscous blood. Regardless of the extent of damage or blood loss it endures, as long as the core remains unharmed, it will be unaffected… It bears some resemblance to the Rose Bishop of the Secrets Suppliant pathway, but it possesses mirror-related capabilities… As Lumian observed, a succession of thoughts calmly raced through his mind.

Bloody Jack's red spiderweb-like eyes displayed a ruthless and bloodthirsty expression. He raised his axe and swung it at Lumian's body.

The deal is done. Now, I'm going to kill you!

Bang!

The axe missed Lumian and hit the ground of the quarry cave, creating a deep fissure and sending gravel and dirt flying.

With a twisted flexibility that exceeded human limits, Lumian maneuvered behind Bloody Jack.

With a swift motion of his arm, Lumian punched out with his right fist.

Blazing white flames surged forth, a bright tail enveloping his fist and wrapping around his forearm.

Pfft! Lumian's fist felt as if it had plunged into a swamp. The deeper he went, the more muddy and sticky it became.

Rumble! He detonated the blazing white flames surrounding his fist, blasting open a passageway.

His fist and forearm sank into Bloody Jack's cavity, halting at the

pale-white spot.

Just as Bloody Jack was about to turn around and swing his axe, he froze. His body rapidly disintegrated, turning into congealed blood that fell to the ground.

The blood clots writhed and reassembled into Bloody Jack, but there was still a gap in his abdomen that couldn't be filled.

Seeing this, Lumian's body ignited with a blazing white flame, ready to attack with all his might.

Bloody Jack instantly turned ethereal and retreated into the mirror on the altar.

Lumian chuckled and abandoned the pursuit, ending the summoning ritual at a moderate pace.

His objective had been achieved. He had acquired the contracted ability—Mirror Mark!

Previously, he had observed Bloody Jack's river of fate not to gather information about it, but to verify if this strange creature from the bloody world possessed godhood!

If Bloody Jack didn't have godhood, Lumian could complete some risky transactions with him to circumvent the requirement of 99 living sacrifices. If Bloody Jack had godhood, he would undoubtedly suffer a backlash. However, he was protected by the ritual and under Mr. Fool's gray fog's supervision, so he wouldn't be significantly affected.

It was precisely because he was aware of this that Lumian dared to agree to drag Bloody Jack out of the mirror, allowing him to no longer be restricted by the ritual.

It turned out that as long as the contracted party could communicate normally, the price to pay when signing the contract would be significantly lower.

Of course, there was no way to avoid the negative effects entirely. Although Lumian obtained the Mirror Mark, it would also make him

more susceptible to attracting abnormal events and strange dangers related to mirrors.

As the crack created by Bloody Jack spread to the wall of spirituality, causing it to gradually disintegrate, Franca took the opportunity to curiously inquire about what had just transpired.

Lumian gave a brief account of his "negotiation" with Bloody Jack and smiled.

"I worked hard to reach Sequence 5 so that these evil creatures would be able to communicate with me calmly."

Franca couldn't resist laughing. "You call that calm?"

With a sigh, she said, "If it weren't for dealing with Moran Avigny, the Mirror Mark wouldn't be a wise choice. You wouldn't have much use for it normally. It's like wasting a contract slot."

This was due to Lumian's lack of mirror-related abilities. Without a fixed mirror world entrance, he couldn't pass through mirrors, let alone use the Mirror Mark to locate his target.

Lumian wasn't bothered by it.

"The Sealed Artifact corresponding to the Hisoka Beyonder characteristic might have the ability to transform into a Wraith. The Mirror Mark could be used to complement it."

"Let's hope that's the case," Franca said, sighing. "This is why Contractees can't compare to Shepherds. Once you sign a contract and gain an ability, you're stuck with it. Even if that ability becomes useless, it still takes up a slot and brings the associated negative effects."

Many contracted abilities were acquired to fulfill specific needs for a limited time. After that period, they often became useless. For instance, Lumian's Niese Face could only be used occasionally as an illusion during combat after he obtained the Lie earring.

Lumian smiled. "Who says I can't get rid of it?"

"Uh…" Franca was caught off guard.

Lumian's lips curved into a bright smile.

"Kill the contract target, and the contract will automatically be nullified."

Franca and Jenna gasped inwardly.

After a moment, Franca joked, "Very good. Keep that smile. That's the smile of a homicidal maniac—no, a Reaper."

Jenna nodded thoughtfully. "No wonder you didn't kill Bloody Jack just now and only scared it away. You were worried that the newly acquired abilities would vanish instantly. Didn't you mention you were planning to contract three abilities this time? Have you thought about the other two?"

"Yes." Lumian wasn't in a rush to complete the second ritual. He casually chatted, "One is to boost my defense or substitution abilities, while the other is to handle undead creatures. However, I'll need to think about the latter later."

The former addressed his lack of physical defense, while the latter made up for his insufficient means to deal with Wraiths and undead creatures.

"Substitution abilities…" Franca said, smiling. "Just sign a contract with a Wraith or specter formed by a Demoness or a Mid-Sequence Seer Beyonder after their death."

Lumian scoffed.

"Do you think I haven't considered that? However, apart from the Demoness evil spirit suspected to be a Saint, there's nothing related to Demonesses or Seers. I definitely can't handle the negative effects of a demigod contractor at my current level."

"Maybe it's manageable," Franca's eyes sparkled. "Maybe the adverse effects will only change your gender."

"What do you mean 'only'?" Lumian wanted to tease Franca for her

"life is short, why not give it a shot" mindset, but he restrained himself in front of Jenna.

Franca suddenly had a thought. "Can you only sign contracts with spirit world creatures or strange creatures? Can you sign one with a human? I can share the Mirror Substitution ability with you."

This was the first time Lumian had considered this question. After thinking for a moment, he said, "The relevant mysticism knowledge doesn't forbid it… But never mind. The Inevitability contract might have some hidden corruption or influence."

"That's true." Franca was still rational.

As she responded, another question popped into her mind.

If I actually sign a contract with him, what kind of negative effects will I inflict on Lumian?

"Why does the ability to deal with the undead have to wait?" Jenna wasn't as quick-witted as Franca, so she could only focus on more practical matters.

Lumian chuckled. "Because spirit world creatures and strange creatures fear sunlight's purification and don't have similar abilities, I can only consider obtaining it from the death domain. There's a good contract target there."

"Armored Shadow?" Franca realized. "Are you worried that giving him too much gold will make future communication uncontrollable?"

Lumian nodded and replied,"Additionally, I'm also waiting for the Sealed Artifact made from the Hisoka Beyonder characteristic. If it's related to a Wraith, I won't need the corresponding contract ability."

lightsNovɛl ƈom After chatting for a while, Lumian reconstructed the wall of spirituality and began his second summoning.

This time, he summoned: "A peculiar creature wandering above the world, an unimaginably sturdy being, a colossal creature that never rests."

After reciting the incantation, a "peak" made of layers of flesh appeared at the mysterious door.

Its height was unknown, but it couldn't fully emerge, causing the illusory and mysterious door to shake.

After speaking the Mystical Language of Fate, Lumian obtained the corresponding information.

This "mountain of flesh" indeed possessed the ability to enhance one's defense. It could toughen one's body to be like steel or rock, but the corresponding downside was having a movement speed as slow as that of an ordinary turtle.

Lumian had no choice but to give up.

His alternative target was his messenger, Penitent Baynfel.

According to the messenger information provided by Madam Magician, Baynfel had the ability to bring his shadow to life and switch positions with his body at critical moments.

Chapter 711 Choice

Since he was summoning his messenger, Lumian didn't perform the ritual in Mr. Fool's name. He simply called forth Penitent Baynfel, who was garbed in a black clergyman's robe, resembling a charred corpse with black flames clinging to his body.

"I wish to enter into another contract with you," Lumian requested with a smile.

He briefly recounted the power of Inevitability, the special contract, the sharing of abilities, the potential price, and the negative effects, awaiting Baynfel's decision.

Baynfel stayed silent for a few moments before responding in a deep voice, "If you're not worried about the downsides, I have no objections."

"What might the negative effects be?" Lumian inquired cautiously.

In Baynfel's empty, dark eye sockets, the dark flames that served as his eyes flickered twice.

"That hinges on your choice. I can let you finalize the contract. Once you know the specific negative effects, you can decide if you want to seal the deal."Follow current novels on novelb((in).(com)

Different choices lead to different negative effects? What choices? Lumian spoke the Mystical Language of Fate, filled with curiosity and puzzlement, allowing the silver-black symbols, words, and patterns to land on the faux goatskin, forming a short, powerful, mysterious, and sinister contract document.

Through the connection forged by the Mystical Language of Fate, Lumian sensed Baynfel's traits and abilities.

The Penitent's powers were intimately tied to shadows and darkness, but most of them seemed to be submerged in murky depths. Lumian could sense their presence, but he couldn't discern their nature.

The two abilities floating above the surface were Shadow Animation and Spirit World Traversal. Their characteristics were Ancient Corpse.

Perfect, Shadow Animation is just what I need… Baynfel probably showcased it specifically for me… He's quite unique, completely different from spirit world entities like Headless Bride, Abscessed Hand, and Human-Faced Mantis… It's much more straightforward to truly communicate with him… As Lumian mused, he gained a deeper understanding of Shadow Animation.

This was an active ability that could animate the shadows of oneself and others. The former could be used to swap places with the body and evade fatal damage when dodging was impossible. The latter would ensnare the corresponding target, hindering their movements, but it couldn't inflict much harm or completely restrain the opponent.

Activating it swiftly to produce instantaneous effects was its greatest strength. Otherwise, it couldn't shield from death or injury. Its drawback was that it could only maintain the activation of one shadow at a time.

As a substitute, if the animated shadow perished, Lumian would have to wait for the sun to rise or set before the shadow would reappear. Shadowless individuals would be deathly afraid of sunlight and instinctively dread it.

In the past, my emotions and desires were volatile, and now I'm piling on a fear of sunlight? If I really run into Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Sun pathway in the future, won't I be too terrified to even open my eyes? Thankfully, this is a downside that only kicks in after losing the shadow substitute. It's not permanent… Lumian looked at Baynfel and asked sincerely, "What sacrifice do you require? Or rather, what price must I pay?"

So far, he still hadn't figured out the negative repercussions of signing a contract with Baynfel.

Penitent Baynfel, with only a thin layer of charred skin clinging to his bones, replied, "Any mystical item in your possession."

Any one… Is this the so-called choice? Picking a mystical item to offer directly shapes the ultimate negative effects? Lumian had an epiphany as he took stock of the mystical items he carried.

His knee-jerk thought was the Pride Armor. After all, he couldn't effectively use the Sealed Artifact at present. However, looking at Baynfel's charred corpse, he felt that he wasn't just sacrificing an item but attempting to off his messenger. Furthermore, while he couldn't use the Pride Armor for now, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony could. Lumian had already taught them the corresponding usage techniques.

At the crux of it all was a single mantra: Don't wear it yourself. Only utilize the negative effects by letting the target trigger them!

As for proactively triggering higher-level negative effects in exchange for indiscriminate area-of-effect damage, there was no way to teach that. It had to be improvised based on the environment and the enemy's traits. After all, Demonesses likely relished this method. It was brutally effective in bullying targets without substitute-type abilities!

Mystery Prying Glasses, Flog boxing gloves, Eye of Truth, Lie earring, Mr. K's finger, Symphony of Hatred bone flute, Fury of the Sea brooch, Traveler's Bag, Omebella's umbilical cord remains, expired misfortune gold coins and unlucky banknotes, Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic… Lumian went through these items one by one.

Excluding non-mystical items and ones that were very handy to him at the moment, Lumian ultimately decided to choose between the Mystery Prying Glasses and the Eye of Truth.

Their abilities overlapped to a degree. Keeping one sufficed.

After a brief moment of contemplation, Lumian opted to offer the Eye of Truth to Baynfel.

He believed that the Mystery Prying Glasses had fewer negative effects than the Eye of Truth when usage time was limited.

Furthermore, the Eye of Truth could only see the truth. The Mystery Prying Glasses could at least be used to paint supernatural works and disguise himself. After Lumian became an Ascetic, he could effectively rein in the urge to paint while donning the Mystery Prying Glasses. He could paint as needed or abstain.

Lumian produced the peculiar Eye of Truth and handed it to Baynfel.

Just as Baynfel grasped the eyewear, which appeared entwined with flesh and blood vessels, Lumian suddenly sensed the downside of signing the contract.

In scenes closely tied to Baynfel's past, he would witness truths better left unseen.

However, it's fine if such effects only happen when it involves this messenger's enigmatic background. Otherwise, I would have cut today's ritual short and made a new choice after finding a suitable contract partner… In Aurore and Franca's words, seeing what shouldn't be seen is a death sentence… Lumian pondered for a moment and replied to Baynfel in a deep voice, "The contract stands."

As he finished speaking, the short and sinister contract spontaneously ignited without fire, transforming into silver-black symbols, words, and patterns that seared onto Lumian's arm.

Lumian glanced down at his shadow and saw it warp on its own, as if performing a powerful dance.

A smile spread across Lumian's face.

After about ten seconds, his shadow settled.

Lumian expressed his gratitude to Baynfel and ended the summoning, stowing away all the items on the altar.

"It's done?" Franca asked eagerly.

It wasn't that she doubted Lumian couldn't even handle his messenger, but she worried the nature of his abilities might not meet the requirements or come with too many strings attached.

Lumian nodded and briefly recounted the situation with Shadow Animation.

As he walked towards the quarry cave's exit, he said to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, "Now, we can hatch a plan to deal with Moran Avigny.

"Franca, contact the Demoness of Black and let her know we're about to make our move. However, to avoid spooking the family and hidden forces behind Moran Avigny, she doesn't need to observe nearby for now. Just request an emergency help charm from her that can contact her through a mirror if the Mirror People have hidden allies. Yes, it's a golden opportunity to test the Demoness of Black's stance towards the Tamara family and the Mirror People. Also, inform the Eternal Blazing Sun Church that they can get ready to cut us some slack.

"Jenna, write to Madam Judgment and clue her in on our plan in the event the Demoness of Black is in bed with the Mirror People.

"Anthony…"

Lumian's mind raced as he considered various details and doled out missions to his companions.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony didn't just passively accept their tasks. They actively chimed in with ideas and helped Lumian fill in gaps and polish his brainstorming.

Upon returning to Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, Anthony ducked out early to keep up appearances at the Trier Psychiatrist Guild. Jenna, meanwhile, changed into a dark black cloaked dress and seized the chance to play the part of a Witch.

Soon, only Lumian and Franca remained in the apartment's living room.

The atmosphere grew awkward, and a prolonged silence hung in the air.

Lumian broke the ice as if nothing had happened.

"How's Jenna coming along with digesting the Witch potion?"

Franca breathed a sigh of relief and said, "Not bad. She's found her groove acting as a Witch. Ask around the market district and you'll hear whispers of Witches appearing in the dead of night to punish rowdy drunkards. Some claim to have fallen into an icy river. Some wake up the next day aching all over, while others get splitting headaches come evening and don't dare drink anymore. What they have in common is they all ran into someone dressed as a Witch. Yes, some drunkards even vanished into thin air…"

Franca's voice trailed off, replaced by a tone fit for telling ghost stories.

"The missing ones committed serious offenses? The others are guilty of beating their families, harassing passersby, and groping women?" Lumian guessed with a smile, based on his read of Jenna.

"Bingo." Franca nodded with a bright smile.

Lumian pondered for a moment and asked, "Aren't you worried the Demoness of Black will catch wind of this rumor and send someone to investigate?"

Franca felt smug and pointed at herself.

"You're looking at her! Me! In the Demoness Sect, I'm the one handling matters tied to the market district!"

She then sighed and said, "Jenna is a natural. She whipped up a solid acting plan in under a month. Maybe she can digest the Witch potion before I advance to Affliction."

"If those incidents hadn't happened, she would've been a star actress. Acting is second nature to her," Lumian agreed.

The two fell silent again.

After a few seconds, Franca put on a brave face and said, "Um, um, you can't breathe a word to Jenna or anyone else about what I said or did near the altar in the mirror world!"

Lumian asked in confusion, "Did you say or do anything out of the ordinary back there?

"I don't recall…"

Franca was taken aback for a moment before flashing an understanding smile.

She stood up with a breezy grin and walked to Lumian's side. She patted his shoulder gratefully and said, "What a bro!"

She felt all the awkwardness had evaporated.

…

A few days later, as Moran Avigny attended an interministerial meeting, Lumian appeared near the government-provided villa.

The Novel will be updated first on this website. Come back and continue reading tomorrow, everyone!